

JESUS CALLS NATHANAEEL

David Baker, Presbytery Word for week commencing Sunday 30 March 2025
Transcription of recording, slightly edited

Good morning. What I would like to do today is continue from the Bible school. I want to look at the interaction between Jesus and Nathanael, but we also will be continuing in the theme of 'the secret place of the stairs'. I want to look at this interaction with Jesus and Nathanael because Jesus finishes by talking about the ladder.

Here is a little bit of trivia as we begin. In the other gospels, Nathanael is referred to as Bartholomew and it is very likely that Bartholomew was his last name, and Nathanael was his first name. John refers to him as Nathanael and I am going to pick up there. Because this is a personal interaction between Jesus and Nathanael, I like the first name in that case. When he is in the list of the twelve disciples in the other gospels, then Bartholomew is okay; but let us go personal today. This is Jesus meeting Nathanael on a first-name basis.

You will notice that the whole gospel of John really is built around personal interactions between Jesus and various people. John chapter three is Jesus meeting Nicodemus, and that was a very personal meeting. Then John chapter four is Jesus meeting the woman at the well. The whole gospel is built around Jesus' interactions with specific people and with specific groups of people. We are going to be reading from John chapter 1 this morning. I am going to begin in verse 40 because this picks up Jesus' first interaction with Peter and highlights the principle for us in terms of how He is calling Nathanael.

Now this is John chapter 1 verse 40. It says here, 'One of the two... [speaking about two disciples here, and they were two disciples of John the Baptist]... one of the two who heard John speak, [speaking about John the Baptist] and followed Him...' Now that is Christ. Remember, John the Baptist baptised Jesus

and he knew that Jesus was the Son of God. He beheld the Holy Spirit descend upon Him like a dove and recognised that this was the Messiah, anointed by the Holy Spirit with the sevenfold Spirit of Yahweh for His ministry. John the Baptist is proclaiming that, and he is saying to his disciples, 'Behold the Lamb of God.' His disciples are hearing that, and they are then responding to that word to follow Jesus. John the Baptist was commending them to that. John the Baptist was not feeling under threat. He is saying, 'No, I must decrease and He [that is Christ] must increase.' Joh 3:30. He is very happy that some of his disciples are now leaving to follow Jesus.

There are two of them here that we are looking at. One was Andrew. Now the other one may have been the John the apostle who is writing this. He does not name himself here, but he is certainly recounting what happened. We know one was Andrew. 'One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah (which is translated, the Christ)." And he brought him to Jesus. Now when Jesus looked at him... [let us pick up the very personal interaction here] ...when Jesus looked at him [this humble fisherman, and I am sure he was not anything fantastic to look at; but He looks at him and] ...He says, "You are Simon, the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas [or Peter] which is translated, 'a stone.'"

Now we know that Jesus emphasised this calling again to Peter after the feeding of the 5000 - probably toward the beginning of this final year of His ministry, leading up to His crucifixion. He says to all of the disciples, 'Who do men say that I am? Some say this, and some say that; and who do *you* say that I am?' Peter is the one who proclaims, 'You

are the Son of the living God.' Jesus responds to him to say, 'You did not get that revelation from flesh and blood. My Father revealed that to you concerning Me. Now allow Me to reveal something from the heavenly Father concerning *you* and the secret of *your* name. You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church.'

Christ, the Son of God was proclaiming to Peter the truth of his name from before the foundation of the world. 'This is who you have been called to be.' I am sure Peter was doing internal gymnastics, hearing the truth of his name and it is resonating with him. 'Upon this rock I will build My church.' Peter was called to be part of the living foundation of the church that Christ was building. The 12 apostles are the 12 foundation stones of the wall of the heavenly Jerusalem.

