



KNOW:TRUTH

The Gospel of John

A New Covenant Study

WEEK TWO | DAY FIVE

JOHN 1:43-51

Pre-Work

Know: Read John 1:43-51

Note: Mark keywords, including pronouns and phrases (John Jesus Christ, Word, man). Ask questions: (Use tools such as interlinear guides to search the original meaning of words- [free tool here](#)) For example:

- Who
- What
- When
- Where
- Why
- How

Observation: Read Genesis 27-28:22 (read the rest of Jacob's story if time allows)

What: What does today's study reveal to me about the nature of God? What truth do I need to apply to my life today? Where do you see Jesus in your reading?

“Very truly I tell you, you will see ‘heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.’ John 1:51

In your Observation homework assignment, you read the story of Jacob on his flight from home. As he slept, when he reached a certain place along the way, he dreamed of angels ascending and descending on a stairway (or ladder in some translations) that met heaven from the earth. God had met him there and spoke a promise of blessing and care (despite how badly he had behaved toward his brother and father.) Upon waking, he named the place Bethel, or the house of God.

Fast forward to John, when Nathaneal saw Jesus, his cynicism was stopped short by Jesus' prophetic Word of Knowledge over him. Jesus had “seen” Nathaneal sitting alone under a fig tree, and then Jesus prophesied an echo of Jacob's vision, “Very truly I tell you, you will see ‘heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.’”

To see the richness in this picture, we need to go back to the first time a fig is mentioned in scripture. In the Garden of Eden, after Adam and Eve disobeyed God, their eyes were “opened” to their nakedness, and they attempted to hide with fig leaves. Fig leaves represent self-righteousness because the great irony of the story is that they were already made like God. Yet, they were deceived into believing that eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

would make them like God, so they tried to make themselves “right” by covering their shame. Fig leaves would not do in covering their nakedness.

God knew where they were when He called, but He gave them an opportunity to run to Him to make things right. Instead, they blamed one another and the serpent. Because they refused His grace, God had to banish them from the garden before they ate from the Tree of Life and lived forever in their state of sin. Before He did so, God covered their nakedness with animal skins signifying the very first blood shed to cover over shame- a sacrifice had been made by God Himself on behalf of mankind, a foreshadowing of the greatest sacrifice to redeem all of mankind.

Another fig tree would be mentioned later in the synoptic gospels in which Jesus curses it when it produces no fruit for him. That fig tree was not insulting Jesus; He was the maker of fig trees, and it did not respond to its creator, but that’s not the point. The fig tree represents self-righteousness. Jesus was cursing man’s attempt to make oneself righteous. Jesus alone can make one righteous through His shed blood.

The story of Jacob is one of self-effort and self-righteousness. Abraham, Jacob’s grandfather, was loved by God and had been granted a covenant of everlasting grace. Abraham and God had a relationship based on God’s love and desire to bless Abraham and his future generations. Just two generations later, Jacob would begin the age-old struggle of relying on his efforts, yet God continuously pursued him with blessing and grace.

The staircase Jacob saw was Jesus. Jesus was the end of self-effort for righteousness. Jesus was the One on whom angels ascend and descend and whom all who believe in Him would be made righteous (righteousness means “in right relationship” with God.) Jesus is “from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,” Ephesians 3:15. “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.” Ephesians 1:3

I do not know what Nathaniel was contemplating while he sat under that fig tree that caused him to respond in surrender at Jesus’ revelation, but the fact that Jesus SAW him in what must have been a moment of deep personal longing created an immediate response to Jesus’ Word of Knowledge. This story makes a case for the power of prophetic ministry and evokes personal reflection on how we each came to believe in Jesus.

Our stories are made up of times when we, like Nathaniel, sat under our own fig trees, longing for something “more.” We cried out for help or desired to be loved by a God we hoped was as kind as our child imaginations hoped He would be.

As a child, I remember times when my deep contemplations about God were met with His love or affirmation. As I entered my teenage years, those thoughts were cut short by the abuse I experienced at the hands of those I trusted. (You can read my story [here](#)). I felt violated and shamed. I felt like my life no longer mattered and that I was damaged- goods and could offer nothing to a future once filled with hope. A year later, on a mission trip in Mexico, God met me

one morning during early-morning devotions. Spiritually preparing for the day's work, our group leader read the story of Genesis of Jacob's dream. Without understanding what it meant, just reading that story stirred my faith to receive hope. The Spirit of God immediately met me with love. I wept as I felt an overwhelming presence scoop in and remove all the pain and trauma which had haunted me for months. I heard God say to me, "I saw you in every moment of your life. When your heart burned to know me, you were responding to my love. You are Bethel, the house of God; pain and trauma do not befit the house of God." and just like that, I was free of the pain.

Just like Nathaniel, you, too, have a story of awakening to the love of God. Take time today to remember the glimpses in childhood when your heart was still tender and the moment you came to surrender to His love.