

John 1:35-51 The First Disciples

Review:

Purpose: John wrote his Gospel as an evangelistic tract for Jewish unbelievers who were scattered throughout the Roman Empire (Hellenistic Jews). It was not written *to* us, but it is recorded *for* us.

ESV **John 20:30-31** . . . these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Focus: The key question of John's Gospel concerns the question: *Who is Jesus?*¹

Application: The key application of John's Gospel is that you believe in Jesus, so that you may have life.

First Lesson: Our first study, was of 1:1-18, wherein John introduced the truth that Jesus is the Jehovah God of the Old Testament.

John 1:1-3 (read): Every Jew knew Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning, God created . . ." John, taking that familiar text, wrote that in the *beginning* was—the Word! And it was the Word who *created*! The Word (*logos*) is the God who created the heavens and the earth back in Genesis 1:1. The Word is the Jehovah God of the Old Testament. John was, of course, referring to Jesus.

ESV **Colossians 1:16-17a**. . . all things were created through him and for him.

ESV **Hebrews 1:1-2** . . . in these last days he [God] has spoken to us by his Son . . . through whom also he created the world.

John 1:14 (read): The remarkable truth is that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us! God became a man (Jehovah Jesus!).

Second Lesson: In the second lesson, we learned about the remarkable ministry of John the Baptist.

John 1:23 (read): John the Baptist's testimony was that he was the voice that Isaiah prophesied would be crying out in the wilderness to prepare the way for the Lord.

ESV **Isaiah 40:3-5** A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God . . ."

In the Hebrew of Isaiah 40:3-5, it is none other than the LORD (Jehovah²), our "God", who would be coming. The One who came, of course, was Jesus, who is Jehovah in human form (the Word became flesh).

¹ D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 95.

Application: Every person should make straight the Lord's highway that leads into his own heart. Genuine sorrow for sin and prayer for God's mercy and forgiveness are involved with making the road straight.³

Mission Accomplished: John the Baptist's mission was accomplished: he bore witness specifically to Jesus as the "coming One".⁴

—New Material—

Andrew & Peter Follow Jesus

Introduction: In a relay race, a baton is passed from one runner to the next. There is a hand-off. In a very real way, this is exactly what we see happening between John the Baptist and Jesus, as John hands his disciples off to Jesus. Today we will learn about Jesus' first disciples, why they followed Him, who Jesus is and what He wants from us.

******How did Peter learn about Jesus (1:35-42)?** Peter's brother, Andrew, introduced Peter to Jesus.⁵

Operation Andrew: Based on Andrew's example, there is an evangelistic program called Operation Andrew. First, it was John the Baptist's witness to Andrew that led Andrew to follow Jesus. Then, it was Andrew's testimony to Peter that led Peter to become a follower of Jesus. An effective form of evangelism is the personal witness of one family member to another, or of one close friend to another.⁶ Notice the word "first" in 1:41—Andrew was not done yet!

Insight: John the Baptist and Andrew both witnessed to people who were already prepared. It was a great advantage to be Jewish and already familiar with Jehovah God. They were also interested in the subject matter: the coming Messiah.

Big Picture: Why are we given this information about the two disciples leaving John the Baptist (1:35-42)? This handing off of disciples illustrated that Jesus was greater than John.⁷ It also shows how well John the Baptist had prepared his own disciples to be ready to follow Jesus, and it shows John's humility.

a) Lamb of God (1:36): John called Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (1:29, 36). Lambs were common sacrificial offerings. The wages of sin is death. The picture is of the innocent lamb dying in your place, of the transfer of your sins onto the lamb.
Write on board.

² In our English Bibles, the Hebrew name for God (Jehovah) is translated by LORD (call capital letters).

³ Hendriksen, *John*, 95.

⁴ Carson, *John*, 152.

⁵ John wrote as if his readers had already heard of Peter, but not of Andrew.

⁶ Carson, *John*, 155.

⁷ It also shows John's humility (in giving up his own disciples).

“The hardest thing to receive is that you will be judged by God for eternity for your sins. Yet disbelieve that and you not only lose the compelling need for Christ as Savior or Rescuer but also your own hope of salvation. The gospel of Christ’s substitutionary death and victorious resurrection is inextricably bound to judgment because it is the only sufficient answer to it. The judgment is what you are being saved from.”⁸

Rabbi (1:38): John’s disciples called Jesus “rabbi” (1:38), at that time a common term of polite honor from a student to a religious teacher.⁹

Joke: Notice how, in 1:38, Jesus asked them a question (“What are you seeking?”). They answered Jesus’ question *with* a question (“Where are you staying?”). My Jewish neighbor once asked me, *Why does one Jew always answer another Jew with a question?* I said I didn’t know; he said, “Why not?”