But Peter had no capacity to meet. Now he is hearing, and he is rejoicing in the call; but he had no capacity to possess that name or to begin to walk in the truth of that name in terms of fulfilling the works of his sonship until he had met Christ eye to eye and heart to heart in the court of Caiaphas and was delivered from all of his self-righteous projection. Jesus was not calling him to be a religious zealot. Peter is hearing the truth of his name, but he is still a religious zealot. Self-righteous. Completely preoccupied with himself and his own importance - so much so, that soon after Jesus says, 'You are Peter and upon this rock...', he is drawing Jesus aside and presuming to rebuke Him, when Jesus began to disclose the nature of His offering journey. There was a big deliverance that Peter needed here to be able to meet his name. He only meets his name in the court of Caiaphas, where Christ looks at him and exposes the depth of his iniquity, while at the same time revealing the heights of his calling. But in that interaction eye to eye, he is connected to the truth of his name.

Peter came to know right there, 'I am a liar. I am a liar. I said to Jesus a number of hours

earlier, "Everyone may stumble, but I will never stumble." Liar. "All may fall away, but I am ready to die with you." ' Liar. His whole projection was a lie. Jesus is trying to tell him the truth by saying, 'Peter, that is not you. In fact, before the rooster crows three times, you will deny Me, Peter.'

When Peter meets Christ eye to eye, He knows the truth about his own iniquity and his own deceit - the lie that he had been projecting upon and imposing upon Jesus. Also, [he knows] the truth then concerning who he had been named to be. He is connected to the truth of his name. He begins to know the truth. He has *heard* it proclaimed, but then he begins to *know* it. Then by the Sea of Galilee, Jesus is able to talk to him on how he will walk in the truth of that name, '...to feed my sheep, tend my lambs, et cetera....' That is Peter. The truth of it was proclaimed - the truth of his name was proclaimed right from the very first interaction, the very first meeting.

Now the same principle applies to Nathanael. Let us continue to read. Verse 43. 'The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, "Follow Me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.' You can see all the relational connections here. They are all from the same town - a little fishing village up on the north of the sea of Galilee. I am sure they all knew each other. Jesus is calling Philip now, and Philip finds Nathanael. Now it is interesting, Nathanael is not from Bethsaida; Nathanael is from Cana. That is the town where Jesus performed His first miracle. He is called to some kind of an extended family wedding or something and finds Himself in attendance. That is Cana. It is all still in the region of Galilee. That is where Nathanael is from. '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." ' He is saying, 'We have found the Christ.' Verse 46,

'And Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" ' [Philip did a good job here. He did not engage in an argument about the merits of Nazareth. He says], 'Come and see.' That is a fantastic invitation. 'Come and see.'

You see in Nathanael's response here, that it does give us a window into who Nathanael was. I think that Nathanael was probably a very self-righteous, possibly self-opinionated Israelite. He probably prided himself in terms of the way he kept the Law and all of these things. He is the measure. He already has this summed up. Philip has only just opened his mouth, and Nathanael already knows what is going on. He has a response; he has a retort. Is he a sceptic? Does he really have something against Nazareth? Maybe. Maybe he had some very bad past experience in Nazareth. Maybe a few of his school friends were from Nazareth or something. I do not know. He obviously does not have a high estimation of Nazareth. Maybe he is just a sceptic based on past experience. Let us elevate him a little bit more than that. I think it *is* more than that. I think he is a very knowledgeable Israelite who knows that the Messiah... (remember that is what Philip is saying, 'We have found the Christ') ...He knows the Messiah is born in Bethlehem. He has already got him, superior biblical knowledge. 'This cannot possibly be the Messiah. The Messiah is born in Bethlehem. Everybody who is anybody knows that, Philip.' Philip is not the least bit interested. 'Come and see.'

Of course, this *was* the Messiah and He *was* born in Bethlehem. It just so happens now that He is living and growing up in Nazareth. The Messiah is born in Bethlehem and that was certainly a prophetic Scripture. That was in the book of Micah and that is a very notable Scripture. Micah 5 verse 2 says, 'But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be

Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.' When the three wise men (Moses, Elijah and Enoch) turn up and Herod the Great hears that they are looking for the Messiah whom they have come to worship, he panics of course. He gets all of the scribes, all of the Pharisees, everyone who has some knowledge of the Scriptures and he interrogates them to say, 'Where is the Messiah going to be born?' And they all respond with this Scripture to say, 'He is going to be born in Bethlehem.' That is why Herod the Great was so panicked. He kills all of the boys under two years old in Bethlehem. This was a legitimate Scripture. I probably think that Nathanael is all over this, and so he discounts it straight away.

