

Who Do You Say That I Am?

Seeing and Delighting in Jesus through an Expository
Journey through the **Gospel of Matthew**

115- Jesus Chooses His Apostles- Part 12
Bartholomew- Part 2

Church October 13, 2024

Matthew 10:1-4

1 Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.

2 Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother;

3 Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus;

4 Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed Him.

*To the Glory of God the Father; God the Son;
and God the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Now it is fitting that we take the Time to examine the Biographies of these twelve men that Jesus chose to be His own personal, “Shaliah” or the Apostles- because, even though these men were very *ordinary* and *common* men- they were used by God to literally change the World.

For example, through God’s sovereign Predestination; by God’s Grace; and to God’s Glory- you and I have been chosen in these Days to make up a *part* of the world-wide Body of Jesus Christ- the Church in the 21st Century. But there wouldn’t be a Church for us to be a part of- had it not been for these men. Because of who they were; what they did; what they taught; and what they either wrote down personally or had written down by Scribes- these men, along with the Old Testament Prophets became *part* of the very Foundation of the Church of the Lord Christ. **Ephesians 2:19-22** says:

19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household,

**20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone,
21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord,
22 in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.**

... so, the “Office of Apostle”- the “Age of the Apostles” was a one-time; non-repeatable Moment in History when a few chosen men were used by God to radically and eternally transform- not only individual people’s Lives- but also the Way that every human being could have a Relationship with the one, true, and living God.

Now it is commonly taught that the word, “*Apostle*” means: “*a sent one*”. But that’s like saying that the word, “*space*” means: “*up*”. It may be true in some sense- but it is *woefully* lacking in the both the Meaning and Purpose of why Jesus chose these men. And because of such shallow and incomplete Definitions- there are many- far too many- within the modern Church today- who *genuinely* think that the Office and Ministry of Apostles is ongoing.

So, please allow me to give you a short “run-down” of what the Ministry of the Apostles was and, hopefully, as you begin to understand this- you will agree that the Office and Ministry of Apostle has ceased. Jesus chose the Apostles to accomplish several very important things:

- Bring the Old Covenant to a *decisive* End
- Bring the New Covenant into *full* Existence
- Receive the final, full, and completed Revelation of God to Man- directly; explain it; and write it down
- Bring Divine Credibility to this new Revelation through breathtaking Signs; Wonders; Miracles; and various Gifts of the Holy Spirit
- Correctly interpret the Old Testament

... and no other Church Leader from the Resurrection of Jesus to this very Day has been called to do these things. The Apostles were the ONLY ones chosen to accomplish these things.

But what is often overlooked in this Discussion is the “*Seal of Apostleship*” that these men brought forth that no one before or since accomplished- and that is the amazing level of Suffering that this men went through. And, of course, this Issue- the Issue of intense and ongoing Suffering- that NONE of the so-called “apostles” of our Day want to touch with a

fifty-foot pole. Let me just give you a brief Summary of how greatly these men suffered for the Cause of Jesus Christ from **2Corinthians 11:22-28** that says:

22 Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I.

23 Are they servants of Christ?—I speak as if insane—I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death.

24 Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes.

25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep.

26 I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren;

27 I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.

28 Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches.

Now for the sake of Explanation- let me zero in on verse 24 that says,

Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes

Physical beatings were common back in the 1st Century. Most all people arrested were beaten- even those, who were later found to be Innocent. But why was Paul specific about how many times he received the lash from the Jews? To find out, we need to go back to the Law of Moses that taught this from **Deuteronomy 25:1-3:**

1 “If there is a dispute between men and they go to court, and the judges decide their case, and they justify the righteous and condemn the wicked,

2 then it shall be if the wicked man deserves to be beaten, the judge shall then make him lie down and be beaten in his presence with the number of stripes according to his guilt.

3 “He may beat him forty times but no more, so that he does not beat him with many more stripes than these and your brother is not degraded in your eyes.

Now it seems like 40 lashes is pretty extreme to me, but back then- a man being beaten with forty lashes was considered both Humane and Dignified. And

this had to do with the fact that ALL men are made in the Image of God and so, deserve to be treated with Dignity and Respect- even Criminals.

So, it was established by God that a man- even a guilty Criminal could NEVER be beaten more than 40 times. To beat a man more than 40 times was a Sin before God. So, what happened if the man doing the Beating lost count? If he beat the Criminal more than 40 Times- he was sinning- so, this caused those doing the Beating to develop a Custom to never beat a man more than 39 times- just in case he lost count.

