

WE HAVE FOUND THE MESSIAH

John 1:35-51

Key Verse: 1:41

The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, “We have found the Messiah” (that is, the Christ).

In the last lesson, we learned that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. We also learned that Jesus baptizes us with the Holy Spirit. In today’s passage, we learn that Jesus is the Messiah. This passage also gives us an account of how the first five of his disciples began to follow Jesus. May God help us to know what it means that Jesus is the Messiah!

I. “COME AND YOU WILL SEE” (35-43)

Look at verses 35-36. *The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, “Look, the Lamb of God.”* Once again John the Baptist told his disciples who Jesus was. In effect, John was saying to them, “You don’t have to follow me any longer. You should follow Jesus, the Lamb of God.” As I said earlier, John the Baptist had a successful ministry going. Thousands of people came to him to be baptized. And he had many disciples of his own. Some people even wondered if John was the Christ (Lk 3:15). But as soon as Jesus began his public ministry, John helped his disciples to follow Jesus instead. What did the two disciples do when they heard John’s witness about Jesus? Look at verse 37. *When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus.*

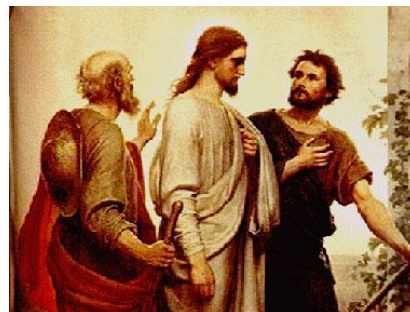
When Jesus saw the two disciples of John following him, what did he say to them? Turning around, Jesus asked them, “What do you want?” (38) This question sounds easy to answer. We all seem to know what we want. But we want so many things that we do not know what we really need. Many people want money, fame, pleasure, power, and the like, not knowing that these things cannot truly satisfy them. Even some believers don’t know what they really need. Some people follow Jesus with a wrong motive. Some people go to church mainly to socialize with others or to receive some moral and financial support. One international student I know was financially supported by a church congregation in Shippensburg, but when his human situation improved, he quit going to the church without even telling them why. It is a sad story. There are many other people who also view Christian faith not much more than a religion of self-improvement, fellowship and companionship, financial help, or deliverance from human trouble and suffering. As we follow Jesus, he also asks each one of us the question, “What do you want?” Jesus wants us to know why we are following him. He wants us to have a pure motive in following him. Let’s read verse 38a. *Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, “What do you want?”*

**WHAT
DO
YOU
WANT?**

The two disciples of John knew exactly what they wanted and what they needed. They said, “Rabbi (which means Teacher), where are you staying?” They wanted to go where Jesus was and find out about who Jesus really was. They did not wish to speak to Jesus only casually, in passing, as people exchange a small talk when they see each other on the street. The disciples did not just say, “Hey, Jesus, what’s up? How is it going?” Instead, they wanted to stay with him and talk about what was on their minds. They wanted to meet Jesus personally, not as casual acquaintance, but as ones who have an intimate relationship with him.

When Jesus heard them asking, “Where are you staying?” he knew right away that they were not interested in his address. They were not asking him to give them a grand tour of his house. In fact, Jesus did not own a house, not even a studio apartment. He once said, *“Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head”* (Lk 9:58).

What did Jesus tell them? Look at verse 39. *“Come,” he replied, “and you will see.”* Jesus invited them to come and have fellowship with him so that they might come to know him personally. “Come and you will see”—this is an invitation of the Messiah for all of us. By coming to Jesus and spending time with him, we come to know who Jesus really is. Many people in history accepted this invitation and their lives were changed forever. For example, St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430) was an intellectual hedonist. He was wasting away his life on drinking and womanizing, because he did not know God and did not have a purpose or direction in life. But one day, his slumbering soul was awakened when he heard a sermon by St. Ambrose (340?-397). He came to Jesus through his personal Bible study and found out who Jesus was—the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He became a spiritual leader and a theologian whose influence is still felt among us.



I also did not know what to do with my life after graduating from college. I wandered around the dark alleys of my hometown, suffering from meaninglessness, emptiness, and guilty feelings from my sinful life. Then a friend invited to a Bible conference. There I heard the voice of Jesus, “Come and you will see.” By God’s grace, I responded to the invitation and came to know Jesus personally through the 1:1 Bible studies with my shepherd. It was the best decision I ever made in my life. Jesus has blessed me beyond my comprehension ever since the day I made the decision to come and see. Let us pray that all young people around us may hear the invitation of Jesus, “Come and you will see,” and respond to him.

