

021: Pointing Others to the Lamb

(based on Sermon #014 in the Life of Christ Series)

The sad story is told of a young Confederate soldier who lay dying after a battle.

- He was a Christian, his testimony well known.
- As he was in his final moments, he sang several Christian hymns.
- After completing a song, the chaplain turned to him and asked if he had any message to send his family.
- "Yes," he said, "Tell my father that I have tried to eat my meals with thanksgiving.
- Tell him that Christ is now all my hope, all my trust, and that he is precious to my soul.
- Tell him that I am not afraid to die — all is calm.
- Tell him that I believe Christ will take me to himself, and to my dear sister who is in heaven."

The voice of the dying boy faltered in the intervals between these precious sentences.

- When the hymn, "Nearer, My God to Thee," was read to him, at the end of each stanza he exclaimed, with striking energy, "Oh Lord Jesus, You are coming nearer to me!"
- Just before drawing his final breath, he cried out: "Just as I am, without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me, and that thou bid'st me come to thee, O Lamb of God, I come, I Come! O Lamb of God, I Come!"
- And with that he sweetly and calmly "fell asleep in Jesus." (Anonymous Confederate soldier)

The descriptive title for Christ uttered by this dying soldier was first uttered two thousand years ago by John the Baptist: the Lamb of God!

- Our previous study presented what the Jews were thinking when they heard this unusual metaphor used for Messiah.
- This study emphasizes the importance of pointing others to the Lamb — not merely pointing unbelievers to Jesus so they can receive the *gift* of eternal life, but also pointing believers to Him so they can receive the *reward* of eternal life, that is, inheritance in the coming kingdom.
- the text for this study is John 1:35-45
- I will begin by reading that passage

John 1:35-45

- 35 Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples.
- 36 And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!"
- 37 The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.
- 38 Then Jesus turned, and seeing them following, said to them, "What do you seek?" They said to Him, "Rabbi" (which is to say, when translated, Teacher), "where are You staying?"
- 39 He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day (now it was about the tenth hour).
- 40 One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.
- 41 He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated, the Christ).
- 42 And he brought him to Jesus. Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, "You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas" (which is translated, A Stone).

- 43 The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, “Follow Me.”
- 44 Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.
- 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.”

Here we find John the Baptist pointing Andrew and an unnamed man, which most believe is John — the very writer of this gospel — to the Lamb of God.

- Andrew then points his brother Simon to the Lamb.
- The Lamb points Philip to Himself.
- And then Philip points Nathanael to the Lamb.
- It happens repeatedly in our text, and it is our duty as well, to point others to the Lamb.
- But what does that mean?
- And why does John the Baptist point others to the Lamb, seeing that John has his own unique ministry?
- Four reasons will be given.

1. Only God’s Lamb Can Take Away the Sin of the World

- A lamb, of course, is a picture of humility and innocence.
- **Isa. 53:7** He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth.
- **1 Pet. 1:18-19** Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.
- I cannot fathom why God the Son would leave Heaven’s glories, deliberately lay aside the use of His divine

attributes, condescend to be born of a virgin, take on human flesh, live a perfect life on Earth, and then willingly die for sinners.

- The only way I know to explain it is that He loves us.
- Rom. 5:8 God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

When John’s audience hears him use the descriptive title, *Lamb of God*, they surely think of a creature that is meek, humble and innocent.

- But much more on their minds is the picture of sacrifice, as mentioned in the previous study.
- That awful ordinance had dominated their history for centuries.
- They know it began nearly fifteen hundred years previously in Egypt, when they were instructed by God to kill a lamb and apply the blood on the doorposts of the house.
- Those who did so were spared death.
- The blood of the lamb was their substitute.
- The angel of death passed over that house.
- The Passover signified salvation of the nation, and thereafter, at the annual Passover feast, every family offered a lamb in remembrance of the national salvation.

John’s audience is keenly aware that the ongoing temple sacrifices do not signify salvation, but restoration to fellowship with Jehovah.

- In fact, every day — morning and evening — and, for that matter, all throughout the day, sacrifices were offered to atone for sins.
- The temple precinct was continually bloody, having a horrible stench, accompanied by the bellowing of animals about to be slaughtered.