The original biblical Goal in beating the Criminal in the first place was to *humiliate* him- to *facilitate* his Repentance- NOT to kill him. And so, beating a man 39 times became common over time with the Jews. When the Romans took over from the Greeks in dominating Israel- they picked up on this strange way to hand out Justice. So, the Romans began beating Jewish Criminals 39 times. But they had an alternative Reason for doing so.

The “Roman lash”- the “*Flagrum*”- had been developed and evolved over time to be an amazing tool of Torture and Death. It was a long strand of leather with bits of bone, lead balls, as well as sharp rocks tied at the End that was designed to inflict the most damage as well as the most bleeding. Contrary to several Legends- Roman Law did NOT limit the number of lashes that could be meted out to the Criminal. And as a Result- many, if not most, who were beaten- died.

It is also commonly thought that Jesus received “39 stripes” before His Crucifixion. That isn’t true. The Roman Authorities felt no Compulsion to adhere to Jewish Law about this. So, the Romans soldiers beat Jesus until they got tired- and it is nothing short of a Miracle that He lived through it- because it was God’s Will that He die by Crucifixion rather than a Beating. The Reason Paul received “39 lashes” is because the Jewish Authorities were in charge of his Beating- as he was accused of preaching Blasphemies because of the Gospel.

But Paul was beaten by the Jews- on five separate Occasions. So, he would have been arrested first, tried, found guilty, and then sentenced to be beaten. So, the Apostle would have been tied to a short post that forced him to bend over and then the Beatings would commence. There would actually be a member of the Sanhedrin Court or one of the ranking High Priests in attendance at his Beating- similar to the Way that Paul was in attendance at the stoning of Stephen. And that religious Leader would read the charges against Paul and then give the “okay” Signal (either a nod of the head or a “thumbs-down” sign) for the Beating to begin.

The sharp rocks as well as the bits of bone tied to the Flagum would have torn the skin of his back open very quickly- causing massive bleeding. But the lead balls would deliver deep-seated bruises down to actually bruising and even

breaking the bones in Paul's body. As each lash was delivered- someone would count- so as not to go past 40 (they wouldn't want to do anything to displease the Lord). Paul may have well passed out or been close to being unconscious once the count of 39 came.

But that wasn't the End of his Suffering- by a long shot. Because of the seriousness of the charges against him- even after he was beaten- the Jews would NOT have let Paul go free. Instead, he would have been drug to the jail- which back in the 1st Century was in worse shape than what animals had to endure.

Normally, the city Sewage ran right through the jail and Criminals had little more than a single bucket to both use the bathroom in as well as receive their food. Disease was rampant and as many Criminals died from disease as from the Punishments.

Normally, the Criminal would be forced to sit down on the dirt floor- usually in his own waste- and his arms would be chained above him on the wall while his feet would be chained to the ground. This cause him to helpless to defend himself from the legions of rats- some as large as cats- that would come out at night and literally eat the face, fingers, and toes of the Criminal.

But in Paul's case- his back was in shreds from the Beating- his own blood and body-serum running down his back against the filthy wall. And this would have been a delicacy for the rats at night. And as he lay in his own filth- the wounds would become infected and his fever would rise- probably causing him to become delirious- until many days or weeks later, they would scab over- if he could live that long. Broken bones were NEVER set and so, they would heal wrongly or not at all.

And the scars left from the Beating would last the rest of his Life.

But once Paul survived and regained his Health from that Beating- they took him out and beat him again (2)! And again (3). And again (4). And again, the fifth time! Five separate times- this Apostle endured this barbaric and inhumane Treatment- all because he had the Audacity to herald the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ!¹

Now more than any of the other Apostles- Paul used the Old Testament to prove that Christianity WAS the fulfillment of the Old Covenant and WAS the promised New Covenant. So, the fact that the Jewish Authorities *continued* to arrest, try, condemn, and punish Paul proved that their Treatment of this man had infinitely MORE to do with the fact that through his Preaching and Teaching he exposed their lost Condition and their religious Hypocrisy MORE than they were simply punishing a man, who had supposedly committed Blasphemy.

¹ Was Paul beaten five times in a row or was he beaten five separate times during his entire Ministry? We don't know- but it really doesn't matter that much. Absent a sovereign Miracle- he would have died because of such harsh Treatment.