So how can we come and see Jesus when he is not around us any longer? Actually he is with us today. We can come and spend time with him through studying his words and through personal prayers. We come to know who Jesus is.

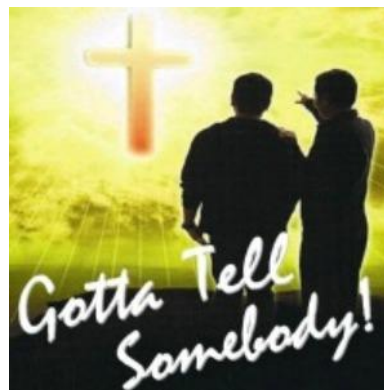
Look at verse 39b. The two disciples of John went and saw where Jesus was staying, and spent that day with him. What did they find out about Jesus? Look at verses 40-41. *Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ).* John says that one of the two disciples in this story was Andrew. He does not say who the other one was, but we can easily guess that it was none other than John himself. Throughout the book, John identified himself indirectly by providing the details of accounts that only an eyewitness could provide. For example, in verse 39, John says that it was about 4:00 o'clock in the afternoon (the tenth hour in Jewish time) when the two visited Jesus.

After spending personal time with Jesus that day, Andrew was convinced that Jesus was the Messiah. There was no doubt in his mind about who Jesus was. The testimony he had heard from his former Bible teacher, John the Baptist, was confirmed in his heart. Andrew was so excited about meeting Jesus that he hurried to find his brother to tell him, "We have found the Messiah." The NIV footnotes tell us that "the Messiah" is the Hebrew form of "the Christ" which is in Greek. Both mean "the Anointed One." In ancient times, kings and prophets were anointed with oil. King David was anointed by Samuel. Jesus is our King who rules us with peace and justice. Jesus brings us God's peace by saving us from our sins. "The Messiah" means "the Savior of the world." The Messiah is the one who saves us from our sins. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Jesus saves us from our sin and death. These days, people seem to consider money as the answer to everything. When I ask my students what they wish to do after getting their college education, many of them say they want to make a lot of money and live happily with family and friends. But things like money and power are false messiahs, because they cannot save us from our sin and death. Jesus once asked his disciples, "What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?" (Mk 8:36). We must come to Jesus like Andrew and find the Messiah who saves us from our sins.

Now let's think about what Andrew did when he found out that Jesus was the Messiah. When Andrew met Jesus personally, something wonderful happened in his heart. Joy overflowed in his heart. He could not keep this to himself. So he found his brother Simon and told him, "We have found the Messiah." Andrew witnessed to his own brother. It's not easy to witness to our own family members. But Andrew went first to his brother Simon and exclaimed that he found the Messiah. By spending time with him, Andrew discovered that Jesus was much more than a country preacher. Jesus is the Son of God who came down to save sinners from eternal condemnation. Andrew had to share this good news with his brother. He said, "Yo, Bro, I've found the Messiah!" He did not care if his brother might say, "What are you talking about, Andy? Are you all right? You've been hanging around too much with that Baptist dude." From Andrew we learn that Christian

witnessing is a natural response of those who meet Jesus personally. When the Samaritan woman in chapter 4 found out who Jesus was, she threw away her water jar and ran to the village people to tell them about Jesus, even though the people had treated her like a prostitute. Likewise, we can joyfully share the good news of Jesus with many young students.

Look at verse 42a. *And he brought him to Jesus.* Andrew didn't just tell his brother about Jesus. He brought his brother to Jesus. He really wanted his brother to meet the Savior. Andrew was an interesting disciple of Jesus. He probably wasn't strong leadership material. It seems that he was always under the shadow of his brother Simon. Many people knew Simon by his name, but they often called him "Simon's Brother." Still Andrew loved his brother and brought him to Jesus. In fact, Andrew does not appear many times in the Bible after this event. His brother went on to become the top disciple of Jesus. But there are two other stories that do include Andrew, and in both times, Andrew brought someone to Jesus. When Jesus wanted to feed the hungry crowd of 5,000, Andrew looked around and brought a boy with five barley loaves and two fish (Jn 6:1-15). When some Greeks wanted to see Jesus, it was Andrew (and Philip) who brought them to the Lord (Jn 12:20-22).



