

- ***READ John 1:43-46*** Have you ever had it happen to you where you consistently see or read a particular thing and you've done that multiple times, and then out of nowhere you see something that you just hadn't seen or thought about before. That happened to me with these verses over this past week. At least three times over the course of January I read through this particular section of John's Gospel account, and it wasn't until just recently that I realized that I had missed a goldmine of extremely valuable teaching material.
 - In setting the scene for our other stories of different peoples' face to face encounters with Jesus, I have made mention multiple times the way that Nathanael's life was forever changed by his realization that he was standing face to face with the Son of God. However, I'd like to suggest to you that this is not the only thing that Nathanael realized on that day as he stood face to face with deity. The truth of the matter is that Nathanael learned many valuable lessons and came to some crucial realizations that not only impacted him, but they can also impact the way we go about living our lives as disciples. With these thoughts in mind, let's take a look at Nathanael's face to face conversation with Jesus so that we can learn what he came away realizing and how that might change him and us.
- I. His presuppositions almost cost him the chance to meet the Son of God, the King of Israel.**
- A. Nathanael had preconceived notions about Jesus that almost caused him to make a big mistake.**
1. We are often critical of Nathanael for the way he practically brushes aside the notion that the Messiah could come out of Jerusalem, but the truth is that his presumption of nothing good coming out of Nazareth wasn't without cause. In fact, history bears out that Nazareth was basically a podunk backwoods middle of nowhere hole in the wall.
 2. Nathanael (who many believe to be the Bartholomew of Matthew, Mark, and Luke) was of Galilee himself specifically Cana. (**John 21:2**) So he would've been well aware of Nazareth and the reputation that it held...really nothing note worthy at all. It was quite insignificant. Insignificant to the degree that there were a number of skeptics who weren't even convinced that it was a real place! Thankfully archaeology has proven through findings that it was, indeed, a city, but it, again, wasn't anything of consequence. It is believed that Nazareth had a population no larger than 500. That size is comparable to Gadsden right over in Crockett County which has a population right under 500 at 470.
 3. So if we think about it, Nathanael wasn't exactly off base when he makes his snide remark about if anything good could come out of Nazareth. Ethan Longhenry said this in an article on the subject, *"In the eyes of more educated and urban Jews, the Nazarenes would have been judged as ignorant at best and perhaps as simple-minded sinners at worst."* Yet, that doesn't excuse the fact that this face to face meeting with Jesus almost didn't happen because of Nathanael's presuppositions and stereotypical judgements.
- B. While we scoff at Nathanael's near miss, we must recognize that it can be just as easy for us to fail to give others a chance simply because of something we assume about them.**
1. How often when speaking with someone about another person or people we don't know, do we make decisions or assumptions about them without ever having met them? Especially as southerners, how often do we hear about someone being from up north and we have presuppositions about them being rude or not being lovers of sweet tea, or being from the north we assume that all southerners don't own a single pair of shoes or that all of them operate moonshine stills out of their outhouses in their back yards?
 2. You see, we all make assumptions and have presuppositions about people depending on a lot of varying factors. Maybe where they're from gets us thinking one way about or them, or we see what they're wearing and we think something else. Now, we also must recognize that often

these presuppositions come from a place of truth or reality, but that still doesn't mean that we shouldn't be willing to give people a chance or the benefit of the doubt.

3. Where would Christianity be if everyone assumed of Jesus as Nathanael did, but actually didn't give him a chance? Where would the church be if the disciples at Jerusalem never gave Paul a chance when he tried to associate with them following his conversion to Jesus? (**Acts 9:26**) Where would many of us be if others weren't willing to give us a chance instead of just working off of some assumption about us based on different aspects of who we have been or who we currently are? If there is anything that Nathanael learned looking back on his conversation with Jesus, it was that he just about blew it if had let his presumptions have the better part of his thinking.

II. He had much to thank Philip for.

A. It was Philip's excitement about his belief in Jesus being the Messiah that led him to go and tell Nathanael that he needed to come and see whom he had found.

1. We're not given very much information about Philip being called by Jesus besides that of Jesus simply telling him to *"Follow Me."* (**John 1:43**) However, I think it safe to assume that Jesus had done or said something else to be able to convince this man to follow Him without what seems to be much hesitation at all.
2. Nevertheless, after Philip is called to follow Jesus, we see him turning around and going to find Nathanael, and Philip doesn't exactly employ a soft sale to get Nathanael to come check this new guy out. Instead, Philip goes straight for the home run by telling Nathanael that he had found *"Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote."* (**John 1:45**) For Philip to describe Jesus in this way would've put a great amount of weight into what he was claiming. To the first century Jew, Philip's description was obvious code talk for the Messiah. Philip was claiming that he had found the Messiah, and we know how much the Jews looked forward to the Messiah because He was supposed to bring about their restoration.
3. But then we see how he goes about telling Nathanael who exactly he was referring to. Jesus wasn't exactly an uncommon name. It would be like modern day John or for this church Alan. So he not only specifies who's son Jesus was in being Joseph's son, but he also further specifies by stating that this was Jesus...Joseph's son...who was from Nazareth. We have already seen how Nathanael reacted poorly, but that wasn't Philip's intent at all. Yet, we also see that Philip didn't allow for Nathanael's initial resistance from stop him from again offering for Nathanael to *"come and see."* (**John 1:46**) Without Philip, who knows if Nathanael ever comes to be face to face with the Son of God.