But as we have gone through the Biographies of the Apostles- I have been faithful to show you one common thread with them all. Not only was God using them greatly- but God also allowed these men to suffer above and beyond the “normal” Sufferings that was common with ALL 1st Century Believers. And they all suffered for the SAME Reason: they heralded the Gospel!

Now contrast that level of unspeakable Suffering with the cushioned Lives of the “pillow-prophets” of our Day, who call themselves, “apostles”. From flying on their own private jets; to eating in the finest Restaurants; to wearing the best clothing; to living in the most luxurious Condominiums on earth- these modern Day- “pied-pipers” demonstrate the greatest Contrast between themselves and the true Apostles- as they sat in chains after being beaten within an inch off their Lives- with rats eating their eyes! No, not only are those men of our Day NOT Apostles of Jesus Christ- many of them- probably the vast majority of them- are NOT even Christians!

Now I told you last week that Nathanael-Barthlomew’s Name was actually “*Mattanah-El-bar-Tolmai*”- or “*Mattanah-El- the son of Tolmai*”. which has been *transliterated* over the Centuries to be “Nathanael- Barthlomew” or simply, “Bartholomew”.

So, let's meet Mattanah-El bar- Tolmai by looking at **John 1:43**- and this is the only place where he's identified in the entire New Testament.

Verse 43 picks up the story of Jesus in the time in which He was calling His Disciples. John the Baptist had pointed to Christ as being the Lamb of God Who takes away the Sin of the World and the Ministry of Jesus then officially began. And so, Jesus called Simon and Andrew, in the prior Passage to be His Disciples. And later on, these two men would become Apostles. But at this point- Jesus just called them to be His Disciples. And then on the very next day after He had done that- Jesus purposed to go into Galilee and He found Philip. And He said to Philip, "*Follow Me.*"

Now Philip is identified as being from Bethsaida- the city of Andrew and Peter- and he probably knew them very well and probably attended the same Synagogue with them and knew them to be followers of the one true living God and lovers of God- with a Messianic Hope they all had very much in common.

So, all of these guys were genuine Believers of the true God; and they were all looking for the Coming of the Messiah; and they followed Jesus- trusting Him to be that Messiah for whom they had waited.

Now after all this- Philip, it says in verse 45, found Nathanael or Bartholomew. So, by this we know that these two men were Acquaintances- but we don't know what that Acquaintance was all about. We don't know whether it was a professional one

or a family one or whether it was just social or spiritual- but whatever their Association was- Philip found Bartholomew.

And the Implication here is that Philip and Bartholomew knew each other- because as soon as Philip met Jesus- he *immediately* went and pursued Bartholomew- because he wanted to tell him what he himself had discovered concerning the Messiah.

And Philip's Conversation with Nathanael- Bartholomew gives us some Indication as to what kind of a guy he was. Look at the last part of **John 1:45** :

We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

So, this is the first bit of Information that we have about the Apostle Bartholomew. Philip knows that what mattered to him the most- is what the Scripture says. And this indicates to us that both Bartholomew and Philip were Students of the Old Testament.

And so, in that sense- they were very different from the religious Establishment which was dominated by the Hypocrisy of the Pharisees. These two men were the real deal. And so, Philip finds his close friend, Bartholomew, and he tells him, "*We have found the One about whom we have studied in the Scriptures for so long.*"

And what we have to understand, my Friends, is that Bartholomew was able to recognize Jesus so clearly and so quickly and so easily because he had such a clear understanding of what the Scripture said about Him. He knew what the Promises about the Messiah were; and so, he knew what the Fulfillment would look like. He knew Him of whom Moses and the Prophets had written. And when He showed up- not immediately upon the first Introduction of Philip- but immediately upon the first Introduction of Jesus- he recognized Him.

And as I told you last week- in verse 46- we get some Insight into Bartholomew's frail, weak, and sinful Character. And, even though Bartholomew was a great Student of Scripture- he was just flat- out biased and bigoted against people who came from the "wrong side of the tracks" because he responds to Philip's excited statement by saying,

... Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?...

And this is a general Statement that manifests a deep- seated Prejudice inside this man. This Statement is not Rational- it's just pure Emotional. And what demonstrates Bartholomew's Hypocrisy is that he didn't live in such a hot town

either. He was from the city of Cana- and unless you were looking for the house where Jesus turned water into wine- you would never go there.

