

9/23/18

The Apostle Bartholomew

In studying the various characters of the Bible you recognize the great diversity of people God is able to use for His own glory.

* This is so evident in our study of the twelve apostles, for they were as different as one man's fingerprints from another.

The key is in allowing God to use our own personality and unique traits and talents through His gifts and to be transformed by His Holy Spirit on a ongoing basis!

We come to Bartholomew, the sixth apostle in the order of Matthew, as we look at him from three vantage points. Matt. 10:3

I. The character Bartholomew.

II. The communication to Bartholomew.

III. The conversion of Bartholomew.

I. The character Bartholomew.

A. The name of Bartholomew appears only four times in the New Testament.

1. His name appears three times in the synoptic gospels. Matt. 10:3; Mk. 3:18; Lk. 6:14

a. The three are the list of the twelve apostles.

b. The appearance of his name is always the second in the second group of four apostles.

1) Philip being the leader of the second group of four.

2) The second group being less intimate in their fellowship with Jesus.

3) The first four, Peter, Andrew, James and John, being the most intimate of the twelve.

c. The apostle Bartholomew is joined with Philip in all three lists of the synoptics, perhaps an indication of their co-labor, as Jesus sent them out two by two?

2. His name appears once in Acts. Acts 1:13

a. His name is preceded by Philip in the three synoptic gospels in the list of the twelve.

1) In Matthew, Thomas follows Bartholomew, then Matthew.

2) In Mark and Luke, Matthew follows Bartholomew, then Thomas.

b. His name in Acts changes order and Thomas comes second after Philip, Bartholomew third, then Matthew. Acts 1:13

1) Three of the four lists have Bartholomew following Philip. Matt, 10:3a; Mk. 3:18a-b; Lk. 6:14d

- 2) Three of the four lists have Matthew following Bartholomew. Mk. 3:18d, Lk. 6:15a; Acts 1:13h
- c. Whether this indicates a change in order of importance is uncertain, though it is interesting that he is not found anywhere after Pentecost in the book of Acts.

B. Bartholomew is known by another name six times in the Gospel of John.

1. The two events recorded are at the start and the end of the ministry of our Lord.
 - a. The first five times his name is Nathanael in the context of his conversion and call. Jn. 1:45-51
 - b. The sixth and last time is when Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, the sons of Zebedee and two others of His disciples were together and Peter said he was going fishing and they said, “We are going with you”. Jn. 21:2-3
2. The appearance of Nathanael at the start and the end only confirms his apostleship.
 - a. The most common explanation is the only rational one, which is the custom of having a double name, even as in the case of Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus. Matt. 10:3
 - b. The treasure-chest is in John’s gospel where we get all that we know about

Bartholomew or Nathanael, in order to get a picture of this man.

- 1) The extent of speculation is great, from being the groom at the marriage at Cana, to being one of the two disciples on the Emmaus road, but this is all speculation at best.
 - 2) The man is distinct from all the other eleven.
2. The name Bartholomew “Bartholomaios” means son of Talmai in Greek consisting of two words.
 - a. The word “Bar” meaning son.
 - b. The word “Talmai”, means the house of Naptali, identifying his family, even as Simon Bar-Jona. Matt. 16:17
 3. The name Nathanael means “gift of God”.
 - a. Chosen sovereignly by God to be one of the twelve apostles. Acts 1:13
 - b. Chosen after an entire night in prayer. Lk. 6:12-13
 - c. Chosen to appear to after the resurrection. Jn. 21:1-14
 - d. Chosen to be sent out to preach the good news to a lost and dying world. Matt. 28:16-20
 - e. Chosen to be studied for our learning.
- C. The home of Bartholomew or Nathanael was Cana.**
1. Cana was Nathanael’s birth place. Jn. 21:2

2. Cana “Kana” means reedy, a place of reeds.
3. Cana was a town of Galilee near Capernaum.
4. Cana was where Jesus did his first miracle by turning water into wine Jn. 2:1-11
5. Cana is the place where the Lord told the nobleman of Capernaum to go home for his son would live and his servant met him on the way and confirmed the healing. Jn. 4:46
6. Cana is not mentioned in the Old Testament, but it has been identified with the modern Kana el-Jelil, also called Khurbet Kana, a place 8 or 9 miles north-west of Nazareth. Others have identified it with Kefr Kenna, which lies on the direct road to the Sea of Galilee, this is the more favorable, about 5 miles north-east of Nazareth, and 12 in a direct course from Tiberias.
7. It is called “Cana of Galilee,” to distinguish it from Cana of Asher. Josh.19:28

Illustration

Have you ever heard of a man name “Jabez”? He is like Bartholomew, he is not know by most Christians perhaps not even by Pastors who study the Bible, he is easy to miss, but to our loss. 1Chron. 4:9-10

* “Now Jabez was more honorable than his brothers, and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, “Because I bore him in pain. And Jabez called on the God of Israel saying, “Oh, that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that Your hand

would be with me, and that You would keep me from evil, **that I may not cause pain!**” So God granted him what he requested.”