Philip says, 'Alright, come and see.' 'Now as he is walking toward Jesus [this is verse 47], Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him.' Jesus knows all of this; all of the background; all of this thing. He is not that interested in all of that. Jesus does not have to prove Himself to him. He is not going to start having an argument about Micah or something. 'Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit."' This principle of deceit becomes very important to us. 'Behold.' Now I think when Jesus is saying 'behold', I do not think He is saying it to whoever else is already with Him. 'Behold, look at this guy coming. He is pretty good. Look at him.' Jesus is looking at him and I think he is saying loud enough definitely that Nathanael can hear it, 'Behold!' The command is to Nathanael. Jesus is talking to *him*. He is saying, 'Behold, open your eyes, Nathanael. You may be a fantastic biblical scholar, but you do not know something. I am about to reveal a secret to you from before the foundation of the world. I am about to proclaim to you the secret of your name. Behold! Will you see your calling, Nathanael?' This is an amazing interaction. 'Behold, an Israelite indeed' - meaning a true Israelite. I do not think He is giving him a

pat on the back because he is so good at keeping the Law. I think he is saying, 'Nathanael, you have been predestined to be part of the true Israel of God.'

The true Israel of God are not the natural descendants of Abraham. The true Israel of God are those who have received the *faith* of Abraham and have received the *promise* of the Spirit by faith. That is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of adoption. Then being *born* as a son of God, the Seed of Christ has germinated in their heart by the Holy Spirit. There has been a conception there of a son of God. 'Behold, new creation!' The true Israel of God, which comprises sons of God, these are the true descendants of Abraham - sons of God who are then making their calling and election sure.

Jesus is proclaiming to Nathanael right from the very first interaction, saying, 'This is not you. I do not care how good you think you are. This is not you. You are not the pin-up for an Israelite. That is not you. But I am saying that who I am looking at is you - an Israelite indeed... [that is who you are called to be] ... in whom is no deceit.' Now I think as Nathanael is realising, he is actually meeting the Messiah here. He might have been a little bit sheepish about his earlier statement. He might have been just a little bit pre-emptive on that, 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth? I am now meeting the Christ who grew up in Nazareth.' Now he was full of deceit. This man was full of deceit. Why was he full of deceit? Because he is full of his own importance. He is pushing forward a projection. That is deceit.

We will talk briefly here about deceit, because this connects us back to Jacob, does it not? When we are talking the true Israel of God, the true Israel of God is the house of Jacob that has been brought forth from the wellsprings of Judah through the offering of Christ. That house, even though it is full of deceivers like Jacob, has been called to be and become the true Israel of God and to

overcome, to become that. Jesus is saying to Nathanael, 'This is what you have been called to be and the journey for you will be just like your father, grandfather, great-grandfather, all the way back to Jacob. You need to be delivered from being a deceiver to someone who is now walking in the truth.'

That was the journey for Jacob. We know Jacob was a deceiver and he was sent away to Laban's house so that God could change his nature. All of those circumstances were part of the chastening of God upon him - Laban changing his wages 10 times and all of those things. Jacob, to his credit, recognised that all of that was the expression of the mercy of God to him. He was not viewing himself as the victim of all of that. He comes back after spending 20 years in Laban's house confessing, 'I am not worthy of the least of all of the Lord's mercies. Everything that has happened to me was the expression of His love to me for my sake. And I am not worthy of all the least of His mercies or of the illumination that He has given me.' The Lord had given Jacob some amazing illumination. We are going to talk about that a bit later because Nathanael was called to see what Jacob saw in terms of the ladder that stretched from heaven to the earth.