And so, from the religious Leaders on down to the “*hoi polloi*”- the people sitting in the Synagogue- it was their prideful and Self- righteous Prejudice that caused them to reject Jesus- even in His own town as we learned back in **Luke 4**.

You remember that in that Chapter- Jesus had gone into the Synagogue- His own Synagogue- where He grew up in His own town of Nazareth- and He went in there and He preached 1-1/2 verses out of the **Prophecy of Isaiah** and the extended Family of Jesus were so filled with Prejudice and Hatred against the only perfect Preacher, Who has ever lived- that after He preached that one Sermon- they tried to take Him out to a cliff on the edge of town and throw Him off and kill Him!

So, it was really this same blind and evil Prejudice that skewed their ability to view the Messiah correctly. It was their deep-seated Prejudice against Jesus as a Galilean; against Him as an uneducated person outside the religious Elite; their Prejudice against His Message; that literally shut them off from the Gospel. They *refused* to hear Jesus because they were prejudiced against Him. And so, rather than humble themselves to a Man they knew was, at the least- FROM God- their deep-seated Biases caused them to be willing to burn in Hell rather than believe!

The great Puritan, John Bunyan understood this Prejudice and when he wrote his famous Allegory, “*The Holy War*”, which pictures God coming down to conquer a soul. He tells about, “Immanuel”, that's God, and the Forces of Immanuel coming to a town called, “Mansoul”. And the Forces of Immanuel coming to the town of Mansoul are coming to bring the Gospel to Mansoul. And they direct their Assault against Mansoul at the “Eargate” because Faith comes by hearing.

But “Diabolos”, who was the enemy of Immanuel and His Forces, and wants to hold Mansoul captive to Hell, decides to meet the Attack by stationing at the Eargate- which is the Gate to which Immanuel's Forces come. And so, stationing at the Eargate- Bunyan wrote,

"Old Mr. Prejudice, an angry and ill-conditioned fellow,"

And Bunyan wrote,

"...and Diabolos put under his power 60 men called Deafmen."

... and so, the Gospel was stopped by this Prejudice.

So, we need to know that men's ears are often closed to the Gospel by deep seated Prejudice- racial Prejudice; social Prejudice; religious Prejudice- whatever.

And this effectively caused the Jewish Nation to remain Deaf to the Messiah. Diabolos or satan is stationed at the Eargate of Israel to keep them deaf. And that is why when Jesus came into His own Synagogue and spoke the Truth- they were deaf to it and tried to kill Him by throwing Him off a cliff!

And it's still that way today. Moving from Deafness you could borrow the vivid Imagery of Paul from **2Corinthians 4:4** when he said,

In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

... deaf and blind by their own human Prejudice against the Truth and against Righteousness- they missed the Message and remained Lost!

So, was Bartholomew influenced by all this? Sure, he was! He lived in a Society that was prejudicial by Temperament and Nature because ALL lost and sinful people are blinded by satan.

But Philip didn't just let this Statement be the last word and he said to Bartholomew at the end of **John 1:46**:

"Come and see."

And that's the best way you deal with Prejudice and Ignorance because they are not Objective- they are subjective. Ignorance and Pride and Prejudice are not based on Facts- they are based on Feelings. They're not based in Reality- they are based on a Sense of Superiority. And Philip knew that the Solution to his friend's Prejudice was simply, "Come and see!"

"Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" I don't know- why don't you just come and see for yourself!

And so, he went. An ignorant and prejudiced Mind- but a Heart that had been prepared in advance by the sovereign Regeneration of the Holy Spirit to receive Salvation. So, Mattanah-El- the son of Tolmai walked up to Jesus with Philip sort of doubting and wondering- his mind on full alert and yet his heart had already been touched by God the Holy Spirit. And now please read **John 1:47**:

Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!"

Now truly- the most important thing that we could ever hear- the most wonderful thing that any of us could ever hear is Jesus telling us that we have no Deceit! What a Statement! Now it would be one thing that at the End of your Life-

somebody says something like this at your Funeral- but here Jesus is telling this sinful, prejudiced man; this man who was full of Rancor and Self- righteousness that he had no Deceit!

So, how could Jesus say that? Was Jesus lying? Bartholomew wasn't Pure- he was a wicked Sinner. He had just made one of the most prejudiced Statements found anywhere in the Bible and yet Jesus says here that he had no Deceit! So, what is this all about?