* What an incredible prayer request by this man that is mentioned only one time!

Application

1. There are many individuals in the Old and New Testament that we know very little about, as well as here on earth, but what we will learn about them in heaven for all eternity will astonish us.
 - a. Enoch is one who will take us back I am sure. Gen. 5:21-24
 - b. Noah will have interesting stories and accounts. Gen. 6-9
 - c. But equally there are many individuals on earth in generations past and during our life that we know little about, yet they are God’s faithful servants to the end.
 - d. They will never write a book, speak to large crowds or their name recognized by all.
2. There are many on this earth though they are in some form of inner circle, they are not the center of attention or even on demand by those who stand in the other more intimate groups.
 - a. You may at times feel insignificant, yet God is interested in you as His dear child. Eph. 5:1-2
 - b. You need to take time to hang out with Him, in order to be rich in Him and able to do all He leads you in. Phil. 3:10-11

- c. You and I should be excited to come to church, on Sunday, mid-week or any other time, for one reason alone.
 - 1) It is not to see if your Pastor can bring about another interesting or great sermon.
 - 2) It is not to see if your needs can be met by the church.
 - 3) It is not because your church is one of the biggest, most popular or any other thing.
 - 4) The only reason you should be excited about coming to church is to hear God's voice speak to you through His word about your spiritual life!

The character Bartholomew was not the most popular!

II. The communication to Bartholomew.

- A. Nathanael was sought out by Philip to communicate the message of the gospel. Jn. 1:45
 - 1. Philip was found by Jesus, we we saw. Jn. 1:43
 - a. Jesus called Philip to follow Him. Jn. 1:43
 - b. Jesus saw him respond without any hesitation or procrastination.
 - 2. Philip decided to find Nathanael, one of his close friends. vs. 45a

- a. Philip is like Andrew, seeking to bring others to Jesus.
- b. Nathanael remember is the same person as Bartholomew.
- 3. Nathanael was told by Philip they had found Him whom Moses in the Law and the prophets wrote about. vs. 45b-d
 - a. Philip and the others; Andrew, Peter James and John were students of the word.
 - 1) The implication being Nathanael was a student of the word of God, also.
 - 2) Nathanael was obeying the commands of the Law. Deut. 6:4-9; Josh. 1:8
* Nathanael had a hunger for God and the things of God!
 - 3) Nathanael was guided by the truth of God's word, not the trends of the day.
* The Pharisees and Scribes were prejudice towards Jesus because He was not educated in their schools, so they missed their Messiah!
 - b. Nathanael therefore must have also been looking and searching as they had.
 - 1) Nathanael believed the promises of God anticipating the Messiah. Is. 7:14
 - 2) Nathanael was looking for God to act in his lifetime.
 - 3) Nathanael was told by Philip with certainty about having found God.

- a) Moses in the Law prophesied of “the prophet” to come, the Messiah at Whose words all would be accountable for. Deut. 15:15-19
 - b)) Daniel the prophet gave the very day of the Messiah’s First Coming, from the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, in troublous times. Dan. 9:24-26
4. Nathanael was told plainly by Philip Jesus was the long awaited Messiah. vs. 45e-f
- a. God had been faithful to His promise to Adam and Eve, “the seed of the women” had come. Gen. 3:15
 - 1) God had become man. Jn. 1:1, 14
 - 2) God had done it at His prophetic time. Gal. 4:4
 - 3) God gave Jesus His human name by the angel Gabriel, “Jesus”, which means “Yahweh is salvation”, it is the Greek name of the Hebrew, Joshua.
 - b. Jesus was from Nazareth at the time that His ministry began, but His birth was in Bethlehem. Mic. 5:2
 - c. Jesus was the son of Joseph by name, but not by conception, He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, yet submitted Himself in obedience for thirty years. Matt. 1:18, 20

B. Nathanael questioned Philip’s assessment. vs. 46

1. Nathanael said, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” vs. 46a-b
 - a. Nathanael was a skeptic at first as well as a bit prejudice like Philip.
 - 1) Nazareth was not a very reputable place.
 - 2) Nazareth was not the most cultured region.
 - 3) Nazareth was on the fringes of Gentile life, identified with trouble.
 - b. Nathanael was still searching and examining for himself.
 - 1) He was no mere follower.
 - 2) He was a “Berean”. Acts 17:11
2. Nathanael was simply invited by Philip to see for himself, “Come and see”. vs. 46c
 - a. He could of argued with Nathanael.
 - b. He could of been offended by his doubt.
 - c. He could of just been indifferent.
 - d. He instead gave a caring invitation to come to his own assessment.
3. Nathanael like all who came searching with a genuine heart, would not be disappointed.
 - a. Seeing one’s need of forgiveness.
 - b. Seeing one’s need of transformation.
 - c. It comes to every person.
 - d. It must be decided by each person.
 - e. It will effect each person’s eternity.

