

We are picking up in John's gospel just after the author had told us about John the Baptist's testimony about Jesus. The Baptist, as the last prophet (Luke 16:16), had told his followers that Jesus was the Lamb of God. He told them that the sign that Spirit of God told him to watch for was fulfilled when he baptized Jesus. This account must pick up after Jesus' 40 days of fasting in the desert. (Luke 4:1-2) Jesus returned to the site of His baptism, and John the Baptist was there with two of his disciples. As Jesus passed, John said, "Look, the Lamb of God!" It was just the day before that he had reminded those disciples the story of how the Spirit had revealed that Jesus was the Son of God.

"Lamb of God" is an amazing declaration. Last week I shared with you how John the Baptist must have had special insight into that because of his familiarity with the Isaiah scroll. He saw the Messiah as the lamb in Isaiah 53, the lamb that would bare our transgressions and be slaughtered for our sins. (Isaiah 53:5) This perspective was completely different from the Essenes' theology. We might speculate that this was the key difference that separated John the Baptist from that group. They both saw Isaiah 40:3 as the scripture that described them; both believed they must prepare themselves for the coming of the Righteous One; both lived in the desert regions and practiced ascetic lives; and both practiced ritual baptism as a sign of cleansing. But the Essenes believed that the Messiah would lead them in a physical battle against the sons of darkness. John saw the Messiah not as a righteous warrior, but as a sacrificial lamb. This was an insight that had to have come from the Holy Spirit. Remember, the angel that announced John's birth said he would be filled with the Spirit from the day he was born. (Luke 1:15)

³⁷ When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. Andrew and John the Beloved heard the Baptist say that Jesus was the Lamb of God. They left John the Baptist to go inquire of Jesus. I'm assuming this was John the Beloved that was with Andrew because he is the one conveying the story. He does not use his name throughout his gospel. The first followers of Jesus would have been important to identify. This was one of those stories the other Gospel writers did not mention, so John the Beloved was led to tell about how it all began.

When his disciples left, notice that the Baptist didn't say, "Wait guys! What about me? What about my ministry?" John the Baptist knew his calling was to point people to Jesus. The fact that they left John to follow Jesus is success for John. He didn't let the numbers game get him off focus. (John 3:30) He didn't let pride in his ministry keep him from obeying his call. The Kingdom of God isn't about building personal ministries. John the Baptist wasn't about to incorporate and start international baptism sites. He was faithfully pointing people to Jesus, and that is our job too. Amen? It doesn't matter which Bible believing church they attend, or who disciples them. What matters is that they follow Jesus.

³⁸ Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?" They said, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" That sounds like a strange question to Western ears. We would have explained about what John the

Commented [notes1]: 16 "The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it. Luke 16:16 (NIV)

Commented [notes2]: 1 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, 2 where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry. Luke 4:1-2 (NIV)

Commented [notes3]: Isaiah 53:5 (NIV) 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

Commented [notes4]: 3 A voice of one calling: "In the desert prepare the way for the LORD ; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God.[Isaiah 40:3 (NIV)

Commented [notes5]: 15 for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth. Luke 1:15 (NIV)

Commented [notes6]: 30 He must become greater; I must become less. John 3:30 (NIV)

Baptist said and how we had a desire to know Him and learn from Him. That's not the way it's done in the Orient. It's impolite to put a person on the spot and demand they give you a yes or no answer. Their question opened the door to politely accept or reject their earnest approach.

³⁹ "Come," he replied, "and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and spent that day with him. It was about the tenth hour. Kochaba (star – implying star of Jacob) (Numbers 24:17) was a city near Bethany on the other side of the Jordan. Like Nazareth (Netzor – branch implying branch of David), it was a town of David's descendents. We don't know for sure if that is where He went, but Jesus would have had relatives there who were obligated to house Him and any guests with Him. The town kept genealogical records of the descendents of David and watched for the coming Messiah. The tenth hour is 4 P.M. They arrived in time to dine together with Jesus and His distant relatives.

There is more to Jesus' answer, "Come and you will see", than first meets the eye. First, it was an invitation for them to visit without committing. It was equally polite response to their polite question. It shows that Jesus' life was an open book. If they wanted to know about Him, they were invited to see His life. They camped with Him for three years and still believed He is God. If that doesn't convince you that Jesus was unique, I don't know what will.

If someone was really interested in you, would you invite them into your home to observe your life? Would that make you uncomfortable? Why? Jesus had nothing to hide. He is the Son of God, blameless in everything He did. Only He could invite people to try to point out a sin in His life. (John 8:46)

⁴¹ The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). Peter, his younger brother Andrew, and Andrew's young friend John the Beloved had all gone south to learn from John the Baptist. They became his disciples and labored alongside him. Apparently, they had failed to go on to the secondary level of education (bet mid-rash) with their local rabbi, and therefore went right to work as apprentices of their fathers as fishermen. This would have happened around the time they were 12 or 13. We know that Peter was much older, at least 20 years old, because he and Jesus had to pay temple tax, a tax taken only from men 20 years of age and older. (Matthew 17:27) The rest of the disciples were somewhere in between. Many believe John was the youngest, in his early teens. That is one reason the paintings you see of him appear to be so youthful. He had to be very young to still be writing around the turn of the century. The three of them apparently took leave of their fathers to serve John the Baptist. These were very serious young men or boys who expected the coming of the Messiah.

