

Invitation to Follow Jesus
Jesus calls the Disciples
Greatest Hits Series (John) – Part 3
John 1:35-51
January 25-26, 2025

Introduction

- Go = Not Stay - Henry Blackaby who wrote the bestselling 1990 book and study, Experiencing God, constantly said, *"you cannot stay where you are AND go with God."*
 - God is on the move and when you accept an invitation to follow Jesus, it means we are leaving now and heading somewhere else. Wherever that is, *it is likely out of our comfort zones.*
- You don't invite someone who is already there – *any invitation says, 'COME...'* which means they aren't there yet. By necessity...

Accepting an Invitation brings CHANGE

- Last Week – Pastor Rodney preached
 - JTB the Effective Witness – Pastor Rodney taught us a lot about a guy named John the Baptist and how this man was *an incredible witness for God. He knew who he was and who he wasn't. He directed anyone that would listen to Jesus Christ. And he was EFFECTIVE.* Why?
 - 3 Key Things:
 1. Embrace our identity in Jesus (what God says about us)
 2. Exercise our authority THROUGH Jesus (He brings the power we are a conduit).
 3. Execute our assignment – obedience to God is our most important directive.
- Context of Today's Stories
 - Jesus is in the South of Israel – why? How do we know? The minute we hear a story about *John the Baptist* we know that it's going to be in the South because that was his region he lived and ministered in. This story starts with him. Why Jesus was there is a guess. John the author doesn't say why. We can assume that after examining Jesus' pattern of travel in His earthly ministry, He traversed the country fairly often (at least once a year for Passover and holy days – He would travel south). *Jesus was born in the South (Bethlehem) but was raised in the North (Nazareth).* This was likely one of those trips that He made routinely, but it was a special time since He is now in the process of *launching His ministry publicly and was recently baptized* by John the Baptist in fulfillment of prophecy and the Law. It's assumed that the next move when He goes North is the wedding at Cana where He is kind of forced to go even more public with the Water to Wine story. So, this Southern visit seems to be kind of a *Kick-Off Ministry Trip.*
 - Jn 1:28 – *"These things took place in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing."*

Lesson

- THERE He is
 - JTB directs his followers to follow Jesus
 - *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 next day again – This is the second time JTB said that Jesus was the Lamb of God (John 1:29)
 - John was standing with two of his disciples, - What's a disciple?¹ It's someone that is a learner from another. In the ancient Israel context it would mean someone who has altered their life around the model of another. It's more than just getting information or direction from someone and more of a lifestyle adoption which comes along with the motivations for why they do what they do (information, truth, etc.).
 - Why does JTB have disciples? – Anyone that is influential likely has disciples. John the Baptist was highly influential. He had a large ministry of baptizing people likely due to the anointing of God. He was a popular religious leader in the region that called people to change. If someone changed and continued to learn from him they would fall into a disciple category.
 - and he looked at Jesus as he walked by – Jesus was headed somewhere. We don't know where, but we know that He wasn't just hanging on the street corner with nothing to do. Jesus was a man of mission.
 - and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" – What an odd thing to exclaim. What does that mean?
 - Behold = This means to pay attention, to draw your attention to, to look at and consider what it means.
 - The Lamb of God² = Lamb of God is a title that would immediately draw an Israelite to the concept of Passover. The story tells of the time during Moses when God brought death upon the Egyptian nation and

¹ "Mathētēs means more in the NT than a mere pupil or learner. It is an adherent who accepts the instruction given to him and makes it his rule of conduct, e.g., the disciples of John (Matt. 11:2; Mark 2:18; Luke 5:33; 7:18; John 3:25); the disciples of the Pharisees (Mark 2:18). In John 9:28, the Pharisees told the healed blind man, "Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses' disciples." Jesus had disciples in the sense that they believed and made His teaching the basis of their conduct. (Matt. 5:1; 9:19; 14:22; Luke 14:26, 27, 33; John 9:27; 15:8)." Spiros Zodhiates, Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament

² "286. ἄμνός amnós; gen. amnoú, masc. noun. Lamb for sacrifice. After John 1:29, 36, "Behold the Lamb of God" (amnós and not arnión, [721]), it became usual to designate Christ as amnós. In later Gr., the term arnós or arnion was adopted throughout the Book of the Revelation, where it is never amnós but always arnion. In fact, amnós is found only in John 1:29, 36; Acts 8:32; 1 Pet. 1:19; Sept.: Ex. 12:5, arnós is used for the Paschal Lamb; cf. Lev. 14:10ff.; Num. 6:12; Ex. 29:38ff., the expression ho amnós, the lamb, toú Theoú, of God, means the lamb provided by God (see Gen. 22:8). The Lord Jesus is called the Amnós of God because He sacrificed Himself at the time of the Passover (see John 2:13; 1 Cor. 5:7). His deliverance of sinners is likened to the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt. Thus John the Baptist recognized in Jesus Christ the One Who was to bring deliverance in that day. The lamb during the Exodus was the means of sparing the people, and on account of it, destruction passed them by. In like manner, Jesus is now the means of sparing those who are willing to apply His blood in order that the judgment of God may bypass them. Amnós designates more often the sacrifice of the Lamb (1 Pet. 1:19), referring to the Paschal Lamb or a lamb given up to death in the service of God. A sheep is próbaton (4263) and a young goat is ériphos (2056) while its diminutive is eríphion (2065), a young kid." Spiros Zodhiates, Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament

