

## Introduction

As a young believer, I knew that God called me to be a teacher, and to be an elder. The Holy Spirit impressed a number of verses on my heart, and one of the main scriptures was Ezra 7:10, where Ezra set his heart on studying the Law of the Lord, practicing it, and teaching His statutes and ordinances in Israel. God used a number of people to prepare me for the calling on my life.

(Ezr 7:10) “For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord and to practice *it*, and to teach *His* statutes and ordinances in Israel.”

In those years I never dreamt of planting churches. However, in 1995, when the Lord began speaking to me about planting a church, I was excited about the plans He had for us. As a church planter, one of the most important tasks is to gather people. You have to communicate your vision to others, and tell them what God has called you to do. You have to invite lots of people to come and be a part of the church plant. I created PPT presentations to show people the vision, and invited people over to talk about it. Some of the people came because of my invitation, while others heard about our church from others, and came because of their invitation.

In our passage today, Jesus is beginning His earthly ministry. What does He begin to do? He begins to gather together His disciples. He invites Andrew and John, saying, “Come, and you will see.” Andrew went and found his brother, Peter, and brought him to Jesus. Then, Jesus found Philip and said to him, “Follow Me.” Philip found Nathanael, and said to him, “Come and see.” Our passage today is about Jesus beginning to gather His disciples. Jesus found some of them and called them to follow Him. Some of those who found Jesus went and found their family members and friends and invited them to follow Jesus. That is how Jesus gathered His disciples, and that is also how churches grow.

First, we will look at the first two disciples of Jesus, Andrew and John. Second, we will look at Peter. Third, we will look at Philip. Fourth, we will look at Nathanael.

## Jesus Begins Gathering His Disciples

1. Andrew (*and John*) (Jn 1:35-40)
2. Peter (Jn 1:41-42)
3. Philip (Jn 1:43-44)
4. Nathanael (Jn 1:45-51)

(Jn 1:35–51) “Again the next day John was standing with two of his disciples, {36} and he looked at Jesus as He walked, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God!” {37} The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. {38} And Jesus turned and saw them following, and said to them, “What do you seek?” They said to Him, “Rabbi (which translated means Teacher), where are You staying?” {39} He said to them, “Come, and you will see.” So they came and saw where He was staying; and they stayed with Him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. {40} One of the two who heard John *speak* and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. {41} He found first his own brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which translated means Christ). {42} He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas” (which is translated Peter). {43} 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.”

### 1. **Andrew and John** (Jn 1:35-40)

John begins by saying that John the Baptist was standing with two of his disciples. In verse forty, John identifies one of the disciples, Andrew. Scholars are pretty much in agreement that the other disciple is the Apostle John, who wrote it. The detailed description of days and times of day indicate that John was there to witness everything that was going on. It was John's style not to mention himself by name. Instead, he chose to write about others, and not draw attention to himself. Andrew and John were disciples of John the Baptist, and our text begins with John the Baptist standing with two of his disciples.

(Jn 1:35) “Again the next day John was standing with two of his disciples,

(Jn 1:40) “One of the two who heard John *speak* and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.”

As John's disciples, they heard his preaching on the baptism of repentance. They heard his preaching about the coming Messiah that he was preparing the way for. They were with John at Bethany beyond the Jordan, and were probably staying with him. They had traveled from their home town in Bethsaida to Bethany beyond the Jordan to learn and be discipled by John. They were there for Jesus' baptism by John, and had heard the voice from heaven declaring, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” They had heard John declare that Jesus was the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. They had heard John say that Jesus had a higher rank than him because He existed before John. They heard John testify that this is the Son of God. When they heard John testify that Jesus is the Lamb of God and the Son of God, they began to follow Jesus.

(Mt 3:17) “and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.”

(Jn 1:29–34) “The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! {30} “This is He on behalf of whom I said, ‘After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me... {34} “I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God.”

This was exactly what John the Baptist wanted. He wanted to point the way to Christ. His role was to prepare the way of the Messiah, and then to identify and testify that Jesus is the Messiah. John was trying to get people to follow Jesus, which is what everyone of us should be trying to do. We should not be trying to make ourselves great, but to make Jesus great. We should be encouraging people to follow Jesus.

(Jn 1:36-37) “and he looked at Jesus as He walked, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God!”  
{37} The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.”

