

The Mind of Christ Challenger Deep – Week 21

June 19, 2019

We're in John Chapter 1, and we've introduced the idea of Jesus changing the name of Simon to Peter and I didn't quite finish all that I had written on that so we are going to finish what is left on that so I have a page left on that. Then we'll get into a transition in this same text.

³⁵ Again the next day John was standing with two of his disciples, ³⁶ and he looked at Jesus as He walked, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" ³⁷ The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. ³⁸ And Jesus turned and saw them following, and said to them, "What do you seek?" They said to Him, "Rabbi (which translated means Teacher), where are You staying?" ³⁹ He said to them, "Come, and you will see." So they came and saw where He was staying; and they stayed with Him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. ⁴⁰ One of the two who heard John speak and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. ⁴¹ He found first his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which translated means Christ). ⁴² He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter).

Later, Peter will use a different word when he speaks of all Christians as living stones. Remember that Jesus has just named Peter as Cephas, meaning stone or rock. Later, when Peter is writing his book, he uses the idea of living stones, pertaining to all Christians that are being built into a spiritual house, in 1 Peter 2:4-6.

And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, ⁵ **you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.** ⁶ For this is contained in Scripture: "Behold, I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner stone, and he who believes in Him will not be disappointed."

⁷ This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, "The stone which the builders rejected, this became the very corner stone,"

⁸ and, "A stone of stumbling and a **rock** of offense";

And Peter proclaimed Jesus to be a chosen cornerstone for the foundation, and then he called Him also, and this is interesting, Peter calls Jesus a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense in verses 7 and 8.

The word **rock** there is the same word that Jesus used to rename Peter. It is the word (Petro), "πετρο". So, at the beginning of His ministry, Jesus calls Simon a "rock", and then when Peter writes his book, he turns around and calls Jesus "the rock". When he calls Him the rock of offense, the word offense is the word scandalon, "σκανδαλον" where we get the word scandal from in 1 Peter 2:4-8.

Peter recognized Jesus as the **TRUE** Peter; the **TRUE** rock. He proclaimed as much in Matthew 16:18 when Jesus said, “I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.” And when Jesus calls him Petros, on which the church is built; it is the statement of confession that Peter uttered in Matthew 16:16, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Peter had proclaimed this in Acts 4:11-12 when he said, “He is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, but which became the chief corner stone. ¹² And there is salvation in no one else; for there is **no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.**”

Paul proclaimed that “this despised stone became the head; and that there is no other foundation that can be laid that *has* been laid, and that is the name of Jesus in 1 Cor. 3:11.

Paul also speaks of the church being built on the foundation of Apostles, Prophets and Jesus as the chief cornerstone. “...having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, ²¹ in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, ²² in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.” Ephesians 2:20-22

With all of this being given about **Jesus** being called the rock; **Jesus** being called the cornerstone; **Jesus** being called the foundation; I ask the question: “How could anyone construct a Papacy from such clear, biblical teaching?” How could we get a papacy out of that Scripture? How could we get the idea of a Pope out of this, and a succession, when it is so clear that when he is talking about the rock, he’s not talking about Peter? Peter knew that Jesus wasn’t talking about him in that way. Peter uses it later in his own book, that Jesus is **the rock**. And his confession was that Jesus was the Son of God. So **Paul** makes it clear that there is no other foundation in 1 Cor. 3:11. **Peter** says it in Acts 4:11-12. It just seems like such overwhelming evidence that no one in the first century had any idea that **Peter** was the foundation of the church. If he was, I wonder why Paul was able to rebuke him publically in Galatians 2:11-14.

When Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. ¹² For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. ¹³ The rest of the Jews joined him in **hypocrisy**, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. ¹⁴ But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, “If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?”

Peter certainly was not infallible. Peter had his faults.

We’re going to turn the corner here. In verse 43 ... and you have to watch for these subtle changes when you’re studying the gospels, because what has happened thus far *seems* to be in Judea. But in verse 43 it says, “The next day He purposed to go forth into Galilee, and He found Philip. And Jesus said to him, “Follow Me.”

