

John 1:43-51

- 43 The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, "Follow Me."
- 44 Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.
- 45 Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote— Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."
- 46 And Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."
- 47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!"
- 48 Nathanael said to Him, "How do You know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you."
- 49 Nathanael answered and said to Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"
- 50 Jesus answered and said to him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these."
- 51 And He said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

43 *The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, "Follow Me."*

- Four days are marked here specifically: (1) John 1:19; (2) John 1:29; (3) John 1:35; (4) John 1:43. Only an eye witness account would dare offer such details because of the possibility of being contradicted.

- This is the day following the testimony of John the Baptist.
- Philip is mentioned in other gospels only in lists of disciples. In John 14:8, he speaks one of the true yearnings of the human heart.
- "Follow me" is not merely an invitation for an invigorating walk. This particular wording is only given in the gospels by Jesus, and only once to anyone outside the circle of disciples. It is only used once in the rest of the New Testament, when an angel commands Peter. See Matthew 8:22; Matthew 9:9; Matthew 19:21; Mark 2:14; Mark 10:21; Luke 5:27; Luke 9:59; and John 21:19.
- In two days, Jesus has attracted six followers: James and John, Peter and Andrew, and Philip and Nathanael.
- Philip is the only one of these first followers who did not seek Jesus or was not brought to Jesus by another.

44 *Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.*

45 *Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote— Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."*

- Bethsaida has disappeared from history, and scholars can only speculate as to its exact location.
- It's very likely that Philip was already known to Peter and Andrew.
- Nathanael and Bartholomew are quite possibly the same person.
- Note that John quotes Philip accurately instead of superimposing upon him a knowledge of the birth in Bethlehem.
- This section of scripture is all about seeking and finding.
- I'm not sure any of us can grasp the sheer joy that must have been in Philip's heart as he shared these words!

- It seems to me that Jesus must have shared often in the manner of the “Road to Emmaus” dialogue—that the disciples would grasp how history and the Old Testament were now unfolding.

46 *And Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.”*

- Nathanael’s question is condescending, and perhaps, hostile. Here doesn’t just question a Messiah from Nazareth, he asks if it can birth *anything* good.
- Since he is from a neighboring community, there could be regional jealousy/rivalry here, but we cannot escape the sense that Nazareth had a poor reputation.
- Lest we pour unnecessary contempt upon Nathanael, remember that it is a basic human behavior to judge by prejudice and preconceived notions.
 - > “Can anything good come from Catholics?”
 - > “...from the other political party?”
 - > “...from someone of another race or culture?”
 - > “...from millenials?”
- Philip offers the most perfect invitation to Christianity which could be offered either then or now! *“Come and see!”*

47 *Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!”*

48 *Nathanael said to Him, “How do You know me?” Jesus answered and said to him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.”*

49 *Nathanael answered and said to Him, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!”*

- To his credit, Nathanael did accept Philip’s invitation.
- Jesus recognizes Nathanael as one who was a faithful and true representative of God’s

covenant people, and not one stained by the self-serving structures and traditions which had evolved over time.

- Nathanael is quire naturally puzzled at how a perfect stranger can claim to know him.
- The words recorded here do not give full justice to the encounter.
- Nathanael was most probably praying under a fig tree in his own garden—unseen by anyone. He grasps immediately that Jesus “saw” not only his presence, but his countenance, his spirit, and his prayers.
- MacLaren writes, *“The Evangelist can tell us what Nathanael said to Jesus, and what Jesus said to Nathanael, but no Evangelist can reproduce the look, the tone, the magnetic influence which streamed out from Christ, and, we may believe, more than anything He said, riveted these men to Him.”*
- I am reminded of the Samaritan woman, John 4:29, who said, *“Come see a man who told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?”*
- Nathanael now confesses Jesus in obvious Messianic terms. We don’t know the depth or breadth of his faith confession, just that it was sincere and without guile.

50 *Jesus answered and said to him, “Because I said to you, ‘I saw you under the fig tree,’ do you believe? You will see greater things than these.”*

51 *And He said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.”*

- Jesus is not being condescending. He is merely contrasting the first spiritual awakening of a disciple to the full teachings and events he will experience.
- Jesus reveals himself to be the ladder linking heaven and earth. See Genesis 28:12-13.
- Jesus uses “Son of Man” over 70 times.