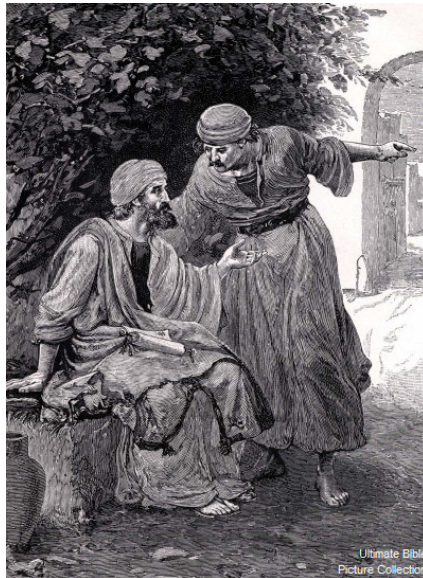


3 *Come And See*

Study Guide
John 1:35-51



Opening

When you get some good news, who is the first person you want to share it with? Why?

As a kid, would you believe something your brother or sister told you?

1. Read John 1:35–51. In these verses we are introduced to five men: Andrew, Simon, Philip, Nathanael and one unnamed disciple (probably John, the author of this book). How did each man respond to the testimony he heard about Jesus?

Which of these responses have you encountered as you have shared your faith in Jesus Christ?

2. In light of verses 30-31, how do you think John felt when his disciples left him to follow Jesus?

What does this say about John's character?

3. In verse 38, Jesus asks those who begin to follow Him a question. What are people generally looking for in life?

When you decided to follow Christ, what were you looking for?

Did you find it? How?

If not, were your expectations misguided?

In Jesus' day, one might be looking for a political or military leader to overthrow Rome. These usually joined the Zealots sect. Others might look for a legal scholar with whom they could debate the details of the Law. These might be inclined to join the scribes or Pharisees. Or they could be looking for a person who would rise to religious position and power, like the Sadducees, upon whom they could ride their coattails. Jesus was none of these, and he wanted them to be clear about this up front.

4. In verse 42, Jesus gives Simon a new name. Why do you think he does this?

What might this tell us about how Jesus sees us when he looks at us?

In the OT, a change of name often indicated a new relationship with God. For instance, *Abram* became *Abraham* (Gen. 17:5) and *Jacob* became *Israel* (Gen. 32:28) when they entered into a new relationship with God. Peter's new name shows us how Jesus looks at us. He not only saw what Peter *was*, he saw what he would *become*. He sees not only the *actualities*, he sees the *possibilities and potential*. When we give our lives to Christ, there is no limitation as to what he can accomplish in and through us.

5. Look at 1:45-46. What type of person does Nathanael seem to be? Why might he find it hard to believe Philip's statement?

Notice the difference in the way Jesus calls Philip and Nathanael. Why do you think he does this?

Perhaps Nathanael was expecting the great Messiah to come from a more prominent place. Nazareth was anything but a glamorous place. It was relatively small and obscure, with about sixteen hundred to two thousand inhabitants. It lay about 3.5 miles SE of the massive city of Sepphoris, which rivaled Tiberias (6:23) for its Greek character in Jewish Galilee. Nathanael was from Cana (21:2), another town in Galilee. Galileans were frequently despised by people from Judea, but it appears that even fellow Galileans despised Nazareth. Some agitators for revolution had come from Galilee (Cf. Acts 5:37), and followers of those who advocated freedom through force could always be found to support a military uprising. In addition, there seemed to be no reference to the Messiah coming from Nazareth in the Old Testament.

Who is Nathanael?

You might notice that Nathanael is not mentioned among the disciples in the other gospels (Matt 10:1-4; Mk 3:13-19; Lk 6:12-16). Many people in this day had two names, often one Hebrew/Aramaic and one Greek form of their name (Levi/Matthew; Cephas/Peter; Thomas/Didymus; Tabitha/Dorcas). But John also does not mention Bartholomew, who is mentioned among the disciples in the other gospels. Also, in each of those cases, Bartholomew is linked with Philip in the list of names. Most likely, Nathanael (*gift of God*) had a second name - Bartholomew (*son of Tholmai or Ptolemy*), indicating his lineage.

6. Nathanael is very skeptical and has lots of questions for which Philip does not seem to know the answer. Do you feel this way sometimes?

How does Philip handle Nathanael's questions?

How is Philip's example instructive for us?

7. What was it that finally brought Nathanael around to believing in Jesus?

Nathanael and Jacob/Israel - Why does Jesus refer to Nathaniel as having "no deceit," (v. 47) and what is the deal with angels "ascending and descending"?

Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel, was known as a deceiver (Gen. 27). Not only that, but many in his family followed in his footsteps (see Gen 34). Jesus says that here is a descendent of a deceiver who is not a deceiver!

In verse 51 (as in verse 47), the reference is also to the story of Jacob, but while verse 47 has Gen. 27 as its background, verse 51 is based on Gen. 28. According to the latter chapter Jacob, resting one evening during his flight from his brother Esau, whom he had deceived, had a dream. He saw a ladder standing on the earth, its top reaching heaven. Ascending and descending upon it were the angels of God. In connection with this dream Jacob hears the voice of God pronouncing upon him a glorious blessing, which was climaxed by these words, "And in your seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Jacob's ladder finds its antitype or fulfillment in Christ. That is the meaning of the words of the Lord to Nathaniel, "You shall see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." The latter is here represented as the link between heaven and earth, the bond of union between God and man, the One who by means of his sacrifice reconciles God to man. With the eye of faith the disciples will be able to see him in that light. They will be able to see the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man. For Jesus this mysterious term (Son of man) is as rich in meaning as is the concept Messiah. The term is based on Dan. 7.*

*William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker. vol. 1-2. New Testament Commentarv : Exposition of the Gosnel According to John. New Testament Commentarv (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House. 1953-2001). Jn 1:51.

8. John records more than a dozen names or descriptions of Jesus in this chapter. What are some of these?

9. Which of the names of Jesus has the most significance to you personally? Explain why.
