



also testifying with them, both by **SIGNS AND WONDERS** and by various **MIRACLES** and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to **His own will.**" (Heb. 2:3-4 emphasis mine).

says that the proof which established faith in Nathanael is weak in comparison to future signs and miracles that will confirm His divinity to the world. Indeed, the writer of Hebrews affirms the truth of this, saying, "**How will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God**

Now I would like to return to the initial statement of Christ as Nathanael approached Him: "**Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile!**" (John 1:47). As we reflect on these words one last time, let each of us consider a question for ourselves: "What would Christ say of *me* if He saw me approaching?" Would He say, "Behold a Christian indeed, in whom there is nothing false"? May we each live so such could be said of us.



4700 Andrews Ave.
Amarillo TX 79106
806-352-2809
www.olsenpark.com

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Welcome Visitors

We are so glad that you joined us today.
Please come again.

● **Let us know if you have any questions.**

ISSUE

12.43

BULLETIN OF
THE OLSEN
PARK CHURCH
OF CHRIST

Faithful Sayings

October 24
2010

Services

Sunday: 9:30 AM
10:20 AM
6:00 PM
Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Pat Ledbetter
Jeff Nunn
Kyle Pope

Deacons:

Dean Bowers
Eddie Cook
Bill Davis
Steve Dixon
Pat Goguen
Jack Langley
Neil Ledbetter
Brady McAlister
Walker McAnear
Lance Purcell
Rusty Scott

Evangelists:

Kyle Pope
Jason Garcia



Nathanael Meets Jesus

By Jason Garcia

In the Gospel account of John we read of man named Nathanael who, upon approaching Christ for the first time, is greeted by our Lord with the words, "**Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile!**" (John 1:47 KJV). I myself have often wondered if Nathanael ever realized the great compliment and recognition that Christ gave him. Who among the apostles, besides Peter, ever received such a wonderful testament to his character? Let us consider what was behind this statement, and the conversation that took place following this compliment.

The Identity of Nathanael

First, as to the identity of Nathanael, a strong argument can be made in support of the view that he was the apostle who elsewhere is called



Fig Tree

Bartholomew. For one thing, the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) all speak of an apostle named Bartholomew, but never mention Nathanael. John speaks of Nathanael, but never mentions Bartholomew. Bartholomew is actually not a proper name but simply means “son of Ptolemy,” and as such, allowing “Nathanael” to be potentially the proper name of Bartholomew. Furthermore, John in-



Olsen Park church of Christ

cludes Nathanael among the other apostles when recording Christ’s appearing to them in chapter twenty one (cf. John 21:1-4). Finally, in the Synoptic Gospels, Bartholomew is invariably mentioned alongside Phillip. This is significant because in John’s Gospel, it is Phillip who calls Nathanael to “**come and see**” the Messiah, indicating the two men had a relationship prior to finding Jesus (cf. Matt. 3:10; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:14; John 1:46). Ultimately, whether or not Nathanael is the same man as Bartholomew will not affect the point of our study, but nevertheless the weight of what Christ said at their first meeting merits some inquiry into this man’s history.

A True Israelite

Now let us consider a couple of particulars within Jesus’ compliment. The word rendered “indeed” is (*alethos*) which is the adverbial form of “true”, and deserves consideration because the reader may be inclined to think that Jesus is saying Nathanael is a “true Israelite” (i.e. one genuinely descended from Abraham) rather than what He is *actually* saying, which is, “truly” here is an Israelite in whom there is nothing false (lit. “no deceit”; Gr. *dolos*). Nathanael differs from the original “Israel” (i.e. Jacob) in that he is not double-minded or duplicitous as the Jacob of old who deceived his family (see Genesis 27:5-44). This fact, coupled with Nathanael’s willingness to seek out Jesus despite his own skepticism, (cf. John 1:46) as well as the religious climate—saturated by hypocritical and deceitful men (e.g. the Pharisees), demonstrates a stark contrast in Nathanael’s *attitude* as indicative of one who is prepared to objectively consider the claims regarding Jesus (cf. Matt

26:4; Mark. 14:1). Adam Clarke puts it this way: “To find a man, living in the midst of so much corruption, walking in uprightness before his Maker; was a subject worthy of the attention of God Himself” (*Critical Commentary of John*, pg. 521).

“How Do You Know Me?”

In response to Jesus’ greeting, Nathanael asks, “**How do you know me?**” (John 1:48 NASB). It wasn’t readily known to Nathanael that Jesus could see into men’s hearts, and thus know the integrity of their character (cf. Matt. 9:4; 12:25; Luke 9:47). However, upon hearing Jesus’ answer, “**Before Phillip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you,**” no room for doubt is left in Nathanael’s mind concerning the nature of Jesus and so he exclaims “**You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel**” (John 1:48-49). Some scholars try to impose significant meaning on Nathanael’s place under the fig tree, and while it’s true that in the Old Testament, the fig tree is sometimes used as a figure for peace, security, and even prosperity (cf. Mic. 4:4; Zech. 3:10), there is no valid reason for such symbolism to be associated with it here. There are some who maintain, because of references in rabbinical writings, that Nathanael was studying Scripture (or meditating/praying) under the fig tree as was the Jewish custom in his day (cf. Midr. Qoh. 5:11 B2). However, some argue that the references for such claims are few and far between, and the evidence for these assertions is flimsy at best due to the obscure, isolated incidents that are cited. Nevertheless, we can be certain,



The Sea of Galilee

regardless of one’s conclusion concerning the fig tree, that Jesus’ revelation to Nathanael, which entailed specific knowledge of the tree, serves to confirm to Nathanael that Jesus was, at the very least, a prophet of God, and such revelations were always meant to prove He was the Messiah, and not merely to impress His audience (cf. John 20:30-31). Lastly, notice that after faith has been engendered in Nathanael, Jesus says, “**Because I said to you that I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You will see greater things than these**” (John 1:50). Christ essentially