only those who had the blood of a sacrificial lamb upon their doorframe would be spared. The lamb that gave its life to save the people in the house would be the sacrificial lamb. John the Baptist knew enough about the Messiah's salvation of the people and knew of the sacrifice that was suggested it would take, so he wanted to clearly designate Jesus as that Anointed One who would come and deal with the sins of His people.

- The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus –
 - The disciples listened to their leader – There seems to be two polar extremes that people take with influential people. 1.) cult followers that don't question anything. 2.) Arrogant individualists that question everything and find themselves to be the leader and independent experts. You find both in every group of humans. Unfortunately in my ministry since I don't tend to preach in a dominant way, I struggle with more of the second. Yet, if we are going to follow, we need to follow. Humility and submitting are not things that are easily adopted by most people, especially Americans.
 - They followed Jesus – literally. They took off after him physically. It was metaphorically true (we find out), but first it was literally true.
 - Motives for Ministry - John encourages his own disciples to leave him and follow Jesus. Are we seeking God's best for those around us? **Are we invested in their development or more interested in what we can get from them/what they offer us?**
- Jesus Invites Andrew and Friend
 - JTB's disciples follow Jesus
 - *John 1:38-40 - "Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, "What are you seeking?" And they said to him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher³), "where are you staying?"⁴ " 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 [4pm]⁵. ⁴⁰ One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother."*
 - Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, "What are you seeking?" – Jesus calls them out and holds them accountable for their actions. They seem to be following Him so they obviously want something. What do they want?

³ "In this instance the comment implies that John's disciples are now Jesus' disciples because they consider him their "Teacher." It is the first of three such translations of Hebrew expressions in the immediate context (see vv. 41, 42). We cannot assume that the Greek-speaking readers of the Gospel actually needed the translations. Quite possibly the writer simply wants to accent his own credibility as someone familiar with Jewish terms and customs. Other narrative asides will deal explicitly with such customs, and with matters of time, place, and the motivation of certain characters in the story." NICNT – J. Ramsey Michaels, *New International Commentary of the New Testament: Gospel of John*

⁴ "They are not avoiding Jesus' question, but in effect telling him precisely what they are looking for. They speak not out of idle curiosity, but precisely as "followers." They want to know where Jesus is "staying" because they assume he is on his way there. He is their leader now, and they want to know where he is leading them." NICNT – J. Ramsey Michaels, *New International Commentary of the New Testament: Gospel of John*

⁵ "The "tenth hour" would be 4 p.m., if we assume that this Gospel, like the others, is following the Jewish time reckoning in which the daylight hours begin at 6 a.m., not at midnight as in Roman law." NICNT

- Jesus saw their pursuit and stopped to let them catch up – **when we draw near to God He draws near to us**. When we are simply fascinated by God He moves on by.
- What do you want? – Jesus is testing for motive and making them face their decision to follow.
 - What are we looking for? - **Do we have clarity around what our hearts and minds are seeking after? What is driving us?**
- And they said to him, “Rabbi” (which means Teacher), “where are you staying?” – why would they want to know where He is staying? Is that odd? Not at all. They were saying they wanted to find out more and knew that He was on His way somewhere. **They were looking for connection time and they wanted to accommodate themselves to Him into His pattern instead of trying to make Him accommodate to theirs.**
 - Rabbi – it means **teacher** but has a **religious** tone to it.
 - We want to follow you – asking where He’s going means they want to go there too. This is **a request to get an invite**.
- 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. – this is Jesus’ invitation to follow Him to His current dwelling to learn from Him.
 - Where was Jesus staying? – it is most likely that He was normally living local in Nazareth where He grew up. He will later live with Peter in Capernaum, but He hasn’t met Peter yet. But here He is on a trip and in the South so it’s not clear where He was staying. **Perhaps he was staying with Lazarus’s family** since John 1:28 says that they were in **Bethany**, which is where they lived.
 - Jesus the couch-surfer – In Jesus’ short earthly ministry (3-4 years) He was on the move A LOT. He would stay in different locations with different friends. In the South He would stay with Mary, Martha, & Lazarus. In the North He would stay with Peter and his family. He was kind of all over the place.
 - They stayed with Him that day⁶ – **they didn’t expect Jesus to fit into their schedule they fit into His. They spent TIME in PROXIMITY to Jesus and it changed their lives.** That is what we must do.
 - Follow Me and STAY – another critical aspect of discipleship is not just to come and check Jesus out, or to only follow Him, but to **remain with Him. This is a suggestion to loyalty, faithfulness, commitment, and intimacy.**
- One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother – This is the storytellers way of getting the twelve disciples backstory together since they are going to feature in the stories moving forward. This is Andrew. Andrew was significant in and of himself,