When Karen and I were living in Orlando, we had a desire to move to Georgia, and had been praying about it. We met with Danny Jones, our pastor at that time, and asked him for his counsel. We gave him our pros and cons, and then said that we had not heard a specific word about moving, but it was our desire. He responded by saying that it was clearly God’s will and we should by all means move. Danny was wanting us to follow Jesus, even if it meant that we would be leaving his church, and going to another church. He had the same attitude as John the Baptist. He encouraged people to follow Jesus, which is exactly what Andrew and John did; they followed Jesus.

Jesus turned and saw them following and said to the, “What do you seek?” They said to Him, “Rabbi, where are You staying?” The term Rabbi means teacher, but it was more than that; it was a term of respect. They wanted to become Jesus’ disciples. Disciples made the effort to go with the one who was discipling them. In a discipleship relationship, the discipler is making an investment in his followers. At the same time, those being discipled are making a commitment to follow their mentor and go with him. They will go where he goes and sleep where he sleeps and be with him all the time.

(John 1:38) “And Jesus turned and saw them following, and said to them, “What do you seek?” They said to Him, “Rabbi (which translated means Teacher), where are You staying?”

When I was on the PGA Tour in the early 1983, there was a minister who came out frequently to tournaments and led the weekly Bible studies. He was very strong on relational evangelism, something that I had a keen interest in learning. I spoke with him, and he promised to work with me that year. Unfortunately, that never happened. One of the reasons was no fault of his. He came to the major events and tournaments, and since I was not one of the top players on the tour, I did not get invited to the invitationals and majors. Therefore, he and I were not at the same tournaments. However, we were at quite a few of the same tournaments and I was not mentored by him. Meanwhile, our home church in Orlando brought in a new pastor, and he was very strong in relational evangelism and small group ministry. I decided to get a job in Orlando, working as a Head Professional at a golf club, so that I could be trained by him in relational evangelism. I laid down my career at that time in order to be discipled. That was what Andrew and John did; they laid down their fishing careers and began to follow Jesus.

At this point, they were just following Jesus, and wanted to be with Him. They probably had some questions that they wanted to ask in a more private setting, and to hear more of His teaching. Jesus replied to them, “Come, and you will see.” So, they followed Jesus and stayed with him that day. John wrote that it was about the tenth hour. The Jewish day started at 6 a.m., so it was four o’clock in the afternoon. They had probably been with John and Jesus all that day.

(John 1:39) “He said to them, “Come, and you will see.” So they came and saw where He was staying; and they stayed with Him that day, for it was about the tenth hour.”

## 2. **Peter** (Jn 1:41-42)

The second person that John mentions is Simon Peter. After leaving John the Baptist and following Jesus, Andrew left and found his brother Simon. They are in Bethany Beyond the Jordan, so he did not go back home to get his brother; it would have taken a week to do that.

Obviously, Simon Peter had gone down there with Andrew. It is highly likely that Peter was also a disciple of John, and was down there with him. Andrew went and found his brother, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah." The "We" would have been the first two disciples of Jesus, Andrew and John. When a person finds Christ, it is normal to reach out to others and tell them about what you have found. It is good to tell your immediate family and extended family members about your new relationship with Christ.

(Jn 1:41) "He found first his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which translated means Christ)."

Messiah (Strong's G3323) is a Jewish word, and it means anointed one. It comes from mashah (Strong's H4886), which means to rub with oil. The Greek word for anointed one is Christo (Strong's G5547), and it comes from chrio (Strong's G5548), which also means to rub or smear with oil. Kings would be anointed with oil, and the Jews were awaiting their Messiah, who would be from the lineage of David.

Andrew brought Simon to Jesus, and Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas." Cephas (Strong's H2786) is an Aramaic word which means rock. The Greek translation of Cephas is Petros, which means rock. Jesus was giving Peter a prophetic word about his calling and future role in establishing the church. In Matthew 16

(Jn 1:42a) "He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter)."

In Matthew 16, Jesus asked the disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." In response, Jesus said, "Blessed are you Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven." Then, Jesus told him that upon this rock He would build His church and the gates of hell would not overpower it.

(Matt 16:15-18) "He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" {16} Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." {17} And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven. {18} "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it."

