

AND WE BEHELD HIS GLORY - Studies in John's Gospel - Part eight
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JESUS AND HIS VERY FIRST FOLLOWERS

John 1:35-51 - "The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, [36] and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" [37] The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. [38] Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, "What are you seeking?" And they said to him, "Rabbi" (which 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 Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. [41] He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ). [42] He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "So you are Simon the son of John? You shall be called Cephas" (which means Peter). [43] The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." [44] Now Philip was from Bethsaida, 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 anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." [47] Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward 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 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 him, "Because I said to you, '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 heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

This section of Scripture marks a turning point in the first chapter of John's account. The focus of attention shifts. We witness the **transition** from the public ministry of John the Baptist to that of Jesus. Jesus speaks for the first time in John's gospel. His words prompt discipleship - **followers** begin to gather around the One who, up to this point, has been the **solitary** Lamb of God. And the first disciples are pictured as **transferring** allegiance from John the Baptist to Jesus.

And the reason **that** detail is important is it gives a deeper insight into what the Baptist meant earlier when he said, **"He [John] said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said.....1:31.... I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel." (John 1:23,31) - IPAD TEXT**

John now makes it perfectly clear that he never intended to permanently **attach disciples to himself**. His whole purpose was to prepare those who faithfully listened to him for a life of **attachment to Christ, the Messiah**.

1) **FAITHFUL WITNESSES BRING PEOPLE TO WHERE JESUS IS**

IPAD TEXT - John 1:35-36 - "The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, [36] and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God!'"

The reference to **“the next day”** is significant. It seems the Baptist specifically **brought** two of his own followers back to the same place he had seen Jesus the day before. The idea the Apostle John wants to leave with us is that’s what people do who witness the greatness of the Christ. They don’t just enjoy what they’ve seen **for themselves**. They find those closest to them and bring them to the same revelation of the Messiah.

In other words, the Baptist’s love for Christ isn’t just a **verbal** thing. And it isn’t just a **private** thing. And it isn’t just a **worship** thing. It’s a **recruiting** thing. Because of the Baptist’s witness to Christ these first followers are included in the group the Apostle John described in **John 1:14 - “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” - IPAD TEXT**

2) FAITHFUL WITNESSES STAY ON MESSAGE

IPAD TEXT - John 1:35-37 - “The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, [36] and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, ‘Behold, the Lamb of God!’ [37] The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.”

The Apostle John makes it clear that when John the Baptist repeated the very same words he spoke the day before - “...**Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!**” - he was repeating them for the benefit of the two disciples who were now accompanying him - “...**The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus**”(37).

If John's disciples are going to follow the Christ they will have to do so on proper terms. The attachment to Jesus Christ must always be based, not on His *teaching*, not on His *miracles*, and not on His *compassion for the poor and needy* (Red Letter Christians?). All of those aspects of Christ's witness and ministry will unfold. But none of them separately, nor all of them combined can be *the* foundational point of understanding and attachment to the Christ. That He is the *Lamb who takes away the world's sin* is the fundamental reality all potential disciples must take in. Apart from this reality there is no reason to leave John the Baptist.

3) **YOU CAN'T FOLLOW JESUS STAYING WHERE YOU ARE**

IPAD TEXT - John 1:38-39 - "Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, "What are you seeking?" And they said to him, "Rabbi" (which 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."

"What are you seeking?"(38). We are 38 verses into the first chapter of John's account and these are the first spoken words of Jesus. And John means for us to take note that they are words of ***invitation - "What are you looking for?"***

The question itself is a kind of ***grace***. It's easy to follow Jesus with no particular plan or intent. Emotional whims come and go. Jesus' very first words call of ***self-examination***. He wants followers who know what they're ***seeking*** - ***"What are you seeking?"***

People come to Jesus for lots of different reasons. Some people are just in a bind and hope Jesus can fix their mess. Some people are told they'll never be sick or poor or unhealthy if they come to Jesus. And who ***wouldn't*** come on those terms? Some people like the emotional high of certain gatherings and worship times. Some people want their kids to have a good life and be raised in Sunday School. There are ***lots*** of reasons people come to Jesus.

“Where are you staying?”, is the disciple’s reply (38). Again, this just makes sense. If you’re committed to **following** someone it seems prudent to find out where they’re **going**.

“He said to them, ‘Come and see’”(39). John highlights the fact that Jesus is the one to extend the first invitation. The Lamb does the first inviting. No one can **“see”** Jesus - **know** Jesus - **love** Jesus - be a **disciple** of Jesus - from a **distance**. You have to **follow** in order to **see**. You have to **come** in order to fully **know**.

Go with Jesus over an extended period of time. You can’t follow Him just by hearing sermons or hob-nobbing with people who merely **call** themselves Christians. **You** have to decide to **come and see**. You have to deal directly with **Jesus**. You have to commit for yourself. You have to choose for yourself. You must take **ownership** of your walk with Christ on a daily basis.

In another place Jesus said the same thing like this - **John 7:17 - “If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority.” - IPAD TEXT.**

This is merely another way to saying “**Come and see.**” You have to follow **first**. Then it starts to come together. The grace for knowing and growing isn’t given as a stand-alone gift. It is all tied up in Christ Himself.

4) **THE CHANGES JESUS CAN MAKE WHEN PEOPLE COMMIT TO FOLLOW HIM**

IPAD TEXT - John 1:40-42 - “One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. [41] He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which means Christ). [42] He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, “So you are Simon the son of John? You shall be called Cephas” (which means Peter).”

