

John 1:43-51

The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, “Come, follow me.” ⁴⁴ Philip was from Bethsaida, Andrew and Peter’s hometown.

⁴⁵ Philip went to look for Nathanael and told him, “We have found the very person Moses and the prophets wrote about! His name is Jesus, the son of Joseph from Nazareth.”

⁴⁶ “Nazareth!” exclaimed Nathanael. “Can anything good come from Nazareth?”

“Come and see for yourself,” Philip replied.

⁴⁷ As they approached, Jesus said, “Now here is a genuine son of Israel—a man of complete integrity.”

⁴⁸ “How do you know about me?” Nathanael asked.

Jesus replied, “I could see you under the fig tree before Philip found you.”

⁴⁹ Then Nathanael exclaimed, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God—the King of Israel!”

⁵⁰ Jesus asked him, “Do you believe this just because I told you I had seen you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than this.” ⁵¹ Then he said, “I tell you the truth, you will all see heaven open and the angels of God going up and down on the Son of Man, the one who is the stairway between heaven and earth.”

Background

Who is Nathanael? We don’t read of a disciple named Nathaniel in the other Gospels, but he’s likely the same person called Bartholomew in other Gospels and Acts 1.

John 1:44 tells us that Philip was from Bethsaida, also home to Andrew and Peter. This town was later condemned by Jesus for rejecting Him despite having witnessed His miracles.

When Nathanael heard Jesus was from Nazareth, he was skeptical. This was likely due to the town’s negative reputation rather than its size or location. The exact reasons for Nazareth’s poor standing are uncertain.

Teaching Points

1. Jesus had the divine attribute of omnipresence.

John 1 clearly shows that Jesus is fully God, possessing all divine attributes:

Omnipotence: all-powerful

Omniscience: All-knowing

Omnipresence: Everywhere at the same time

While His physical body was limited to one place during His earthly life, Jesus never gave up His divine nature. In John 1:48, when Jesus tells Nathanael, “*I could see you under the fig tree...*” it’s more than just foreknowledge. It’s a glimpse of His omnipresence. Jesus didn’t just know; He saw. This attribute continued throughout His life and remains true today. Though He has a physical, resurrected body, Jesus is still and always has been omnipresent, because He is eternally God.

2. Jesus is the Bridge between heaven and earth.

When Jesus told Nathanael he would see angels “*going up and down on the Son of Man*” (John 1:51), He was likely referring to Jacob’s dream in Genesis 28 where a ladder connected heaven and earth. That dream symbolized God’s continued presence and communication with Jacob despite his failures. Jesus revealed that He, Himself, is the true bridge between heaven and earth. Communication and peace between God in Heaven and mankind on earth are only possible because Jesus, the Son of Man, is the Bridge. As 1 Timothy 2:5 says, Jesus is the one Mediator between God and man.

Application

1. When in doubt, check it out!

If you have doubts about Jesus or the Christian faith, don’t turn away. Check it out! When John’s disciples wanted to question Jesus, He said, “*Come and see.*” When Nathanael questioned Jesus’ background, Philip also said, “*Come and see.*” Honest doubts are okay. What matters is seeking answers. Nathanael came to Jesus and found clarity. If you’re unsure about Jesus or the Christian message, keep seeking. Check it out!