So, from verse 42 to verse 43 there is a span of time where Jesus has to transition from Judea all the way to Galilee, but not only just into Galilee, but into the *northern* part of Galilee. It probably took him some time to walk that distance. This was probably a several days journey between verse 42 and verse 43. And it's interesting to see because sometimes we might connect the calling of Andrew and Peter with Philip and Nathaniel. But these were two different places and in different time periods.

In verse 43 there is a shift to Galilee. The New American Standard Bible (NASB) says, "**He purposed**" to go forth into Galilee". The word that is used here means 'an exercise of the will'. It is "ἠθέλησεν" and means to be willing. This word is also used in:

Matthew 17:4 At the transfiguration, Peter inquires as to Jesus' **willingness** to allow him to make three tents. Peter said to Jesus, "**Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.**" (Are you okay with purposing me to built three tents?) And, of course, Jesus didn't want him to build the tents and then Moses and Elijah disappeared before Peter could do it anyway.

Romans 13:3 indicates that we should be **willing** to fear authority. It is our **purpose**, we purpose to fear authority. "**For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended.**" We have to be **willing** to do that.

Luke 14:28 indicates **intention** as in building a tower – If anyone **purposes** to build a tower. "**Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it?**"

John 5:21 says that Jesus makes alive whoever he **wills**. In other words, Jesus **purposes** to make certain people alive. He has that **purpose** in mind.

In **John 21:18-22**, Jesus could have willed John remain until He came back again. Remember when Jesus told Peter in 21:18, "**but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go.**"

Then Peter said, what about John – What about him? In verses 21-22 we read, "**So Peter seeing him said to Jesus, "Lord, and what about this man?" Jesus said to him, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!"** Jesus is saying that He could **purpose** for John to remain forever ... until He came back again if he wanted to.

The whole point of my showing you these things is to try to understand why this word is used in John 1:43. He said, the next day He **purposed** to go forth into Galilee. So here are some of the conclusions I draw.

Jesus' moves were deliberate. They were intentional. The will of the Father was being carried out in all that Jesus did and said. In other words, Jesus didn't do anything in a haphazard way. He didn't do anything without thinking it through; without there being a deliberate purpose within it. So Galilee will be the center of His earthly ministry, away from the religious and the political centers of Israel.

Jesus is going to take His ministry, the headquarters, if you will, away from the politics of Israel, away from the religious center of Israel, in Jerusalem, and He's going to move it north and spend most of His time in Galilee.

Brian: Were all the Apostles from Galilee?

Rod: All, except one. Judas was the only one from Judea. All of the other Apostles were from Galilee. That may have been another reason for Him to move His ministry to Galilee ... so that His Apostles, if they followed Him around, would have an opportunity to be at home. Sometimes we think about the Apostles leaving everything: their wives, their children, their homes, their businesses and never having the opportunity ... that doesn't sound right. So maybe Jesus centered His ministry in the area where the Apostles were from so that they could spend more time at home. Except for Judas ... and I don't know what that means.

So He was at home in Galilee. He was familiar with the customs and the people. That is where He was raised – in Galilee. And perhaps the people were too familiar with Jesus and did not show Him the respect that He deserved. But how did Jesus balance out the various factors? He had to do his ministries somewhere. Why here? Why not in Rome or in a remote part of the world? Why here in the hills of Palestine? Why did Jesus go **there**? I don't have any answers to that other than what I've said already. But He **chose** ... He had a **purpose** ... for choosing to be in Galilee.

Jesus continues to build His team. Now Philip came from Bethsaida in Galilee, the home of Andrew and Peter. Now remember that Andrew and Peter were called when they were in the south. Then they went back to the north, but now they are in Bethsaida. Bethsaida was the northern most point on the Sea of Galilee. In the case of Andrew, Andrew found Jesus, but Jesus found Philip. Was Philip the "other disciple" of John who heard John's declaration: "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world?" I believe he was. **My** belief is that Andrew and Philip were disciples of John the Baptist before they became disciples of Jesus.

Perhaps Philip was a little less willing to drop 'all' and to follow Jesus. Jesus challenged him bluntly. He just looked at Philip and said, "Follow Me." These are very powerful words, and this simple directive changed Philip's life. He had no idea what he had agreed to, except his initial conclusions about the identity of Jesus. This is about following a **person**, an attachment to a **person**, devotion to a **person** and not merely a set of **teachings** ... though he would be taught. But it wasn't merely joining some club ... No ... it's, "Follow Me." And I don't think we can underestimate this.