Jacob comes back and he is confessing that, but his nature is not fully changed until he wrestles with Christ. We will read these passages. This is Genesis chapter 32 and verse 25. He was not fully delivered from his deceit until he had wrestled with Christ alone. He had to meet Christ. It was not going to be through his circumstances. He had to meet Christ. Genesis 32 verse 25 says, 'When He saw [this is Christ here, wrestling with Jacob - Christ the Man] that He did not prevail against him...' Not that He was not winning the wrestle, as if the Lord was worried about that. He was not prevailing in bringing this deceiver who was continually struggling and striving in the flesh. He had not yet prevailed in Jacob's life to bring him

to the place of poor in spirit. He had not yet prevailed. Jacob is still striving; he is still struggling; he is still wrestling, and the Lord is saying, 'What is it going to take to prevail in this man's life?' He saw that he had not prevailed yet. 'He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him.' We have looked at this many times when the Lord reached out and touched the socket of his hip and brought him to weakness in his flesh. This is where Jacob finally becomes poor in spirit and realises he can no longer continue to struggle and strive and wrestle in the flesh. The whole mode of this struggle changed.

Jacob is now clinging to Christ, not wrestling with Him. Remember, the Lord was actually impeding him from entering the Promised Land because the Lord knew if he entered into the Promised Land without letting go of his religious projection, Esau was going to kill him. Jacob is trying to get past, and the Lord is stopping him to save his life. 'He [the Lord] reaches out, touches his hip and then says to Jacob, "Let Me go, for the day breaks." But he said, "I will not let You go until You bless me." So He said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." ' He recognised his name. 'I am a deceiver.' This is what Peter came to realise. This is what we all need to come to realise. I am a deceiver. This is the truth of me. Verse 28, 'He said, "Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel [Jacob means 'deceiver'; Israel means 'prince with God']; for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed.' ' You have now become an overcomer, not in the flesh, but by the Spirit. Prevailed. 'Then Jacob asked Him [now this is a massive point], saying, "Please tell me Your name." But He said, "Why is it that you ask My name?" And He blessed him there.'

Now I want to say on the way through, that the fruit (or the evidence) that we have met Christ ourselves personally, eye to eye, and been delivered from our self-righteous

projections, will be that our whole desire will shift from wanting to know our own name. 'What is my name? What is my name? Who am I? Where do I fit?' It will shift from all of that desire (which is carnal), to a spiritual desire motivated by the Spirit to know the Lord - *His* name. You cannot mistake that shift. It is a massive shift. Until that shift takes place, we will be preoccupied with all manner of self-verifying mechanisms to try to find our name. I have written a fair list, and I am sure you can add some more. It will be performance. What am I good at? How am I performing? How does that compare with my own expectations? How does that compare with how everybody else is doing? How do I know myself in relation to performance? Or how do I know myself in relation to other people? How are people responding to me? How do I read that? Are they happy with me? Are they unhappy with me? Are they affirming me? Are they accepting me? Now this can be a massive problem in a marriage if we are looking into the face of our spouse for identity verification; or if we are coming to the *agape* meal for identity verification - trying to read how everybody else is responding to what I am saying.

Identity verification through people or identity verification (there are so many examples), through sickness. This is a big one in the Scripture. This becomes part of who I am. I am sick all the time. This is what defines me. This is what I like to talk about. Jesus comes along, like He said to so many, 'Do you want to be healed?' Not everybody wants to be healed. Some people like being sick. It is part of who they are. Identity verification through sickness or identity verification through helping other people - the benefactor. Now of course we are called to give. We are called to care for one another, but it is a big problem if we are a benefactor, and we are deriving identity verification through those things. That is another big one. Or identity verification through talking. Self-

analysis. I like to talk about my problems. I like other people to hear me talking about my problems. In all of my talk, I am trying to find myself through talking. That is another big one. Or the worst of the worst, identity verification through ministry. That is the ugliest of them all. Identity verification through pastoral care, identity verification through preaching, or identity verification through ministry. These are all massive problems. Identity verification. If you are not finding it in all of those areas, it then shifts to fantasy. There is a whole list of identity verification mechanisms through fantasy.

This will be the case until we meet Christ and we are connected to the truth of our name through that personal interaction with Christ in response to the word that is proclaimed to us. Remember the word that is proclaimed to us is the word of God the Father that is proclaimed to us by the messengers of Christ. The Holy Spirit is bringing conviction in relation to that word, so that we can turn and meet Christ and be connected to the truth of our name. We are then verified, and our identity is verified in the right and proper way through that relational interaction. Every person does need identity verification. You do. Without it you are lost and without hope in this world. But you are only verified when you are properly connected to your name and then walking in obedience to that name.

