

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).”

From the beginning of his gospel, John testified that Jesus is the Messiah through John the Baptist, and now through Jesus’ first disciples. He tells how the first disciples encountered Jesus, made an immediate confession that he is the Messiah, and testified about Jesus and brought people to Jesus. Encountering the Messiah had a great impact on them. They were like a man who found hidden treasure in a field and went and sold everything he had to buy that field (Mt 13:44). They joyfully committed themselves to the Messiah. In a word, they were truth seekers. They were the remnant of God in that generation. They found Jesus because Jesus found them (Jn 15:16). God seeks those who seek him (Jn 4:23). 2 Chronicles 16:9 says, **“...the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.”** God encourages and supports those who seek him with all their hearts. Are there truth seekers in our time? Our time is not worse than Elijah’s time. Baal worship was prevalent and it seemed that there was no one who sought God. So Elijah complained, **“I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me, too”** (1 Ki 19:14b). Sometimes we feel like Elijah did. Yet, let’s remember what God said to Elijah, **“Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel - all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and whose mouths have not kissed him”** (1 Ki 19:18). Indeed, there are remnants of God in our time too (Ro 11:5). God is living. God is the Almighty, Sovereign Ruler. God is seeking those whose hearts are seeking him. God is working to call and raise disciples in our time for his world mission purpose.

In today’s passage let’s learn how Jesus’ first disciples found the Messiah, and more than that, how Jesus found them. We can learn what kind of relationship Jesus wants to have with us and the clear goal to which he is leading us. John records Jesus’ encounters with five disciples: Andrew and John (35-40), Peter (41-42), Philip (43-46), Nathanael (47-51). Each encounter is different, and the conversations are vivid, meaningful and dynamic. Each confession about Jesus is different. But in essence, they all confess that Jesus is the Messiah.

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First, “Come and you will see” (35-42). In this part we learn how Andrew and John met Jesus. First of all, they heard John the Baptist’s testimony about him (35-37). The day after John introduced Jesus publicly, he introduced Jesus to his disciples, saying, **“Look, the Lamb of God!”** (36) John the Baptist’s message was always the same, yet it was simple, powerful and fruitful. He did not beat around the bush, but came straight to the point. He introduced his disciples to Jesus so they would follow Jesus instead of him; he did not try to keep his disciples permanently. He knew that they were not his sheep, but Jesus’ sheep. His main concern was to exalt Jesus. Two of his disciples, Andrew and John, the author of this gospel, heard John the Baptist’s testimony and were deeply moved. They turned their eyes upon Jesus and began to follow him. They became disciples of Jesus. We learn here that hearing someone else’s testimony about Jesus is very important. God uses the testimony of witnesses to bring people to Jesus himself. Paul says that faith comes from hearing the message about Jesus (Ro 10:17). God is pleased to save people who humbly hear the message about Jesus from one of his witnesses (1 Cor 1:21). The first two disciples humbly accepted John’s testimony about Jesus.

Secondly, they made a relationship with Jesus and found him to be the Messiah (38-39). After hearing John’s testimony, the two disciples wanted to see for themselves if it was true. They were like the Bereans: After hearing Paul’s message, they examined the Scriptures every day to see if it was true (Ac 17:11). When Jesus saw the two disciples following him, he asked, **“What do you want?”** Jesus did not welcome them blindly. He wanted to know their real desire or motive. The question, **“What do you want?”** may sound easy to answer. But it is not easy when we have to share an honest answer from our hearts. What do you want? People’s recognition? Power to rebuke your critics? A million dollars? To lose weight and look like a movie star? These may seem appealing. But they cannot satisfy our deepest need. Jesus wants us to seek something more in following him. What we seek matters most to Jesus, not our human backgrounds or qualifications. Jesus wants us to have a right motive. So he asks from the beginning, “What do you want?” We must answer honestly, realizing that Jesus knows everyone’s heart (2:24-25).

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What did the two disciples answer? They said, **“Rabbi, (which means teacher), where are you staying?”** This means that they wanted to learn from him and to spend time with him. They had a great desire to know Jesus personally. Some people seem to follow Jesus in order to get something from him, such as power, some kind of leadership skill, success, or health and wealth. Such people are not interested in the person Jesus, or growing in his image. So they don’t commit themselves to Jesus. Jesus wants us to know him truly, make a relationship with him and grow in his image. In truth, we can find everything in Jesus. Jesus is the source of life and all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Jn 1:4; Col 2:3). Let’s have a desire to know Jesus himself, like the first disciples. This is essential in being a disciple of Jesus.