I think, sometimes, we, in any particular tradition we may have grown up in, we have **more** allegiance to the teachings and tradition than we do to the man, the **person** of Jesus. And I think that's one reason why it is so difficult to let go of our traditions is because we have more allegiance to them than we do to Jesus, Himself.

One of the things that concerns me a little about places overseas is, that the people who have already gone there, who got there before I got involved in some of these countries,

may have taken a certain ‘flavor’ of Christianity with them. They sometimes want to talk more about their “peculiar doctrines” than they do about a peculiar man named Jesus.

Now, I'm not saying that those things are unimportant, but often they don't get talked about in context. They may not be talked about within a particular association with all that's being said. They may be things that are just ripped out, categorized, put into some kind of formula, and then **that** becomes the mantra of the Faith for people.

For example, one illustration could be that if they could talk about the five acts of worship, they could feel like they are in pretty good shape because they can identify the ‘five acts of worship’. When **I** go into these places, I hardly *ever* talk about those things. Now, I **am** going to talk about things that I think are important in **any** Scripture or **any** text. But I'd rather talk about the seven points of unity from Ephesians chapter 4, than the five acts of worship.

Now I do believe in singing and praying and preaching and giving and the Lord's Supper ... I believe in all those things. I just don't happen to think that they are the only acts of worship. I don't happen to believe that you can pull those out and say that that is the sum total of our worship to God; and to *do so* would misrepresent what worship really is.

Jean: And also, the five acts have to be done at a certain place and certain time. When I think about following Jesus, personally, I think about **doing** the things He did. I try to follow him in that way. I think how He was giving, he was forgiving and He was kind.

Rod: Yes, and there might be some things that I might not say the way they say it and so forth, but I think *more important than anything else* is that we spend so much time, over and over again, reiterating what we call “these first principles”, that we **neglect** so much **more** information. For instance, information about the mind of Christ! We say that these other things are more important ... and if you get “*these things*” down, you will truly be the right disciple.

But that's not how Jesus did it. When Jesus was teaching the twelve, He very rarely put things on some kind of list and said, “Okay, here are the five acts of worship. Let's get those down. Study those. Hear, believe, repent, confess and be baptized. Let's get that down on your fingers...” You don't see Jesus *doing* that. You see Him interacting in a very meaningful way in order to bring people to allegiance to Himself. And if I really know who is Lord, then I don't have to know all of the details of everything. I know the One who is going to save me. I know the One who I can go to, and that's the One I need to give my allegiance to. I just need to sit at His feet and let Him teach me any way He wants to teach me. I don't need it filtered through some kind of filter, whether it's a “Church of Christ” filter, or Baptist filter, or Methodist filter etc. I don't need it filtered through *anything*. It just needs to be the pure words of Jesus, because you can't improve on that. He doesn't need any filters.

So, when Philip went to find Nathaniel, Philip's introduction added a new dimension to Jesus' identity.

⁴⁵ Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” ⁴⁶ Nathanael said to him, “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.” ⁴⁷ Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!” ⁴⁸ Nathanael said to Him, “How do You know me?” Jesus answered and said to him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.” ⁴⁹ Nathanael answered Him, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel.” ⁵⁰ Jesus answered and said to him, “Because I said to you that I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You will see greater things than these.” ⁵¹ And He said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”

One of the things I want you to see as we go through chronologically ... we begin to see, the different words that are used to identify Jesus, and these words get heaped up one after another. He has been identified as a *Rabbi*. They see Him as the *Lamb of God* who takes away the sin of the world. They see Him as the *Son of God*. All of these titles or these designations, begin to roll through the text, we begin to see more and more who this person is.

We have *Lamb*, and *teacher*, and *Christ*, and now one more. Philip says, “He’s the One who has fulfilled Old Testament prophecy.” Philip has brought a new dimension to the identity of Jesus. He’s the One who we’ve been *looking* for! He’s *the One that the Old Testament prophesied about*.