- Why did God ordain such an awful ordinance?
- Surely, it was to illustrate the truth that sin is horrible and demands a payment, the price of blood, which represents the substitutionary giving of life for the benefit of another.
- The entire system — the Passover lambs, representing the national salvation, as well as the ongoing sacrifices, representing confession of sins and restoration to fellowship — served as a type of the Lamb of God who would come as the ultimate once-for-all sacrifice.
- He would be the fulfillment, the antitype of the Old Testament sacrifices.
- The blood of bulls and goats and lambs could never take away sins (Heb. 10:4), but the perfect Son of God would — and, from our perspective, He did!

Though the Lamb was forecasted in places in the Old Testament (e.g., Isa. 53), the Jews of the first century were oblivious of the need for Messiah to die as God's Lamb.

- The amount of divine revelation available to them was too limited.
- We need to remember this when interpreting the Gospels.
- It's easy for us, given our New Testament, post-crucifixion understanding, to see how Christ's death fulfills the Old Testament types, because "hindsight is 20-20," as the cliché goes.

John the Baptist proclaims that the Lamb of God will take away the *sin* (singular) of the world.

- The apostle Paul later wrote that Christ died for our sins (plural).

- At my ordination council more than thirty years ago, I was asked to explain the difference between sin (singular) and sins (plural).
- The council members were not joking.
- Understanding the distinction is critical.
- Every person ever born on planet Earth is a sinner — not because they have committed sins, for a baby has not yet sinned.
- We are sinners at birth — indeed, at the point of conception (Ps. 51:5) — because of our heritage in Adam.
- Rom. 5:19 By one man's disobedience many were made sinners.

The word *made* in this verse means "designated" or "constituted."

- Thus, all humans are sinners, not because they have committed sins, but because they were designated as sinners from birth.
- Adam's sin plunged the entire human race into sin (singular). The only escape from sin is through death.
- That's where the crucifixion of Jesus comes in.
- He died and rose again to nullify the sin nature man inherited from Adam.
- Those who believe on Him for eternal life die *in Him* and are raised *in Him*, experiencing newness of life.
- Sin is no longer the master of that life.

Rom. 6:4-7

- 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.
- 5-6 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His

resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.

- 7 For he who has died has been freed from sin.
- The “baptism” mentioned in these verses is not referring to water baptism.
- It is talking about being immersed in Christ’s death.
- Think of it! Those who are immersed with Christ in His death are raised with Him in His life.
- They have been freed from sin and death (the old master inherited through Adam) and now have a new master.
- The old master is “done away with,” literally, rendered powerless or ineffective to rule.
- The new master is Jesus Christ unto righteousness and life.

In fact, Jesus gives His Holy Spirit to indwell those who have believed (see 1 Cor. 6:19-20).

- They now have a divine Helper.
- Those who continue believing, accessing His grace by faith, He enables to experience victory over sins (plural).
- Rom. 8:1-4
- 1 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.
- 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.
- 3-4 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

- Thus, sin (singular) inherited from Adam has been resolved through the death of Christ, and sins (plural) no longer need to be expected in a normal Christian life, thanks to the resurrection life of Jesus.
- When believers sin, they can immediately confess their sins and receive cleansing from God.
- Further, they can walk in the light and have the blood of Christ continually applied in a cleansing sense.
- 1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
- 1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.
- John the Baptist points others to the Lamb, because only He can take away the sin of the world.
- second, John points others to the Lamb, because ...

2. God’s Lamb is to Be the Focal Point of Ministry

- Jn. 1:37 The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.
- Read between the lines and notice the humble spirit of John the Baptist once again.
- He has just worked himself out of a job.
- As he points his own disciples to Jesus, John knows they will no longer be following him.
- Yet this does not bother him in the least bit.
- On the contrary, he is quite pleased.
- I wonder if the average twenty-first century pastor has the same heart.
- Sadly, many ministries are all about the pastor — his ministry, his little kingdom.
- He is the leader, a pope of sorts, and everyone knows it.
- But where is Christ in all of that?