Jesus is saying to Nathanael, 'There is a journey for you, Nathanael. At the moment, you are a self-righteous deceiver, but I am calling you to be part of the true Israel of God and have no deceit in your heart so that you are able to meet and be met in the truth and genuinely participate in a fellowship. This is the call.' Now Nathanael is hearing this. He does not know all the implications, but he is hearing something here as Jesus is speaking to him. He knows, 'This is not me, but this is who I am being called to be.'

The same way that Nathanael needed (talking about Jacob) to be delivered from his own deceit by meeting Christ eye to eye before he could become an Israelite in whom is no deceit, is true for all of us who belong to the house of Jacob that has come forth from the loins of Judah through the offering of Christ. Remember that Isaiah says in Isaiah 48 verse 1, 'Hear this, O house of Jacob, who are called by the name of Israel... [This is the call] ...called by the name of Israel, and have come forth from the wellsprings of Judah; who swear by the name of the Lord, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth or in righteousness.' Meaning there is deceit there. This is what the Lord is dealing with.

What does this deceit look like? I have already said it. At the baseline, you go back to the first lie. What was the first lie? The first lie is that Satan, who is the father of lies, was speaking from his own resource. Because he is speaking from his own resource, what he is saying is a lie. The source of all truth is the fellowship of Yahweh, and the word of truth is proclaimed by God the Father. Everything else is self-sourced or self-resourced and is a lie. Satan, speaking from his own resource, is speaking a lie. And what is the lie? 'You can be the source of your own name and works.' When Adam and his wife believe that lie, everything they do then is self-sourced as they are trying to craft an image for themselves. That is the expression of a lie. Our projections are a lie. We may believe implicitly in the veracity of our projections; but those projections are a lie. When we are putting them forward and asking other people to accept them and verify them, we are imposing upon them our lie. That is what our default is until we meet Christ and are delivered from that propensity. That is the deceit.

When you read the apostle John's letters, you will note that he is completely preoccupied with the truth. Then at the same time, he is

pulling the curtain back and saying, 'You know what? That is a lie.' He says statements which you read at face value, and you think, 'Okay John, you are not pulling any punches here.' Statements like 1 John 2 verse 4. There are many, but I will just read this one. He says, 'He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar and the truth is not in him.' Alright, wow. If we say we know Christ, but we are not actually obedient to His word, we are lying. We do not know Christ. 'The truth is not in him.'

John is continually talking about the truth. He uses all of these phrases, and when he says the truth, he is not worried about the truth of the theology. The truth is the word of the Father about you. The truth about you. It is the word about your name and your works. This is your name discussed before the foundation of the world by the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, where there is no time. They are discussing your name and the intricate detail of your name and who you are called to be as a son of God both in this lifetime and also in the age to come. 'Eye has not ear seen, ear has not heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man everything that God has prepared for those who *love* Him.' 1Co 2:9. That is the secret of your name.

The source then of the proclamation of that to you is the word of God the Father. Jesus then says (because He is proclaiming the word of the Father) in John 17 verse 17, praying on the Mount of Olives to the Father and saying, 'Sanctify them by Your truth [the word of truth is our sanctification], Your word is truth.' Then in verse 19 He says, 'And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.' Jesus is sanctifying Himself (or He is setting Himself apart to be obedient to God the Father and the word of God the Father) so that He can fulfill the works of obedience for every son of God. He is sanctifying Himself to an obedience for our sake. Then on that offering journey, He is learning our obedience; He is

fulfilling the works of our sonship; He has completed the work.

This is absolutely foundational to understanding the ladder. We may not even get there today; we will see how we are going. The understanding (the way that Christ sanctified Himself to be obedient to the word of God the Father concerning you and your sonship), He has learned that obedience for you. Then He says in verse 20, 'I do not pray for these alone.' He is speaking, 'I am not just praying for the disciples. I am not just doing this for the disciples who are here with me now. I am praying for every son of God. I am praying for every believer.' I am praying, 'I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word.' Jesus knows there will be a messenger administration that will proclaim the word of truth by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven in every generation.