Philip declared that Moses and the prophets wrote about Jesus centuries before. Satan, in the temptation, even added the words “Son of God”.

Deuteronomy 18:18 gives one such mention by Moses. “I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.” So Moses designates Him as **the prophet** who will come after him who God, Himself, will raise up and everyone must listen to. This was partially in response to the Israelites who did not want to hear God speak directly because it terrified them. The context of this was that God was speaking directly to the people, and the people said, ‘Don’t speak to us anymore. When you speak to us, God, You are terrifying us. Your voice is so powerful, so strong, you’re shaking the mountains. It’s causing an earthquake. Don’t speak to us. You’re scaring us to death.’

So Moses, in a prophecy, said that one day God would send another prophet, like ‘me’. And God will speak to Him, and I want you to listen to Him. So when Jesus came, He didn’t break rocks, He didn’t cause earthquakes when He spoke. But they needed to listen to Him.

Jesus was the ultimate fulfillment of this – the One who has the words of God in His mouth and who will speak what God commands. So when Philip says, “the Law and the Prophets”, he meant the Old Testament. He is saying that the Old Testament spoke of Jesus.

So, to Nathaniel, all **he** heard when **he** was introduced to Jesus was, '*Jesus of Nazareth*'. That's all he heard. "...the son of Joseph." That's it. He didn't hear any of the rest of what Philip said. He just heard, 'Nazareth – Son of Joseph.'

Nazareth was southwest of Bethsaida. It was inland. It was a smaller and much poorer place. Some of the cities that were right on the Sea of Galilee were prosperous because they had more industry. They had fishing businesses. But the more inland territories, they were more farmers and they didn't make as much money, so Nazareth was a poorer place.

The identity of Jesus was tied to His home. The Messiah was connected to David; Bethlehem, not Nazareth. So, there is this piecing together of clues people are doing. You will find this in the Book of John. People are trying to figure out, "who is this Jesus?" Some of those said that He can't be the Messiah because the Messiah is not going to come from Nazareth. He is going to come from Bethlehem. But they didn't do their homework to find out where Jesus was actually born. They're piecing together clues but some are not real clues because they misunderstood what the phrase "Jesus of Nazareth" really means.

So Nathaniel's opinion may have been very un-theological much like our reaction to someone 'great' who came out of a small, unimportant town. It was not meant as a "dig" against Jesus as much as it was as a "dig" against Nazareth. For me, I grew up in Valdosta which was a big city in South Georgia. If somebody was born in Hahira..., I mean, can anything good come out of Hahira? We thought we were a whole lot better than Hahira ... or Homerville.

In John 18:7, when the soldiers came for Jesus, they asked for "Jesus, the Nazarene". "Therefore He again asked them, "Whom do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus the Nazarene." He had become known as this person from Nazareth. And I don't think that they were saying that in any complimentary way. They were saying, "Let's go arrest that hayseed, let's go arrest that yokel, {that nobody}, that guy from up there in Nazareth." Can anything good come out of Nazareth?

That good thing may refer to anything of benefit, so does this comment of Nathaniel indicate that he was a skeptic? Is Nathaniel just simply a skeptic? Well, let's think this through.

Based on what follows ... I don't think so. I don't think that he's just inherently a skeptic. Maybe he just loved to use some sarcasm. Maybe he was a bit of a joker. Can anything good come out of Nazareth? Maybe, he was a little bit of a smart aleck, but that doesn't make him a skeptic. He got very serious once Jesus began to talk with him. All this business about Nazareth, when Jesus started talking to him, Philip did not argue with Nathaniel. That's one of the things Philip did not do. He did not argue with Nathaniel. He simply said, "Come and see." So if somebody says, 'what about Jesus'; just say, "Come and see. Spend a little time with Him. Get to know Him." This is a profound invitation. And so many people today, who just blow Jesus off as being unimportant;

they never ‘come and see’. They never sit at His feet to listen to Him. So if we can simply get people to ‘come and see’ Jesus will do the rest.

In John 5:40, all who “**behold**” the Son, who **see** Him, and *believe*, will have eternal life. People must *get a good look* at Jesus. What is there not to like? I mean, once you see Jesus, what is there not to like?