Yes, pastors are shepherds, charged with leading people.

- But they are merely under-shepherds, tasked with leading people to the Great Shepherd.
- Sometimes that means leading people to some hard truths in the Scriptures — truths that can be very difficult to swallow.
- Some pastors avoid preaching the hard truths because they are afraid of losing people.
- But those who realize that Jesus is to be the focal point of ministry don't worry about the fallout.
- They plod forward, pointing disciples to Jesus, not attempting to build their own ministry through politics and diplomacy.
- Where is the spirit amongst present-day spiritual leaders that truth must be declared regardless of consequences?
- And where is the spirit that Jesus must increase while we decrease?
- We have everything to gain and nothing to lose by pointing others to the Lamb!

May we learn from John the Baptist.

- He has no insecurity about pointing others to the Lamb of God, because he understands that the Lamb is to be the focal point of our ministry.
- Insecurity is a general problem in our culture and a specific problem amongst leadership.
- Many husbands and fathers are insecure, not to mention, many wives and mothers.
- They raise insecure children who go out into life as insecure adults, continuing the vicious cycle.
- As a result, many pastors are insecure, and so are many church members.
- What is insecurity?

- It is not having confidence about yourself and your roles in life. It is feeling threatened.
- It could be a teen who lacks confidence because they don't like the way they look.
- It could be a wife/mother who lacks confidence because her husband constantly berates her and orders her around.
- It could be a husband/father who lacks confidence because he didn't have a good father, or he has responded wrongly to circumstances in his life, or he has a wrong concept of God.

Insecure people are often overly protective, jealous, abusive, harsh, even authoritarian and dictatorial.

- They can turn inward and become introverts.
- They often become distrusting and controlling, thinking others are out to get them.
- It can lead to paranoia for some.
- The insecure are typically arrogant and self-focused.
- The bottom line is that continuing in insecurity is sin because it is a focus on self rather than a trust in the Lord.
- When you learn to trust the Lord with every detail of your life and learn to trust the Holy Spirit to work in the lives of others, then you will become confident in the Lord, and you will stop being the Holy Spirit to other people.

Ironically, self-confidence is often at the *root* of insecurity.

- Believers become insecure when the flesh fails and they try to solve the failure by throwing more self at the problem.
- But flesh stinks, for it corrupts. Forsake the flesh!
- Recognize insecurity in your life and confess it as sin.

- Then do as John the Baptist and find your full confidence in Christ.
- When you do, you will become a true leader, pointing others to the Lamb.
- Remarkably, the Lamb of God inspires confidence.
- John the Baptist points others to the Lamb of God, for He is to be the focal point of ministry.
- third, John points others to the Lamb, because ...

3. God's Lamb Invites Seekers to Fellowship with Him

- Spend all the time with Jesus that you possibly can.
- Have a seeking mind.
- Go to His Word with questions, prayerfully.
- Jesus loves to spend time with those who are seeking Him.
- He fellowships with those who abide in (i.e., remain with) Him.
- **John 1:38** Then Jesus turned, and seeing them following, said to them, "What do you seek?" They said to Him, "Rabbi" (which is to say, when translated, Teacher), "where are You staying?"

As these two disciples of John the Baptist pursue after Christ, Jesus turns to them and asks, "What do you seek?"

- In other words, "What are you looking for?"
- What do you want?" They respond by calling him, "Rabbi," which was a title of highest respect given by Jews to those who taught them the law.
- By using this honorable title, these two disciples are choosing to place themselves under the teaching authority of Messiah.
- They can see that Jesus is heading somewhere, so they ask later in the verse, "Where are You staying?"

- The very clear implication, which Jesus understands, is that they don't want to deter Him, but they want to follow Him and benefit from spending time with Him.
- They are seeking fellowship with Jesus.
- The answer Jesus gives is much better than they can anticipate.
- He says, "Come and see," as if to say, "You are most welcome to join me; come along!"
- And so they do! They stay with Him the rest of the day.
- **39** He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day (now it was about the tenth hour).

