

The Gospel of Matthew

Title: Messengers Of The King - Part 3

Text: Matthew 10:2-4

[#5 - PHILIP](#)

As with Andrew there is no mention of Philip in the first three gospels, except the mention of his name in the list of disciples. There are two accounts in the gospel of John where we get some insight into Philip. It is highly likely Philip was a devout man looking for the Messiah as was laid out in the Old Testament Scriptures. Philip was a fisherman. Philip isn't mentioned except for the listing of the apostles in the first three gospels. The Lord Jesus called Philip in John 1:43, "**The next day He purposed to go into Galilee, and He found Philip. And Jesus said to him, Follow Me.**"

NOTE: Jesus went and found Philip. It is clear that Philip knew of the coming Messiah as we see in John 1:45, "**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.**" Philip was aware of the coming Jesus, and in a human respect was looking for Him, but it was Jesus who found him. Many today know of Jesus, they go to church, they read their bibles, they know of God, they know He exists, yet they are living their own lives, but it's only when God finds you in the pit of sin you are in will you ever be redeemed.

APPLICATION: Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost. Many are looking today. Jesus acknowledged such in the many healing He did, as they were seeking Him out. The leper, the woman with the issue of blood, the centurion.

God had prepared Philip's heart with the written word. It appears God's plan of the Messiah was on his mind. God prepared Philip's heart and when Jesus said "**follow Me**", of course he did. In the text of John 1:45, Philip told Nathanael of whom was written in the law. So immediately he began to share the message of Christ. **NOTE:** one of the genuine marks of true faith is sharing Christ when opportunity arises.

Something we also learn about Philip is he was of an analytical and practical mind, cf. John 6:5-7. Jesus knew He was going to multiply the bread and fish, but He tested Philip. We find that Philip's answer was practical, analytical, often much like our answers are when faced with impossible odds. His response was from a practical sense, there isn't enough to buy for all these. He took the question at face value, a denarii is a days wages.

How do we view the response of Philip? It did reveal a lack of spiritual understanding. Often when faced with human impossible odds, we acknowledge God and who He is, but in the same sentence we doubt. We often believe and then look at our circumstances.

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Philip also lacked some spiritual insight (as we all do from time to time) in John 14:8-11. Philip was more at home with physical facts and data than faith. But the Lord used him. History has reported that Philip was hung upside down by his feet, with sharp stakes in his feet and thighs. He slowly bleed to death.

#6 - BARTHOLOMEW (NATHANAEL)

John is the only one that addresses him as Nathanael. He is only mentioned in the first three gospels in the listing of the twelve. The only account we have in the Bible of interaction with Nathanael is in John 1:45-51. This is a marvelous truth of how God works in the heart of men. After the Lord called Philip, he went and found Nathanael. Philip was excited about the Messiah, the one they had been looking for, seeing in the OT scriptures.

Nathanael's response is one of prejudice, cf. John 1:46. First, it's apparent that both of these men were studying OT scriptures, and were aware of a coming Messiah. But Nathanael stumbled over the fact of where Jesus was from. It was common in the culture for Jews and Gentiles (Samaritans) to be prejudice towards each other. Let's define this word prejudice, "an unwarranted generalization based on feelings of superiority, and it can be a powerful obstacle to truth." This doesn't just affect ethnic prejudice, it also affects religious prejudice. His response reflected this, "can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" I am not justifying such prejudice, but it was a common statement of the day.

The very nature of prejudice is too turn a deaf ear and a blind eye to any truth that does not fit your preconceived notion. If not corrected, this is a common and powerful tool of Satan. What Satan does is appeal to the prejudices of man to turn him or her away from the gospel truth. The prejudices of their man-made traditions blinded many of the Jews from seeing the gospel of Jesus. This was all in-spite of His miracles and teachings.

Nathanael prejudice was tempered by his desire to know God's truth. Philip said to "come and see" and he went. The truth of the matter is, no matter the common prejudice of the time, Nathanael's heart won over his head. In other words, the truth of God's word superseded and replaced the cultural wrong of the time. NOTE: The truth will knock off any unbiblical positions we hold.

Let's unpack the conversation Jesus had with Nathanael in John 1. Jesus saw Nathanael coming and said there's no "guile" or deceit in him. He knew his heart. He knew all about him. Nathanael's response was "how do you know me?" I suppose we can assume Nathanael's response was really "how do you know me on the inside?" Even before Philip called you to come, "when you were under the fig tree, I saw you" (vs. 48). God knows our heart, He knows it's wicked ways, and tendency to sin, but He gives you a new heart. What a response from Nathanael, as he recognized and worshipped Jesus in vs. 49, "You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel." No matter our misguided thinking, when Jesus comes, He makes it right. Scripture and even tradition has little

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to say about his ministry or death. But it is apparent from the words of our Lord that he was a man after God and His work.