I believe one of the invitations we offer to people is, ‘you need to come see this Jesus I serve. He’s unbelievable. He’s unique. There is nobody like Him. You’re never going to find anybody like Jesus.’ And then they’ll say, “What is so unique about Jesus? What’s so special about Him?” You better be ready for an answer on that one. Tell them what is so special about Jesus. Nathaniel’s response to Philip’s invitation was to come and see. Jesus saw him coming. So, here’s Nathaniel coming toward Jesus. Jesus saw him coming and Jesus uses the same word. He says, “**Behold**”. Remember that John the Baptist used the same word with Jesus when he said, “**Behold** the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”

When Jesus saw Nathaniel coming towards Him he said, “Behold”. He was calling attention to whoever was with him to ‘look at this man coming to me’. And what did He say about Nathaniel? He said, “*Behold. A true Israelite in whom there is no guile*” ... there is nothing false in him.

This caught my attention as one of the greatest assessments of Jesus. It’s much like what he said of John the Baptist when He called him the greatest person who was ever born. In Matthew 11:11 we read, “*Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist! Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.*” This led me to name my son, Jeremy, Jeremy Nathaniel.

Jesus’ lead word was “behold” and was similar to Jesus word looking at Peter when he looked at Peter, made eye contact with him and He renamed him. Now He is doing the same thing with Nathaniel. This seems to be a little bit of a trend. Jesus loves making eye contact and I can give you those three times when Jesus is making eye contact with His Apostles. It’s a very good thing to do, particularly in raising children. If you want to get their attention, make eye contact.

Usually, when the child won’t look at you in the eye, it’s because they know they’re doing something wrong and they don’t want to face you. If you can stop them long enough and say, “Look at me. Now look in my eyes.” And if you can get that eye contact, *then* you know you have something going with that child where you can say something to them. You don’t have to get upset with them...you don’t have to raise your voice. Just say, “Look at me. Look at me.”

There is just something about looking in the face of Jesus that just melts us. It strips away any kind of covering. It’s like when the veil is taken away in 2 Cor. 3:15-16. “*Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. ¹⁶ But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.*” When we get that eye contact with Jesus, there is nothing between us anymore. It’s like He just sees right through us. He knows us.

Ruth: It's really interesting how Jesus is evaluating new acquaintances. He immediately says, Simon, I will call you 'rock'. And then he sees Nathaniel. He doesn't even speak to him, and He says, 'Look. Here is a true Israelite'. And when you think that Jesus can see into a person, who we think He knows already, and see right into their worth ...

Rod: You're exactly right. And I am going to go there and speak the same thing about that because that's one of the things we need to understand about. When we come into a relationship with Jesus, He already knows us. He even said He knew what was in man in John 2:24-25. "But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men,²⁵ and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man." He didn't need man's testimony about what it in man. He *knows* what's in man. He's had a whole, long history of watching mankind.

Jesus and I need to get a good look at each other. I need to see Him and He needs to see me. This is the basis of our relationship. He looks me over and I look Him over. We size each other up, and of course, when I do that, I will be cut down to size. He will increase and I will shrink when we see each other as we really are. It begins with "behold".

Jesus wanted others to see in Nathaniel what **He** saw, and He wanted Nathaniel to *know* what He saw. Jesus pronounced a profound blessing on this young disciple. His life was forever changed that day by these words. Jesus committed to Nathaniel before Nathaniel committed to Him, to Jesus. Of course, Jesus saw him first. Jesus saw him first and He made a commitment to Nathaniel before Nathaniel even *knew* Jesus and had opportunity to make a commitment to Him.

Jean: Were they young? Do we know the ages of the apostles?

Rod: Well, we don't know them in any detail other than just the history going forward and knowing, basically, how long they lived. John, we know, lived into the latter part of the first century so he had to have been pretty young. I would say that the apostles were no more than in their twenties ... maybe late teens or early twenties. I don't think any of them were very old. And, again, part of this is from not just what we read in Scripture because we don't have a history of the Apostles. But we do have a lot of things from other writings that indicate where the apostles went and what they did. It is said that Thomas went all the way to India. He brought the gospel to India. It takes time to spread the gospel.