Illustration

The demoniac wanted to go with Jesus after he was delivered, but Jesus said no. Mk. 5:18-20

* “And when He got into the boat, he who had been demon-possessed begged Him that he might be with Him. However, Jesus did not permit him, but said to him, Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you. And he departed and began to proclaim in Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him; and all marveled.”

Application

1. Those closest to us are to be our top priority for sharing the good new of the gospel. Eph. 5:21-6:4

- a. Mother and Father.
- b. Brothers and sisters.
- c. Grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins.
- d. Friends.
- e. Strangers.

2. The best thing to do often is to invite them to church. 2Pet. 3:9

- a. So they can see the diversity of people and ages, all together.
- b. So they can see the people of God worshipping in one accord.
- c. So they can hear the word of God to convict them of their sins and save them.
- d. So they can observe people in their love for the Lord and each other on a down to earth level.

* All this will remove many of the false concepts about church and Christians!

3. The gospel is open for examination by all who come to see, whether the things declared are true or false. Acts 17:11

- a. The prophecies that have been fulfilled are staggering.
- b. The evidence for the death and resurrection of Jesus is overwhelming and without question.
- c. The central person of Jesus is like a “red thread” from Genesis to Revelation.

The communication to Bartholomew was the gospel message!

III. The conversion of Bartholomew.

A. Nathanael’s heart was revealed. Jn. 1:47-48

1. Nathanael took the invitation of going and seeing for himself seriously and Jesus saw him coming to Him. vs. 47a
 - a. He was invited and came to Jesus.
 - b. He exercised his free will to choose.
2. Nathanael was declared to be a good moral man by Jesus, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!” vs. 47b-d
 - a. The reference to having no guile means he was not one ruled by deceitfulness and corruption as was the order of the day for many of the Jews, being hypocrites.
 - * Remember that Jacob the deceiver of deceivers name was changed from “surplanter” to “Israel”, God prevails

- or governed by God, no longer to rule his own life but God!
- b.** The declaration marked a man living in the midst of corruption, but walking in uprightness before his Maker, a practice that does not escape the attention of God.
 - * Not all that are Israel are true Israel!
 - c.** The need of Nathanael nevertheless was to be saved.
 - 1)** Good moral people are still sinners by nature. Eph. 2:1-2
 - 2)** “There is none righteous, there is none who understand; none that seek after God.” Rom. 3:10-11
 - 3)** Remember he is revealed as being prejudice regarding Nazareth. Jn. 1:46
 - 3.** Nathanael questioned the validity of the assessment of Jesus about his person, as he had of Philip’s assessment of Jesus. vs. 48
 - a.** Nathanael said to Jesus, “How do You know me?”. vs. 48a-b
 - b.** Nathanael was told by Jesus, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.” vs. 48c-f
 - 1)** Fig trees were a place to rest and meditation on God and prayer.
 - 2)** Fig trees were a sign of blessing by God in the future Kingdom. Hab. 3:17
- B.** Nathanael’s confession was proclaimed. Jn. 1:49

- 1.** Nathanael immediately answered and called Jesus, “Rabbi”. vs. 49a-b
 - a.** The title “Rabbi” was used of the Jewish teachers or head person. vs. 49a
 - b.** The use of it towards Jesus was more than in the normal human sense by what he qualified it with.
 - c.** Nathanael confessed Jesus, as his teacher about the things of God.
- 2.** Nathanael said, “You are the Son of God!” vs. 49c
 - a.** The title is not a casual or careless declaration.
 - b.** The title was understood to be of the fulfilment of God becoming man.
 - * “Oh that God would rent the heavens! That You would come down.” Is. 64:1
 - c.** The title was a confession about the end of his personal search for his Messiah, He had arrived to forgive him.
- 3.** Nathanael said, “You are the King of Israel.” vs. 49d
 - a.** The title confessed that Jesus was the rightful heir to the throne of David to rule and reign over Israel.
 - b.** The title confessed his own personal surrender to Jesus as His Lord and Savior to rule over his life in full authority.
- 4.** Nathanael is a sharp contrast to Philip.
 - a.** Philip was very rational and calculating and prejudiced.