John is then using these phrases, and they are all important phrases. The first one is *believing the truth*. He is talking about the fact that the word of truth is proclaimed to us by the Holy Spirit and when we receive that word, faith comes by hearing so that we can *believe the truth*.

Then he talks about *knowing the truth*. We know the truth because as we respond to the word and the conviction of the Holy Spirit in relation to that word, we are able to meet Christ eye to eye and we can know the truth. That is what I was talking about in relation to Peter in the court of Caiaphas. That is where he came to know the truth, which includes of course knowing the heights and the depths.

Then we are to *walk in the truth*. We are led by the Holy Spirit on the pathway that Christ has authored for us. Walking in the truth includes sanctifying ourselves. We are accountable for our own obedience to the word of truth in how we are walking, being led by the Spirit. As we walk in the truth, 'what is true in us ...' I am not reading all of

these verses, but you will pick up all of these themes in John's letters. As we are walking in the truth, what is true in Christ, because it is already true in Him, is progressively becoming true in us as we are learning our obedience and as we are then fulfilling the works of our sonship that Christ has already accomplished for us. And we are bringing forth fruit. What is true in Him is becoming true in us.

We are then able to *love in truth*. Now this is one step beyond the love of the truth. Now the love of the truth is absolutely essential. We have been talking about that. I would put the love of the truth equal to becoming obedient from the heart. As you are being led by the Spirit in the fellowship of Christ's offering, the other law (that is the source of all of the deceit) is being circumcised from your heart and the love of God is being poured into your heart through the Holy Spirit. There is a process of regeneration happening. Your heart is being regenerated. Your mind is being renewed so that you are becoming obedient from the heart and that is absolutely essential for your salvation. In fact, there is no salvation apart from becoming obedient from the heart to the word of truth concerning you and your sonship.

John uses this phrase, and I am very interested in this one. It is *love in truth*. I will just read two verses here to highlight this. This is 2 John chapter 1 verse 1. He says here (I will just commend this thought to you), 'The elder, to the elect lady and her children whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all those who have known the truth...' You will pick up that *know the truth* phrase there. But he says here, 'The elder, to the elect lady [now he is talking about the congregation that he is writing to] and her children... [all of the sons of God who live in that area - part of that congregation]... to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth...' That is an interesting phrase.

3 John verse 1: he starts the same way. He is not now talking to a congregation. He is talking to a specific man or elder. John is calling himself an elder here. He is part of a presbytery in the right hand of Christ, walking in his sanctification in that fellowship. He is saying, 'The elder, to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth...' There is a massive point there. The love of God: this is the love of God that is being poured into our heart as we are being led by the Spirit on the pathway that Christ has pioneered for us. This is only happening as we are walking and learning to walk in the truth of our sanctification. We are able to express love (or love) but only within the context of sanctification. '...whom I love in truth.' There are a lot of other fallen kinds of love which are not sanctified in any way.

Finally, the love of God is only expressed in sanctification, and you cannot love unless you are walking in the truth of your sanctification. When Jesus called Nathanael by name, He proclaimed the same call that belongs to the 144,000 as the firstfruits of the true Israel of God in the time of the end. The 144,000 are the representatives of firstfruits families. This is not limited to individuals. I think they are the representative. I am sure there are individual households or households comprising individuals among this number, but the 144,000 are representative of firstfruits families. Revelation 14 verse 5 highlights how far the call is going to Nathanael. He is the forerunner of this. We do not know a lot about Nathanael, but this is a pretty amazing call that he receives right from the very first interaction that he has with Jesus.

Revelation 14 verse 5 says, 'And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault [or blameless] before the throne of God.' Blamelessness is walking in the light of the word of present truth, responding by the Spirit to the word as it is proclaimed to us. Then 'in their mouth was found no

deceit.' It is an amazing thing. It means they have been delivered from all projection. They are actually able to then go and proclaim the gospel of the kingdom as the word of their testimony, as a word that is true. What is true in Christ is true in them. No lie, no projection; just what is real; what is true; the truth of their testimony. It is not sourced in them, because that is the other definition of a lie. It is not their word. It is the word of God the Father.

