

Come and see

It's not as if the Baptist has to wait long for his as-yet-unexpressed wish to be fulfilled: the very next day he loses two of his disciples to the Lamb of God. One at least – Andrew – was presumably among his best. If the other (unnamed) one was John himself, as many think, that makes two.



Andrew wastes no time fetching his brother Simon and telling him that they have found the Messiah. It is striking just how quick these first followers of Jesus are to believe in him. Andrew takes the Baptist's word for it, and Simon takes Andrew's. Doubtless those first few hours in Jesus' presence were significant too.

Some people are like that. They are already seekers after something or someone and are open to the truth about Jesus. They simply need to be invited to come and see (Jesus). Doubtless God has already been at work in some way preparing their hearts. Philip is another with an open heart.

Nathanael is not so immediately open. He simply cannot credit that anything good, let alone anyone as significant as Israel's Messiah, could come from Nazareth. Yet he is willing to suspend his disbelief and at least "come and see." However it is not so much Nathanael's seeing that proves decisive as Jesus' seeing. It is the same prophetic seeing which will be significant in the encounter with the Samaritan woman (4.16-19). Though not called a 'sign' by the Gospel writer (cf. 2.11), it is in fact the second instance of special divine revelation which leads to faith. The first was at 1.33, where the Baptist was the recipient.

Jesus is wary of people who demand a sign, nevertheless signs have their place in his ministry, particularly – it would seem – if *not* expected.

It may show a lack of faith to demand a sign, but it is surely a sign of stubborn unbelief – blind folly even - *not* to accept a sign when it is miraculously and graciously given. Nathanael, Jesus tells us, is a man without guile, so it's no surprise that he is quickly won over by Jesus' prophetic seeing. In fact Jesus suggests he is too easily impressed, or rather impressed by too small a sign, for he will see far greater things.

Jesus' promise to Nathanael that he will see heaven opened is an allusion to Jacob's ladder. Jacob, renamed Israel, was full of guile, yet he was allowed to glimpse in a dream something of God's heavenly glory (Gen 28.10ff.). How much more will guileless Nathanael and his fellow disciples ("you" plural in 51) see God's glory revealed in the Son of Man (see Dan 7.13) as he is crucified, resurrected and ascends to the Father.

To ponder

Thinking of Nathanael's objection, what objections do people have to Jesus' claims today? How might we still get them to come and see?

To pray

God of grace, I thank you for your call on my life. Help me to be like Andrew and Philip, quick to encourage family, friends and neighbours to come and see Jesus. May they too see your glory in him, in whose name I pray. Amen

Reflection