

Philip

A Practical & Logical Thinker Becomes a Believer

“The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. ⁴⁴ Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. ⁴⁵ Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. ⁴⁶ And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.” John 1:43-46

I. Background of Philip

- A. Only John’s gospel gives us information on Philip No other gospel book mentions Philip outside of the disciple lists.
- B. Philip the apostle should not be confused with Philip the evangelist. Acts 8:1-6; 21:8 The only time Philip the apostle is mentioned in Acts is in the list of disciples in chapter 1, otherwise, it is Philip the evangelist. This Philip was chosen as part of seven men to assist the apostles in serving widows. (Stephen was one of those chosen with Philip to serve widows.)
- C. Philip was from Bethsaida, the same town as Peter & Andrew.
- D. “Philip” is a Greek name This is interesting because all twelve disciples were Jewish but no Hebrew name for Philip is given. He may have come from a Jewish family who took on Greek culture and language (Hellenistic Jews). Customs would have dictated for him to have a Jewish name, but he is never referred to by it.
- E. Always fifth in the apostle lists.
- F. He was a religious man – knew the Old Testament. John 1:45 I think we can confidently say Philip was searching for the Messiah as well as the others that followed Jesus. They saw Jesus as the fulfillment of the Old Testament!

II. Life & Growth of Philip while traveling with Christ

- A. Philip’s call
 - 1. He was called independently while most were called in pairs It is interesting to note that Philip was near the Jordan when Christ called him. (John 1:28) We find his call at the last of four days recorded in John 1 before Christ returns to Galilee and seemingly the marriage at Cana. The fact Philip was in the area of John the Baptist causes scholars to believe he might have been a follower of John. Those Jews who were sincerely looking for the Messiah would certainly be interested in John's message and claims. (Review the message and task of John the Baptist)
 - 2. First man Jesus sought out This is unique language to the call of Philip. It is also wonderful to realize Philip was the first to have Jesus seek him out and to hear, “Follow me” from the His lips. But please realize, all men have to be sought by Christ (John 15:16), and as we said these men were being drawn by God as evidenced by their desire for truth. (John 6:44-45)

B. Philip brings Nathanael Philip not only was seeking God but when he found Him had a heart of an evangelist! The language here is also interesting. Notice, “we have found him,” we see Philip indicated that he found the Christ, not that he had been found by Jesus! John MacArthur says concerning this passage, “Philip’s call is a perfect illustration of how both exist in perfect harmony. The Lord found Philip, but Philip felt he found the Lord. Both things are true from the human perspective. But from a biblical perspective, we know that God’s choice is the determinative one.” Twelve Ordinary Men p. 123 (John 6:37)

1. Felt that Jesus was the fulfillment of prophecy Philip’s wording betrays his amazement. The One whom he met, who fulfilled the Old Testament was none other than a lowly carpenter’s son from Nazareth! This was not who they really expected! But it did not deter Philip. He was sure this was the One!

2. Did not claim Christ deity Remember, these disciples had a lot to learn in a short time! But they will all come to the realization, that Jesus was, “that Christ, the Son of the living God.” John 6:66-71

3. He was insistent that Nathanael should see Christ. “Come and see” Philip was not taking no for an answer! Philip was convinced Jesus was the Messiah. He didn’t understand all of the theology concerning the Messiah, but he knew the Messiah was Jesus!

“When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? ⁶And this he said to prove (Gk - test) him: for he himself knew what he would do. ⁷ Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.” John 6:5-7

C. Feeding of the 5000

1. Jesus seeks to test Philip with a question Almost 100% of the time English translations use the word “test” to describe Jesus’ question to Philip. Jesus wasn’t asking for a plan, He already knew what He would do, this question was all about testing Philip. The word “test” is interesting – it has many forms but always seeks information. To a teacher it means to seek what knowledge was retained; to a doctor, the level of health of a patient; to a scientist, the purity, or strength of an element; we could go on and on...but to God, a test seeks one thing – faith! This is true in the Old Testament, Gospels, and Epistles. Deut. 8:16; 2 Cor. 13:5; I Peter 1:6-7 God doesn’t need to find out information, we need to know about our faith. Our faith must be tested for our own understanding and growth!

