

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

#3: "Jesus Calls His First Disciples"

SCRIPTURE: John 1:35-51

INTRO:

As I pointed out last week, John's gospel account isn't synoptic. That is, it's not like Matthew, Mark, and Luke. He begins the story of Jesus with an adult Jesus.

Hindsight tells us that Matthew's account was aimed at the Jews, Mark's at the Romans, and Luke's at the Greeks. That leaves John's account for the rest of the world and for us today.

We're not even through the first chapter, and we're at the part where Jesus calls His first disciples.

THE FIRST TO BE CALLED WERE ANDREW AND PETER.

Beginning in verse 35:

The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. 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?" 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. One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ). 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).

So, Andrew was a disciple or follower of John the Baptizer, and when John pointed to Jesus as the Lamb of God, he immediately followed after Him.

Andrew and the unnamed one with him called Jesus "Rabbi," which literally means "my great one," but had come to mean "teacher." Some believe the unnamed disciple was John, the author of this gospel account. Others believe it could be Phillip since he and Andrew go together in this gospel account and came from the same village. They went with Jesus and probably spent the night at the place where He was staying.

Whatever happened to Andrew? As we can best determine, he was crucified around 70 A.D. on a cross that was in the shape of an “X”. Such an “X” shaped cross is known today as “Andrew’s Cross.”

Upon being convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, Andrew found Simon his brother and brought him to Jesus. When Jesus first saw him, He said, “You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas.” Cephas is Aramaic for Peter, and Peter is Greek for “rock.” Simon is Hebrew.

What else do we know about Andrew and Peter? We know that they were sons of John or Jonah (They’re the same name in Greek and Hebrew.). As fishermen, they were what would be called “a man’s man” in that they were lived a rough, hard life and were unkempt and foul-mouthed. Andrew was probably born between 5 and 10 A.D. and died around 60-70 A.D. Peter was born about 1 B.C. and died around 67 A.D. He was crucified. The church historians Tertullian, Origen, and Eusebius state that he was stretched out, dressed in prison garb, and he requested to be crucified upside down because he felt unworthy to be crucified in the way that the Lord Jesus Christ had been.

We don’t read much about Andrew in the New Testament, but we know that Peter plays a very prominent role in the establishment and growth of the church.

NEXT TO BE CALLED WERE PHILIP AND NATHANAEEL.

Verses 43-51:

The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, “Follow me.” Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. 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.” Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.” Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!” 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.” Nathanael answered him, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” 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.” 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.”

So, what do we know about these two?

What about Phillip? Well, John tells us that it was Phillip who asked Jesus how they were going to feed the 5,000 people who had gathered to listen to Jesus teach. Since his name is Greek (Phillipos), he may have played a role as a

liaison between the Greeks and Jesus. John mentions in chapter 12 that he told Andrew about some Greeks who wanted to meet with Jesus. At the Last Supper, it was Phillip who asked Jesus to show them the Father, affording Him opportunity to teach them about His oneness with the Father.

Tradition has it that Phillip was crucified upside down and refused to be freed when the people demanded it.

What about Nathanael? What do we know of him? Well, Nathanael expressed some skepticism when Phillip first told him about Jesus. He said, "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" Jesus, upon seeing him, commented, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!" He is referred to in the synoptic gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke as "Bartholomew," which means "son of Tolmai," who was his father. He's also mentioned as Bartholomew in Acts 1:13, where the apostles who were together in the upper room are listed.

Tradition says that Nathanael was to be crucified with Phillip but was removed from his cross at the behest of the people.

WHAT DID JESUS MEAN IN VERSE 51?

He said to Nathanael, "*...you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.*" What could be the meaning of that?

Bible scholars are unsure as to what Jesus meant by these words. I offer you the words of Paul Butler, my former classmate at Ozark Bible College:

"The best exegesis is that Jesus means He is the antitype of Jacob's ladder (Genesis 28:12). In other words, He will be revealed to Nathanael as the Way to Heaven. He will be shown to His disciples, and eventually the world, as the Mediator between God and man" (College Press, Bible Study Textbook, *The Gospel of John*, Volume 1, p. 56).

But why does Jesus refer to Himself as "*the Son of Man*"? What's with that? We understand Him to be "*the Son of God.*" But here and in many other places in the gospels He refers to Himself as "*the Son of Man.*" We'll find it 13 times in our journey through the gospel of John. The *College Press NIV Commentary John*, by Beauford H. Bryant and Mark S. Krause, offers five reasons Jesus referred to Himself this way:

1. This designation is used in the Old Testament in Daniel 7:13-14;
2. As Jesus used it, it simply meant "I" as in John 6:20, where He said to His disciples, "*It is I; do not be afraid*";
3. It fit with His predictions of His death and resurrection;

4. It fit with His teachings on the future end of the world and His judgment;
and
5. He wanted to unite His human nature with His divineness, hence, ***“Son of God”*** and ***“Son of Man.”***

When I see the two descriptions, I think of His virgin birth – that He was human because Mary gave birth to Him, and divine because he was conceived by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, He didn’t have the sin-tainted nature that would have been passed along by a human father.

CONCLUSION:

So, Jesus has now been revealed as the Messiah and has called four disciples. He is both Son of God and Son of Man. We’ll pick it up from there next week...