John records the ripples of a genuine discovery of Jesus Christ. Notice the wording of **verse 41** - “**He [Andrew] first found his own brother Simon and said to him, ‘We have found the Messiah’ (which means Christ).**” When Jesus is encountered authentically the natural impulse is to share the news with those closest to us.

And notice another detail in the text - **John 1:42 - “He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, ‘So you are Simon the son of John? You shall be called Cephas’ (which means Peter) - IPAD TEXT**

He didn't just *tell* Peter about Jesus. Faithful followers *bring others* to where Jesus is. You can't really *send* people to Jesus. They will usually need someone to *bring* them. Following Jesus is *relational*. That's why people need other people to get them ready for meeting Jesus.

5) WHAT JESUS SEES IN THOSE WHO COME TO HIM IN FAITH

IPAD TEXT - John 1:41-42 - “He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, ‘We have found the Messiah’ (which means Christ). [42] He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, ‘So you are Simon the son of John? You shall be called Cephas’ (which means Peter).”

There is a very basic issue being dealt with in this text that has absolutely nothing to do with Peter being the first pope. The real issue is what happens with authentic followers of Christ. How is following Jesus different from following John the Baptist, or the Dalai Lama, or Oprah Winfrey?

And what we see in this text is the setting of the bar in terms of expectations of the power of Christ in His disciples. Simon is the second recruitment in history to follow Christ. To mark the kind of change he will experience Jesus specifically not only **names** Simon but traces his earthly make up in terms of his DNA - **verse 42** - **“....Jesus looked at him and said, ‘So you are Simon the son of John? You shall be called Cephas’ (which means Peter).”**

Don't miss the simple point. “Peter, this is what you are right now by ***human heredity and environment.***” Jesus openly exposes what makes Peter Peter as far as the earthly scene is concerned. This is what we usually factor in when we calculate our destiny.

But Peter is not locked in once he commits to Christ. There will be more unfolding in his life than he can know at this present moment. There is nothing ***presently*** on the scene that can inspire such hope. Nothing has changed ***yet*** for Peter. It's all still in the future - **“....You shall be called Cephas’ (which means Peter).”**

That's all Peter gets from Jesus right now. Just a bare promise. It's only much later on that Peter will begin to see glimpses of the *unfolding* of all Jesus would build into his ordinary life - **Matthew 16:15-18** - "He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' [16] Simon Peter replied, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' [17] And Jesus answered him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. [18] And I tell you, *you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*'" - IPAD TEXT

But none of that is on the horizon when Jesus gives Peter his divine name change. All he has is a commitment to follow Jesus. Nothing of that future grace is visible right out of the gate.

And there's great hope in that because we're made to observe that huge gap between what Peter *hears* Jesus promise and what Peter presently *sees* of his own life. And that's the way you come to Jesus. And that's the way I come to Jesus too. Only we get to look *back* on Peter's life and see Jesus make good on His promise. He always does. Remember, no one's life is limited by the experiences accumulated in the past. True, like Peter, we all have to start where we are - with nothing but the promise of Jesus. But come and follow on. Every earthly life can have a divine start.

6) THE INWARD DELIGHT OF JESUS IN FINDING AN HONEST HEART

IPAD TEXT - John 1:43-50 - "The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." [44] Now Philip was from Bethsaida, 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 anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." [47] Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward 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 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 him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these."

Jesus immediately describes Nathanael as ***"an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit."*** And the significance of that, as I mentioned earlier, is the terms ***"Israel"*** and ***"Israelite"*** are almost never used in John's gospel. But they are used by Jesus in describing Nathanael for a very good reason. There is something Jesus sees in Nathanael's heart.

The clue of Jesus' meaning is actually found earlier, in **verse 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."** Philip knows how to relate his discovery of Jesus to Nathanael. He tells Nathanael he has found the one to whom all the Old Testament Scriptures pointed. And he **does** this because he knows this will have impact on Nathanael. He knows Nathanael has been studying these Scriptures with an expectation of the coming Messiah.

Nathanael was an **"an Israelite indeed"** because he used the Old Testament Scriptures to open his mind up to Christ. And he was an Israelite indeed **"in whom there is no deceit"** because he wasn't using his religion to **cover up** his sin or push Jesus out of his Jewish religious system.

In other words, Nathanael, though an informed Jewish scholar, was **honest** with his encounter with Christ. He hadn't **prejudged** Christ. True, he did have some trouble with the Messiah coming out of Nazareth. But he allowed the revelation of Jesus to push out all his prejudices.

The idea of not having a heart of **deceit** is described powerfully in **Psalm 32:1-2 - “Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. [2] Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.” - IPAD TEXT**

This is the truest cardiac test in the whole world. We are **all** sinners. And, evidently, there are people in whom the Lord **counts** iniquity and those in whom the Lord **doesn't** count iniquity. And the difference isn't that one is **sinless** and the other **guilty**. The difference is in the way the sinner **confronts** his true spiritual condition.

As we saw with the Pharisees, some people are **crafty** with Jesus. They skate by him quickly with a few Bible verses and praise choruses. They remain in their sin for all their religious activity.

There are others who allow the truth to turn their whole beings inside out. They don't pretend they're better than they are. They don't hide their sin from others or from themselves. They go **deep** with Jesus and His call on their lives.

And by the way, they're the ones, to use Jesus words, who find heaven opened up above them - the way to God clear of obstruction and nonsense - **John 1:51 - "And 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." - IPAD TEXT**