John the apostle says it is the tenth hour of the day, or about 4 pm (the day would start at 6 am).

- Imagine a whole evening spent with Jesus — dining with Him, talking with Him, asking Him questions, watching Him pray, observing how He responds to others who serve Him, staying up late to talk with Him about spiritual matters!
- When was the last time you spent an evening with Jesus?
- He is just as accessible to you — and even more so — for He lives within you through His Spirit.
- Oh, the fellowship we can experience with Jesus!
- But oftentimes you are too busy to fellowship with Him, or you would rather spend time with friends or family or your hobbies or the television.
- Surely, these two disciples are able to walk away from this meeting with Jesus with a glow on their faces.
- Perhaps they can say what the two travelers with Jesus on the road to Emmaus said in Luke 24:32:
- Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?

A meeting with Jesus is worth more than anything this world can offer.

- It is even better than a meeting with your family.
- Indeed, a meeting with Jesus will make your meetings with family so much better.
- Notice what this meeting with Jesus does for at least one of these disciples:
- 40 One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.
- 41 He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated, the Christ).
- Andrew is definitely one of these two disciples; the other is not named, which means it is probably John, for John never speaks of himself.

But here's the point: A meeting with Jesus will prepare you for bringing others to Him.

- Time in prayer, time in His Word, time meditating on Him and communing with Him will compel you to point others to the Lamb!
- Andrew the fisherman brings his brother Simon to Christ.
- He says, "Simon, we have found the Messiah!"
- Little does Andrew realize that Jesus has found them.
- When Jesus meets Simon, He says, "You are Simon the son of Jonah (John).
- From now on you will be called Cephas (which is Aramaic, the Greek equivalent is Peter).
- Verse 42 says that Cephas means "a stone."
- Literally, a rock or hiding place.

The name Simon means "quick to hear."

- By nature, Peter is quick to hear but he doesn't always respond properly to what he hears and knows to be truth.
- However, Jesus prophesies here that Peter (his new name) will become stable and unmovable, filled with the Spirit and bold in his witness for Christ.
- But that is way out in the future.
- He is now following the Lamb.
- His own brother Andrew has led Him to become a disciple of the Lamb.
- Not only do others lead people to the Lamb, the Lamb draws others to Himself:
- 43 The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, "Follow Me."
- 44 Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.

Philip hails from Bethsaida, the same hometown as Peter and Andrew, a village on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee.

- They must surely know each other; they are undoubtedly friends.
- Perhaps Peter and Andrew have been talking in the community about this Lamb of God.
- Now Philip is a disciple, and what is the first thing he does as a disciple?
- He goes out and encourages others to become disciples, in this case his friend, Nathanael.
- These men — Andrew and John and Peter and Philip and Nathanael — are already believers in an Old Testament sense.
- So when John the Baptist comes preaching repentance, they realize their need to confess sin and return to fellowship with Jehovah God.

- They are baptized with John’s baptism for the remission of sins.
- John then points them to Jesus, the Messiah, the fulfillment of everything they already believe as Old Testament saints.
- Inspired by Jesus, they go out and make disciples of their circle of influence.

Making disciples is the idea of encouraging those who are already believers to walk with Jesus and grow with Him in sanctification.

- That’s what’s happening here in this text. A person has to be saved in order to become a disciple. All disciples are believers, but not all believers are disciples.
- Unbelievers are not ready to become disciples because they have not been regenerated; the Holy Spirit does not live within.
- In that case, you must share the gospel of Jesus Christ, showing them the importance of believing on Jesus for eternal life.
- Until that happens, you cannot lead them to discipleship.
- But once they believe, you still haven’t fulfilled the Great Commission until you lead them in discipleship.
- Making disciples is the central focus of the Great Commission.

Do you know the most effective way of making disciples?

- By going first to those who are in your circle of influence, those whom you influence and those who influence you — friends, neighbors, relatives, fellow-employees, etc.
- Point them to Jesus!
- If they are unsaved, point them to believe on Him for eternal life, for that is the prerequisite to a life of discipleship.