Paul, for instance, lived until about 68 or 69 A. D. His ministry was about 30 years long. We know that John wrote the book of Revelation close to the turn of the century so he was probably in his nineties.

Jean: So there is no historical book on the Apostles?

Rod: It's just piecing things together. I have one book in my library about the Twelve and it pieces together all the information that we **do** have but all indications would be that around 30 A. D. they would be pretty young except for James, the Apostle who did first.

We think that Peter died around the same time that Paul did so we're getting close to 70 A. D. That's forty years that they had been with Jesus and in those days, life expectancy was not very long. But John was extreme living into his 90s.

The New American Standard Bible says in v. 47, "**Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!**" The word "αληθως" meaning truly or indeed is an adverb that means truly, really, or certainly. This word is also used in:

This word is used in:

Matthew 14:33 – the Apostles said, "You are **certainly** God's Son."

John 17:8 – And they received them and **truly** understood that I came from God.

Acts 12:11 – Peter said, "Now I know **for sure** that the Lord has sent forth His angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod"

John 4:18 – When the woman from Samaria said that she did not have a husband, Jesus said, She spoke **truly**. You **are right** when you say you do not have a husband, for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said **truly**.

It is the quality of being genuine, the real thing. But my question is, "in what sense was Nathaniel a **true Israelite**?" How was he a true Israelite? He was a genuine, real McCoy, Israelite. But what does that mean?

If the focus is on Nathaniel's skepticism that Jesus could really be the Messiah, this seems fairly typical of the Jews. So if you're using the term "you're a true Israelite", you're just as skeptical as all the rest of them. That's one possibility. They had seen signs. "Prove it to me again." When we say "you're speaking like a true, that's usually not complimentary when we say that. We are saying, "I would have **expected** you to say that because of who you are." He could have been saying, "You're a true Missourian." In other words, I expect you to be skeptical. The Jews sought signs. That would have been typical of the Jews of that time. But I don't think that's what He meant about Nathaniel.

Or

But Jesus could have seen a genuine quality of heart and life that demonstrated that Nathaniel was a real Israelite in the **Abraham's** sense of the term. Jesus addresses this in John 8:26 as to being descendants of Abraham. He says to them that their judgment is **fleshly** but His judgment is **true**. And God Himself bears witness. The One who sent Jesus is **true**. He speaks His words. Jesus proves His truthfulness.

The idea of a **true** Israelite is always doing what pleases the Father, abiding in His word, making a true disciple. He says, if you are **truly** My disciple then you will know the truth and the truth is going to set you free. If you are truly my disciples, you will keep my words.

And I believe that is what He is talking about with regard to Nathaniel. He is a **true** Israelite. This raised the discussion of what it really means to be Abraham's descendant. Who is a true descendant of Abraham? Even though they were physically Abraham's descendants, the ones in John 8, they were trying to kill Jesus who was the Word.

Carole: Not all of Israel is Israel. Romans 9:6

Rod: Right. That's what Paul says later on. Not all of Israel is Israel. So they prove that they had no place for God's word in their hearts, and therefore, they weren't true. They could not be called a true Israelite because they didn't have God's word. They weren't true descendants of Abraham even though, ethnically, they were. But they were not of the *spirit* of Abraham. They were not of the *faith* of Abraham. And so, if they were Abraham's seed they would do what Abraham did (John 8:39).

Deeds demonstrate who the real person is. Because they did not have **truth** in them, they could not understand truth when it was presented to them (John 8:45). This applies to Nathaniel. I believe this is what Jesus meant about Nathaniel. Nathaniel hears the **truth**. Nathaniel has such a good heart, he has such a heart like Abraham, he can latch onto that truth. As Proverbs says, "Buy the truth and sell it not" (Prov. 23:23). He has it and he's not getting rid of it. He's not selling it.

The exchange with Nathaniel is interesting. Was Jesus using sarcasm or speaking directly? Jesus said, "In who is no guile." The Greek word for guile is (dolos) "δολος" from an obsolete word that is hardly used at all in Scripture. It means decoy, trick, bait, wile, craft, deceit or subtlety. Other translations say, "In him there was nothing false.

