

The Forgotten Jesus Podcast

S5E5

Studying The Word Under a Fig Tree - (John 1:47-51)

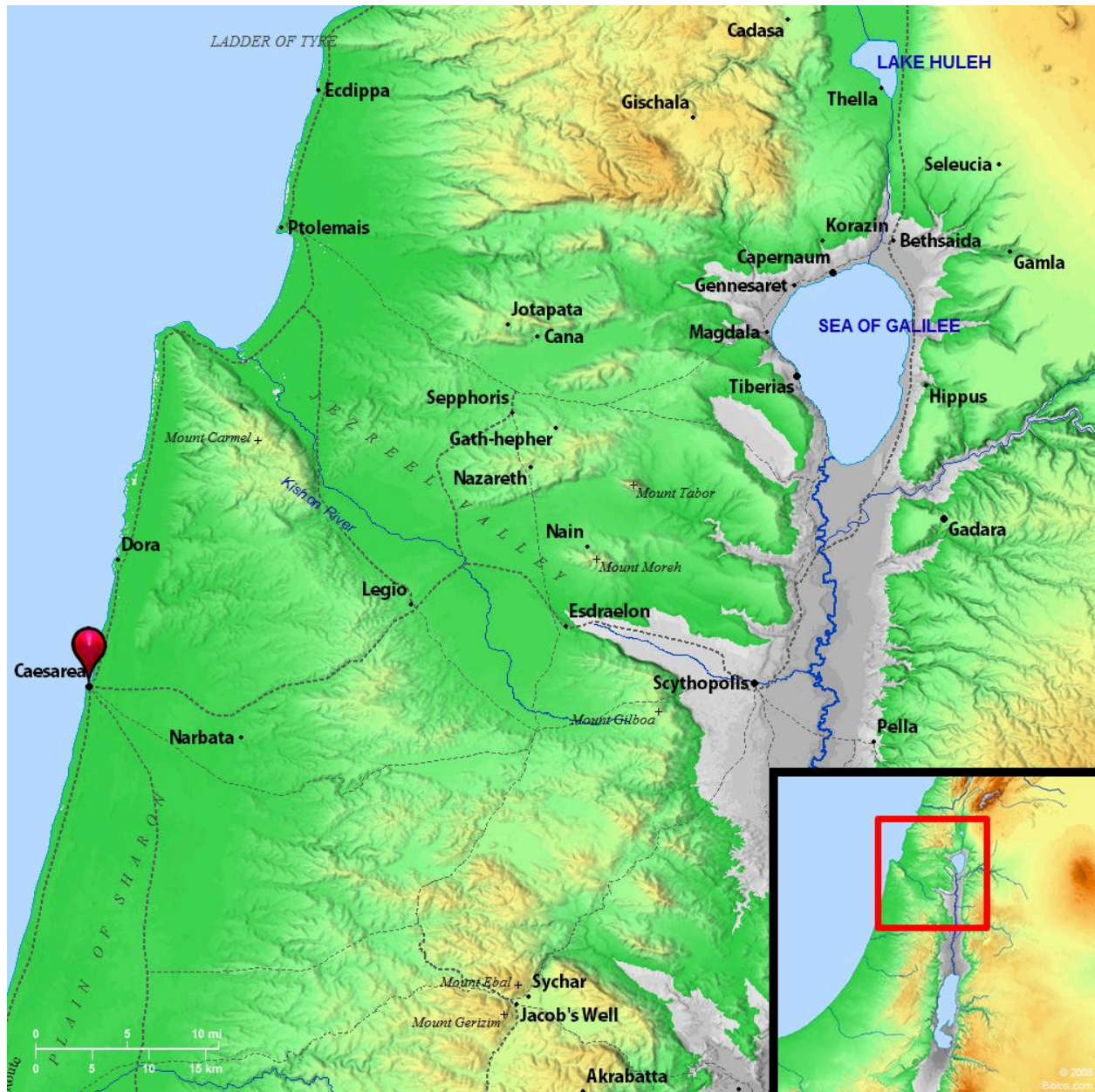
Description – We're continuing our walk through John 1 and Jesus calling the first 5 disciples. Today we examine Nathanael.

Going back to the "Fab 5" looking at Nathaniel's response to Phillip.

John 1:46

⁴⁶ "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Nathanael asked him. "Come and see," Philip answered.

Caesarea by the Sea - one of the most beautiful cities that Herod built there next to the Mediterranean seaside. But less than 30 miles away, we find the town of Nazareth.