Now for the 144,000: this is a big point. It is the word of God the Father that is then proclaimed by the apostolic administration of Christ in the presbytery around the throne of the Father. That word is then proclaimed by the 144,000 as the word of their testimony in all nations. They are not the source of it. The One who sits on the throne is the source of that word. They are fully connected to that administration as messengers of that word of truth. As they proclaim it with the Holy Spirit, those who receive it are able to be illuminated concerning the truth of *their* sonship. This is part of the ladder connected to heaven and earth.

Nathanael responds in John 1 verse 48. Jesus only made a statement to Nathanael here, but Nathanael responds, and I think this is telling. Verse 48: 'Nathanael said to Him, "How do you know me?"' That is an amazing thing. In one interaction with one statement and Jesus conveys to this man that he is known from before the foundation of the world. 'How do you know me?' It is the same when Jesus is talking to the woman at the well. He is saying, 'You have had five husbands and the man you are with now is not your husband.' He is telling her all of this, but she walks away from that and she goes and tells everybody in the village, 'Come and meet a Man who has told me everything that I have ever done.' She just knows, 'This Man knows me. I have met someone who has looked into the deepest part of my heart. Everything is exposed and laid bare before

Him.' Nathanael is responding here, hearing the word of his name proclaimed. '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."' This connects us back to the theme of the fig tree. Does it so happen that Nathanael was standing below a fig tree as Philip meets him and then says to him, 'We found the Messiah?' Now that may well be possible. Knowing that the fig tree was used in the Scripture to be symbolic of a person's house, many commentators suggest that Nathanael had been praying in his house earlier that day, and Jesus was referring to, 'When you were under your fig tree in your house praying, I saw you.' I think it is more than that. I think Jesus is saying, '*Before* Philip called you... Philip has now called you and you have responded. You have come and are meeting Me and you now know I know you. I am telling you, Nathanael, from *before* I saw you. I was part of the dialogue. This is the secret concerning you. I was part of the discussion - the dialogue about your name before the foundation of the world. I saw you. I saw what you have been called to be. I saw your predestination. I am telling you now, Nathanael, whether you have been walking under fig trees or whatever it is that you have been doing, from *before* I saw you as a man who has been called to meet Christ; be delivered from your projection; stand up; proclaim the truth as a man in a worthy house. That is what you have been called to be.' Again I think there are some gymnastics happening internally here for Nathanael as he hears this call.

Now will you as men today hear that call to you? From before the foundation of the world, the Lord Himself saw you as a man in the middle of your house, connected to the headship of Christ, able to stand up and by the grace of God, lay down your life for your wife and children. 'I saw you under your fig

tree.' Or will you forever be stuck in the mire of your own self-analysis and inadequacy and disqualification, continually telling the Lord why you cannot stand up? He is saying, 'Well, I saw you from before the foundation of the world and I am telling you, you *can* stand up. There is a grace coming to you in my word to stand.' 'Before Philip called you, I saw you under the fig tree.'

I will not get to 'the stairs' here and we know the prophetic statement. I will just read this last statement. You know the statements in the book of Micah and then also the book of Zechariah concerning being a man under his vine and fig tree. Now that is Micah chapter 4, verse 4, 'Now everyone shall sit...' When you read 'sit', it is 'dwell in peace'. That is where you will dwell, and you will be resting or at peace. This is talking about a house of peace here. '...Everyone shall sit [or dwell in peace] under His vine.' That is Christ's vine. The emphasis of the vine is a son of God who has been born by the Holy Spirit of the life of Christ. You do not become grafted into the vine. You are born of the life of Christ by the Holy Spirit and therefore connected to the Root, which is Christ. His life becomes your life. That is the emphasis of the vine. A son of God connected to Christ. 'If any man be in Christ, behold, new creation.' We are looking at individual sons of God connected to Christ.

The emphasis of the fig tree, as we have been looking, is worthy houses. I think of it a little bit as under *His* vine, capital 'H', that is Christ. Then it is *His* fig tree because Christ is the Head of your house. But it is also little 'h'. It is *your* fig tree; it is *your* house - your worthy house. 'Everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken.'