This shows you the sovereign Work of God in Salvation! This Statement by Jesus shows you clearly that Salvation is NOT about the elimination of Sin from our lives; that Salvation is NOT about us keeping the Law of God; or about being baptized; or about speaking in tongues; or about partaking of Communion. Salvation is NOT about praying certain Prayers; or "going down Front"; or raising your hand; because Salvation is not based on anything that we ourselves do for ourselves!

It is clear to those of us who know and understand the Bible- that at this Point- Bartholomew had already experienced the Miracle of the New Birth and had already been "given new, spiritual Life by a sovereign Work of God before he had ever physically come to Jesus. So, like all of us- Bartholomew was born again BEFORE he was forgiven and made Righteous (Justified). And this is one of the most important theological Truths that anyone can ever get from the Bible. It is a very simple Statement- but it has very powerful Ramifications. Here it is- and you might want to write it down- because it will change your Life:

Regeneration *precedes* Justification

Regeneration- the sovereign Miracle of the New Birth- precedes- it comes *before* being Forgiven and made Righteous (Justification). In other words- in order to be forgiven and made Righteous- you MUST repent; and you MUST believe. But because of the Blindness of your heart; and because the Fall of Adam was so radical and so great- unless and until God the Holy Spirit comes inside of us- FIRST- and gives us eyes to see; ears to hear; and an heart to believe- nobody will ever repent and nobody will ever believe.

Now way back in 1971 when I was first saved- I was taught that being born again was the same thing as being "forgiven"- but the Bible teaches that these are two completely separate Events. I was also taught that I must believe in order to be born again. But the Bible teaches that that isn't true either.

The Truth is that unless I am first born again- I will have neither

the Desire nor the Power to repent and trust in Jesus. So, the Truth is that I must first be born again in order to have the Faith to believe. And I must be born again in order to have the Desire to repent.

So even though Bartholomew was not yet forgiven and made Righteous- he had been chosen by God from before the Foundation of the world for Salvation. And because of that- God had already birthed him the second time and Bartholomew had been sovereignly and graciously given eyes to see. He had been sovereignly and mercifully given ears to hear. And he had already been sovereignly and miraculously transformed by the sovereign Work of the Holy Spirit down to the base Element of his own Nature. And with that new Nature- Bartholomew- like all of us- would respond to what God had already done and he WOULD repent and trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and he would be forgiven and made Righteous (Justified)!

So, it is in that sense- that he had no Deceit. This doesn't mean that he was Sinless; or that he never said anything wrong- we just heard him exercise his ignorant Prejudice just a second ago. No, all this Statement by Jesus means is that Bartholomew was chosen by God for Salvation!

Now Jesus also said that Mattanah-El bar Tolmai was an “**Israelite indeed**”. So, what does that mean? Here Jesus used the Greek word, *alethos*- which means: *genuine or truly*. So, Jesus was saying that Bartholomew was *genuinely* or *truly* an “Israelite”.

This is an Area of Theology that many find hard to accept. But what I am about to say is just as true and right and biblical as **John 3:16**. So, just what was Jesus talking about? Was Jesus referring to Bartholomew's physical Descent from Father Abraham? No- not in the physical Sense. He's not talking about Bartholomew's Bloodline or his Ethnicity or his Genetics. So, what did Jesus mean by this Statement? It means that Bartholomew was a true spiritual Israelite and not merely an Israelite in the Flesh or in name only.

You see, the Reality is that many, who say they are or who lay claim to be “Israelites” or “Jews” are not. **Romans 9:6b & 7a** clearly says,

... they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants ...

... and then in verse 8 the Apostle Paul gave us the Answer to this Mystery when he said this:

That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.

... in other words, human Flesh and everything associated with human Flesh (like Ethnicity; Nationality; and Bloodline) means NOTHING to God as far as Salvation is concerned! And it NEVER has! ALL that matters is whether a person has been sovereignly chosen by God. And if he has- he WILL be saved. And THAT ALONE makes him a “child of God”.

But if an individual- even a Jew- does NOT come to Jesus for Salvation- then that person is NOT chosen by God; he is NOT a “son of Abraham”; nor is he a “child of God”; nor is he part of the “people of God”! And that is why the Apostle wrote this in **Romans 2:28&29:**

28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh.