Some churches have interpreted this incorrectly. The Catholics use this to say that Peter was the first pope and that the church going to be built on Peter. Some other groups say that this refers to prophecy, and that God was going to build His church on prophecy. When we lived in Orlando, we had a Spanish pastor living beside us, and he pastored a Hispanic Church of Prophecy, and they believed that the church is built on prophecy. While prophecy is important, it is not the rock that the church is built on. Jesus is the rock. Jesus is the Chief Cornerstone. Jesus is the rock that many stumble over. The church is built on Christ alone.

Paul made it very clear in 1 Corinthians 3:10-11. He said that he was a wise master builder and laid a foundation. Another person was building on that foundation, and he was referring to Apollos, who came and led the church after Paul had planted it. He said that each man must be careful how he builds on it, for no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the foundation that we build on. He is the rock that the church is built on. It is not built on prophecy, Peter, or anything else, but on Christ alone.

(1 Cor 3:10-11) “According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. {11} For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

### 3. **Philip** (Jn 1:43-44)

The next day Jesus “purposed to go into Galilee, and He found Philip.” As I studied this, I opened a map that showed Bethany Beyond the Jordan and Galilee. They are in Bethany beyond the Jordan, and Jesus purposed to go into Galilee. Philip was from Bethsaida. If Jesus went to Bethsaida, it would have been a walk of about 70-80 miles. It was about 55-60 miles as the crow flies, but to follow the road along the Jordan northward, it was longer. This journey would have taken three or four days by foot. At first glance it appears that Jesus went to Bethsaida and found Philip. Logistically, this could not be done. Scholars have different explanations about resolving the timeline of this passage. After studying and meditating on this, I believe that Philip was also in Bethany. Andrew, Peter, James, John, and Philip probably traveled together on this ministry trip, and it was easy for Jesus to find Philip the next day. Jesus purposed to go the region of Galilee, and it does not say that He found Philip in Bethsaida. It just says that Philip is from there. In chapter two we have the wedding in Cana, and so Jesus is probably headed to Cana for the wedding.

(Jn 1:43–44) “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.”

Jesus said to Philip, “Follow Me.” That is the will of God for everyone. He does not wish for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance. God desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. God’s call to everyone is, “Follow Me.”

(2 Pe 3:9) “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.”

(1 Ti 2:3–4) “This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, {4} who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

Jesus called to everyone, “Follow Me,” but He also gave some requirements. In our text Jesus did not give any requirements, but in Luke 9:23-34, He said, “If anyone wished to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.” The cost of following Jesus was your life. To follow Jesus, we must deny ourselves and take up our cross daily, and follow Jesus. I have met many people who claim to be Christians who prayed to receive Jesus so that they could be saved. They were not following Christ, and they were not denying themselves. Instead, they were living their life the way they wanted to live it. They were not losing their life for Jesus’ sake, and they were certainly not following Jesus. The gospel invitation that Christ gave was quite different.

(Lk 9:23–24) “And He was saying to *them* all, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. {24} “For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.”

A few chapters later in Luke, Jesus said that before we follow Him we need to count the cost. He gave an illustration of someone building a tower. Before they begin to build, they calculate the cost to see if they have everything they need to complete the tower. Jesus gave a second illustration of a king going out to battle. Before they got too close to the enemy, a king will consider if he is strong enough to win the battle. If not, he will send a peace delegation and ask for terms of peace. Jesus made it clear; before becoming His disciple, we must count the costs of carrying our own cross and dying to self, which includes all of our possessions.

(Lk 14:27–33) “Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. {28} “For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? {29} “Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, {30} saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ {31} “Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand *men* to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? {32} “Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. {33} “So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.”

#### 4. Nathanael (Jn 1:45-51)

The next person to become a disciple of Jesus is Nathanael. Jesus found Philip, and what does Philip do? He immediately finds Nathanael. It is very likely that Philip and Nathanael were both disciples of John the Baptist and had come down to Bethany beyond the Jordan to learn from John. Philip was from Bethsaida, while Nathanael was from Cana. Both of these places are in Galilee, but were not close to each other. They may have met while they were there with John the Baptist. Philip said to Nathanael, “We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote – Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph?” The “we” suggests that perhaps a group from Bethsaida had come down together. Andrew, John, Peter, James, Philip, and Nathanael had all come down together to see John the Baptist. We do not know that as fact, but it is highly probable.

(Jn 1:45) “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.”

(Jn 1:44) “Now Philip was from Bethsaida, of the city of Andrew and Peter.”