- b. Nathanael was full of faith, meditating on the things of God, willing to come and see.
- c. Philip after three and a half years said to Jesus, “Show us the Father and it is sufficient for us.” Jn. 14:8
- d. Nathanael said to Jesus the first time he came to Him, “You are the Son of God”. Jn. 1:49a-c
- e. Philip was practical, sizing up everything by what he saw and slow to understand.
- f. Nathanael was a man of prayer, a seeker of truth, honest, open to truth and willing to trust God!
* Yet God used them both these men as they yielded to Him!

C. Nathanael’s call was announced. Jn. 1:50-51

1. Nathanael’s call of faith would not be disappointing. vs. 50
 - a. Jesus honored Nathanael’s faith in coming to Him by saying, “Because I said to you, “I saw you under the fig tree, you believe?” vs. 50a-d
 - b. Jesus told Nathanael his life of faith would pay off in the future by saying, “You will see greater things than these.” vs. 50e
2. Nathanael’s call declared he would see the fulfilment of Jacob’s dream by declaring, “Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you

shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.” vs. 51

- a. Nathanael was told by Jesus what he was reading and meditating under the fig tree. Gen. 28:10-19
- b. Nathanael was meditating on the passage of Scriptures in Genesis where Jacob had a dream as he fled to from Esau and he saw a ladder let down from heaven to earth, angels descended and ascended and God promised to bless him and bring him back wealthy and safe. Gen. 28
- c. Nathanael was to be assured that He Jesus was the God who had descended to bless man through salvation.
 - 1) This is not speaking of the Mount of transfiguration for it was witnessed only by Peter, James and John.
 - 2) The only other possibility is the ascension of Jesus on the Mount of Olives to heaven, where the angel appeared to rebuke the disciples for gazing into the heavens and promised that He would return in like manner as He left. Acts 1:9-11
- 3. Nathanael was at Galilee and saw the risen Lord to be commissioned with the Great commission. Jn. 21:1-14
 - a. He is listed in Acts as noted. Acts 1:13
 - b. Yet he is not mentioned in the Acts at all.

- c. Tradition tell us that he was a missionary to various countries and explains his death in different ways.
 - 1) Esebius reports that he preached the gospel in India and left behind the Gospel of Matthew, in the actual Hebrew characters. Hist. V.x3
 - 2) Armenia, Phrygia, Lycaonia, Mesopotamia and Persia also have been claimed the scenes of his labors.
 - 3) He is said to have evangelized with Philip and Thomas.

Illustration

Necodemus came with an open heart searching and was not disappointed, but in fact was given the very requirement of the new birth to enter heaven. Jn. 3

Application

1. All men and women who come to Jesus of their own free will with legitimate doubts will not be turned away by Jesus, but welcomed to find rest for their souls, like Nathanael. Matt. 11:28-30
 - a. Having a clear understanding of who Jesus is.
 - b. Having a clear understanding that Jesus knows everything about you and still loves you.
2. Every person must confess Jesus as their own Lord and Savior before man, as Nathanael. Matt. 10:32
 - a. He is the Son of God Who die for me, in my place. 1Jn. 2:2
 - b. He is the One Who reigns and rule my life.

- c. He is the One Who teaches me all things through His Holy Spirit. Jn. 14:26
3. The conversion through the spiritual birth of any person is the work of God, like Nathanael. Titus 3:15
 - a. The word is proclaimed by an individual, the good news of the gospel.
 - b. The fact of one's lost condition and spiritual deadness is foundational. Eph. 2:1-2
 - c. The fact that Jesus became sin in the place of sinful man, due to His love for man. Jn. 3:16, 2Cor. 5:21
 - d. The fact that the person's conviction must come by the Holy Spirit through the gospel and made alive, faith being activated to the yielding heart, not mere sorrow for the consequences, but genuine repentance, seeing sin against God. 2Cor. 7:9-10
 4. The conversion of a person is always a call of God by faith, to see the things of God in a greater measure, like Nathanael. Rom. 10:17
 - a. The very birth of the believer implies growth, going from a babe to a mature adult.
 - b. The parables often focus on increased stewardship by faithful service in faith.
 - c. The promise is that eye has not seen, ear has not hear, nor has entered into the hear of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love Him. But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. 1Cor. 2:9-10a

The conversion of Bartholomew was a work of God!

Conclusion

This is Bartholomew, the sixth apostle from three vantage points.

- I.** The character Bartholomew was not the most popular!
- II.** The communication to Bartholomew was the gospel message!
- III.** The conversion of Bartholomew was a work of God!