#7 - THOMAS

I suppose that most of us are most familiar with the term “doubting Thomas.” As with other disciples, the details we have are found in John’s gospel. Let’s look at Thomas aside from the known fact of his doubt. In John 11:1-5 is the story of Lazarus. Concerning Lazarus Jesus said in vs. 14-15, “Lazarus is dead, and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, so that you may believe; but let us go to him.” This meant going to Jerusalem. This is where extreme hostility was occurring. What is the response of Thomas? John 1:16, “Therefore Thomas, who is called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples, Let us also go, so that we may die with Him.” Doesn’t sound like a doubting Thomas does it? It seems that he was the one who took the lead to be all in for our Lord. Thomas was willing to pay the ultimate price for following Jesus. “He was obviously pessimistic about the outcome of the trip, but his pessimism makes his act all the more courageous. As a pessimist, he expected the worst in the outcome of the trip, but went anyway. An optimist would have needed less courage, but would have expected less danger.”¹

No matter the doubtless commitment to Jesus, Thomas, as with the others, often didn’t see the reality of Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection. This was the misunderstanding in John 14:1-6. Thomas didn’t want to be separated from Jesus. But He didn’t understand He was talking about His death, burial and resurrection. The words of Jesus comforted Thomas in vs. 6. If you know me, you know the way. If you know me, you know the truth.

The most famous name given to him is “doubting Thomas” and it comes from the text in John 20. Jesus has risen, yet for Thomas his worst fears have come true. The Lord is gone, they are left leaderless. But the Lord has appeared to the disciples gathered, cf. John 20:19-23. Thomas wasn’t with them, he may have been depressed and it’s nearly impossible to convince a pessimistic, depressed person of truth.

Where was Thomas at the first gathering? Who knows. It simply states he was not with them. Too often we miss God’s blessings because we are consumed in our own pity and doubt. The men whom he had spent three years with were telling him they saw the risen Jesus. Yet, he didn’t believe them. He wanted proof. His faith was at the bottom of the barrel. The word “I see” literally means “to behold” and unless he literally laid eyes on Him, he would not believe. And not only see Him, but he wanted to touch the physical wounds of the Lord.

After eight days Thomas was again with them, and the text doesn’t mention he expected to see the Lord. But Jesus appeared and responded to Thomas’ statement, providing Jesus knows our hearts, thoughts and words. His command to Thomas in vs. 27 was one of powerful truth. Here it is He

¹ The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, pp. 162

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says. Touch it as you said you wanted to. His response was one of knowing all doubt removed. But Jesus gently rebuked him. His doubt caused him to miss a blessing of complete total faith. Many of us have doubted, and yet God still performed what we needed. Once we realize it, we seem ashamed of doubting God. NOTE: many of us can identify with Thomas. We have full commitment, then we have depressed doubt that God isn't going to help. It is said that Thomas preached as far away as India, and the Mar Thoma Church, which bears his name, still exists today. Tradition holds that he died from a spear, a fitting end for one who wanted to see and touch the wound in his Lord's side.

#8 MATTHEW

A tax collector. A hated person. A traitor. They were legal extortioners. We have already discussed, but Matthew was hardly proud of what he was. He seems to always describe himself as “the tax collector” as a constant reminder of his own unworthiness and the greatness and mercy of God. I am often reminded of 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, “Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.” Matthew literally “burned the bridges” of a tax collector. He wasn't going back nor could he.

Matthew was not only faithful but humble. He is faceless and voiceless in the three years he spent with the Lord. He asks no questions, and he makes no comments. He appears directly in no narrative. What we know is in Matthew 9:10, he had many of his “friends” over to eat with Jesus. He was gladly sharing Jesus with his vile friends, “Then it happened that as Jesus was reclining at the table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were dining with Jesus and His disciples.” His humility was evident as we don't see any conversations concerning Matthew, but when the Holy Spirit opened his heart to use his pen, he wrote “twenty-eight powerful chapters on the majesty, might and the glory of King Jesus.”²

Matthew also quotes the OT more than any of the three other gospels combined. NOTE: He sensed personal sinfulness as likely no other disciple did. He had done so much wrong. I think we can see the depths of sin we've been forgiven of in terms of our past. Some were religious but lost, others were deeply involved in wicked ways and sin. For some today, as with Matthew, the deliverance is paramount. Jesus gave this parable in Luke 7:42-43, “A moneylender had two debtors: one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. So which of them will love him more? Simon answered and said, I suppose the one whom he forgave more. And He said to him, You have judged correctly.” Matthew likely loved much because he was forgiven much.

² The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, pp. 165