Tenth Hour (1:39)—Depending on whether a Roman or Jewish method was used, the tenth hour was either 10 a.m. or 4 p.m.

Why do you suppose we are only given the name of one of the two disciples who left John the Baptist to follow Jesus (1:40)? John’s interest was in showing how Peter was introduced to Jesus, and that involved only Andrew. However, it may also have been a matter of humility, since it is commonly thought that the unnamed disciple was John himself, author of our book.¹⁰

b) The Messiah/Christ (1:41): Andrew called Jesus the Messiah. As our text states, Messiah is the Hebrew word that was translated “Christ”. Julius Caesar’s last name of Caesar. He became so famous that his last name became a title for subsequent emperors. Contrary to this, Jesus’ last name is not Christ. “Christ” is a title, not a name. He is Jesus, the Christ/Messiah. *Write on board.*

Review: As we discussed last lesson, both Messiah and Christ remain untranslated words in our English Bibles. What do they mean? They each mean “anointed one.” It anoint someone is to rub ointment on them. Ceremonial/religious anointing was used to consecrate or set apart kings, priests and prophets. The Messiah was the One who ultimately embodied all three anointed offices.

Why do you suppose that Jesus changed Simon’s name to Cephas/Peter (1:42)? This was not just a nick-name given by one pal to another. God often changed people’s names to indicate a special calling or character.

What does this name change tell us about who Jesus is? The name change gives us a glimpse into Who Jesus really was: Someone who, like a prophet, could see into another person’s life, know his character and know his future.¹¹

⁸ Jim Elliff, Facebook post, April 13, 2019, facebook.com/jim.elliff.9. Accessed April 14, 2019.

⁹ Carson, *John*, 155.

¹⁰ Dennis & Grudem, *ESV Study*, 2022.

¹¹ Carson, *John*, 156.

Cephas/Peter (1:42). “Peter” remains an untranslated word in our Bibles. Cephas is an Aramaic name meaning “rock” (the Greek equivalent is the name Peter). God would one day give Peter the grace to stand like a rock by faith in the face of intense persecution.¹² Like Civil War general Thomas Jackson, Peter would stand like a stone wall despite withering attacks from the enemy.

******How did Jesus convince Nathanael to follow Him (1:43-51)?** Jesus had spiritual x-ray vision! That Jesus was able to see into Nathanael’s inner character (no deceit) and also know what he had been doing in private (sitting under a fig tree) convinced Nathanael that Jesus was the Christ (1:47-48).¹³

Galilee (1:43): Galilee was region north of Judea and west of the Sea of Galilee. Draw map on board: backwards letter “C” for Mediterranean Ocean, strawberry for Sea of Galilee, crooked string for River Jordan, cucumber with bite taken out of it for Dead Sea. Judea was west of the Dead Sea. Galilee was an area in the north, Judea was an area in the south, and in between was (joke) “some area” we’ll call “Samaria” (west of the River Jordan).

Philip (1:42): What convinced Philip to drop everything just because a total stranger said, “Follow me” (1:43)? See 1:44. Jesus evidently was not a complete stranger to Phillip. Since Philip was from Bethsaida, as were Andrew and Peter (1:44), it was likely they had all three already been talking previously to each other about Jesus. Philip was thus probably prepared. Operation Andrew strikes again!

Bethsaida (1:44): Bethsaida was a city in Galilee on the northern coast of the Sea of Galilee. Its exact location has not yet been determined by archaeologists.¹⁴

How did Philip describe Jesus to Nathanael (1:45)? He described Jesus as **1)** Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets¹⁵ wrote, **2)** from Nazareth, and **3)** the son of Joseph.

c) Predicted By Moses and the Prophets (1:45): *Write on board.* A major reason to believe in Jesus is because of all the prophecy He fulfilled.

ESV Romans 10:17 . . . faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

Application: Philip expressed the great truth that the Law and the Prophets wrote about Jesus. The Old Testament can never be understood correctly unless Jesus is seen in them.¹⁶

Writing of unbelieving Jews, Paul said:

¹² Hendriksen, *John*, 107.

¹³ It is possible that Nathanael and Bartholomew are the same person, since Bartholomew is linked with Philip in the lists of the apostles in all three synoptic Gospels (Dennis & Grudem, *ESV*, 2022).

¹⁴ Samuel Pfister, “Where is Biblical Bethsaida?”, *BiblicalArchaeology.com*. Accessed April 09, 2019.

