

=THE APOSTLES=

Lesson 9

The Apostle Nathanael (Bartholomew)

AIM: to teach my pupils the Bible facts about Nathanael.

POINT OF CONTACT: Nathanael's life is wrapped around a wedding (at least, we feel this is so), as will be discussed later in the lesson. For the point of contact, discuss with the pupils something about a wedding. Ask them if they have ever been to a wedding. Ask them to tell some of the things that happened. Ask them what event for the guests took place after the wedding. (The reception is the intent here.) Discuss weddings for a while, and then lead into the lesson about Nathanael (Bartholomew).

INTRODUCTION: There is little doubt that the Nathanael of the Bible is also the Bartholomew of the Bible. John calls him "Nathanael;" the other writers call him "Bartholomew." Probably they are the same person. Let us notice some interesting facts about him.

- I. NATHANAEL IS ANOTHER NAME WHICH MEANS "THE GIFT OF GOD." Salvation is the gift of God. This once again could be stressed.

- II. NATHANAEL CAME FROM CANA IN GALILEE. Nathanael is little more than a name mentioned in the Gospel record. After we are told in John 1:45-51 how he became a disciple, very little else is said about him. John does make a reference, however, that he came from Cana, a tiny village about five miles northeast of Nazareth. He is mentioned, of course, in the four lists of the apostles; beyond that, we have simply to conjecture about him with a trace of his name in legend and tradition here and there. However, since we do know that he came from Cana of Galilee, let us dwell on this for a while. No doubt he was present at the wedding feast when Jesus performed the first of His miracles, the turning of water into wine. Certainly he would have been present at such an occasion.

- III. LEGEND HAS IT THAT NATHANAEL WAS ACTUALLY THE GROOM. This certainly would not be beyond consideration. Jesus did meet him in the prior chapter. Nathanael had been saved in the prior chapter. Jesus did make a special trip to Cana. It is certainly within the realm of possibility Jesus could have been at Nathanael's wedding. We should dwell here upon the importance of inviting Jesus to our wedding. Especially would this be a good point for young people. Following are some ways to insure the fact that Jesus is in our wedding ceremony.
 1. It should be performed in the church by the pastor.
 2. It should be a Christian ceremony where the bride and groom dedicate themselves to each other and also to the Lord.
 3. It should be an event shared by Christian friends and those who can pray for the new home.
 4. It should be a wedding where a saved person does not marry an unsaved person, but rather where saved people unite themselves together in Christ.
 5. Nothing should be done at the reception that would mar the Christian testimony of the bride and groom.
 6. It should be between people who know it is God's will for them to marry.
 7. It should be built upon courtship that brings honor to Christ, one which is built around prayer and the reading of the Scriptures.
 8. It should be a wedding ceremony where both bride and groom are clean and pure and have saved themselves, each for the other.

There are still other things that would bring Christ in a wedding ceremony. These perhaps can be added by the teacher or even the pupils.

- IV. NATHANAEL WAS WON TO CHRIST BY PERSONAL SOUL WINNING. Notice John 1:45, 46. Philip was a friend of Nathanael. He it was who told Nathanael about Jesus Christ and led him to the Saviour. (Stress here the importance of personal soul winning, how that every Christian can and should be a soul winner.)
- V. NATHANAEL KNEW THE BIBLE. Notice the words in John 1:46, "And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?..." Philip had told Nathanael he had found the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. Nathanael could not believe it; he knew the Scriptures too well. He knew the Old Testament Scriptures mentioned Bethlehem in Micah 5:2 and also mentioned such places as Zion, Jerusalem, etc.; but he was not expecting the Messiah to come out of Nazareth. Nathanael knew Nazareth well. It was a poor, pitiful, utterly unimportant place. It had a reputation less than the best. He knew the Bible. (Stress the importance of knowing the Bible.)
- VI. NATHANAEL WAS A CLEAN YOUNG MAN. You will notice the words of Jesus in John 1:47, "...Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" Nathanael was probably a vine-dresser or a keeper of vineyards, a lover of plants and trees. The Scripture here seems to imply that he was a quiet, contemplative type of fellow, the kind of man who would enjoy sitting under the family fig tree, praying and meditating upon the coming kingdom of God. The words, "no guile," seem to imply that he was not a deceitful person but rather a simple, plain kind of fellow. He was clean and dedicated to whatever task was his.
- VII. HE CAME TO THE REALIZATION THAT JESUS SAW HIM THROUGH AND THROUGH. In fact, this was the thing that made him trust the Saviour. Notice John 1:48 when Jesus said, "...Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee." Nathanael immediately realized this was the Son of God, and then he came to the realization that Jesus saw and knew everything about him. (This would be a good point to stress in the lesson for Sunday. Every child and young person should realize there are no secrets to God. He hears everything we say, knows every place we go, knows every thought we think. This is a very important truth. Stress it very strongly.)
- VIII. NATHANAEL WAS AMONG THOSE WHO WERE FISHING SO FRUITLESSLY ONE NIGHT AFTER THE RESURRECTION. Read John 21:2. He found out that the way to fish is in the energy of Christ and the power of Christ and the help of Christ. He found out that works done in the flesh cannot be blessed.
- IX. HE WAS A MARTYR. Tradition has it that he went to India and then to Armenia to preach and that he was either crucified or skinned alive. Ancient Christian art seems to lean toward the latter. Think of such a horrible death! He died for the cause of Christ and His kingdom. Picture him on a foreign field, dying and looking back to that time when Philip said, "We have found the Messiah," and reliving that wonderful experience.