Andrew went to look for his brother Simon. We don't know what Andrew saw, but between the words of John the Baptist and what he saw of Jesus, he was convinced that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah. He felt he had to find his brother because he knew his brother had a passion for the coming Messiah. Do you want to tell family and friends because you are so convinced of what you have seen in Jesus? I think if anyone takes the time to come and see Jesus, they'll have the passion of Andrew, to tell family and friends that they have found the Savior, to bring them to Jesus.

Commented [notes7]: 17 "I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel. He will crush the foreheads of Moab, the skulls of all the sons of Sheth. Num 24:17 (NIV)

Commented [notes8]: 46 Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me? John 8:46 (NIV)

Commented [notes9]: 27 "But so that we may not offend them, go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours." Matt 17:27 (NIV)

⁴² And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter). The father of Simon and Andrew was another man named John. Jesus immediately gave Simon a new name, Cephas or Peter. He called him a stone. It was kind of nickname, not a common name at that time, kind of like Rocky. Peter, Andrew, and John are now the first followers of Jesus, but not officially His disciples yet. That would come later on the shores of Galilee. (Luke 5:8)

Taking a new name became a standard of the first century Christian converts. They would see their old life as past and the new name represented who they had become. In many third world countries today, the practice continues as converts take a Bible name to replace their old identity. The old is gone, the new has come. (2Corinthians 5:17) They will often pick the name of a Bible character they would like to emulate. Jesus gave this name change to Peter as soon as they met. We see all Peter's mistakes that were yet to come, but Jesus saw past them, to the man He was making of Peter. I believe He does the same for all of those who follow Him. (Revelation 2:17) Jesus told the church in Pergamum that to all who overcome He gives a white stone with a new name written upon it.

⁴³ The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me." After Peter joined Andrew and John in following Jesus, Jesus went back up to Galilee. I mentioned before that the first three had not been officially called to be disciples yet. Now we see the customary call. A successful student who had finished memorizing the Torah and studied oral law would find a rabbi that he wanted to continue his education with. It meant they would become the rabbi's disciple to learn all the ways and teachings of the rabbi. The student would inquire about following. If the rabbi accepted him as a disciple, he would say, "Follow me!" Philip was the first to receive this official call from Jesus. We don't have any record of him asking about becoming a disciple. The call may have come as a surprise. In fact, Jesus chose all His disciples and called them, though they did not feel worthy to ask to be disciples. (John 15:16) They may have all failed to memorize the Torah and so felt destined to be a part of their father's business. But Jesus came to them and called them as if they had been successful.

That is especially encouraging to me and I hope to you too. You don't have to have completed seminary or be in the top of your class. You don't have to have it all together for the greatest Rabbi of all to say to you, "Follow me!" What an honor! What grace and love! You aren't doomed to a life of meaningless labor; the Rabbi of rabbis has called you to follow Him. (Mark 8:34) Everything you do can be filled with meaning. Disciples would follow closely to hear everything the rabbi said in every situation. They were said to walk in the dust of the rabbi's sandals. Whether at work or study or play, we can watch our Rabbi and find out how to live as God intended. Everything we do can be fused with meaning, if we will follow as closely and watch as carefully. (Mark 11:29) Are your eyes fixed on Jesus?

Philip, Andrew, and Peter were from Bethsaida (house of fishing). It has only recently been discovered because of changes in Lake Kinneret. There were anchors and hooks discovered in the ruins. James and John were also originally from this city only a few miles from Capernaum. These were ordinary people like you and me.

Commented [notes10]: 8 When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" Luke 5:8 (NIV)

Commented [notes11]: 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! 2 Cor 5:17 (NIV)

Commented [notes12]: Revelation 2:17 (NIV) 17 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it.

Commented [notes13]: 16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit-fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. John 15:16 (NIV)

Commented [notes14]: 34 Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. Mark 8:34 (NIV)

Commented [notes15]: 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Matt 11:29 (NIV)

⁴⁵ Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote--Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Galilee was a hotbed of Messianic expectation. It had more rabbinical schools than Judea. Add to that the national and regional expectation of a coming Messiah and the preaching of John the Baptist and you have a people prepared for the coming of Jesus. Nathanael was one of many who expected a deliverer to arise and show them not only the way to restore the nation, but to restore the religious practice in Jerusalem. He was serious about his faith and that is why Philip went to tell him. Philip was probably thinking of [Deuteronomy 18:15](#), how Moses promised that God would raise up a person like himself to whom the people must listen. I wonder which of the other prophecies Philip had in mind?