⁶ “the verb “to stay,” or “remain” (Gr. menein), represents another paradigm for discipleship, alongside “to follow” (Gr. akolouthein). To “follow” is to embark with Jesus on a journey, while to “stay” or “remain” is to maintain a lasting personal relationship with him. That the disciples “stayed” with Jesus (presumably in Bethany) for the rest of the day testifies to their commitment as disciples.” NICNT

but his brother would go on to be more famous, therefore for John the Beloved to describe this after the fact (many years later) he would link the characters to people that his listening audience would know.

- What do we know about Andrew?⁷ – from what I can gather, Andrew was a religiously-minded guy who grew up in a fishing business family. His brother was Simon Peter. His best friend seem to be Philip. The three of them (along with the other fishing family: James and John) became not just disciples of Jesus but were selected as Apostles of Christ as well. Andrew initially was a disciple of John the Baptist, but we know that he also would travel back north and work with his family's business.
 - Mt 4:18–22 – “While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” ²⁰ Immediately they left their nets and followed him. ²¹ And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. ²² Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.”
- How was he a disciple AND a fisherman? – Although we know that a call to follow Jesus seemed to demand all of the guys’ time and attention and became somewhat of a full time gig, it didn’t have to be. There were many disciples of other influential people, that still had day jobs. We know that even Paul the Apostle was a tentmaker (leather worker) AND evangelist for Christ.
- What happened to the other unnamed dude? – it’s strange that only one disciple of John the Baptist was named (Andrew). Why is that? There are a lot of unnamed people in John’s gospel so it’s not unusual, but it does bring up a question. Some speculated that it was the author John, and he didn’t want to name himself, but that’s unlikely. The author of NICNT commentary believes that it is likely Philip (and that’s the close connection).⁸ It’s possible that he is one of the Twelve but unnamed at this

⁷ “Ἀνδρέας Andréas; gen. Andréou, proper noun. Andrew, a native of Bethsaida (John 1:44) shared the same house at Capernaum (Mark 1:21, 29) with his better known brother Simon Peter. By trade he was a fisherman (Matt. 4:18), but attracted by all that he had heard or seen of John the Baptist, he, for a time at least, left his work and followed John the Baptist into the wilderness. There he came to be recognized as one of John’s disciples (John 1:35, 40). When Christ came, He found Andrew with a heart ready and eager to welcome Him. No sooner did Andrew meet the Lord than he went in search of his brother Peter (John 1:35–42). Later, Jesus met Andrew by the sea along with his three companions and called them to follow Him (Matt. 4:18ff.). Andrew was later appointed to a place in the apostolic group (Matt. 10:2ff.). His place must have been a place of honor for his name always occurs in the first group of four, and it is with Peter, James and John that he is again associated in the private inquiries to Jesus regarding the time of the last things (Mark 13:3). He appears in the story of the feeding of the 5,000 (John 6:5ff.) and again in John 12:20ff. when the Greeks came to see Jesus. He is especially associated with Philip, the only other apostle who bore a Greek name. It is generally believed that he was martyred at Patrae in Achaia, Greece, being bound but not nailed to a cross in order to prolong his sufferings. He was not only the first home missionary (John 1:41), but also the first foreign missionary (John 12:22).” NICNT

⁸ “In the present context, it also lends credibility to Schnackenburg’s suggestion that Philip is the unnamed disciple of verse 40. This proposal, while not provable, explains why Jesus so quickly “finds” Philip (v. 43), and why Philip then proceeds to do just what Andrew had done (v. 45). The notice that Philip was “from Bethsaida” hardly means that the scene of the action has shifted there from “Bethany, beyond the Jordan” (v. 28). Bethsaida was in Galilee (12:21), and at this point Jesus has only “decided to set out for Galilee” (v. 43). He has not arrived there. Quite possibly the Gospel writer expects his readers to know that Bethsaida is in Galilee, for knowing that would help them understand why Philip responded so quickly to Jesus’ invitation. For him, and for Peter and Andrew as well, it was an opportunity to return home, parting company with John and his disciples. While nothing is said explicitly of Andrew and Simon Peter accompanying Jesus and Philip (and presumably Nathanael) to Galilee, the presumption later on is that “his disciples” were present at the wedding in Cana (2:2, 11), and then with Jesus in Capernaum (2:12). The implication of the narrative is that by this time they numbered either four or five, depending on whether Philip and the unnamed disciple are the same.” NICNT

time. It's possible that it was just another disciple that followed Jesus for a long time but wasn't one of the Twelve selected. Or it could be that he initially followed Jesus but didn't stick with it so no one really knew him so why mention his name?