B. We can all be a "Philip" to the many people in our lives with whom we have influence.

1. Before we even think about who we can be a "Philip" to, can you think about someone in your life who might have been a "Philip" to your "Nathanael?" Maybe you were the one who was in need of a Savior, and you were unaware of Jesus's desires for your life? I know that was the case for my mom and dad. My dad had not grown up in a home where faith was central to life. Sure my dad's family was religious to an extent. Most Hispanic people are religious people, but it wasn't until he met my mom that he was introduced to the true will of God and the church that His Son had given His life for. Some of you might have come from similar situations.
2. Like Nathanael, we should be unendingly thankful to those people who were willing to ask us to *"come and see"* the Lord Jesus. Additionally, we should give effort to think about those whom we might know of whom we could be a "Philip" towards. Who do we know that is in need of the saving blood of Jesus? Maybe we know some "Nathanaels", and maybe we have even tried to invite them to come meet Jesus yet they offered resistance. That's ok...it happens, but that doesn't mean that we have to give up! Be like the real Philip and simply

continue to encourage those “Nathanaels” we know to come and see. Who knows what will come of it, but we know that nothing will happen if we never ask!

III. Following Jesus would lead to his faith being more greatly confirmed.

A. Jesus seeing Nathanael under the tree and knowing his heart would not be the most amazing thing that Nathanael would see through his following of Jesus.

1. It was after Philip convinced Nathanael to come and see Jesus that we see the interaction between Jesus and Nathanael take place. Jesus sees Nathanael coming and shouts, ***“Behold, and Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!” (John 1:47)*** Nathanael was obviously taken aback by this stranger seeming to think that He knew something about him, so he asked the obvious follow up question, ***“How do you know me?” (John 1:48)***
2. Now, maybe Jesus greets Nathanael in this manner because of his comments of nothing good coming out of Nazareth. After all, we made the point that Nathanael wasn’t exactly off base with his comments. Or maybe Jesus said what He said because of what Nathanael was thinking upon as he was sitting under the fig tree when Jesus said that He saw him. ***“Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.” (John 1:48)*** Anyone could’ve seen Nathanael sitting where he was, but not just anyone could know what was on his mind. Whatever it was that Jesus meant by what He said, it was enough for Nathanael to willingly proclaim that Jesus was in fact the Son of God, the King of Israel. ***(John 1:49)***
3. It is at this point that Jesus takes the words of Nathanael and lets him know as we say here in the south, ***“you ain’t seen nothing yet!”*** He tells Nathanael, ***“You will see greater things than these.” (John 1:50)*** He further details that Nathanael would see ***“the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.” (John 1:51)***
4. What is Jesus alluding to? We can’t know for certain, but He could be making a reference to Jacobs latter where Jacob saw angels going up and down to and from heaven on a latter. It could be that Jesus is saying that He, the Son of Man, would come to be that connection between man and heaven. If this is the case, then this would make sense because if Nathanael is indeed the Bartholomew of the Synoptics then he would see Jesus be exalted as Lord and Christ through His death and resurrection. Regardless, Nathanael’s faith was only going to be strengthened through his being along side Jesus.

B. The longer we live as disciples, the more opportunities we will have to see the love and grace of Jesus at work in our lives and the more our faith will be confirmed.

1. We know that faith is the evidence of things hoped for the conviction of things not seen. ***(Hebrews 11:1-6)*** When we all initially come to Jesus, we come in faith hoping that we will see our lives changed through a willingness to be obedient to Him in all things. How long does it take for us to start seeing those changes and benefits? For some of us, that doesn’t take long at all because doing things according to Jesus’s way will truly lead to a more abundant life.
2. Additionally, we will see God’s love in action with all of those we are joined to in the body of Christ. We might not see some miraculous signs to show us God’s power, but we have one another and the lives we lead for God. We see the joy and love we share. We even see those who might once have been enemies with those whom we are now joined through Jesus. We see the willingness to rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who mourn. We experience the ability to find joy and hope, even in the worst of situations. We are joined together with others by a bond that cannot and will not be broken as long as we hold fast, and that will do nothing but strengthen our faiths and resolve to be faithful to God all of our days.

What a swing of realities for Nathanael that all could've never happened if Philip hadn't extended the invitation for him to "*come and see.*" None of it would've ever happened if Nathanael had not have been willing to put aside his presumptions about Jesus of Nazareth in order to at least go and meet the man. Nathanael never would've forever had his life changed by the One he acknowledged as the Son of God and the King of Israel. I hope that each of us can learn something from Nathanael's face to face meeting with Jesus that almost never was, so that we might have the same opportunities to change the lives of others all the while being mightily changed ourselves.

PRAYER *Our good Father in heaven...we are so deeply thankful for Your mercy and grace. We are so thankful for Your Word which leads us into a deeper and truer knowledge of who You are and Your will for us. As we have studied this evening, we pray that you would help each of us to lay aside our preconceived notions and presumptions of others so that our efforts to grow and to help others grow will not be hindered. May we ever keep our eyes open for opportunities to aid others, and may we never take for granted the amazing work that you are doing in each of our lives. Help us as we go throughout this week to lean upon You for strength. May we look to Your Word for guidance, and may You help us to overcome the temptations of the evil one. Thank you so much for Jesus and His sacrifice, and it is in His holy name that we pray these things...amen.*