What did Jesus say to Simon who was brought to him by his brother Andrew? Jesus was greatly interested in Simon and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas." "Cephas" in Aramaic means "rock" as does "Peter" in Greek. At this time, Simon was anything but a rock. He was an impulsive, unstable person, as his name "Simon" meant "sand." But Jesus changed his name from Simon to Peter. Jesus saw him with the hope of God. He saw what Simon could become, his potential, instead of what he was. Jesus prayed that Simon would grow to be a rock solid man of faith by following him as his disciple. This teaches us that our Lord Jesus looks at each of us with the hope of God. Worldly people only look at our outward appearance, what kind of job we have, our income level, or our educational and family background. But our Lord Jesus is different. He wants us to become great men and women of God by following him as his disciples.

II. JESUS SAID, "FOLLOW ME" (43-51)

Look at verse 43. *The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me."* This verse simply tells us that Jesus called Philip to be his disciple. Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida (44). The three must've been childhood friends. Anyway, Philip accepted Jesus' invitation and became one of his disciples. He must also have met Jesus personally, as his testimony shows. Look at verse 45. *Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son*

of Joseph.” Philip witnessed Jesus to his friend Nathanael on the basis of the Old Testament. He told him how Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah prophesied by Moses. Ever since the Old Testament times, the Israelites had been waiting for the Messiah who would set them free. Now after meeting Jesus personally, Philip was sure that Jesus was the one Moses wrote about in the Bible.

What was Nathanael’s response to Philip’s witness? He said, “Can anything good come from there?” (46) Apparently Nathanael was a Bible scholar. He knew from the Book of Micah that the Messiah would come from the town of David, that is, Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). What Nathanael did not know was that Jesus was actually born in Bethlehem, though he was raised in Nazareth. Philip did not argue with him. He simply said, “Come and see.”

Look at verse 49. *When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false."* As soon as Jesus saw him, he made a comment about Nathanael’s character. He said Nathanael was a true Israelite in whom there was nothing false. Nathanael was a man of pure heart. It’s not easy for young man to keep his heart pure. So how could Nathanael keep his heart pure? Psalm 119:9 says, “How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word” (ESV). Nathanael studied the Bible diligently and struggled to obey the word of God. This was his secret. He had a yearning desire for God in his heart as he meditated on the word of God. Jesus was happy to meet such a young man. And Nathanael became one of his disciples. Actually, the gospels don’t say much about Nathanael other than John in this passage. The other gospels don’t even mention his name. Instead of Nathanael, the name Bartholomew appears (Mk 3:18). Apparently, Nathanael and Bartholomew were the same person. Bartholomew means “the son of Tolmai.” So his full name must have been Nathanael the son of Tolmai.

Nathanael was surprised by Jesus’ comment about him. How could he possibly know him so well when they had not even met? So Nathanael asked, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered, “I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you.” Jesus told him that he knew what he was doing under a fig tree. Perhaps the spot under the fig tree was Nathanael’s secret place for prayer and mediation. Maybe he went there whenever he wanted to have a quiet time with God. Now Jesus was telling him he knew all about the place. He knew about his prayers as well.

Nathanael was very impressed by the fact Jesus knew him so well. Who was Jesus that he knew him even before they met? The answer was so obvious to Nathanael. Look at verse 49. *Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel."* He made a confession of faith: “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.” His confession was similar to that of Andrew who said, “You are the Messiah!” We learn here that Jesus is the Messiah who knows each of us. He knows us better than we know ourselves. He knows us when we pray under a fig tree or when we have sinful thoughts in front of TV. He knows all our problems and is willing to help us. We can trust him and follow him in our life journey, knowing that he is our Messiah.

Look at verses 50. *Jesus said, “You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than that.”* Jesus was saying to him, “Nathanael, you are impressed to hear that I saw you under the fig tree. But you have seen nothing yet. Wait until what you will witness as you follow me as one of my disciples!” *He then added, “I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man”* (51). These verses are a story that reminds us of Jacob’s dream about the angel of God in Genesis 28. At that time, the young Jacob was away from his home for the first time and he was scared about his uncertain future. When he prayed to God, God showed him the vision of a ladder on which angels were ascending and descending. Jesus said to Nathanael figuratively, in light of Jacob’s dream, “If you believe in God, your spiritual eyes will be opened and you will see the spiritual things and the glorious kingdom of God.” Jesus is the ladder that connects sinful men and the holy God. Jesus is the way to the kingdom of God. Jesus is the high priest through whom we can approach God. God had in store for Nathanael this wonderful truth!



In this passage we learned that Jesus is the Messiah, our Savior. After meeting Jesus personally, Andrew testified, “We have found the Messiah.” Philip told the same to Nathanael, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law.” Then Nathanael confessed, “You are the Son of God.” May God help each of us come to Jesus and spend time with him so that we may meet the Messiah very personally! May God help us also to bring young students to Jesus!