Then Zechariah 3 verse 10. The point we are making is that in the time of the end, worthy houses who belong to the true Israel of God will be places of provision and protection

during the opening of the seals. At the same time, worthy houses will also be the context for the evangelistic ministry of the church. The 144,000 will comprise a network of worthy houses that are suitable to gather the great multitude from every tribe, nation, people and tongue. Speaking about the day of the Lord that will commence when the Father takes His seat, the prophet Zechariah declared in Zechariah 3 verse 10, 'In that day, says the Lord of hosts, everyone will invite his neighbour under his vine and under his fig tree.' Is everyone happy with that?

Let us go one step further. I will finish here with John 1 verse 49. I have been really rejoicing in this point. This is verse 49. 'Nathanael answered and said to Him, "Rabbi..." ' Nathanael knows that what is being proclaimed to him is connecting him to the secret of his name from before the foundation of the world. He now knows exactly who he is talking to. There is no confusion. ' "...Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" [Now verse 50], Jesus answered and said to him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree', do you believe?" '

Let us pause there. Jesus is not just saying, 'I have shown you a bit of a party trick. You were under a fig tree when Philip called you and that is pretty amazing that I could know that, because I was not there. Now I have said that to you and you are pretty amazed, and so now you are saying I am the Son of God.' It is much more than that. It is exactly what we have just said. He said to him, 'Before I saw you as a man under your fig tree, I have just proclaimed that as a word to you. It is the word of God the Father. The word from before is now suddenly being proclaimed to you. Nathanael is receiving that, and he is all lit up and full of faith. I think Jesus is saying this in the positive. I do not think He is giving him a bit of a backhander. I think He is saying this in the positive. 'Because I said this to you, do you believe?' Recognising that,

of course, because He said this to him, he believes there has been a gift of faith imparted to him on this point. He believes.

Then He says, 'You will see greater things than these.' That is an interesting statement. I will put a question to you: what could possibly be greater than the word of God the Father that is proclaimed to you by Christ or by a messenger of Christ with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven so that you behold or see your calling? What could possibly be greater than that? We are not talking comparatively. I am asking what could possibly be greater than that? There is nothing greater than that. But then Jesus says, 'Something greater you are going to see. I am going to show you something greater.' See if you can catch this today in the Spirit.

What He is saying is, 'I am not just showing you something from before the foundation of the world that is unattainable - that you are seeing but you cannot inherit, because you are here on earth and that predestination or inheritance is in heaven and it is afar off. I am going to show you something greater, Nathanael. You have just seen your calling. Now hereafter, what you will see is the ladder that connects heaven and earth so that you can inherit everything that you have just seen by illumination.' That is what He is saying. Now this is the amazing point concerning the ladder. He says here in verse 51, 'Most assuredly...' This is the first of all of the 'most assuredly statements' in the gospel of John. There are 25 of them in all. Every time He says it, it is something that you know is absolutely true - something in which it is impossible for God to lie. 'Truly, truly', or 'most assuredly'. Remember He said that to Nicodemus? 'Most assuredly I say to you, unless one is born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' That is absolutely true. You cannot get around that. 'Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.' This is another one of these statements: 'most

assuredly, truly, truly.' He says to him. '...most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open. You are going to see the gate of heaven.' He is not saying, 'I am going to peel heaven back.' He is saying, 'You are going to see, like Jacob, the house of God, which is the gate of heaven. You will see heaven open [or you will see the gate of heaven] and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.'

I might leave it there for today because it is 11.30, but that is getting us up to the start of the theme of the ladder because Christ Himself as the Son of Man is that Ladder in the first case. That is what I said earlier. We need to be illuminated to see Christ on His offering journey. He is speaking to Nathanael here as the Son of God in the flesh, but He is saying, 'Nathanael, I am going to be fully identified with you in your fallen, sinful, human condition in the garden of Gethsemane, and I am going to walk the whole journey for you and be glorified as the Son of Man so that this ladder is in place for you exactly where you are to become a son of God whose citizenship is in heaven.'

Are you catching the greater point here? This hope is not afar off. There is nothing greater than that when you see it. But there is also an offering that we are being invited to join where we are fully connected to that. Of course, the first element of that is the prayer meeting. I will leave it there and hand back to Andrew.