(Jn 21:2) “Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and **Nathanael of Cana in Galilee**, and the *sons* of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples were together.

Philip said to Nathanael, “We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote – Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” There is no indication of any of the Old Testament references, but by the remark they were all familiar with what the Law and the Prophets said about the Messiah that would come.

A few years ago, a prominent minister, who is the pastor of one of the three largest churches in America, made a comment that we don’t need the Old Testament. I questioned one of his followers, and he said that in context it was referring to salvation. Here is a case of the Old Testament pointing to Christ. In the early church, they did not have the New Testament, and they used the Old Testament exclusively to preach the gospel. After Jesus had risen from the grave,

He appeared to two men on the road to Emmaus. They were discussing Jesus' crucifixion and death when Jesus joined up with them. Then Jesus said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory? Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures." Jesus explained Himself using Moses and the prophets. I would love to have the transcript of all the verses that Jesus used.

(Lk 24:25–27) "And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! {26} "Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" {27} Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures."

There is another Philip, who was one of the deacons chosen in Jerusalem to serve widows, and an angel of the Lord told him to "Get up and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza." He obeyed and as he went, he saw an Ethiopian eunuch in a chariot, and he was reading from Isaiah, but was not understanding what he was reading. The Holy Spirit told Philip to go up and join him in the chariot. Philip asked him if he understood what he was reading. The eunuch told him, "Well, how could I unless someone guides me?" Philip began explaining that passage, Isaiah 53, and then preached Jesus to him." The Ethiopian believed, was baptized, and then the Holy Spirit took him to Azotus. The Old Testament is full of references to the Christ.

(Ac 8:26–35) "But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, "Get up and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a desert *road*.) {27} So he got up and went; and there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure; and he had come to Jerusalem to worship, {28} and he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah. {29} Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go up and join this chariot." {30} Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" {31} And he said, "Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. {32} Now the passage of Scripture which he was reading was this: "He was led as a sheep to slaughter; And as a lamb before its shearer is silent, So He does not open His mouth. {33} "In humiliation His judgment was taken away; Who will relate His generation? For His life is removed from the earth." {34} The eunuch answered Philip and said, "Please *tell me*, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself or of someone else?" {35} Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him."

In the writing of Moses, we have the account in Genesis 3, where the seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent, which refers to Christ. In Genesis 22, when God asked Abraham to sacrifice his son, Isaac, it was not only a test to see if Abraham would withhold anything from God; it was a picture of what God the Father would do ultimately by sending His Son, Jesus, to die for our sins. There are lots of scriptures from the Law and the Prophets that foretold of the coming of the Messiah, and Philip, Nathanael, and the group were very familiar with them.

In some of the Christmas messages that I have done, I have gone through the prophecies about the coming of the Messiah. Micah wrote that he would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). Isaiah wrote about the virgin birth (Isaiah 7:14). In messages about the crucifixion and resurrection, we looked at Psalms 16, and 22. The details in those Psalms that were fulfilled are incredible. We also looked at Isaiah 53, which is what Philip used to preach Jesus to the Ethiopian eunuch.

Nathanael's responded to Philip with a question, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" In Albert Barnes commentary, he wrote, "The character of Nazareth was proverbially bad."<sup>1</sup> Many believe that there was nothing wrong with Nazareth; it was merely out of prejudice that it had this poor reputation. Philip gave him the perfect response, "Come and see." He did not try to argue or defend Nazareth; he simply asked him to come check out Jesus himself, and Nathanael did come.

(Jn 1:46) "Nathanael said to him, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."

When Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, He said, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!" Jesus was saying that Nathanael was a man of good character. He was not a hypocrite. He was not deceitful. He was not full of guile. He is who he professes to be.

(Jn 1:47) "Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!"

About fifteen years ago, the Lord called me to plant a church in the East Mountains, a suburban area of Albuquerque. We were part of a church there, and I was leading their men's ministry. After I had left, one of the pastors from that church was at my office and he said to me, "Bill, you're the real deal." This man had observed my ministry, my secular vocational work, and how I was taking care of my parents. This was a high compliment from him. He knew there was no hypocrisy, deceit, or fraud in me; I was who I said I was. That was what Jesus told Nathanael. Upon hearing this, Nathanael asked Jesus, "How do You know me?" That is a fair question. They had never met before, so in the natural there is no way for Jesus to know about his life and character. Jesus answered, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Jesus was operating in the Spirit, and He saw things in the Spirit. He had a word of knowledge about Nathanael's character. Then, He revealed that He had a prophetic vision of him. The gifts of the Holy Spirit were operating in Jesus, and it impacted Nathanael, who had been doubtful and reluctant about anyone from Nazareth.