- If they are already saved, point them to forsake all and follow Him.
- The pattern here in John 1 is exciting.
- John the Baptist points Andrew and John to become disciples of the Lamb — that is disciple-making!
- Andrew brings his brother Simon to Jesus.
- Jesus finds Philip, and Philip goes to find his friend Nathanael, with the purpose of bringing him to discipleship in the Messiah.
- John points others to the Lamb of God, because ...
- 1. Only God’s Lamb can take away the sin of world.
- 2. God’s Lamb is to be the focal point of ministry.
- 3. God’s Lamb invites seekers to fellowship with Him.
- finally, John points others to the Lamb, because ...

4. God’s Lamb Promises Reward to Those Who Follow Him Faithfully

- With Jesus there is always something more exciting to follow.
- He always leads to greener pastures and greater heights.
- The famous preacher of yesteryear, F.B. Meyer, said:
- He published no manifesto; elaborated no system of doctrine; insisted on no theological examination. His person was His theology. He appealed to the craving of the human heart for love, and offered Himself to supply its needs, pledging Himself to lead His disciples from the “come and see” of the first interview, to the vision of “greater things than these.”
- This principle is illustrated in the text in Christ’s encounter with Nathanael.
- It starts with Philip’s introduction:
- 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 is excited. He wants his friend Nathanael to meet the Messiah.

- At first, Nathanael is skeptical.
- John 1:46 Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.”
- Nazareth must have quite a reputation, or perhaps Nathanael is simply wondering out loud how someone as prominent as the Messiah, the King of Israel, could possibly hail from such an insignificant place as Nazareth.
- Why not Jerusalem, the holy city?
- Or, in keeping with the prophets, why not Bethlehem, the city of David?
- Interestingly, Philip answers Nathanael the same way Jesus had answered Andrew and John the previous day: “Come and see.”

There’s something important in this statement.

- Inherent in “come and see” is an offer that requires a decision.
- A person can choose to go and see or stay and ignore.
- Jesus will never force anyone to follow Him in discipleship.
- That’s also true of salvation (i.e., regeneration).
- He simply makes an offer: “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink” (John 7:37).
- An offer is on the table.
- It’s up to you to take it or leave it, to accept or reject, to believe or not believe.
- But there is much at stake.
- With respect to eternal life, it is literally a matter of life or death.

- With respect to discipleship, it is a matter of eternal reward for the faithful or punishment for the unfaithful.

Does Nathanael go with Philip to meet Jesus? Yes!

- Though skeptical, he wants to see if this is indeed the Messiah.
- It is important remember that Old Testament saints were looking forward to the coming of the Messiah.
- When Jesus arrived, it took some time for people to check Him out and make sure His claims were genuine, that He was indeed the Son of God, the Messiah of Israel.
- They must not rush into it and embrace a false Messiah, so, naturally, there was some skepticism in the beginning.
- I have no doubt that I would have had the same response at first.
- “Is this really the Messiah? I must check out His claims.”

Doubt does not mean they are unbelievers, in the general sense of that term.

- During this critical period of transition, these Old Testament Israelites are merely carefully investigating to be sure this man is the fulfillment of everything they have believed as children of Jehovah.
- Embracing someone who claims to be the Son of God, well, that’s a big step, so that one must proceed with great caution.
- Andrew and John and Peter and Philip have no problem believing Jesus is the Messiah, for they have been followers of John the Baptist.
- They have been prepared.
- Nathanael needs to do some checking first, but gets on board rather quickly because of the testimony of his friends and also his conversation with Jesus.

Notice the amazing statement of Jesus to Nathanael:

- **John 1:47** Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!”
- What is “an Israelite indeed?”
- Paul said in Rom. 9:6 “They are not all Israel, which are of Israel.”
- In other words, merely being Jewish does not make one right with God.
- That is clearly demonstrated by John the Baptist’s national call to repentance and multitudes obeying the message and submitting to the baptism of repentance.
- Jesus refers to Nathanael as “an Israelite indeed” because He knows that Nathanael is already an obedient Jewish man.
- His heart is right with God, like these others men who have been followers of John the Baptist.

There’s something else about Nathanael.

