

He Loved Me . . .

He Loves Me Lots

The Gospel of John

Text

John 1:35-51

Topic

Jesus recruits several disciples promising they will see angels ascending and descending upon Him as depicted in the vision of Jacob's ladder

Title

"Recruits & Ladders"

"Everything you need"

That is the promise made by a parachurch organization that offers to help you plant a church.

Their website says, "With [our] church planting [program], you'll get personalized coaching, practical training, relevant resources, and tested strategies that work in the community in which you plant. You'll be able to implement proven systems that will help increase the long-term success of your church plant."

They identify three stages: Prelaunch, Launch, and Post Launch. During prelaunch, "We will outline partnership details [that's double-speak for how much they'll charge], discuss your salary, and explain what church planting

grants you will receive. We will teach you how to raise funds [and] recruit your launch team. We can even help with the creative aspects of your church plant, such as naming, branding, and logo development."

Welcome to the weird and wacky world of 21st century church planting.

Answering the question, "How much money should it cost to plant a new church?" the estimate from several experts is between \$300,000.00 and \$500,000.00 *to be raised in prelaunch.*

When we came in 1985, there was \$4,000.00 in the bank. Adjusting for inflation, that translates to a whopping \$10,000.00 in today's money. No wonder we were 18 years at the YMCA.

As for me and my house, we would not attend a church planted using those methods.

John the Baptist pointed his disciples to Jesus indicating to them that He was "everything they needed."

True, Jesus wasn't planting the church, not at first. His initial mission was no less monumental. He offered Israel the Kingdom of God on Earth.

Jesus had one nonmaterial resource. John told us verse thirty-three that God the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus from Heaven and remained upon Him.

We are baptized with the Holy Spirit at our conversion into the body of Jesus on Earth. We have the promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit in abundance if we ask our Father for Him.

I'll organize my comments around two points: **#1 Jesus Says To You, "Come & See,"** and **#2 You Say To Everyone, "Come & See."**

#1 - Jesus Says To You, "Come & See" (v35-42)

John the Baptist and Jesus had extremely long pre-launches. Nothing much is recorded beyond a few miraculous events surrounding their births and Jesus' youth. Suddenly about thirty years later, in 29AD, John launched his baptism for repentance ministry:

- He put on a camel's hair garment and a leather belt.
- He went out into the wilderness.
- He fed on locusts dipped in wild honey.

By word of mouth, Jews from surrounding villages and towns heard about it. They flocked to John, repented, and were water baptized to prepare for the arrival of the Messiah who would baptize His followers with the Holy Spirit.

John's only resource was the Holy Spirit.

Jesus' ministry launch was more dramatic, but only slightly. John shouted out, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" The Holy Spirit lighted upon Jesus in the form of a dove and remained on Him.

It was all very supernaturally natural. Maybe I can illustrate. Don't bother watching *Jesus Christ Superstar*. The title is enough to inform you it isn't going to be biblical. Judas is portrayed as a confused supporter of Jesus, an anti-hero with the Lord's best interests in mind. (BTW: Any representation of Judas in a heroic light is just nonbiblical nonsense).

At one point, Judas sings,

*Now why'd you choose such a backward time
And such a strange land?
If you'd come today
You could have reached a whole nation
Israel in 4BC
Had no mass communication*

Mass communication would have overshadowed the supernatural.
Joh 1:35 Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples.

Multitudes were coming out to be baptized. There would be a lot of logistics involved. People would need assistance, have questions. Some of those John baptized stayed and served as his disciples. They picked up the slack so John could baptize more people. There was no plan, only servants.

Joh 1:36 And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!"

God sent John to identify to Israel their Messiah who must first be slaughtered as a substitutionary sacrifice. He was on message, even though it was not a popular one.

He didn't look at any demographic studies or poll people to hear what they wanted in a preacher.

He wasn't concerned that there were no facilities or services of any kind where he'd be baptizing.

Imagine how ridiculous if John had applied for a grant.

Joh 1:37 The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.

I want to think that John was excited to see these two disciples follow. These disciples had heard his message had received it. The apostle John would write in his third letter, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth" (1:4).

Joh 1:38 Then Jesus turned, and seeing them following, said to them, "What do you seek?" They said to Him, "Rabbi" (which is to say, when translated, Teacher), "where are You staying?"

It's common in movies to have a follow-on-foot scene. Often the person being followed will turn and confront the follower.

"What do you seek?" are the first recorded words of Jesus in this Gospel. Humans are seekers because God has put eternity in our hearts. Nothing and

no one other than Jesus can satisfy us. God wired us that way. What we seek is to fill the void only God can fill.

Their response seems off base. "We're stalking You and want to know where You live!"

Joh 1:39 He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day (now it was about the tenth hour).

Jesus showed them spiritual hospitality, and they talked until 4pm. The Lord started His ministry by serving people His Father brought to Him.

Unless you are a hermit (which I'm guessing you are not since you are here!), serve people and you will discover your gifts and the works God has planned for you. Don't plan to serve potential people in the future. Serve right now those who seek Jesus. It's really that simple. Why do we hesitate? There's no safety net.