- Jesus Invites Peter to Follow Him
 - Andrew brings his brother Simon to Jesus
 - 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, "You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas" (which means Peter)."*
 - He first found his own brother Simon – **What was his first mission field? His family.** He immediately went to talk it out with his brother. We know that Peter was in the family fishing business and so was Andrew but apparently this was a time off (vacation? Break?). Andrew didn't want to keep this grand discovery to himself. He wanted to share it.
 - Do we want to share Jesus with our family? – do we want our family to be saved like we are? **What's stopping us? Is it harder to minister to our family or easier?** I guess it depends on relationships and history, right?
 - and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ). – *Christ* is not Jesus' last name. It means *Messiah*, which is translated 'Anointed One' and it's an Old Testament Jewish term that means the famous One who was going to come into Israel miraculously and save the Jewish people from both their sins and the oppressive world around them. It was the most important figure they were waiting on.
 - What did the Old Testament say about the Messiah?⁹ – relatively clear references to the Messiah appear in 26¹⁰ of the 33 Old Testament books with most of them being in the Torah, Psalms, Isaiah, and Zechariah.
 - What were their expectations of what type of figure the Messiah would be? – it becomes abundantly clear with the rejection of Jesus that many did not pay attention to ALL of the Messianic prophecies given in the Old Testament. Usually most people would think of the popular and most commonly shared aspects of the Messiah. Many believed that if what was said about the Messiah was true, then He would have to be God-Incarnate because he is said to be: eternal and everlasting, creator, and holy. They even knew the OT authors would refer to Him as the 'Son of God'. It was clear that this Godly figure would come down in human form from heaven. Closer attention would show that the Messiah would be

⁹ <https://www.messianic.org/prophecy/a-comprehensive-list-of-messianic-prophecies/>;

<https://www.newtestamentchristians.com/bible-study-resources/351-old-testament-prophecies-fulfilled-in-jesus-christ/>;

¹⁰ the Torah (1st 5 books); Joshua, Ruth, 1-2 Samuel; 2 Kings, 1 Chron, Job, LOTS in Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Solomon, LOTS in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Jonah, Micah, Haggai, LOTS in Zechariah, and Malachi.

born of a virgin, born in Bethlehem and raised in Northern Israel. He would be both prophet and king, shepherd to the Israelite people. He would come with grace and Truth. He would be a miracle-worker and strictly obedient to Yahweh. But this is where things got messy. Many scriptures refer to Him being a mighty victor that would crush the world through His rule and raise Israel up to victory and prominence, and a bunch of other Scriptures talked about Him as a Suffering Servant who would be beaten and die. It seems that the more popular narrative was victory and so when Jesus fulfilled the second more visibly (what people could see), they didn't believe in Him. They WANTED Him to be the other victor One who would free them from Rome's oppression.

- He brought him to Jesus. – **What do you do for the people you love? You bring them to Jesus. You provide a bridge. You provide an INVITATION to get to know Him. You don't force it. You don't guilt into it. You offer and invite and let God do the rest.**
- Why did Simon go? – apparently God had been working on him prior and he was curious or needy.
 - We are late to the game – there is no one that you are going to minister to BEFORE God has got to them. God always moves first and invites us to join in the process. Whether God's been softening them up by difficulty and challenge, or whispering hope, or letting His love melt them, by the time you are going to minister to someone they have already been significantly prepped by God. That doesn't guarantee that they are ready for surrender, only that you are not alone and having to do things by yourself from scratch.
- What about the seashore calling of Andrew and Peter? – the other gospels seem to highlight that Jesus called Andrew and Peter and James and John on the seashore of the Sea of Galilee in a dramatic, drop your nets and follow me and I will make you fishers of men, scenario. So was it this way or that way? It seems most clear that this meeting was first and that's why by the time that Jesus connects with them back up North, they are ready to go. There is also an indicator that even before the 'drop your nets and follow me today' there was a situation where Jesus used their boats to preach. The point is that they were really familiar with Jesus by the time they dropped everything to follow Him. Luke lays this out better than the others:
 - Lk 5:1–11 – “On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret, ² and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. ³Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. ⁴And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.” ⁵ And Simon answered, “Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets.” ⁶ And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their

nets were breaking.⁷ They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink.⁸ But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."⁹ For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken,¹⁰ and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men."¹¹ And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him."

- Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas" (which means Peter) – This is a fascinating way to meet someone. What was Jesus trying to do?
 - Jesus changed his name – Why? What in the world? What's wrong with his old name? What's the benefit of a name change? The Bible (both Old Testament and New Testament) is filled with stories of names being changed by God. We have Abram to Abraham and Sarai to Sarah. We have Jacob to Israel and so many others. What's the purpose of it? Establishing a new mission and identity. This is exactly what Jesus is doing with Simon Peter. Peter had been one sort of guy doing one sort of plan and now Jesus was redirecting and renovating all of that.
 - What does Simon mean? – Simon means 'hearing' and was likely just his birth name. It didn't hold a significant meaning that I can tell.
 - Peter and Andrew's dad was named What?¹¹ – In Matthew's gospel Simon Peter is referred to as Barjona. Literally, Barjona means 'son of' (Bar); Jona (which means Jonas, not John). Again, there are a lot of people with the same name around and they want to specify who they are talking about with any descriptor that helps and who their father was, was a common way to say it. The weird thing is that it may be that Jesus is referring to Simon Peter being a spiritual son of John the Baptist (like his brother) and isn't referring to his dad at all. If this is the case then Jesus was making a more spiritual statement than an identity statement (meaning, 'you used to be John's disciples, but I am changing your name because you are now my disciple'). This interesting point was brought up in the NICNT commentary. Not sure what to think about it and not willing to put enough study into it due to its lack of importance to the overall point.

¹¹ "'Simon, the son of John' is usually read as the equivalent of "Simon Barjona" (or "Simon, son of Jona") in the Matthean account of the changing of Simon's name (Mt 16:17), but "John" and "Jona" are quite different names in Hebrew. The only "John" mentioned so far is the one who has just proclaimed Jesus as "Lamb of God" (v. 36), and it is at least as likely that Jesus is addressing Simon as an adherent or disciple of John as that he is making reference to Simon's actual father. While Simon is not explicitly said to be John's disciple, he is with his brother Andrew and other disciples of John "in Bethany, beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing" (v. 28), not at home in Bethsaida (v. 44). If this is the case, then when Jesus tells "Simon, the son of John," that his new name will be Cephas, it marks a transition for both disciples (or all three) from being John's disciples to becoming disciples of Jesus. The initiative in this transfer of allegiance lies not with them, but with Jesus. Jesus' pronouncement to Simon marks a point in the Gospel at which Jesus takes center stage, and John for the time being disappears. From here on, Jesus will call and direct his own band of disciples, and John will be seen only once more, just long enough to say an eloquent good-bye (3:22–36)." NICNT

- What does Cephas/Peter mean? – it means Rock.¹² What is Jesus trying to say? Is this ironic or direct? It seems to indicate ‘solid’ and ‘foundational’. That is fascinating because by personality Peter doesn’t display that as his natural tendencies. He seems strong, bold, confident, and explosive, but I would never call him foundational and solid. He always puts his foot in this mouth and speaks out of turn. He is rebuked more than any other disciple. But that’s the beauty. **It wasn’t what he WAS, it was what he was BECOMING.**
- The Chain of Invitation
 - Jesus invites Philip and Philip invites Nathanael
 - *John 1:43-46 - “The next day Jesus decided to go to [North to] Galilee.¹³ 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.”*
 - The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. – it makes it sound random and perhaps it was. I don’t think we should make too much of it since maybe the original language says, ‘then he went to Galilee’. Galilee is a region that had a lot of little towns in it, it’s not a city. Jesus’ hometown of Nazareth was in the region of Galilee. So, where was he coming from if he WENT TO Galilee? He was actually in the South of Israel where John the Baptist was at the beginning of this story (we only really figure this out right now but should have known once JTB was mentioned. JTB wasn’t a northerner per se. He did most of his ministry either in Central-Israel (the Jordan River runs most of the length of Israel north to south), or Southern-Israel. The traditional site of Jesus’ baptism was right above the Dead Sea (in the South) and east of Jerusalem (the southern capital city).
 - He found Philip and said to him, “Follow me.” – What made Jesus call Philip to follow Him? We don’t know, John doesn’t say. As a matter of fact it’s not clear why the 12 were chosen the way that they were. We know that Jesus had a lot of followers and people flocked around Him. There are times in His earthly ministry where it referred to crowds that followed Him. But this is the very beginning of the movement and very few have heard of Jesus so far, so He’s hand-picking and inviting. Perhaps Jesus invited a bunch of people to come follow him and Philip was simply one of the masses, but we know that he became special. The purpose of the specific selection of the Twelve Apostles out of the group of disciples is

¹² “The latter is not a name, but the Greek transliteration of an Aramaic word for “rock... The name “Cephas” is used only here in the Gospels, but eight times in Paul’s letters (1 Cor 1:12; 3:22; 9:5; 15:5; Gal 1:18; 2:9, 11, 14). Paul uses the name “Peter” only in Galatians 2:7–8, where his language seems to have been dictated by that of a specific agreement drawn up by the Jerusalem church. Otherwise, Paul seems to have regarded Cephas as a real name, not a nickname, and consequently not to be translated, as the Gospel writer has done here.” NICNT

¹³ “His decision “to set out for Galilee” anticipates the wedding “in Cana of Galilee” (2:1), and may even presuppose Jesus’ invitation to the wedding (2:2). Having “decided” to make the journey, Jesus himself now does some “finding.” He “finds” Philip and “says to him” (now for the first time explicitly to anyone): “Follow me.” NICNT

unclear as well. The story says that Jesus stayed up all night talking to the Father about stuff and then came down and selected the Twelve. There was something in that conversation that assured Him of who to pick whether He brought a plan to the Father and it was authorized, or the Father was downloading to Him who He wanted.

