

## More Than Meets the Eye

John 1.45-51

Nathaniel was an honest skeptic who believed. His story is an invitation to all skeptics to believe in Jesus. But a closer look at John's account of his conversion reveals hidden levels, exposing a fascinating connection with an ancient patriarch, and a future celebration. Let's look close...

- Story of Nathaniel: Conversion of a skeptic  
*He hears, questions, comes and sees, wonders, and believes*  
*Honest skeptics consider; others simply reject*  
  
Application: *Skeptic, believe in this Man!*
- Story of (True) Israel: Jacob's ladder revisited  
*Jacob-Nathaniel connection: Wrestling w/God, Israel, and deceit!*  
*From the fig tree, to faith, to the future*  
  
Application: *Christian, be like Nathaniel!*
- Story of Redemption: Stairway to heaven  
*A fig tree cursed...and heaven opened!*  
*The week ends, the wedding begins; the best is yet to come!*  
  
Application: *Look for the blessed hope!*



1. The story of the conversion of Nathaniel begins under a fig tree – an event which we are told nothing about. However, ‘sitting under a fig tree’ was considered a place for prayer, meditation, and study. If this is what Nathaniel was doing, what Old Testament revelation might he have been reflecting on?
2. How does Philip identify Jesus to Nathaniel? How does this differ from the way John the Baptist (vv. 29, 34, 36) and Andrew (v. 41) identify Him? Why did Philip say “Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote” (v.45), instead of just “the Messiah”? Why do you think Nathaniel was skeptical of Jesus as the Messiah? How does Philip unobtrusively invite him to consider Jesus?
3. When Jesus meets Nathaniel, He calls him a ‘genuine Israelite’ (the only time “Israelite” occurs in John), and adds, “in whom there is no deceit!” Nathaniel’s response suggests that Jesus knew what he was thinking about when he was under the fig tree! Where did the name “Israel” originate, and what does it mean (see Gen. 32.24-28)? How does this correspond to Nathaniel’s experience? While the nation of Israel is included in prophecy, who are ‘true sons of Israel’ today (Rom. 2.29)? How can we be like Nathaniel?
4. Jesus’ ability to have knowledge that is not available to sons of men elicits Nathaniel’s declaration of faith in Him as God’s Son and the promised Messiah. Jesus says he will see “greater things than these” (v50). What in the near future was Jesus referring to?
5. Jesus concludes by saying Nathaniel (and other disciples) “will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man” (on this title, see Dan. 7.13-14). This reminds us of Gen. 28.10-22, where God appeared to Jacob, and communicated His promised blessing to him in a dream. How does that experience parallel with Jesus’ ministry as the Son of Man?