2. Philip’s answer showed the impossibility of buying food The answer Philip gave shows his faithlessness in considering the ability to feed this crowd. Don’t forget, Philip had seen water turn to wine, and perhaps hundreds of people healed from disease and injury, but this was beyond Jesus’ power according to Philip. Test failed!

D. Philip & Andrew bring the Greeks to Jesus

1. The Greeks came to Philip for an audience with Jesus. It is speculated these Greeks singled out Philip because of his Greek name. Or he was known to be one of the disciples that handled crowds and meetings. This was not a hard situation for Philip to discern, yet he was unsure and timid in just taking these men to Jesus. So Philip went to Andrew who was always quick to bring people to Jesus, and maybe he was thinking, if someone was to be scolded by Jesus, let it be Andrew!

Though it is not spelled out in Scripture, it seems as if Jesus did receive the Greeks. He not only gave them the Gospel but invited them to follow Him! Notice verse 26, “If any man serve me, let him follow me;...”

“Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.” John 12:27-28

2. Philip hears the discourse on Jesus’ coming death. Sometimes I think we forget the amazing events the disciples heard and saw. Jesus’ words to Andrew and Philip with the coming of the Greeks were a powerful revelation of the coming events of His death and a call to serve. Christ will move into a prayer to His Father and will hear from Heaven a thundering voice back! Philip, Andrew, the Greeks, and all those around would hear it all! What a privilege!

Keep in mind, the Upper Room is the last of the disciples’ formal training, within hours Jesus will die.

“If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. (John 1:18) ⁸ Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. ⁹ Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?” John 14:7-9

E. Philip’s Upper Room Question

1. Jesus was claiming His oneness with the Father. Verse 7 is a plain verbal claim to deity. To know Jesus is to know the Father, they are one! Jesus reveals the Father because they are both God.
2. “Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.” – John MacArthur had strong words concerning Philip’s statement in these verses, “Of all the foolish, impetuous, heartbreakingly ignorant statements that occasionally escaped the lips of the disciples, none was more disappointing than Philip’s remark in the Upper Room.” Twelve Ordinary Men p. 130 All the wonders and words that Philip had seen revealed the Father; all the patience, love, forgiveness, gentleness, goodness, and power revealed the Father; all the holiness, wisdom, and honor Philip had observed revealed the Father – for they were One! Where was the faith that they all confessed with Peter, “thou art the Christ, the son of the living God.” This was an amazingly sad statement. How could Philip need more proof? He was sounding more like an unbelieving Pharisee instead of a chosen apostle!

III. Lesson from Philip’s Life

Doubts and questions are normal, even for true Christians, particularly at certain points in our lives. There in the Upper Room, the disciples were hearing some very troubling words from Jesus. He was going

away, they couldn't come, Peter, their leader was going to deny Him...and many other odd statements. Philip's faithless statement came on the heels of these words of Jesus. This is not surprising, because many times doubt and questions come at times of crisis, trouble, and uncertainty! In times of testing faithless statements can flood our hearts and minds, and we must remember the truths of God's word. Study the Bible, and saturate ourselves with good Bible teaching and preaching, it is there we find the answers and settle our doubts - in the Word of God. John 20:30-31

Let's go one more time to the Upper Room, at the time when Philip asked his embarrassing statement, "show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." Let's look at Jesus' reply... John 14:9-14 Let's remember we can ask anything in Jesus' name. Let's have the faith to ask! Ask for – faith to speak boldly; faith to live godly; faith to teach and disciple others; faith to endure illness; faith to go on in loss; faith to trust God with our future

Christian tradition tells us Philip was perhaps the second of the disciples who were martyred for their faith, eight years after James. He was put to death by stoning. Isn't it wonderful that through the power of the Holy Spirit and obedience to Him, Philip was able to grow in his faith and become a confident, steady witness to the deity of Christ and His Gospel? Realize, God still uses weak, men and women to do His work! (I Cor. 1:27-29)

Nathanael/Bartholomew

One who Discovered that Honesty is Not Enough

I. Background of Nathanael/Bartholomew

- A. Nathanael was from Cana of Galilee What important event of Christ happened at Cana? First miracle.
- B. Why two names?
 - 1. Nathanael – (Probably) First (given) name – Means “God’s gift”
 - 2. Bartholomew – (Probably) Surname name – Means “son of Tolmai”

It is interesting to note that in all four apostle lists (Matthew, Mark, Luke, Acts), we find the name Bartholomew given but no incident of Bartholomew is recorded. Only John features him, twice, and calls him Nathanael. Scholars are confident they are the same person.

