

Follow Me!

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John 1:40-51

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Introduction: Jesus was not successful as a preacher or religious founder! At least not in any of the ways that humanity calculate success. He had some listeners but very few actual followers. One of His disciples turned out to be Satanic and was willing to have Him murdered for a small sum of money. He was also a thief.

His total number of faithful disciples was eleven and of those there were only three that He allowed to experience and see certain realities about Himself. Even one of the inner three actually denied even knowing Him on the night of His death.

The more Christ preached and revealed Himself, the fewer people followed Him. Consider just this one instance:

John 6:58-71 ⁵⁸ "This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever." ⁵⁹ These things He said in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum. ⁶⁰ Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard *this* said, "This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?" ⁶¹ But Jesus, conscious that His disciples grumbled at this, said to them, "Does this cause you to stumble?" ⁶² "What then if you see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before?" ⁶³ "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life." ⁶⁴ "But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him. ⁶⁵ And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father." ⁶⁶ As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore. ⁶⁷ So Jesus said to the twelve, "You do not want to go away also, do you?" ⁶⁸ Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life." ⁶⁹ "We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God." ⁷⁰ Jesus answered them, "Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and *yet* one of you is a devil?" ⁷¹ Now He meant Judas *the son* of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray Him.

Contrast this to the church in our day. The largest church in America has 43,500 members and more than that in attendance every Sunday. The next 9 largest churches have another 200,000 members. Now I am not bashing big, but I am wondering how Jesus Christ could not get more than 11 guys to follow Him when He preached, taught and performed miracles and these ten men can get a quarter of a million followers in our day.

The answer is not in the label of the product. It is in the message preached or even more to the point it is in the person preached. Christ said that the world hated Him. We tend to downplay that today. No...."they don't hate Christ they just have never heard of Him." They do not know how loving and kind He is....or how forgiving." If we can just find an

effective, non confrontational, culturally acceptable, non offensive and positive way to speak about Christianity then men will become Christians.” AND....this is true....if you can just remove the offense of the gospel and of Christ Himself then men will join whatever it is that promises them what they believe they need in this world.

John 7:2-7 ² Now the feast of the Jews, the Feast of Booths, was near. ³ Therefore His brothers said to Him, "Leave here and go into Judea, so that Your disciples also may see Your works which You are doing. ⁴ "For no one does anything in secret when he himself seeks to be *known* publicly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world." ⁵ For not even His brothers were believing in Him. ⁶ So Jesus said to them, "My time is not yet here, but your time is always opportune. ⁷ "The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil.

John 15:18-23 ¹⁸ "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated me before *it hated* you. ¹⁹ "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. ²⁰ "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. ²¹ "But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me. ²² "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. ²³ "He who hates Me hates My Father also.

With this in mind lets read our test this morning. It is John's account of the calling of the first disciples. They were all ordinary men like you and me. They had no idea what they were getting into when they decided to follow Christ. They were hitching their wagons to a star not a meteorite. They were going to reign with the King, but instead they died for Him.

John 1:35-51 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). ⁴³ The next day He purposed to go into Galilee, and He found Philip. And Jesus said to him, "Follow Me." ⁴⁴ Now Philip was from Bethsaida, of the city of Andrew and Peter. 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."

This narrative explains three important things about following Christ.

- It is Christ Himself that men follow and not teachings about Him. [35-39]
- It is Christ Himself who calls men to Himself and not teachings about Him [40-46]
- It is Christ Himself who knows and finds us in the world. [47-51]

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The next day John was standing with two of his disciples: John taught "about" Christ. When he began to do so he did not even know who The Christ was. He was a prophet who was told to go and tell people that Messiah was coming. In this task, John the Baptist was like every other prophet. God says that the purpose of the prophets was to point the way to Christ. The unique thing about John's message was that the coming of Messiah was very, very near.