(Jn 1:48) "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."

In 1 Corinthians 14, Paul wrote about the proper use of spiritual gifts in the assembly. His desire was for order in their services, not chaos. He did not discourage the use of gifts, he strongly encouraged the Corinthians to desire spiritual gifts, especially prophesy. In verse twenty-four, he said that if an ungifted man comes and encounters prophesy, he will be convicted and called to account, and the secrets of his heart are disclosed. The end result will be that "he will fall on his face and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you." Those instructions were not just for the Corinthians; they are for all of us. God wants us to be empowered witnesses of His, and to use spiritual gifts to edify others and to reach out to unbelievers.

(1 Co 14:24-25) "But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an ungifted man enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all; {25} the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so he will fall on his face and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you."

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<sup>1</sup> Barnes Notes, The Gospels, Baker Books, page 188



Nathanael was doubtful, but when Jesus prophesied to him, the secrets of his heart were disclosed, that there was no guile in him, and his whereabouts, when he was called by Philip, were known by God. He responded just like Paul wrote about. He answered, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel.”

(Jn 1:49) “Nathanael answered Him, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel.”

Jesus replied, “Because I said to you that I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You will see greater things than these... 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.” And in the next three years, Nathanael would see many things greater than that. Jesus also referenced the vision that Jacob had at Bethel, when he saw a ladder and the angels of God ascending and descending on it.

(Jn 1:50-51) “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.”

In Jacob’s dream he saw a ladder set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven. There were angels ascending and descending on the ladder and the Lord was standing above it. We have a picture of a sovereign God who is watching over everything that is happening on earth. He has a plan for the redemption of mankind, and He is watching over it. He has made a covenant with Abraham and He has made promises to him, and He is watching over those plans and promises. God has angels or messengers who are doing the work of God. They bring messages down to man and messages back up to God. Angels carry out the work and plans of God. God was assuring Jacob that He was with him, and He would fulfil the promises made to him.

(Gen 28:12-15) “He had a dream, and behold, a ladder was set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. {13} And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, “I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants. {14} “Your descendants will also be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed. {15} “Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”

When Jesus says this to Nathanael, He was telling him that the angels of God are going to carry out the promise made to Abraham and to his descendants to bless all nations through his seed, and Jesus is that seed. The angels were ascending and descending on the Son of Man, which is Christ. It is in Christ that all the families of the earth will be blessed. Jesus is telling Nathanael that He is the fulfilment of this vision, and God will fulfil all His promises through Christ, and that the angels of God will help Jesus accomplish His work. When we look at the life of Jesus, the angels were there ministering to Him after He fasted for forty days. When Jesus was arrested, He stated that He could have twelve legions of angels at His disposal if He wanted. The angels were with Jesus to carry out His earthly assignment.

(Mt 4:11) “Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and began to minister to Him.”

(Mt 26:53) “Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?”

## Conclusion and Applications

This was the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, and He is beginning to gather His disciples. He had just been baptized, and that was significant because John testified that He was the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world, and that Jesus is the Son of God. John had his own disciples at that time, but he knew that He was not the Christ; he was to point the way to Christ. He was called to prepare the way of the Lord. John’s testimony of who Jesus is was what Andrew and John needed to hear, and they began following Jesus. They followed Jesus to where He was staying and were with Him that day. Andrew slipped away and brought back his brother, Simon, saying, “We have found the Messiah.” Simon came and Jesus prophetically gave him the name, Peter, because he was going to be a pillar in the church.

The next day, Jesus found Philip, and called to him, “Follow Me,” and he began following Jesus. Philip wasted no time and found Nathanael, and brought him to Jesus. Nathanael was doubtful, saying, “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” Jesus gave him a word of knowledge and a prophetic vision, and Nathanael became convinced himself that Jesus is the Son of God.

As we look at why people followed Jesus, we find that Andrew and John followed Jesus because of the testimony of John, and Jesus’ call to them, “Come and you will see.”

Peter followed Jesus because of the testimony of Andrew, and because of a prophetic word given by Jesus.