- C. Possible that Nathanael was employed by the Zebedee - John 21:2 We find him named with the seven that went fishing with Peter after the resurrection.
- D. Understood the Old Testament and the coming Messiah Like all the disciples, Nathanael was one looking for the coming of the Messiah.

II. Nathanael's Life and Growth while traveling with Christ

“Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. ⁴⁶And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.” John 1:45-46

- A. First meeting with Christ
 - 1. Told of Christ by Philip Philip had just met Christ and the first thing he did was find Nathanael. This tells us they were close for Philip knew Nathanael would want to

know that he had found the one that fulfilled the Old Testament. It's obvious both men knew the Old Testament and desired truth. Because they were in the area where John the Baptist was, many scholars believe they were his disciples. (John 1:43)

2. Skeptical concerning Jesus coming from Galilee It was my first thought that Nathanael's question concerning Jesus coming from Nazareth was based on his knowledge of the Messiah – Messiah was to come from Bethlehem. But looking at the language, his statement was based on prejudice and bigotry! Most English translations say, "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" This statement reveals Nathanael's heart. While Judeans looked down on Galileans, Galileans looked down on those from Nazareth. Prejudice is based on feelings of superiority, not on fact. It seems many canceled out the possibility of Jesus as the Messiah based on the fact He was from Galilee. John 7:52 Prejudice causes one to not listen to or obey truth! Thankfully this was not the case for Nathanael, Philip would not take "no" for an answer. He finishes by saying, "Come and see."

“Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile (Gk - deceit; completely honest, full of integrity, nothing false, no deception, not a false bone in his body, truth teller)! ⁴⁸Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. ⁴⁹Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.” John 1:47-49

3. Christ declares Nathanael's honesty Jesus declared Nathanael's true, genuine, and authentic attitude as an Israelite. Not the hypocrites that Jesus encountered in the synagogues and temple, but Nathanael was one who loved, trusted, and served God from the heart! This is what God has always sought in His followers! Rom. 2:28-29; Phil. 3:3 Here's the same Greek terminology – John 8:31
4. Jesus' omniscience turns Nathanael into a believer Nathanael could have perceived Jesus' commendation as simply flattery. He even asked Christ, "how do you know me." So Jesus went on and revealed He knew where he was, under the fig tree, then Nathanael believed! Most believe the fig tree was more than a resting spot, but instead was Nathanael's place of spiritual retreat, study, and prayer. The dramatic way this shifted Nathanael's thinking must be based on what was going on under that fig tree! With Jesus' statement about the fig tree came Nathanael's turning point and marvelous declaration...“thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.” For one of the twelve, at this point of Jesus' ministry, this was a wonderful statement of faith!

“Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. ⁵¹And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.” John 1:50-51

5. Promise of greater things to come Jesus was the ladder that connected heaven to earth! John MacArthur said this about Nathanael, “How wonderful to see someone so

trustworthy and trusting from the very beginning, so that for him the whole three years with Jesus was just an unfolding panorama of supernatural reality!”

“After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise showed he himself. ² There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples. ³ Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, we also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing. ⁴ But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.” John 21:1-4

- B. After the resurrection Nathanael is named among the seven who went fishing I don’t like to be too hard on the disciples at this point. Jesus had told them to go to Galilee after His death, they really didn’t know what to do, so they did what they knew – fishing! Nathanael was among them and will fellowship and eat with the risen Jesus!

Church traditions believe Nathanael ministered in Persia, Armenia, and India. It is certain he died of martyrdom but there is no certain account of how.

III. Lesson from Nathanael’s Life

Nathanael was a devout Jew but needed to believe in Christ as the Messiah. We must understand that being religious does not necessarily mean you have a place in heaven. Knowing the Scripture, having an interest in the things of God, and doing acts for God and the good of man does not guarantee an eternal home. Only a belief in Christ as your Savior from sin is our way to God. This belief will change your eternal destiny and everything about you now on earth! Read Rom. 3:1-2, 9-31 Emphasis that even Nathanael had to come to this conclusion v. 23-25 – or use another presentation of the Gospel.