Commented [notes16]: 15 The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him. Deut 18:15 (NIV)

⁴⁶ "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip. There have been a number of attempts to interpret Nathanael's response. Some believe that Nazareth was a town of laborers that had come to help build the Roman city of Sephoris. Being a group of opportunistic trades people without roots, they were looked down on. However, with more evidence emerging as to Sephoris' Jewish population, Nazareth is seen more as a group of David's descendents. If that is the case, they may have been a bit uppity about their expectation of the Messiah coming from their little insignificant town. Nathanael was from Cana, another rival small town just four miles from Nazareth.

Philip used the same phrase that Jesus used to call the first two, "Come and see." He must have been convinced by Jesus' manner and speech. He thought all Nathanael needed to do to be convinced was to see for himself. That is true for every hungry heart. No one who is truly hungry for truth will ever be disappointed by coming to Jesus. I believe in this invitation, "Come and see." If you are searching, come and see for yourself. Listen to His words. Read about how He lived. I may not be the perfect example and will probably let you down, but come and see Jesus. He won't disappoint the seeker of truth. ([Matthew 7:7-8](#))

Commented [notes17]: 7 "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. Matt 7:7-8 (NIV)

⁴⁷ When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false." Jesus recognized Nathanael's sincerity and commented on it. That is quite a statement too. Could it be said of us? Is there something false in us, something we want to hide? Are we like Jacob the deceiver, plotting and scheming to get what we want, or the new man Israel who prevails with God?

⁴⁸ "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you." The fig tree was a place where the Israelite would sit in the shade and pray and meditate on Scripture. Every blessed home had its own fig tree and the big leaves provided shade from the Summer sun. Perhaps Nathanael had a very meaningful time that morning and sensed God's presence. Only he and God knew about that experience. Suddenly Jesus' says He knew too. Nathanael had a sense of Jesus' divine knowledge that came from the Holy Spirit. ([1Corinthians 12:8](#))

Commented [notes18]: 8 To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, 1 Cor 12:8 (NIV)

⁴⁹ Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel." He came and saw, and with one word of knowledge from Jesus, Nathanael believed. That was just what he needed to hear to know. Jesus does the same for all

who are willing to come and see. Son of God and King of Israel, both were terms used for the Messiah. Some extra-biblical Jewish writings applied the terms to the same person. (1En. 105:2; 4Ezra 7:28-29) Jesus preferred Son of Man and shunned King of Israel because it played into the false expectations of the current Jewish hopes of a new David. The town of Gamla was nearby, and was the birthplace of the zealot movement. Nathanael's zeal for the Messiah may have been tinged with the hope of a deliverer king like David of old, but he was now a believer.

⁵⁰ Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than that." "You ain't seen nothin' yet." Jesus knew the prophecies of the miracles that the Messiah would perform. (Isaiah 35:5-6) Nathanael would get a lot more evidence. He'll see the paralyzed restored, the cripple walk, the blind see, and even the dead raised to life. And fellow believer, whatever word Jesus spoke to your heart that won you, you aint seen nothin' yet! You will see greater things if you continue to follow Him with expectant faith.

⁵¹ He then added, "I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." Jesus used an Old Testament type and shadow of himself to help Nathanael and us understand what he was getting into. I say "us" because the "you" in this verse is plural unlike that in the previous verse. Jesus told him the greater things **we** would see would include Jesus as touchdown spot for Jacob's ladder.

When Jacob was fleeing Esau after stealing the blessing, he stopped at Bethel and went to sleep for the night. He had a vision of a ladder connecting heaven and earth. The Lord was at the top of the ladder and angels were coming up and down on it (him). It was a picture of blessings and revelation poured out on Jacob. He awoke and called the place the House of God, Bethel, and the gate of heaven. (Genesis 28:12)

Jesus was saying that the disciples would see many more revelations than that as the angels ascend and descend upon Him. Indeed, they would see more than any other Israelites. Where He is, there is the house of God. Angels will be constantly intervening for the King of the Universe wherever He goes. Jesus is our source of revelation, and He is the house of God, the gate of heaven. (Genesis 28:17) The greatest promise Jacob and the patriarchs received are fulfilled in Jesus who brings blessing to all the earth. What was true for Nathanael is true for us; if we want a connection to heaven, Jesus is it. If you want the flutter of angel wings about you, it comes via Jesus. Do you want to find the house of God, the gate of heaven? It's where Jesus is. Come and see! "How awesome is this place!" Jacob said. "Amen!"

Heaven opened and angels ascending and descending also pictures unbroken communication of the Father and Son. Jesus was the one man who lived a life in constant communion with God. We'll see that displayed in His actions and words. I told you John the Beloved doesn't pull any punches. He makes it as plain as can be. With the help of the Holy Spirit, he brings out every memory he had of Jesus making these marvelous claims. (John 14:26) Jesus is either the greatest con man the world has ever seen or the house of God and the gate of heaven. Not sure which? Hear Him say what he said to those first disciples, "Come and see!"

Commented [notes19]: 5 Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. 6 Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert. Isaiah 35:5-6 (NIV)

Commented [notes20]: 12 He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. Gen 28:12 (NIV)

Commented [notes21]: 17 He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven." Gen 28:17 (NIV)

Commented [notes22]: 26 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. John 14:26 (NIV)