

Bartholomew

or

Nathanael*

“The Disciples”



Bartholomew is symbolized with the Bible and a slaying knife because he is said to have been flayed alive for preaching the Gospel.

Have you ever searched for something and heard the phrase “It was right in my own backyard.” I think that is what was happening with Bartholomew. They had been searching for Christ, the king, but they couldn’t find him. What would he look like? What would he do. Sometimes we’re in the same situation. We’re looking too hard and then find out the answer was there all the time. All we had to do was pray. In Bartholomew’s situation they were seeking and Christ was there all the time.

*“Philip now went off to look for Nathanael and told him, ‘We have found the Messiah!—the very person Moses and the prophets told about! His name is Jesus, the son of Joseph from Nazareth!’ ‘Nazareth!’ exclaimed Nathanael. ‘Can anything good come from there?’ ‘Just come and see for yourself,’ Philip declared.”
John 1 45-49 The Living Bible*

Many times the phrase “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” has been interpreted as a negative question. Some Bible scholars paint a much different picture. Barclay, a noted authority on the Scriptures, feels that this is evidence that Philip and Nathanael had been searching for the Messiah. Nathanael’s response is more of a wonderful fulfillment of a prayer than a statement of disbelief. Further, Nathanael’s response showed that he had knowledge that a Messiah was to come, and he believed they had found him. Christ told Nathanael he had known about him even before Philip brought him to join the disciples! But, we’ll get to that later on.

We say we study the scriptures, and we hunt for answers, and then we get them through study, prayer, or from another person and we doubt. The fact that Christ knew Nathanael was enough for him. He believed and went on to become a great missionary.

To one who has faith, no explanation is necessary. To one without faith, no explanation is possible.

Thomas Aquinas

Many times we need to stop and look at the people that God has chosen to lead us. We can begin at the birth of Christ with the lowly shepherds. Then there were some guys running around the country side following a star. They thought they were hunting the Messiah, a new King. And, that King was born in a lowly stable. None of them had any “doctoral degree.” The shepherds weren’t even allowed to testify in court. The wise men were from another country and probably spoke a different language. Why would the people have believed them? They weren’t anyone special.

Perhaps we need to realize that God chooses the people He knows will do the job regardless of their background, education, social status, or even where they were born. Nathanael was willing to take Christ at His word and follow Him. He didn’t require a blinding experience like Paul.

There is more to the story than just Nathaniel making the quote “*Nazareth. Can anything good come from there?*” John 1:46. In the very next verse, as Philip and Nathanael were going towards Jesus, Jesus recognized him and said “*Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!*” Nathanael was concerned. He wondered how Christ knew him.

John 1:48-51 is a wonderful answer to Nathanael.

“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.’”

Some authorities have put much significance into the fact that it was a fig tree and have tried to tie symbolism to that. Others feel that he was there in prayer and it was just a place to sit in the shade. The most important part of this story, for me, is the fact that Christ knew the sincerity within Nathanael and gave him a great promise that is available to all of us.

From a man barely mentioned in the Bible, we see God’s ultimate knowledge of us. He knew Nathanael long before Nathanael knew him. But Nathanael knew that He was the Son of God. Is God watching us? I believe He is. Just as He knew Nathanael, He knows us. We are told He cares for us and knows the number of hairs on our head. Whether He knows each hair is not important. It is important that we know He cares for us and watches over us just as He did Nathanael. He knows if we believe in Him.

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**It is not about
how well you said it
or how often you said it
but its about how
sincere and true are you
with what you are saying**

He knew that Nathanael believed in Him and made him a wonderful promise. Jesus promised that Nathanael would see heaven and the angels of God ascending and descending. That is a wonderful promise to us also if we believe.

Sometimes we want to seek God like Nathaniel. Sometimes we want to hide and think that God can’t see us. We realize he can but sometimes we don’t want him to see what we’re doing. I’m so glad He sees me all the time even when I want to hide.



*“If God could
close the mouth
of the lions for
Daniel, part the
red seas for
Moses, make
the sun stand*

*still for Joshua, open the prison for
Peter, put a baby in the arms of Sa-
rah, and raise Lazarus from the dead
then He can certainly take care of
you! Nothing you are facing today is
too hard for Him to handle!*

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we see so many signs of Your love every day, and we take them for granted. Help us to accept them as Your gifts to us, and then help us to lead others to know that You are the one, and through You we can all have eternal life with you beginning today and forever. In Christ’s name we pray. Amen

1. Can anything good come from someone in a neighboring town? Don’t they have to be from far away and have many degrees?
2. And if they are from far away, then we ask how could they know anything. They aren’t even from here?
3. Who would have believed those “wise” men? Would you? Would I?
4. What do we require before we realize that Christ is the One?
5. What can we learn about ourselves from Nathanael?
6. Is God watching over you even before you accept Him as your personal Savior?

*Some scholars believe Nathanael and Bartholomew were the same. Others believe they were two men. Nathanael is mentioned in John; Bartholomew is mentioned in Matthew, Mark, Luke and Acts.

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*“When we chase happiness externally,
we’re simply looking for God in all the
wrong places.” Anonymous*

*“Let us not love with word or with
tongue, but in deed and truth.”*

1 John 3:18