- Another invitation to follow = Apprenticeship – this is a good time to highlight the fact that ‘follow me’ isn’t just an invitation to come to class when I teach. It was to follow like a rabbi would be followed which meant sharing a lot of time together and be around each other on a consistent basis. It’s lifestyle discipling not merely academic.
- Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter¹⁴ – Bethsaida is a small fishing village in the North (Galilee area). It was the same town that Andrew and Peter lived in as they were growing up.
- 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.” – Another invitation! Philip has to invite someone he cares about (whether they were family or just buddies isn’t clear). He clearly had enough clout to convince Nathanael to come check Jesus out. To claim to have found the Messiah was a HUGE claim. Everyone for hundreds of years kept claiming they found the Messiah and it was always wrong. But there was something about the credibility of Philip that caused Nathanael to say yes.
 - Who is Nathanael?¹⁵ – most scholars believe that Nathanael is the same as the Apostle **Bartholomew** (John doesn’t use the name Bartholomew but Nathanael, while the other gospel authors use Bartholomew). Not much is known about him other than his high character.
 - Philip went out of his way to find Nathanael – sometimes we are blessed to share our faith ‘along the way’ of normal life. Sometimes it requires a little more attention, purposefulness, and effort. This seems to be a timing issue. Philip had engaged with Jesus and didn’t want to lose the momentum of the passion he had. He went immediately to Nathanael and said, ‘you have to check this guy out!’
 - Where did Moses write about the Messiah? – As mentioned above the Messiah is mentioned a lot (in the majority of the Old Testament books).¹⁶

¹⁴ “The relationship between Andrew and Philip surfaces again later in the Gospel, where Andrew never appears without Philip (see 6:5–9; 12:21–23), and Philip only once without Andrew (14:8–10).” NICNT

¹⁵ “Nathanael is unknown to the synoptic tradition, and all efforts to identify him with someone named in the synoptic Gospels (Bartholomew, for example, or Matthew) are speculative... The name “Nathanael” means, in Hebrew, “God has given,”...” NICNT 3482. **Ναθαναήλ** Nathanaēl; masc. proper noun transliterated from the Hebr. N^othan`ēl (5417), gift of God. Nathanael, a native of Cana of Galilee (John 21:2) and an Israelite without guile, as stated by our Lord in John 1:47. He was led into the presence of Christ by Philip immediately after his call. Nathanael confessed Jesus to be the Son of God and the King of Israel. Because the name Nathanael occurs only in John 1:45–49 and 21:2, combined with the fact that John never mentions the name of Bartholomew, it is generally supposed that the two are identical.” Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament

¹⁶ <https://www.messianic.org/prophecy/a-comprehensive-list-of-messianic-prophecies>;
<https://www.newtestamentchristians.com/bible-study-resources/351-old-testament-prophecies-fulfilled-in-jesus-christ/>

- Where did the Prophets write about the Messiah? – See explanation far above.
- Why is He called Jesus of Nazareth, son of Joseph? – because there were a lot of Jesus' (it was a very common name and is translated into Joshua later). These are descriptors. It's possible that this local area was small enough that they would have known some of those names personally or heard of them through family.
- Does our reputation inspire trust to believe our message? – **Does our current lifestyle help or hurt our invitation to people to follow Jesus Christ?**
- Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?¹⁷" – Why did he say this? What's wrong with Nazareth? That's Jesus' hometown. What's with the disrespect? There are two common views of what Nathanael was reacting to. 1.) **that it was a small town and a bit 'backwoods' and 'uneducated'** (later we find that Nazareth was the one place that rejected Jesus blatantly and He wasn't able to do many miracles there) **and problematic**. This would suggest that Nathanael was prejudice about their disappointing lack. 2.) The other view is that Nathanael is reacting to **how close to home** that is for him. He is from Cana (John 21:2) which is just north of Nazareth and not all that different (both are in Galilee and smaller towns). In this case his prejudice is **'too familiar'**. I'm not sure which one it is, but **it does seem to suggest a hesitation because it's not what he expected**.
 - What are we hanging up on? – When we hear all this about Jesus what's hanging us up? **What are we hearing or believing about Jesus that seems unlikely or impossible? What's an obstacle to us coming to faith today? Growing in your faith today? What prejudice do we have that might be hindering us?**
 - Philip said to him, "Come and see – **Philip didn't try to answer everything, he simply gave the invitation to 'check it out for yourself.'** Our job is not to convince people of Jesus per se. Our job is to invite and introduce and help them discover. If Jesus doesn't change them after being introduced that is between them and Jesus.
- Light Weight Faith
 - Jesus invites Nathanael to follow Him
 - **John 1:47-51 - "Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!"⁴⁸ Nathanael said**