Jesus was saying, 'Nathaniel, you're not a fraud. You're not a fake. You're the real deal, Nathaniel.' And that was one of the best compliments Jesus could ever give anybody – to tell them that I recognize in you that you're a person of integrity ...you're the real deal.

Matthew 26:4 the plot to seize Jesus by **stealth** (that is the same word).

Mark 7:22 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, ²² deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as **deceit**, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness.

Mark 14:1 the priests and the scribes were seeking how to seize Him by **stealth** (by trickery or by being baited) and kill Him.

Compare the actions of the Apostle Nathaniel and Judas. Nathaniel seemed to be a very open person. You know what he thinks. So when he sees Jesus he says, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" He's transparent. He knew exactly what he was thinking because he just said it. He does things in the open. Like whatever he did under the fig tree. (And we have no idea what he did under the fig tree.) When Jesus said he saw him under the fig tree; there must have been something that Jesus saw him do under the fig tree that immediately caused Nathaniel to say, "**Now I believe.** You are the Son of God. You are the King of Israel."

The fig tree sighting is interesting. Where was the tree? When did Jesus see him under the tree? Was it minutes before this encounter or was it hours or days? Nathaniel wants to know how Jesus knows him.

And later, the woman at the well will want to know that, too. Remember when Jesus told her, “You’ve had five husbands” and she wonders, “How do you know me?” She goes back and says ‘He told me everything I ever did.’ Now that may be an exaggeration.

The basis of our relationship with Jesus is ‘knowing Him deeply’. He knows us well and we should know Him as well. Just as Jesus looked at Peter, He looked at Nathaniel. He saw him. Isn’t that the way with us? Before any of us are called, Jesus sees us. He knew us long before we were called.

How does this relationship with Jesus develop? Jesus takes the lead in it. Others may help facilitate it, but Jesus reveals things about us that we are surprised He knows about. Jesus looks at our true nature and reveals it. Jesus affirms us. Jesus studies us. If we are to develop a relationship with Him, we must study Him ... a relationship developed out of communication. Nathaniel went from someone on his own path, minding his own business, to following Jesus eventually to his death. Everything changed that day. His world was turned upside down. He was challenged to respond. The excitement of discipleship is growing.

Nathaniel’s response was immediate. The designations that **he** used for Jesus was Rabbi, Son of God and King of Israel. He used three designations for Jesus. How did he draw those conclusions on his first encounter? He immediately says you’re a rabbi, you’re the Son of God and you’re the King of Israel.

Up to this point, we have Lamb of God, Teacher, Christ, and Nathaniel adds Son of God and King of Israel. Five designations are in Chapter 1:19 and following. At Jesus’ baptism, the Father proclaims Jesus to be the Son of God. God revealed it. Later Peter would say this. In other words, this is more of what I have been talking about – all these different designations for Jesus. The question, particularly in the book of John, is “who is He? Who is Jesus?”

You will see John, and the way he wrote the book, laying out the case, adding on terms one after the other, to help us understand who Jesus is.

Ruth: I’ve heard that John was written late in John’s life as opposed to the other three gospels which were written earlier. I heard that one of the reasons he wrote it was because people were beginning to believe that maybe **John** had been the Messiah, and not Jesus. They had missed it. So since John was there, as one of the apostles, he wanted to present the facts that John **wasn’t** the one they were to follow. It was Jesus, and John **said** it as well as many other **proofs** that showed that He was the Son of God. And when I read it after that, I could see him defending the position that he (John) was **not** the Son of God – Jesus was. And right from the beginning people like Nathaniel said, “You **are** the Son of God”. And we don’t **know** if Nathaniel was there at Jesus’ baptism when God’s voice came down and said, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.”

But he immediately recognized Him. And it was written down so that the people, who were beginning to doubt Jesus, would know. People could tell right from the beginning. The **true** Israelites could tell right from the beginning that Jesus was the Son of God.

Rod: I would imagine when people read this later about Nathaniel and him being called the **true** Israelite, those people who rejected Jesus, and maybe even Paul, if maybe he was exposed to this; that there was a time when I *wasn't* a true Israelite. So, you're exactly right. Note in 1 John 1:1-3 how John begins his short book: *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.* John says, "my eyes have seen Him, my hands have touched Him and we proclaim that which we know." John makes it clear that he was a witness – an eye-witness to this.

