

THE TWELVE

#6. Nathaniel — An Honest Heart

10.14.18

John 1:43-51 NASB The next day He purposed to go into Galilee, and He found Philip. And Jesus said to him, "Follow Me." ⁴⁴ Now Philip was from Bethsaida, of 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 Nathanael said to him, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." ⁴⁷ Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there 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 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 that I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You will see greater things than these." ⁵¹ And He said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

The Central Lesson of his Life: The Path of Discipleship is best served by a pure heart.

I. The Background of Nathaniel

- A. Nathaniel Bar-Tolmai: He is known as Bartholomew in each of the Apostolic lists, but in the Gospel of John he is known as Nathaniel.
- B. He was a resident of Cana, a small town in Galilee where Jesus performed His first miracle (John 2:11).
- C. He was a close friend of Philip (who introduced him to Jesus), and is usually paired with him in the Gospel lists as well as some early records of church history.
- D. He is seen in John 1 when he received his calling from Jesus, and in John 21 where he returns to fishing after the resurrection of Jesus.
- E. His death is uncertain; there are two main traditions. The first is that he was beheaded, and the second states that he was beheaded after being flayed by whips that created ribbons of flesh that were often pulled away from the body. In our vernacular, this was being "skinned alive."

II. What we observe about Nathaniel from the Gospels

A. It seems he was a devout student of Scripture.

1. Philip's appeal to Nathaniel was upon the basis of scriptural prophecy.
2. Jesus took the same approach when he spoke to Nathaniel.
3. This was not a needs-based testimonial.
4. Note: People often come to Jesus based upon crisis and need, but they must quickly be grounded in Scripture in order to see the "Bigger Need."

B. He had his own baggage that needed processing.

1. "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"
2. Nazareth's reputation was severely limiting.
3. The unbelieving Jews had once quipped, "Search the Scriptures, and you will see no prophet ever comes from Galilee." But they were blinded by their own baggage. In fact, as many as five prophets came from Galilee! We know Jonah did, and the evidence supports Nahum, Hosea, Elijah, and Elisha as being from the region of Galilee. Jesus was born in Bethlehem and raised in Nazareth, which is in Galilee. He was called Jesus of Nazareth, so the Pharisees assumed that He was born in Galilee.
4. The Pharisees were adamant that no prophet ever came out of Galilee because they thought it was proof that Jesus was not a prophet and could not be the Messiah. They knew the Scriptures prophesied the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (John 7:42, Micah 5:2). So the Pharisees were wrong on two points—that no prophet had come from Galilee and that Jesus could not be the Messiah.

C. He was open to supernatural dealings by God.

1. I saw you under the fig tree, just before Philip called to you.
2. The moments you spend in searching for God are never forgotten.
3. I am the ladder — the link between Heaven and Earth!

4. Nathaniel seemed to grasp from the beginning the truth that took some other disciples months to figure out.

III. Lessons from the Life of Nathaniel

- A. If I have a heart devoted to seeking God, it puts me miles ahead in the journey of discipleship!
 1. “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!”
 2. This is only the beginning, Nathaniel!
- B. When my life is open to correction, God will lead me into truth
 1. Jonah’s anger
 2. Elijah’s despair and depression
- C. When my life is free of deception, it opens the door to everything God has planned for me.
 1. “An Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile!”
 2. This era was a time in Israel’s history marked by hypocrisy, legalism, and marginalization of God’s Word.
 - a) Jesus and Paul pointed out that not everyone who was a natural Jew was a true Son or Daughter of Abraham.
 - b) The Single Eye results in my whole life being full of light!