29 But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

... and this is the Way it has ALWAYS been! And this explains why God had to personally kill so many Jews in the Wilderness and why so many Jews refused to believe in Jesus. They weren't chosen! Because ALL who have been chosen will come! Please look at **Romans 8:29&30:**

29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;

30 and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

So, once again- Jesus was talking about the Fact that God the Father had already chosen Bartholomew for Salvation from before the Foundation of the world! And because he was chosen; and because he had already been born again- Bartholomew was on his way to become a *spiritual Jew*; an *inward Jew*; and a *true Jew*!

But Bartholomew was not yet Justified. He was not yet forgiven and he had not yet become Righteous before God by Faith alone. Yet he was a chosen vessel. He was a man, who was on his Way to become a true Israelite. And a true Israelite is one who is an Israelite or a Believer on the inside.

So, this was a born again man. This was a man who had experienced the New Birth and was ready for both Forgiveness and Righteousness. This was a man whose eyes and ears had been opened and whose heart had been softened- ready to

meet Jesus- and yet at the same time- he was sinful and flawed as everybody is. Now please look again at the first part of **John 1:48**:

Nathanael said to Him, "How do You know me?"

Mattanah-El- the son of Tolmai said, *"How do You know me? I don't know You- so how do You know me?"* In other words- Bartholomew was asking Jesus, *"I don't know You- so what is the Basis of Your Knowledge about me?"*

What a Question to ask the Omniscient God of the Universe! Now remember the Context of this Meeting. Bartholomew is doubting whether this Man can be the true Messiah that Philip said that He was. Not that he questioned Philip- because Philip is his friend. And it's not that Bartholomew questions or doubts the Scripture- he doesn't. He believes the Scriptures. It's just that this particular Man from Nazareth that he doubts- doesn't seem to fit the Image of what the long-awaited Messiah ought to look like. This Man was the son of a Carpenter- a no-name, non-descript guy named, Joseph who comes from a scraggly town that has no connection to Prophecy; and that didn't even exist as the Old Testament Scriptures were being written. So, how could this be connected to the Messiah? It was just hard for this man to buy into all this.

So, he approached Jesus and Jesus said to him, *"Ah, an Israelite indeed in whom there's no deceit!"* And I think Bartholomew understood it this way- he said, *"How do You know me?"* with this kind of incredulous Thought, *"Are You just flattering me? How do You know me? Are You just trying to earn Points with me? Are You just trying to add me to Your Followers by using this Flattery on me? How can You possibly say that about me- You don't even know me? That's a pretty straightforward Statement! So, how in the world could You say that about me?"* Now read the last part of verse 48:

... Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you."

And by saying this- Jesus was saying, *"No, Mattanah-El, the son of Tolmai- as a matter of fact- I'm not using human Flattery on you at all! I'm not trying to butter you up; or deceive you into following Me at all! I am God! And I am using my Own unlimited Divine Omniscience- and I saw you when you were underneath that fig tree!"*

Now I think there may be a little more to this than what most people think. And this is all about seeking for the correct Context of a verse because all the little things in Scripture make it fascinating to me.

You see, back then- poor people (most people) in Israel lived in a one-room house. And you did everything in a house and the house could get full of smoke and it could get stuffy and also was very hot.

And one of the ways you cooled off was to plant trees around a house, close to the house. And one of the favorite trees to plant back then was a fig tree because it provided wonderful fruit; and over there- a fig tree would grow to a height of about 15 feet. So, you could get under it- because it would have a diameter of maybe 30 feet wide.

So, this would make a wonderful shade tree; and a Way to leave the house; and the heat of the house where they did all the cooking and everything.

So, getting under the shade of a fig tree would be a wonderful place to go. And they also had a little patio on the roofs of many houses back then- but in the heat of the Day- the people would go up there. And so, getting under the shade of a fig tree was a typical place to go. And under the trees became kind of a “private room” for poor people to go and sit and meditate and pray and talk to God.

And I think Jesus was not just saying, “I knew your geography, or I knew your physical location” but Jesus was saying... “I know the State of your Heart because I saw you under the fig tree! And I know what you were doing there! I saw you and I heard you in your private room! That's where you would go and study the Scriptures; and that's where you would go and pray to Me! That's where you would go and meditate. Bartholomew, I saw you in your secret place. I saw you in the private place. I saw you in the place of Meditation. And I heard your cries to Me!