He looked at Jesus as He walked, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!": God revealed Christ Jesus to John when he baptized Jesus. From that point on John's message changed from talking about the Messiah to introducing men to the Messiah. What John knew is something that many in our day have forgotten. When you witness you need to reveal the person Jesus Christ to your hearers. Witnessing is not even primarily about the needs of men. Christ's claim on men is self evident from who He is!

Acts 1:6-8 ⁶ So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" ⁷ He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; ⁸ but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus: When we talk about the sin of men and their hopeless condition it must never conclude with that truth. If it does

it is not “Good News” but news of the most deplorable nature. It drives men to despair but not to the arms of Christ. Andrew and John were introduced to the reality behind the preaching of John the Baptist. That is the only reason to preach the Scripture...to introduce men to Christ. The Catholic Monk, Martin Luther had heard about the condemning judgment of God his whole life. This was his account:

Though I lived as a monk without reproach, I felt that I was a sinner before God with an extremely disturbed conscience. I could not believe that He was placated [reconciled or appeased] by my satisfaction [going through the ritual of penance: contrition, confession, and acts of satisfaction]. I did not love, yes, I hated the righteous God who punishes sinners...I was angry with God, and said, "As if, indeed, it is not enough, that miserable sinners, eternally lost through original sin, are crushed by...the law...without having God add pain to pain by the [New Testament] threatening us with His righteousness and wrath!" Thus did I rage with a fierce and troubled conscience (Martin Luther: ***Martin Luther: Selections From His Writings***, Anchor, 1961, p. 11

There is a second reaction that men have to any word about God that does not exalt Christ and offer Him as the only solution of men. It is moralism and is the bane of humanity. It is the foolish and unbiblical belief that any you can be good enough to deserve heaven or God’s favor. This is embodied in the religions of the world. Even with the many people who do not believe in heaven or hell, over 60% of Americans asked, think they are going to heaven. Why would they think that, is the follow-up question and almost all their answers are based on their own morality and intrinsic goodness.

So Christianity without Christ is worse than no Christianity at all. It either drives people to the world where they live in despair and with an elusive quest for joy and purpose or it drives them to self-righteous, pompous religion that God will never accept in a million years. Martin Luther had experienced both of these extremes before being delivered by Christ Alone. When God finally showed him Christ’s gracious love at the cross he said,

“When the devil throws your sins in your face and declares that you deserve death and hell, tell him this: "I admit that I deserve death and hell, what of it? For I know One who suffered and made satisfaction on my behalf. His name is Jesus Christ, Son of God, and where He is there I shall be also!"

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?": What do seekers seek? In this case we actually know. John had introduced them to the one person who...now listen to this description....”TAKES AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD!” [1:29]

How is this possible? You cannot take back a sin anymore than you can take back a word. You can be sorry that you hated someone, but you still hated them. You can be sorry for lying, but you still lied and on and on it goes. How does a man “Take Away” your sin. This is what John and Andrew sought. John had sent them to Christ for that, even though he himself had been preaching repentance and baptism he knew it was just preparing the way for Christ to do what only God the Son could ever do.

So they came and saw where He was staying; and they stayed with Him that day, for it was about the tenth hour: This means it was about 4 PM. That is the time when men begin finishing up their outdoor work or if traveling begin looking for lodging. John and

Andrew spent the night with Jesus and we can imagine that there was little sleeping because when the next day came. John and Andrew were not longer followers of John but of Jesus.

It is Christ Himself who calls men to Himself and not teachings about Him [40-46]

John 1:40-46 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). ⁴³ The next day He purposed to go into Galilee, and He found Philip. And Jesus said to him, "Follow Me." ⁴⁴ Now Philip was from Bethsaida, of the city of Andrew and Peter. 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."

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John 3:13-16 ¹³ "No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man. ¹⁴ "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, [explain] even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; ¹⁵ so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life. ¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

John 12:31-35 ³¹ "Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. ³² "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself." ³³ But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die. ³⁴ The crowd then answered Him, "We have heard out of the Law that the Christ is to remain forever; and how can You say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this Son of Man?" ³⁵ So Jesus said to them, "For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes.