Philip followed Jesus because Jesus found and called him to “Follow Me!”

Nathanael followed Jesus because Philip found him and invited him to “Come and see.” He also heard Jesus give a prophetic word and a word of knowledge to him, and this convinced him that Jesus is the Son of God, the King of Israel.

| Why People Followed Jesus |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| Andrew and John           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Testimony of John (Lamb of God, Son of God)</li> <li>• Voice from heaven (This is My beloved Son...)”)</li> <li>• Jesus’ call: “Come and you will see.”</li> </ul> |
| Peter                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Testimony of Andrew (Messiah, Christ)</li> <li>• Prophetic word of Jesus</li> </ul>  |
| Philip                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jesus’ call: “Follow Me.”</li> </ul>   |
| Nathanael                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Philip’s testimony (One spoken about by Law and Prophets)</li> <li>• Philip’s call (“Come and see.”)</li> </ul>  |

From these examples, there are a number of applications. First, we see that our testimonies are extremely important in bringing people to Christ. John testified. Andrew testified and Philip testified. There are lots of different types of testimonies, but these testimonies were about finding Jesus, the Son of God. We need to be ready to share our testimony with others. Take time to write out your testimony, and be ready to share it with others.

Second, we see the importance of invitations. Jesus invited Andrew and John to come and see. Andrew invited his brother to come and meet the Messiah. Jesus invited Philip, saying, “Follow Me.” Philip invited Nathaniel, who was doubtful, saying, “Come and see.” We must invite others to come find Jesus. We must invite people to our gatherings to hear about Jesus. We must be on the lookout for people we can invite to come and see.

Third, we see the importance of reaching out to those close to us. Andrew reached out to his brother. Philip reached out to Nathaniel, a friend. We need to reach out to our family members and invite them to follow Jesus. We need to reach out to friends, associates, and neighbors and invite them to come and see what we have found. Statistically, most people come to Christ through a friend, not through a pastor or an evangelistic crusade. God used ordinary people like you and I to reach our lost family members and friends.

Fourth, we see the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Andrew and John heard a prophetic word from John testifying about the identity of Christ. Peter heard a prophetic word about his identity and roll in the coming years. Nathanael heard a word of knowledge and a prophetic vision. Jesus told the disciples that they were to be His witnesses, but they first needed to wait upon the Holy Spirit. God wants us to be empowered witnesses, and to walk in the Spirit. We need to be zealous for spiritual gifts, especially prophecy. Prophetic visions and words expose men’s hearts and causes them to declare that God is certainly among you. Be filled with the Holy Spirit.

### **Closing Prayer**

Father God, thank You for the Gospel of John. Thank You for Your word, which enlightens us and teaches us Your ways. Help us to reach out to our family members and relatives and share Jesus with them. Give us wisdom and boldness. Fill us with Your Spirit. Give us words of knowledge, words of wisdom, and prophetic words and pictures. May we be Your witnesses going out in the power of the Holy Spirit. Help us to be like John, not drawing people to ourselves, but pointing people to Christ. We pray these things in Jesus’ name. Amen.

### **Discussion Questions**

- What keeps us from going to our brother or sister, like Andrew did, and bringing him to Christ?
- What prevents us from being like Philip and bringing a friend to Christ?
- What prevents us from inviting others to “Come and see.”?
- When Philip heard a negative response from Nathanael, how did he respond? Why was this a great approach to use?
- John received revelation from God about the identity of Jesus, and then proclaimed it. Jesus gave prophetic words to Peter and to Nathanael. Why is prophecy so impactful in evangelism?
- If we are going to be used prophetically, what are some things that we should do so that we are in the Spirit and can give prophetic words?

## **Jesus Begins Gathering His Disciples**

### **Introduction** (Ezr 7:10, Jn 1:35-51)

1. **Andrew and John** (Jn 1:35-40, Mt 3:17)
2. **Peter** (Jn 1:41-42, Mt 16:15-18, 1 Co 3:10-11)
3. **Philip** (Jn 1:43-44, 2 Pe 3:9, 1 Ti 2:3-4, Lk 9:23-24, 14:27-33)
4. **Nathanael** (Jn 1:45-51, Lk 24:25-27, Ac 8:26-35, 1 Co 14:24-25, Ge 28:12-15, Mt 4:11, 26:53)

### **Conclusion and Applications**

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- 3.
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