This massive, magnificent city was enormous compared to tiny Nazareth. In Caesarea by the Sea they had an incredible amphitheater that overlooked the seashore. It held anywhere from 3500 - 4000 people.

Jesus is raised in Nazareth, and does most of his ministry in Nazareth and around Galilee. We know Jesus would have been aware of Caesarea, but he never preached there in the amphitheater, nor do we find any accounts of him even visiting the city.

Remember, Jesus was a Jewish rabbi, not an American TV evangelist or preacher.

John 1:47-48

⁴⁷ Then Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said about him, “Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.” ⁴⁸ “How do you know me?” Nathanael asked. “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you,” Jesus answered.

Notice that Jesus doesn't call him by name, but he calls him by his character.

“When you were under the fig tree, I saw you.” - What does this mean?

“Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.” - What does this mean?

There is one rabbi who believes that every time Jesus speaks he's quoting the OT. Sometimes it's not everywhere, but you may have to dig for it.

Remember, to follow a rabbi meant that you were going to take his yoke upon yourself. That was his ways, his teachings, his interpretation of the law.

When Jesus says, “I see there's no deceit in you” it's a callback to Genesis. It's a pointing to Nathanael's character.

When people are wanting more of God, they are supposed to go and sit and pray under a fig tree.



Fig trees were associated with deep study of the word. According to Rabbi Abba, whoever sits under the fig tree will eat the fruit thereof. The more one studies and looks at a fig tree, the more figs you will find. The same is true of the Word of God– the more you study the word, the more nuggets of wisdom you find in scripture.

So when Jesus says he saw Nathanael under the fig tree, it was when Nathanael was meditating and contemplating on the Word of God.

Nathanael isn't just sitting under a tree taking a nap, he's seeking God in the scriptures.

Jesus is saying to him, "I know where you are spiritually, but I also know the text you were studying."

Nazareth was looked at as an uneducated, backwoods, redneck town in the north. While the area of Galilee lacked in education and sophistication, they were devoted to the Lord and to the worship and obedience to God.

So when Nathanael says, "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" he says this because he's familiar with the stereotype of the town.

Genesis 27:35-36

³⁵ But he replied, "Your brother came deceitfully and took your blessing." ³⁶ So he said, "Isn't he rightly named Jacob? For he has cheated me twice now. He took my birthright, and look, now he has taken my blessing." Then he asked, "Haven't you saved a blessing for me?"

At this point, Jacob (who would become Israel) who is now known as the deceiver.

John 1:51

⁵¹ Then he said, "Truly I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

This is the passage that Nathanael was reading and studying sitting under the fig tree, Jesus is linking him to Israel (Jacob), and here he's linking him to Jacob's dream in Bethel:

Genesis 28:10-13

¹⁰ Jacob left Beer-sheba and went toward Haran. ¹¹ He reached a certain place and spent the night there because the sun had set. He took one of the stones from the place, put it there at his head, and lay down in that place. ¹² And he dreamed: A stairway was set on the ground with its top reaching the sky, and God's angels were going up and down on it. ¹³ The LORD was standing there beside him

They believed that when an angel was coming down to Earth from Heaven, that the angel had a message or a revelation from God for someone. They also thought that as angels ascended back into heaven, that they were taking messages or prayers from people back to God.

John 1:51

⁵¹ Then he said, “Truly I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”

Jesus takes the concept of Jacob / Israel and tells Nathanael that there was a place in Bethel where Jacob had this dream, but now the angels are going to “ascend and descend” on Jesus, that he would be the place where humanity and God would connect.

John 1:14

¹⁴ The Word became flesh and **dwelt** among us. We observed his glory, the glory as the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

This word “dwelt” is also where the word tabernacle comes from.

Exodus 25:8-9

⁸ “They are to make a sanctuary for me so that I may dwell among them. ⁹ You must make it according to all that I show you—the pattern of the tabernacle as well as the pattern of all its furnishings.

Then in Exodus 40 something happens.

Exodus 40:34-35

³⁴ The cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. ³⁵ Moses was unable to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud rested on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

John is pointing out that not only is Jesus dwelling among us, literally tabernacling with us, but he’s also the ONLY way to get to God the Father. He’s the way, and it’s no longer a place, a traveling tabernacle in the wilderness or a magnificent temple in Jerusalem, it’s now found in a person, Jesus.

Links for F260 Bible reading plans

Foundations F260 (Both Old and New Testament readings)

<https://longhollow.com/follow-the-f260-bible-reading-plan>

New Testament F260

<https://longhollow.com/follow-the-nt260-bible-reading-plan>

Old Testament F260

<https://longhollow.com/follow-the-ot260-bible-reading-plan>