- He is without deceit.
- Not only is this man an obedient Jew, he is genuine, unlike the Pharisees.
- We could say he is Jewish through and through — obedient and genuine in his spirit toward God.
- He is not a sinful Israelite, thinking he is right with God because of his national heritage and therefore not needing repentance.
- The Pharisees had that attitude.
- This man Nathanael is the “real deal.”
- He’s a faithful saint of God, walking with Jehovah, in an Old Testament sense. He now needs to follow Jesus in discipleship

Nathanael is greatly impressed that Jesus knows so much about him.

- That prompts him to ask a question:
- **John 1:48** Nathanael said to Him, “How do You know me?” Jesus answered and said to him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.”
- Jesus answers by saying that He had known him long before Philip had called him, while Nathanael was still sitting under the fig tree.
- “Remarkable!” Nathaniel is surely thinking.
- No one can know that but God.
- He sees that Jesus is the fulfillment of all that he has believed as an Israelite, and instantly believes.
- Thus, we find Nathanael’s public proclamation in v. 49:
- “Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” Then Jesus asks Nathanael a question:
- **John 1:50** Jesus answered and said to him, “Because I said to you, ‘I saw you under the fig tree,’ do you believe? You will see greater things than these.”

“Nathanael, do you believe because I am able to reveal to you the secrets of your life?”

- You will see greater things than these!”
- In the context, it seems what Jesus is implying is that in the judgment to come, Nathanael will be rewarded because of his faithfulness to the Lord.
- Jesus is not merely referring to the miracles that Nathanael will see Him do later in His ministry.
- Nor is Jesus merely referring to the greater works that the disciples will be empowered to do by the Holy Spirit.
- Rather, Jesus is speaking of something in the distant future, at the resurrection.

- **John 1:51** And He said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.”

Jesus tells Nathanael something unusual.

- In the future he will see the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.
- This is an obvious reference to Jacob’s dream in Gen. 28, which an Israelite like Nathanael would have known about.
- Jacob, in his early life, was full of deceit.
- For instance, he tricked his brother Esau in trading the birthright for a bowl of stew.
- But through the years Jacob changed, by the grace of God, and became a growing, godly saint.
- In fact, God changed Jacob’s name to Israel. He became the father of the twelve tribes.

Perhaps Nathanael is reading this very account from the Torah as he sits under the fig tree.

- Jacob dreams of a ladder (staircase) extending from Earth up to the heavens.
- On this stairway, he sees angels ascending and descending — some going upward toward the heavens and some coming down toward Earth.
- They are ascending and descending on the Son of Man.
- In other words, Jesus — or perhaps “His city” — is the foundation of this stairway.
- In the context of Jesus’ discussion with Nathanael and what Jesus says in v. 51, we see the eschatological application of Jacob’s dream.
- What Jacob sees fits the description of the New Jerusalem described in Rev. 21-22, the city of reward, the ruling realm of the Messianic kingdom.

The context here in John 1 is clearly the prospect of reward for a man who is living righteously, without deceit.

- Nearly two thousand years after Jacob’s dream, Nathanael, sitting under a fig tree — which is symbolic of Israel — reads this very passage, trying to make sense of it all, trying to find the application for his life.
- Jesus resolves any questions in his mind and says, “You will experience that — you will see it, Nathanael because you are an obedient, faithful, genuine Israelite!”
- This seems to mean that Nathanael — as long as he remains on the path of righteousness — will be rewarded with a place of rulership in the New Jerusalem.
- Remarkably, Jesus uses this illustration from Gen. 28 to illustrate that His kingdom of the heavens is coming, and only those believers who are faithful will dwell there with Him as His co-rulers.

Keep in mind this has nothing to do with salvation.

- Discipleship is about sanctification unto reward.
- All saints will be in the coming kingdom, in some realm of it, but not all will be included in the “kingdom of the heavens” realm, the New Jerusalem.
- That realm is only for rulers.
- Have you been preparing for the kingdom? If so, you will see greater things than these
- 1 Cor. 2:9 Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.
- Are you, like John, pointing others to the Lamb?
- I challenge you to THINK ON THESE THINGS