But Jesus is nowhere to be seen today. He told the disciples He was going away and they threw a fit over it. It was a fit of anxiety not anger. They were stumbling along with Him

right at their side they reasoned. "How will we ever make it with Him gone back to heaven?"

John 14:3-5 ³ "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, *there* you may be also. ⁴ "And you know the way where I am going." ⁵ Thomas said to Him, "Lord, **we do not know** where You are going, how do we know the way?"

Jesus, however had a plan and that same plan is in effect today for you.

John 16:6-15 ".....because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. ⁷ "But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. ⁸ "And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; ⁹ concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; ¹⁰ and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; ¹¹ and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged. ¹² "I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear *them* now. ¹³ "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. ¹⁴ "He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose *it* to you. ¹⁵ "All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose *it* to you.

Look at Christ! Speak of Christ! No matter what you read, hear or say, from God's Word it needs to point toward and finish with the spectacle of Jesus the Messiah of God. Blessedly, The Holy Spirit is in the world and in you for that expressed purpose. He is not here to exalt men by giving them awesome gifts! The Spirit is here to exalt Christ and bring men to the only person who can and has taken away the sin of the world.

When we speak, pray, witness or preach, it is the Holy Spirit who makes Christ visible to the spirit of men. It has always been the Holy Spirit who says "behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." Paul explained to the Corinthians that religion and morality both condemn men. The Law of Moses embodied both for the purpose of driving men to Christ...to hope only in Christ even before He appeared in the world. Every OT believer hoped in Christ because they knew that they were hopelessly condemned by the Law. Both Christ and Paul taught men to hope in Christ Alone.

2 Corinthians 3:12-18 ¹² Therefore having such a hope, we use great boldness in *our* speech, ¹³ and *are* not like Moses, *who* used to put a veil over his face so that the sons of Israel would not look intently at the end of what was fading away. ¹⁴ But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Christ. ¹⁵ But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart; ¹⁶ but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. ¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, *there* is liberty. ¹⁸ But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

It is Christ Himself who knows and finds us in the world. [47-51]

John 1:47-51 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."

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."**: This is how Jesus saved you. He sets His affections on you before He actually calls called you to faith. He came into the world to die for your sins and then at the appointed time He send a "Philip" to call you to Himself. Christ started His ministry this way and carries it on the same way through the work of the Holy Spirit. Again Paul explains only this time to the Ephesians.

Ephesians 1:4-8 ⁴**He chose** us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. **In love** ⁵ He predestined us **to adoption as sons** through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the **kind intention** of His will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, **which He freely bestowed** on us in the Beloved. ⁷ In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, **according to the riches of His grace** ⁸ which **He lavished on us**. In all wisdom and insight

Ephesians 1:13-14 ¹³ In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of *God's own* possession, to the praise of His glory.

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What is your response to that? Is it trust? Is it relief and hope and peace? It should be all of these because Christ knows you and every detail of your heart and yet....he calls you to himself because He is full of love, compassion, grace and pity for you. You should come freely and quickly and without mental reservation. You should become a follower, not a mere believer! The world is full of nominal believers. Jesus said he was

seeking followers and worshipers....and worshipers have beheld the exaltation of Christ by the Holy Spirit of God.

John 4:23-24 ²³ "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. ²⁴ "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

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.": This is a direct allusion to Jacob's Ladder into heaven. Christ has opened heaven's door to mankind. He brought God down to man and would take man back to God. Nathaniel would experience this firsthand. What he had at that moment was the stunning realization that God had always known about Him, had always seen him and had, purposed to make him a child of God and a follower of Christ. A Spirit driven sight of Christ includes this assurance. Christ Jesus is the only hope of men and is totally worthy to be exalted in the world. The same man who denied Jesus in his own strength, said this by the power of the Holy Spirit...

CONCLUSION

Acts 4:8-12 ⁸ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of the people, ⁹ if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well, ¹⁰ let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead-- by this *name* this man stands here before you in good health. ¹¹ "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."