So, Jesus not only knew Bartholomew’s Location- but He knew this man’s spiritual Condition. And because God had already prepared Bartholomew’s mind and heart- that was all it took -. Now please read verse 49:

Nathanael answered and said to Him, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel.”

Now keep in mind that back then- the phrase- “Son of God” always is used to refer to Jesus sharing the same Nature of God the Father. So, Nathaniel was saying here- “*You are God!*” So, this man was confessing with his mouth- that Jesus is God; that Jesus is Lord! And according to **Romans 10:9**- that is one of the things it takes to be saved- you must confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord- that He is fully Deity.

So, Bartholomew understood that Jesus knew everything about him. He not only knew his physical Location, but He knew Bartholomew’s spiritual Condition. And so, he said, “*That's enough for me because only God knows that! Therefore,*

You are the Son of God!" That is to say "You have the same Nature as God and You are one with God." . Now look at verses 50&51:

50 Jesus answered and said to him, "Because I said to you that I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You will see greater things than these."

51 And He said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

So, Jesus was saying to him, *"From here on out- everything you see is just going to enrichen and enlarge your Faith!" The other Disciples, the things that they see, they're going to struggle with. They're not going to understand. And even Philip... 'Lord, show us the Father!'... they're all going to be struggling. But not you! Everything you see is going to enrichen what you already know to be true!"*

And of all the Apostles, Bartholomew seems to me to be the one who gained the most from his Time with Jesus. Because at the outset, he knew exactly who He was. And so, everything after that- was an Enrichment!

The *first* Church Historian- a man named, *"Eusebius of Caesarea"* (260-339AD) wrote an Account called, *"Ecclesiastical History"* or the *"History of the Church"*. In that book, Eusebius wrote that after Jesus ascended into Heaven- Bartholomew went into India and left behind a copy of the **Gospel of Matthew**.

Jerome of Stridon (342-420AD) wrote that Bartholomew did most of his work in India around the Bombay Region near the Konkan Coast. The modern Christians of Azerbaijan consider Bartholomew to be the one that God used to bring the Gospel to them. History also records that Bartholomew united with the Apostle Jude Thaddeus and went into what is today called, "Armenia"² to begin a Church there that has been having uninterrupted worship Services since Bartholomew first preached there.

The Tradition is that after preaching the Gospel to the local King- he was converted. But the magistrates of the Region feared both the Jews and the Romans and so, they arrested Bartholomew and condemned him to die by the slow and intentional flaying of his Flesh like they would clean a fish or skin an animal!

You know, I'm thankful as I read a lot of material on the Apostles, as I read about the people that God has used. You know, I've been reading a lot of Christian Biographies. And I'm consistently amazed at how God has always used weak and sinful people- how He can go into the gutter and into the horrible pits of the world and find the worst, the lowest, the most degraded person- and save them and then make them the means of somebody else's Salvation.

² In many circles, Armenia is considered to be the *first* predominately "Christian Nation".

The Savior made an Apostle out of an evil Publican. He has made countless godly Women of great Virtue out of a Prostitute. All through History, God has been using flawed and sinful people. And we've seen it in these men.

But what about your own Life? I'm sure in this Congregation this Morning- there is some man or some woman, some young person, who feels that their Life is broken and disreputable- maybe even scandalous. They think their heart is dirty and their mind is full of corruption. And maybe you feel a little bit intimidated being here, if the truth were known. Well, I want you to know, you're just the kind of person the Lord can use mightily- because God is glorified the most- when He picks up the lowly, the base, the common, the humble and He transforms them. As long as you can cry, "*Lord, have mercy on me,*" that's all He asks, like the Publican who beat on his chest. And of that man, Jesus said, he went home justified.

If you are available, willing, the Lord can change you and use you to change the world. That's what He's been doing. And He's still doing it. One of the Stories I heard many years ago, was about one of the greatest Preachers in America after the turn of the 19th Century, was a man who was a drunken Alcoholic- who spent all his family's money on his booze. He didn't feed his family. And he eventually had a little baby girl- who died. And she died of Malnutrition. He was drinking so much- he forgot to feed her!

This man went in a drunken Stupor to the Funeral, and after the Service was over, he stole the clothes off her dead body to exchange for a drink. And on his Way to the bar- he stumbled into a Mission; heard the Gospel; was converted; stopped drinking; and was used to bring many others to Jesus Christ!

And that's just one among millions of other Stories of what God can do and will do- for those who have been made Humble by the Grace of God!

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your Pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.