

Lesson 12

Second Sunday after the Epiphany

The Holy Gospel: John 1:43–51

Matthew, Mark, and Luke are the synoptic Gospels. They have the same narrative style as they view the life and ministry of Jesus. John wrote his Gospel much later. He included some basic narratives and added others, but focused especially on the longer discourses of Jesus. Only John tells of the first contacts between Jesus and those who had been disciples of John the Baptist. He tells how he and Andrew were with Jesus for part of a day after they had been directed to Him as “the Lamb of God” by their master. Andrew then found his brother Simon and brought him to Jesus. Then Jesus called Philip, who invited Nathanael to come and see Jesus for himself.

Philip, from Bethsaida, “The House of Fish,” was probably involved in the fishing industry, as were Peter and Andrew and James and John. His name is of Greek origin, possibly suggesting that he grew up in a Jewish home with more liberal views, although, because of centuries of Greek influence, it really was not an unusual name among the Jews. We’re told Jesus *found* Philip to say to him, “Follow me.”

159. What does this say to us about Christian discipleship? (See John 15:16.)

Philip extended the Lord’s finding by going to his friend Nathanael. Philip’s approach to Nathanael indicates that he and Nathanael were serious students of the Scriptures. Pious Jews practiced a daily discipline of reading and meditating in a quiet place. Nathanael’s sitting in the shade of a fig tree might well refer to his time for such devotion.

160. Why did Nathanael react when Philip identified Jesus as “Jesus of Nazareth”? What can we learn for our own witnessing from Philip’s “Come and see”? How can we and our friends see Jesus?

161. Jesus approached Nathanael with some complimentary words that would be sure to gain his attention. What is the significance of His calling Nathanael “an Israelite indeed”? What does His adding “in whom there is no deceit” say about Nathanael’s character and personality?

162. In His reference to Nathanael being under the fig tree, what might Jesus have keyed on that would make His remark especially pointed for Nathanael? What “greater things” did Nathanael come to see as a disciple of Jesus?

163. With His allusion to Jacob’s experience at Bethel, what point was Jesus making about Himself and His ministry?

Nathanael called Jesus “the Son of God,” but Jesus referred to Himself as “the Son of Man.” When pressed at the time of His trial, Jesus did openly acknowledge that He is the Son of God, but He usually used the title “Son of Man” as He referred to Himself (see Matthew 26:63–64). His use of “Son of Man” was drawn from Daniel 7:13–14 and had messianic overtones, but was not popularly used in speaking of the promised Messiah.

164. Why did Jesus avoid referring to Himself as the “Messiah” or “Christ” during the course of His ministry and even tell His disciples not to do so?

The Old Testament Lesson: 1 Samuel 3:1–20

Samuel was the boy who was “lent to the Lord” (1 Samuel 1:26–28) by his parents in gratitude when God heard the prayer of his mother, Hannah, that she might be blessed with a son. The boy may have been as young as five or six years of age when he was brought to the tabernacle and dedicated to the Lord’s service. How old he was when he was called by the Lord is difficult to say, for the Hebrew word for “boy” is very broad in scope. Josephus, a first-century historian, said Samuel was 12 when the Lord spoke to him, but that may be because that had become the age in Jewish tradition at which a boy became a “son of duty” (*Bar Mitzvah*) and took personal responsibility for his faith and religious life.

165. What incidents in Jesus’ life does Hannah’s dedication of her son to the Lord, the service of Samuel in the tabernacle, and his interactions with the Lord bring to mind? What does “Samuel was lying down in the temple [tabernacle] of the LORD, where the ark of God was” suggest about Samuel and his service in the tabernacle?

The New International Version reads “ministered *before* the LORD.” The English Standard Version says, “Samuel was ministering *to* the LORD under Eli.” Either may be correct. “*To* the LORD” suggests ministering to please the Lord.