

THE TWELVE (8)

Waiting for Jesus

A. Introduction

1. Who were the Twelve?

The Twelve were men who were called to believe in Jesus and to follow Him.

The Twelve were men who were chosen from a larger group of disciples to be apostles and were given what they needed to do this role.

2. What do we learn from The Twelve about what it means to be disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ?

Andrew taught us that disciples of Jesus introduce people to Jesus.

Simon Peter taught us that disciples of Jesus are changed by Jesus to be like Jesus.

John taught us that disciples of Jesus love the truth about Jesus.

James taught us that disciples of Jesus learn to suffer for Jesus.

Philip taught us that disciples of Jesus never stop learning about Jesus.

B. Meet Bartholomew

1. Who is Bartholomew?

In Matthew, Mark and Luke, Bartholomew is named as one of the twelve apostles – but that is all we know about him.

“These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew.” (Matthew 10:2-3)

“These are the twelve he appointed: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means Sons of Thunder); Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew.” (Mark 3:16-18)

“When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles: Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew.” (Luke 6:13-14)

In these lists, Bartholomew’s name appears next to Philip’s, which implies that they were friends.

The only other time Bartholomew is mentioned is on the list of apostles in the book of Acts.

“When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew.” (Acts 1:13)

In John’s Gospel, there is no mention of Bartholomew, but a man called Nathanael appears among the apostles, both at the beginning and end of the book – but there is no mention of him in Matthew, Mark or Luke.

Nathanael too was a close friend of Philip – the first thing Philip did after meeting Jesus was to find Nathanael to tell him.

“The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, “Follow me.” Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. Philip found Nathanael.” (John 1:43-45)

It is strange that Nathanael, who is not listed as being an apostle, would be out fishing with Peter and five of the other apostles after Jesus' resurrection.

"Afterwards Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Tiberias. It happened this way: Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together." (John 21:1-2)

But not if Nathanael and Bartholomew are the same person and Bartholomew was Nathanael's family name (meaning 'son of Tolmai').

2. Bartholomew was also known as Nathanael.

He was from Cana in Galilee – the place where Jesus did His first miracle of changing water into wine.

"Nathanael from Cana in Galilee." (John 21:2)

He was a fisherman.

"I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing." (John 21:3)

He was good friends with Philip.

"Philip found Nathanael." (John 1:45)

He was called by Jesus to follow Him.

"Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig-tree. You shall see greater things than that." (John 1:50)

He was chosen by Jesus to be an apostle.

"These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew." (Matthew 10:2-3)

3. What do we learn from Nathanael Bartholomew about what it means to be disciples of the Lord Jesus?

Disciples of Jesus are waiting for Jesus.

C. Nathanael Bartholomew was waiting for Jesus

1. Nathanael is introduced as an Israelite who was waiting for the Messiah to come.

"Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote – Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." (John 1:45)

Philip was excited to tell Nathanael that the One he was waiting for had arrived.

How was Nathanael waiting for Messiah to come?

2. Nathanael was waiting for the Messiah by studying God's Word.

He had a place where he studied God's Word – under the fig-tree.

"How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig-tree before Philip called you." (John 1:48)

Under the fig-tree was most likely the place where Nathanael went to study and meditate on God's Word.

He had a person who he studied God's Word with – Philip.

"Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote – Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." (John 1:45)

And from his study of God's Word, he knew what God's Word said about the Messiah – what Moses had written about in the Law and also what the prophets wrote about Him too.

No wonder he was sceptical when Philip referred to Jesus as coming from Nazareth, because up until now, there had been no link between the Messiah and Nazareth.

"Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked." (John 1:46)

It was not so much that he despised Nazareth, but that he simply didn't think that the Messiah could come from there.

But when he met Jesus and Jesus showed Himself to be the Messiah, because of his study of God's Word, he was able to recognise him straightaway.

"Come and see," said Philip. When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false." "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig-tree before Philip called you." Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel." Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig-tree. You shall see greater things than that." (John 1:46-50)

His study of God's Word is even seen in his confession that Jesus is the Messiah he had been waiting for.

"You are the Son of God." (John 1:49)

"I will proclaim the decree of the LORD: He said to me, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. You will rule them with an iron sceptre; you will dash them to pieces like pottery." (Psalm 2:7-9)

"You are the King of Israel." (John 1:49)

"The LORD has taken away your punishment, he has turned back your enemy. The LORD, the King of Israel, is with you; never again will you fear any harm." (Zephaniah 3:15)

Nathanael recognised that Jesus was the Messiah long before Peter did.

3. Nathanael was waiting for the Messiah by living God's Word.

"When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false." (John 1:47)

Jesus was not saying that Nathanael was sinless – he was human after all.

Rather he was saying that Nathanael was not a hypocrite – he was an authentic Israelite – who loved God and was living God's way.

This was in contrast to the Pharisees, the religious leaders of the day.

"Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach." (Matthew 23:1-3)

4. Nathanael waited for Jesus to come by studying God's Word and living God's Word.

After Jesus came, and died, and rose again, and ascended into heaven, it was time for Nathanael to wait again for Jesus to come.

"They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the

sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." (Acts 1:10-11)

This time as Nathanael waited, he encouraged other people to wait for Jesus to come too, by sharing God's Word.

"Pantaenus was one of these, and is said to have gone to India. It is reported that among persons there who knew of Christ, he found the Gospel according to Matthew, which had anticipated his own arrival. For Bartholomew, one of the apostles, had preached to them, and left with them the writing of Matthew in the Hebrew language, which they had preserved till that time." (Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 5:10)

According to tradition, after going to India, Nathanael Bartholomew took the gospel to Armenia, where Polymius, the king of Armenia was converted.

Following this, Astyages, Polymius' brother, ordered that Nathanael Bartholomew be executed.

There is no reliable record of how he was martyred.

One tradition has him tied up in a sack and cast into the sea. Another has him crucified. While yet another has him flayed alive before being crucified head downwards.

D. Disciples are waiting for Jesus

1. We are waiting for the Jesus to return.

2. How are we to wait?

By studying God's Word.

By living God's Word.

By sharing God's Word.