We don't know what Jesus saw with Nathaniel under the fig tree. But it so surprised him that Jesus actually saw him, that he proclaimed Jesus to be the Son of God. Nathaniel also called Jesus the King of Israel. This is closely related to being the Christ. Kings are anointed. Would Nathaniel have known that Jesus was a descendant of David? He heard he was from Nazareth, not Bethlehem, the City of David. On what basis did Nathaniel conclude that Jesus was King? Was it merely Jesus having seen him under the fig tree? How did that help him to know that?

But Jesus knew greater wonders would follow. Even the sign of the open heavens and angels ascending and descending ... In other words, Jesus is saying, "You think that's something ... me seeing you under a fig tree? You're going to see greater things than that, Nathaniel. You're just getting started here. One day you are going to see the Son of Man ascending and descending, like on a ladder to heaven." Jesus was referring to Genesis 28:10-12. The place was Bethel, the House of God or the Gate of Heaven where Jacob dreamed of the heavens being opened and a ladder coming down with angels ascending and descending up and down the ladder.

But is Jesus thinking Nathaniel came to faith too easily? In other words, "I told you **one** thing and you believed? Did He think maybe he came to faith too easily? Did he think Nathaniel's faith was invalid or too small? Was it a mustard seed faith?

Jesus knew that if Nathaniel continued to follow Him he would see much greater things. Perhaps Jesus only wants us to start one walk with Him knowing that if we continue to follow, He will provide more and more evidence of His power and authority and identity. In other words, "I'll give you enough faith to get started, and if you keep walking with me you're going to see amazing things and your faith is going to grow from the more amazing things you see happen in your relationship with me.

And I think for people who start out on the path and they have a mustard seed faith, a small faith, one of the things that those of us who are older in the faith need to do is encourage them to not stop early in your walk! **Continue** in your walk because if you'll stay with Jesus, He is going to show you greater things than what you've already seen. And it's going to be amazing things for you to see.

Perhaps, Nathaniel did see this Bethel experience during **Jesus'** ascension back to heaven. Maybe when Nathaniel was standing there looking up into the heavens and seeing Jesus rise up into the heavens and disappear in the clouds, maybe Nathaniel turned to Philip and said, "This is exactly what Jesus said I would see one day. Wow! And I thought His seeing me under a fig tree was a big deal. **THAT'S** a big deal ... Jesus ascending back into the heavens."

Could they be standing on the spot near the fig tree where Jesus first saw and spoke to Nathaniel? I don't know.

Could this be the first "verily verily" statement of Jesus? The *true* Israelites ... and all the "Verily, Verily..." statements that Jesus made, and all the "Truly, Truly ... I say unto you"; ... could this be Jesus' way of using his "highlighter"?

Is this a way of Jesus using his "highlighter" and highlighting the truths that He was speaking to the people? He would say, "Truly, Truly I say unto you" or when He would say to somebody, "You are a true Israelite". Is Jesus helping to identify for us what is real and what is not real?

I'll end with this story:

The Story

Some little boys broke into a store one night and changed the price tags on all the items in the store just as a joke. So something with a price tag of \$100 they put a ten cents tag on, and on a 10 cent item they put a high price on. They just switched all the price tags on everything.

When the shoppers came in the next day, they were confused because they saw something that they thought they were going to buy for a dollar and it had a \$1,000 price tag on it. They were really confused about it.

This is like what the devil does. He breaks into our world and he rearranges all the price tags on everything. He says, "**This** is important" ... when it's really not. "That's important" when it's really not. He says, "This is **not** important", but it really is.

Then Jesus came into the world and put all the price tags back in the right places. And he **did** that by saying things like, "Truly, truly I say unto you." You can **know** this is the *truth*. This, over **here**, is a lie. **This** is the truth. And He helps us to sort all that back out.

He was doing that with Nathaniel in a very direct way. So when He says to us, "**You** are a **true** Christian, **you** are a true Israelite, **you** are a true disciple, it helps us to know that if anybody else says anything different, don't believe them. Jesus has already proclaimed us to be the real deal.