How did Jesus respond? Let's look at verse 39a. **“‘Come,’ he replied, ‘and you will see.’”** He invited the disciples into his personal life. He wanted them to know him better and better. Many people hesitate to let others really know them. It is because we tend to hide our weaknesses, and only reveal our great point. Many people look great from a distance. But if we see them up close and personal, all their issues are exposed and we are disappointed. However, the closer we get to Jesus, the more beautiful and awesome we find him to be. As we know Jesus better, our desire to know him increases. Meeting this Jesus transforms people. Some have approached Jesus to find something wrong with him. General Lew Wallace studied the Bible diligently for this. But through Bible study he found the Messiah and was transformed into a new person. He witnessed to Jesus through his work: “Ben-Hur: A tale of the Christ.”

“Come and you will see” is Jesus’ open invitation; it is full of grace and mercy. The door to Jesus is always open. Jesus said, in Revelation 3:20, **“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.”** Jesus said in Matthew 11:28, **“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”** Jesus warmly invites us to know him intimately. Let’s come to Jesus.

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Look at verse 39b. **“So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon.”** Simply being with Jesus opened their eyes. They could see clearly that Jesus was the Messiah. They shouted with excited, trembling voices: **“We have found the Messiah!”** (41) What does “Messiah” mean? He is **“the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”** (1:29). He is **“God’s Chosen One,” “the Son of God”** (1:34). He is **“the one who comes from above”** and **“is above all”** (3:31). He is **“the Savior of the world”** (4:42). The Messiah is everything to everyone. To those who are perishing, he is the life-giver (1:4). To those who are thirsty, he is the spring of living water (4:14). To those who seek the worthy object of worship, he is their perfect lover (4:26). To those who are hungry, he is the bread of life (6:35). To those walking in the darkness, he is the light of the world (8:12). To those who are wandering, he is the good shepherd (10:11). To those suffering under the power of death, he is the resurrection and the life (11:25-26). To those without hope, who feel like orphans in this world, he is the way to the Father’s house (14:6). To those who are confused by false teaching, he is the truth (14:6). To those who want to grow and bear fruit, he is the true vine who provides everything we need (15:5). In Jesus we find everything we need for abundant life. Jesus is the Messiah!

Thirdly, they testified about Jesus and brought Peter to him (40-42). After meeting the Messiah, what did they do? Did they enjoy his grace by themselves? Not at all. They wanted to share it with others. **“The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, ‘We have found the Messiah’ (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus”** (41-42a). Andrew knew his brother Peter had the same longing for the Messiah that he had. When he found the Messiah, he shared his discovery with Peter. More than that, he brought Peter to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, **“You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas” (which, when translated, is Peter)** (42b). In Greek, this means “rock.” Jesus knew that Peter was a very ordinary man, but he had great hope in him. Jesus saw in him a seed with enormous potential to grow until he became a great spiritual leader. With this hope, Jesus bore all his weaknesses and failures, and helped him to grow until he became a useful servant of God, a pillar of the early church. Andrew’s great contribution to God’s history was bringing Peter to Jesus. We never know how Jesus will transform people we bring to him. Let’s

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bring people to Jesus with great hope. We don't need to worry about what will happen to them in the future. It is all up to Jesus. All we have to do is trust Jesus, and bring people to him with faith.

Second, “You will see greater things than that” (43-51). The next day Jesus decided to leave Bethany and go to Galilee (43a), where he would focus his ministry. He found Philip and invited him, **“Follow me”** (43b). What does this mean? It was an invitation to a personal relationship with Jesus as his disciple. It involved learning his character, and growing to be like him. It required setting his life direction and making a commitment. From the beginning of John's gospel, Jesus called his disciples to follow him. At the end of John's gospel, Jesus again said, “Follow me” (Jn 21:19). Following Jesus is a lifelong pursuit. We face many challenges, problems and troubles; we fail and make many mistakes. We see many people come and go. It is easy to despair and feel like giving up. Yet through all this, Jesus says, “Follow me.” We need to fix our eyes on Jesus and learn of Jesus in the midst of any difficulty or hardship.