¹⁷ "Nathanael's skepticism about Jesus probably does not arise out of small-town rivalries (Nathanael was from Cana, according to 21:2), but out of a stubborn provincialism in reverse that refuses to see anything great or glorious in that which is familiar or close to home. Nathanael takes offense at "Nazareth" for much the same reason that the human mind in every generation takes offense at the Word coming "in human flesh" (v. 14). Whether or not it also reflects the writer's awareness of later Jewish polemic against "the sect of the Nazoreans" (Acts 24:5) is more difficult to determine. If it does, then Philip's words, "Come and see," stand as an invitation to the Jewish community to put old prejudices aside and test the claims of Jesus and the Christian movement fairly on the basis of personal experience." NICNT

to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called¹⁸ 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."

- Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!" – This is a big statement. How did Jesus know that? What was He saying? He was saying this man's character was extremely high. He was a good guy who wasn't out for selfish gain. It was a compliment.
- Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" – Nathanael is freaked out a bit and doesn't get what's happening. Did someone tell Jesus about him? Did he know this guy from somewhere? He didn't think so. He was confused.
- Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you."¹⁹ – Jesus tells him something that no one would have known. Jesus wasn't stalking this guy. He saw it supernaturally. How did that happen isn't explained but it was clearly miraculous because of the response from Nathanael. He is blown away.
 - Is this a supernatural vision? – Is that what this is? Do those still happen? Yes they do although they are more rare.
- Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" – Nathanael goes off. He had been told that this was Messiah, so he was going to have a lot of information in his mind to pour out (e.g. Son of God; King of Israel) because those were things assumed about the Promised Messiah. He is convinced that Jesus is who Philip said he was because of the supernatural miracle he just experienced (why I think supernatural experiences matter so much).
 - Rabbi = religious teacher (see above for more information).
 - Son of God²⁰ = what did they know about a Son of God at that time? They knew that the Messiah was called Son of God and it simply meant that he would 'come from God'.

¹⁸ "Called" (φωνῆσαι) is not the word commonly used for calling or recruiting someone as a disciple (that is, καλεῖν), but means simply to call out or speak to someone." NICNT

¹⁹ "Grammatically, the words are ambiguous, but the most likely meaning is that "under the fig tree" is where Nathanael was when Philip "found" him and told him about Jesus (v. 45)... The participle ὄντα ("being," or "when you were") could be read either with the first occurrence of σε, or "you" ("Before Philip spoke to you under the fig tree, I saw you"), or with the second ("Before Philip spoke to you, I saw you when you were under the fig tree"). See Abbott, *Johannine Grammar*, 278." NICNT

²⁰ "The Gospel writer and his readers know that Jesus is God's Son in a more profound sense than Nathanael could have understood (see 1:14, 18), yet he allows Nathanael (like John in v. 34) to speak for him and for the entire Christian community. Nathanael's confession anticipates the writer's hope that all who read "might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing have life in his name" (20:31)." NICNT

- King of Israel²¹ = What is this title? What does it mean? King of Israel was a Messianic title because the prophecies said that he would rule Israel and bring them victory and salvation. King David was the best king they had had, but the Messiah was the real deal and better than David. David ruled Israel. The Messiah would rule the world.
- 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 responds kind of funny, it's like He's saying, 'wow, you are a miracle lightweight. That impressed you? That ain't nothing, wait until you see the other stuff that I can do, and you will experience by following me.
- What greater things would Nathanael see? – Jesus is about to mention one of the biggies but what other things would Nathanael witness by following Jesus? Not only would he witness these things but would participate in: healing the sick, casting out demons, causing miracles, etc.
- And he said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you²², - this is an ancient way of saying, 'what I'm about to tell you is really important and I'm serious about it, so I need you take this to heart...'

²¹ "The second title, "the King of Israel" (see 12:13), is precisely what we would expect from "a true Israelite." Nathanael, as "Israel," acknowledges "Jesus, son of Joseph, from Nazareth" as his King and Lord. The designation of Israel's king as God's son goes all the way back to the biblical Psalms (compare Pss 2:6–7; 89:26–27), and in the present context the two are virtually synonymous ways of affirming Jesus as "the Christ" or "Messiah" (compare vv. 41, 45)." ... There is ambivalence about Jesus' kingship in this Gospel. He eludes efforts to make him king (6:15), yet the crowds in Jerusalem echo Nathanael's words in welcoming him as "King of Israel," in fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9 (12:13, 15). The inscription over the cross, in common with the other Gospels, reads, "the King of the Jews" (19:19; compare v. 14), but the Gospel writer puts the irony in context with a serious dialogue between Jesus and Pilate over kingship (18:33–38) and a reminder to Pilate that Jesus "made himself the Son of God" (19:7). "My kingship is not from this world," Jesus tells Pilate, "You say that I am a king; for this I was born, and for this I came into the world, that I might testify to the truth. Everyone who is from the truth hears my voice" (18:36, 37). Those who are "from the truth," like Nathanael, are the "Israel" of which Jesus is King. Nathanael and his companions will learn shortly that Jesus' identity as Son and Revealer of God defines and takes precedence over his identity as King." NICNT