¹⁵ This is shorthand for the 39 books of the Old Testament.

¹⁶ Hendriksen, *John*, 109.

ESV 2 **Corinthians 3:15-16** . . . to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed.

In 1:46, what prompted Nathanael to ask, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”

There are no Scriptural predictions of the Messiah coming from Nazareth—Bethlehem, yes; Nazareth, no.

Application: In response to Nathanael’s honest caution, Phillip replied, “Come and see” (1:46). This was an open invitation originally given to Nathanael, but it is also extended to the reader.¹⁷

Operation Phillip: Andrew brought Peter to Jesus, then Phillip, and now we learn that Phillip brought Nathanael to Jesus. Yet again we see effective friendship evangelism as one long-time friend tells another about Jesus.¹⁸

Application: *Who can you talk to about Jesus? Brother? Sister? Mother or Father? Your kids? Uncle? Old school friends? Neighbors? Hunting buddy?*

Everyone we’ve read about so far has been an Israelite (Jesus, John, the Pharisees, the priests, the Levites, Andrew, Peter, Philip, etc). Yet Jesus singled Nathanael out as an Israelite—with no deceit. What in Old Testament history offers insight into why Jesus called Nathanael an Israelite—with no deceit (1:47)? See Genesis 27:35, 30:37-43. The name Israel was given by God to Jacob, who was previously known for being a trickster and deceiver. Jesus complimented Nathanael for being an Israelite (a descendant of deceitful Jacob), yet one in whom there was no deceit.¹⁹ The title Israelite was given to Nathaniel to highlight the purity of his scruples.

In 1:48, why did Jesus clarify that He saw Nathanael under the fig tree “before Philip called you”? Nathanael doubtless would suspect that Philip had previously told Jesus about Nathanael’s honest character. Jesus wanted to dispel that false notion by revealing something about Nathanael that Philip did not know.

Who did Nathanael declare Jesus to be in 1:49? He declared him to be the Son of God and the King of Israel (1:49). Both are Messianic titles. *Write on board.*

d) Son of God (1:49). *Write on board.* To be “a” son of God means you are godly, that you are like God. To be “the” Son of God is a Messianic title. In fact, as we have seen, the Son of God is none other than God the Son.

ESV **John 14:9b** Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.

e) King of Israel (1:49). *Write on board.* This is another Messianic title, taken from Psalm 2 where we learn that the anointed (the Messiah) is both a King and God’s Son:

¹⁷ Carson, *John*, 160.

¹⁸ As before, there was a prior interest in spiritual things.

¹⁹ Hendriksen, *John*, 110.

ESV **Psalm 2:2-12** The kings of the earth set themselves . . . against the LORD and against his anointed . . . He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, “As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill” . . . Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

The flip side of God’s love is His wrath.

What did Jesus promise Nathanael in 1:50-51? Jesus promised that Nathanael²⁰ would see great signs, such as angels ascending and descending on Jesus. It was as if Jesus said, “You ain’t seen nothin’ yet!”

To what Old Testament ladder event involving Jacob did Jesus make reference in 1:51? See *Genesis 28:12*. It is a reference to Jacob’s ladder upon which angels went up and down. **Song:** “We are climbing Jacob’s ladder”.

f) Him on Whom angels ascend and descend (1:51); a heavenly ladder! *Write on board*.

g) **Son of Man (1:51):** *Write on board*. This is Jesus’ favorite title for Himself, a Messianic title derived from Daniel 7:13-14 showing the Messiah to be a king.

ESV **Daniel 7:13-14** I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven²¹ there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

So What?

According to John 1:35-2:25, who is Jesus? Jesus:

- a). Is the Messiah/Christ, 1:41.
- b). Is “the one” written about by Moses and the Prophets, 1:45.
- c). Is the Son of God, 1:34, 50.
- d). Is the King of Israel, 1:50.
- e). Son of Man (Dan 7), 1:51.

Based on John 1:35-2:25, what does Jesus want from you?

Philip said to Nathanael, “Come and see.” He wants you to do the same. It is an open invitation.

He wants you to believe in Him as the Messiah (Christ).

He wants you to accept him as the Son of God and King of Israel.

You can hear this lesson being taught at SermonAudio.com/NTRF.

Stephen E. Atkerson NTRF.org 04/14/19

²⁰ “You” (1:51) is plural; Jesus evidently made this promise to both Nathanael and Phillip, and perhaps to all the disciples.

²¹ Jesus quoted this in Matthew 24:30 with reference to His A.D.70 judgment coming.