

John 1:43-51



Passage:

⁴³The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." ⁴⁴Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. ⁴⁵Philip 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." ⁴⁶Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." ⁴⁷Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!" ⁴⁸Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." ⁴⁹Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" ⁵⁰Jesus answered him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these." ⁵¹And he said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

Notable People:

- **Nathanael** – Little is known of Nathanael, or Bartholomew, except that he was one of the disciples of Jesus and likely an honorable man.
- **Philip** – Known as "the evangelist" because of his work in bringing Nathanael to Jesus. He is listed fifth in the synoptic Gospels but is included among Jesus' close disciples in John Gospel.

Notable Places:

- **Galilee** – In northern Israel, many events in the life of Jesus occur in Galilee. Jesus likely grew up in this area. Most of the twelve disciples are from this area of Israel. It is the highest region in Israel, with Mt. Hermon and is the most well-watered area in Israel.
- **Nazareth** – A small town, likely only 200-500 people, with mostly poor inhabitants. Roughly 65 miles north of Jerusalem and 18 miles west-southwest of the Sea of Galilee.

Cross References:

- NT Use of the OT: Deuteronomy 18:18, Psalm 32:2, Genesis 28:12
- Shared Figurative Language: John 7:41,52, John 12:13/Zechariah 9:9,
- Key Word Usage: Matthew 2:23 (likely Isaiah 11:1, play on words with Nazarene and Branch in Hebrew)

Key Words:

- **εὕρισκω** (heurisko) v.43, 45 – to find something through either purposeful search or accidentally for oneself.
- **γινώσκω** (ginosko) v. 48 – to know, specifically in this context, an acquaintance of.

Notable Language:

- Doors of Heaven – v.51
- Son of Man as Jacob's Ladder – v.51
- To Open as To Reveal – v. 51

Notable Context:

- **Fig Tree** – one of the most important Biblical plants particularly valuable for the shade of its leaves. National tranquility is often pictured by the image of every man sitting "under his vine and under his fig tree," (1 Kings 4:25). Nathanael "under the fig tree" likely was his own house, possibly in prayer with God.

Before:

- The Testimony of John the Baptist (1:19-28)
- John the Baptist's Proclamation (1:29-34)
- Jesus Calls Andrew and Simon Peter (1:35-42)

After:

- The Wedding at Cana (2:1-12)
- Jesus Cleanses the Temple (2:13-22)
- Jesus' Conversation with Nicodemus (3:1-21)

Main Idea:

Jesus calls two more disciples: Philip and Nathanael. When Philip finds Jesus and reacts joyfully upon recognizing him as the long-awaited Messiah, he shares the news with his friend Nathanael, who initially doubts if the Messiah could come from Nazareth. Jesus demonstrates to Nathanael how he already knows him, revealing that He has seen him (Nathanael) under the fig tree. This leaves Nathanael in awe and convinced of Jesus' divine identity, quickly prompting him to follow His word and proclaim him as Messiah. Thus, Philip and Nathanael became some of the first disciples after being called by Jesus Christ. Through this exchange, we learn of Jesus' recognition of both blind and seeking faith when embracing the call to follow Jesus.