²² "The double "Amen" formula occurs 25 times in John's Gospel as a way of solemnly attesting the truth of what is about to be said. It is never doubled in the other Gospels, where Jesus uses the single "Amen" 31 times in Matthew, 13 times in Mark, and 6 times in Luke. The formula does not demand the plural "you." Jesus could have used the singular (soi) as he does with Nicodemus (3:3, 5, 11) and with Peter (13:38; 21:18). "Amen" (sometimes doubled) was fairly common in Jewish literature as a response to a prayer or vow,⁷² but Jesus' use of it to introduce certain pronouncements is virtually unique. The 25 instances of "Amen, amen" in John's Gospel are quite varied and resist easy generalization. Sometimes (as here) they attest the truth of a single pronouncement (3:3; 8:51; 13:21); other times they introduce (10:7; 12:24) or punctuate a longer speech of Jesus (for example, 5:19, 24, 25), or highlight Jesus' responses within an ongoing dialogue or controversy (see 6:26, 32, 47, 53). Sometimes they call attention to his identity as "Son" (5:19) or "Son of God" (5:25) or "Son of Man" (here and in 6:62). Sometimes (as here) they predict the future (see 13:21, 38; 14:12; 16:20, 23; 21:18). Sometimes they point the way to salvation or eternal life (3:3, 5; 6:47, 53; 8:51). It is easy to say (as many commentators do) that the formula accents certain sayings of Jesus as especially important, but if Jesus is "the Word" (vv. 1, 14), and if everything he speaks is what he has received from the Father (for example, 3:34; 7:16; 8:26, 28, 38; 12:49), then all of his sayings are true and revelatory in the eyes of the Gospel writer. It is just that Jesus pauses occasionally to vouch more explicitly for their truth. In a sense, the double "Amen" formula here (and even more explicitly in 3:11) solemnly attests the truth of all that Jesus will say from here on." NICNT

- you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending²³ on the Son of Man – What does this mean? It's pretty cryptic and I'm certain that the group listening initially had no clue what it meant. When was this fulfilled? It is referring to heavenly beings ministering to Him and working with Him to indicate that He was Godly. This happened multiple times, one of which was the Desert Temptation. Another was the Garden of Gethsemane.

Conclusion

- Accepting an invitation requires change – How that relates to Salvation
 - Practical Change Required - Following Jesus necessitates change. Locations changes, occupations changes, name (identity) changes, thinking changes...
 - No mention of sin yet – Outside of John the Baptist's claim of Jesus being the Lamb that takes away the sin of the world, there is no mention of Jesus inviting people to come be saved from their sin. There seems to be another motivator for them other than fear. He is inviting them into relationship with Him but for a purpose. What did they know? What did they expect? The attachment seems to be around Jesus being the alleged Messiah so maybe there was a salvation element to them, but I think they would have triggered more on the idea of the Messianic victor more than the Suffering Servant motif. In other words, we think about people only 'coming to Jesus' out of desperation, but at this point they are looking to follow Jesus for the GREATER.
- Altar Call

²³ "More to the point is the fact that angels are associated with the Son of man nine other times in the Gospels, and are viewed on at least three different occasions as Jesus' actual or potential protectors during his sojourn on earth (see Mt 2:13–14, 19–21; 4:6, 11; 26:53; Mk 1:13; Lk 22:43). Chronologically, Jesus' promise to Nathanael and the other disciples comes closest to the notice at the temptation in Mark and Matthew that "the angels were ministering to him" (Mk 1:13; compare Mt 4:6, 11). In simplest terms, "the angels of God going up and coming down over the Son of man" represent the "glory" (doxa) to be displayed in Jesus' ministry (compare v. 14), from the wedding at Cana (2:11) to the raising of Lazarus from the dead (11:4, 40)—all of it preliminary to the Son of man's final "glorification" in the passion narratives. Probably no significant distinction should be made between the angels "going up" (as if to bring Jesus' prayers up to the Father) and "coming down" (as if to bring to Jesus revelations from God). Rather, the two participles simply reinforce the notion that God is with Jesus from the beginning of his ministry to the end. The reference to "the sky opened" echoes the synoptic accounts of Jesus' baptism, while the angels (as we have seen) would have evoked for some his desert temptation. Just as the writer of this Gospel omits the transfiguration, yet sums up the whole ministry of Jesus with the testimony that "we looked at his glory" (v. 14), so he omits Jesus' baptism and temptation, yet affirms the reality of the Spirit "remaining" on him (vv. 31, 33) and of angels "going up and coming down" over him (v. 51), not in one or two incidents but throughout his ministry, up to and including his resurrection." NICNT