When Philip heard Jesus' words, **“Follow me,”** he was overpowered by Jesus' spiritual authority. Anyone who really hears Jesus' words, **“Follow me,”** finds his calling irresistible. Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida (44). After experiencing Jesus' call, Philip could not but go to Nathanael and say, **“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”** (45). When he encountered Jesus, he found that Jesus fulfilled prophecy. Philip's testimony was based on Scripture. Philip was also one of the truth seekers. Nathanael responded, **“Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?”** (46a). Nathanael had a prejudice toward the people of Galilee, including Nazareth. This was a cultural prejudice, which had a long history. From the time of the Assyrian invasion, Galilee's culture had been mixed between Jew and Gentile (2 Ki 15:29), which resulted in religious pluralism (2 Ki 17:29-33). In the time of Jesus, it was known as Galilee of the Gentiles (Mt 4:15). Orthodox Jews had a prejudice that nothing good could come from Galilee (Jn 7:52). This prejudice hindered Nathanael from accepting Jesus as the Messiah. How did Philip deal with this? He did not agree with Nathanael, or argue with him. He simply said, **“Come and see.”** He had a conviction that if Nathanael just encountered Jesus, all of his prejudices

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would vanish. This is the most effective way to bring people to Jesus, overcoming all kinds of prejudice. When we want to invite people to Jesus, we discover hindering barriers of various kinds: ethnic, social, religious, cultural, language and so on. Especially missionaries who cross cultures face these barriers. When we analyze them, they seem impossible to overcome and we can easily give up. But there is a way. When we are convinced that Jesus is the Messiah, and simply say, **“Come and see,”** we can experience a breakthrough. We should bring people to Jesus himself, not to our own cultural brand of Christianity. Jesus is our peace, who breaks the dividing wall of hostility and brings true reconciliation (Eph 2:14). E. Stanley Jones was a most effective missionary of the early 20th century, sometimes called, “the Billy Graham of India.” He faced cultural barriers which included the caste system and a tremendous diversity of tribal groups. But he was not overwhelmed by all these barriers. He was occupied by Christ, and simply preached Christ, and helped people to meet Jesus. His book, “The Christ of the India Road,” has inspired many people to become missionaries. When we face cultural issues, we don't need to calculate or argue. Let's simply invite people to Jesus, saying, **“Come and see.”**

When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, **“Here is a true Israelite in whom there is no deceit”** (47). Nathanael had a negative view of Jesus. But Jesus saw Nathanael very positively, that he was pure-hearted, honest and sincere. In a word, he was a truth seeker and a remnant of God. Usually pure hearted people are misunderstood, not appreciated, shunned and lonely. They are often regarded as foolish. In America, many who try to keep sexual purity are regarded like this. Jesus knew Nathanael, considered him very precious and appreciated him. Nathanael was surprised because no one had understood him, but Jesus did. Jesus went on, **“I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you.”** Nathanael was shocked by Jesus' transcendent knowledge of him. So he declared, **“Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel”** (49). When Nathanael encountered Jesus, all of his prejudices were gone and his spiritual eyes opened. He found the Messiah.

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Jesus said to the astonished Nathanael something even more astonishing. Let's read verses 50-51. **'Jesus said, 'You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that.' He then added, 'Very truly I tell you, you will see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.'**" Here, "the Son of Man" is a messianic title. Until this time, people could not see heaven, the kingdom of God, because the door of heaven was closed due to man's sins. But Jesus came into the world and proclaimed the kingdom of God. Then Jesus opened the way to heaven through his death and resurrection. Jesus became the mediator between God and man. Now we can come to God freely through Jesus and have fellowship with him. Through Jesus we can experience the kingdom of God now and forever.

People are living in this world struggling with present realities, not having the kingdom of God in their hearts. They seek bits of pleasure and convenience and want to soothe their weary souls with entertainment. They have no vision beyond the weekend. Their minds are full of worries, and they sigh every seven minutes. People seem to be overwhelmed with their tough life. We need hope and vision. Jesus promises those who follow him, **"You will see greater things than these...Very truly I tell you, you will see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."** Jesus promised that we will experience the kingdom of God when we follow him. Then we can have true peace, joy and satisfaction.

In this passage we learn that when the first disciples encountered Jesus, they made immediate confessions, such as: **"We have found the Messiah."** It was the beginning of a relationship with Jesus which extended into the eternity of the kingdom of God. Jesus is working in our time, too, to call and raise disciples who know him and testify about him. Many of us have met him personally and are being transformed by him. Let's follow Jesus to the kingdom of God and testify about him to the people of our times.