

# They Had Been With Jesus – Nathanael bar-Tolmai –

Luke – The Acts of Jesus

Luke 6:14f; Jn 1:45-51

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# Gleanings From the Edges of Scripture

- His relationship to Phillip
- His familiarity with the Scriptures
- His prejudiced view
- His sincerity
- His faith

# His Relationship with Phillip

- When Phillip found (was found by) Jesus, he immediately went looking for Nathanael – Jn 1:45
- We have found him...
  - Apparently he and Phillip had been looking for the Messiah, and as Phillip had met him, he had to bring Nathanael to him as well

# His Familiarity With the Scriptures

- He was familiar enough with the entire OT to know the prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah – Jn 1:45b
- Phillip's identification of the Messiah as coming from Nazareth did not deter Phillip's recognition of the fulfillment of prophecy, and Phillip expected the same from Nathanael.
- Nathanael was already a seeker after the Truth of God's Word.
- Nathanael was able to quickly recognize Jesus as the fulfillment of the prophecies – 1:48f.

# His Prejudiced View

- Judeans thought of Galileans as something akin to “hicks.”
  - Nathanael was from an insignificant town in Galilee called Cana, it was not on the road to anywhere.
- Nazareth was a major crossroads town between Judea and Lebanon, and between Galilee and the Mediterranean
  - Galileans did not like Nazareth; it was kind of the rough town where the uncouth cousins interacted with the outside world.
- To his credit, Nathanael went anyway with Phillip - 1:47
  - He confronted his prejudice, and the facts won out – Jn 1:49

# Consequences of a Prejudiced View

- It cuts people off from the truth
  - Nothing good comes from Nazareth?
  - How can the Messiah and His Apostles come from Galilee, instead of Jerusalem?
  - Uneducated Men (the Apostles) – Ac 4:13
  - Galilee has raised no prophet – Jn 7:52
  - The Messiah...Joseph's son? – Lk 4:22-24
    - "Let's kill him" – Lk 4:28f.
  - He is an untrained rabbi, outside the establishment
- Salvation came to His own people, they missed Him – Jn 1:11; 2 Co 4:3f.

# His Sincerity – No Deceit in His Heart

- Jesus knew (Jn 2:25) Nathanael's heart – Jn 1:47
  - He was a genuine “son of Abraham” in that he was truly seeking to follow after God – Ro 9:6*f*.
  - Indeed, ἀληθως, truly (cf. Jn 8:31)
    - Contrast with Mt 23:13-33
  - Though tainted by sin, Nathanael was one who was truly yielded to God and therefore justified by faith – cf., Abraham's faith and justification, Ro 4

# His Faith – He Was Quick to Believe

- His first reaction to the Messiah – astonishment; “How do you know me?” – 1:48
  - He had come out of a confidence that Phillip would have thought his statement through.
  - Yet, there were still prejudices to overcome.
    - Nazareth is unknown to the OT, the inter-testamental writings, the apocrypha and Josephus
    - Nazareth (and all of Southern Galilee) was to some degree separated from Jewish life.
  - Jesus demonstrated his omniscience; under the fig tree was likely where he and Phillip studied the Scriptures. (“I saw you in your secret place.”)
- His second reaction, submission – 1:49
  - Contrast, Phillip’s slowness to grasp Jesus’ full identity – Jn 14:8f.



# Nathanael's Grasp of the Scriptures and Jesus' Ensuing Promise

- The “Son of God” – Ps 2
- “King of Israel” – Zep 3:15; Zec 9:9; Mic 5:2
- Because you have believed, you will “see greater things than these.” 1:50*f.*; cf., Gen 28:12
  - Heaven opened and angels ascending and descending on the Son of Man
  - Jesus is the ladder between heaven and earth

# Nathanael's Ministry

- He took the Gospel East into Persia and India (Eusebius) and as far North as Armenia.
  - Converted Polymius, King of Armenia, to Christ
  - To the Armenian Apostolic Church, along with Jude, he is the Patron Saint of Armenia
- Conflicting accounts of his martyrdom
  - Flayed alive with a whip, before being crucified head downward at the order of Polymius' brother.
  - Skinned alive and beheaded in Albanopolis (Turkey)
  - Kidnapped, beaten unconscious, tied up in a sack and tossed into the sea to drown
- He was faithful, from the beginning to the end.

# Nathanael's Legacy

- He was found faithful, from the beginning until the end
- Well done, thou good and faithful servant
  - Mt 25:23