Joh 1:40 One of the two who heard John *speak*, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

It's almost certain that the other guy was John, the writer of this Gospel. He refuses to draw attention to himself.

Joh 1:41 He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated, the Christ).

Family's are weird. You know what I mean because it's almost Thanksgiving. Conan O'Brien tweeted, "If you want to avoid seeing your family this Thanksgiving, *be sure to book a flight on American or Southwest.*"

Nonetheless, your family is typically your first ministry. Especially if you were saved later in life. The people who know you best will see the transformation within you thanks to the indwelling Holy Spirit. It's as if Jesus puts you in front of them to say, " 'Come & see' what I've done for Gene. It is what I will do for you."

Joh 1:42 And he brought him to Jesus. Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, "You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas" (which is translated, A Stone).

We tend to follow the interpretive path that leads to why Cephas, who we know as Peter, was called "A Stone."

If you were Jewish, your first instinct would be to recall men and women in the Scriptures that had their names changed for the better by God:

- Abram was renamed Abraham.
- Sarai was renamed Sarah.
- Jacob was renamed Israel.

A name change announces that God Who has begun His good work in you *will* complete what He started.

Jesus says to us, "Come & see that I have a new name for you."

In the Revelation, Jesus says, "To him who overcomes... I will give... a white stone, and on the stone **a new name** written which no one knows except him who receives *it.*" '

"Him who overcomes" is synonymous with being a Christian. I don't mind my name. My parents lived in a simpler era where no one was named Apple or Blanket. I am excited to hear Jesus call me by my new name. It will be perfect.

Nonbeliever, Jesus is calling you to "Come & see" Him on the Cross, dying in your place for your sin as the Last Lamb.

Believer, *keep coming*. Don't veer off; don't stop short. "Come & see" the good works God has prepared for you.

#2 - You Say To Everyone, "Come & See" (v43-51)

Lauren Faulkner was my co-worker in 1979. God used him to bring me to salvation and point me in the right direction.

By far, most conversions involve the witness of a family member, a friend, a co-worker, or a stranger. Someone we would call a nobody, a “whosoever.”

That’s me; that’s you. We are somebody’s nobody.

Joh 1:43 The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, “Follow Me.”

When He was born, Jesus added a sinless human nature to His deity. Jesus is fully God *and* fully human in a union we cannot understand.

His unique God-man status confuses us. One scholar writes, “He knew people’s thoughts (Mark 2:8), was able to distinguish true believers from nonbelievers (John 6:64), knew “from the beginning” Judas would betray Him (John 6:64), and knew “all things” (John 16:30). On the other hand, He “increased in wisdom” (Luke 2:52) and did not know the day or hour of His Second Coming (Mark 13:32).”

We need to adopt a perspective going forward. Let’s survey a few verses that can give us insight:

- Joh 5:19 “The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.” Jesus never acted independently. He was fully God and fully man but acted on Earth as a man submitted to God the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Joh 14:1 “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater *works* than these he will do, because I go to My Father” (John 14:12). If Jesus did His works as God, if they were works of His deity, *we would not be able to do them*.
- Joh 14:16 “I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever...” Jesus was promising to send the gift of the Holy Spirit to empower His followers in the same manner the Holy Spirit empowered Him.

Jesus did His "works" as a man empowered by the Holy Spirit for our example. He set aside the independent use of His deity. If He did His works employing His deity, how could we ever hope to do them as mere humans? We couldn't.

Jesus "found Phillip" means He was led to find Phillip, acting in concert with His Father. Likewise He wanted to go to Galilee because His Father was prompting Him.

Joh 1:44 Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.

Jesus will pronounce judgment on the people of Bethsaida because they reject the witness of His miracles and do not repent of their sins (Matthew 11:21). These three men represent God's grace in salvation. He called them out from a wicked town. He would have saved any in Bethsaida who repented and received Him.

Joh 1:45 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."

- Moses told Israel to look for the coming of a great Prophet.
- The other prophets of the Old Testament said He would be the One upon whom the Holy Spirit remained.

Philip shared the Lord with Nathanael, but he was wrong in the details:

- Although Jesus grew up in Nazareth, He was born in Bethlehem.
- Joseph was not Jesus' biological father.

You and I get it wrong sometimes when sharing Jesus with others. God is limitlessly gracious. He covers for us time and again. Share what you know.

Joh 1:46 And Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."

Nazareth was an obscure, off-the-beaten trail village. It is not once mentioned in the Jewish Scriptures. Surely someone as famous and powerful as the Messiah would not be associated with such humble beginnings and background.

Jesus invited Andrew and John, "Come & see." Philip invited Nathanael, "Come & see." In both cases, there was a responsibility to act on what they'd been told.

Joh 1:47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!"

Jesus made a statement that showed He knew Nathanael's inner thoughts. Jesus was omniscient, but we're understanding Him acting as human walking in dependence upon His Father in the Spirit's power.

Jesus was exercising what will later be labeled "the word of knowledge." It is the Holy Spirit giving you knowledge you cannot otherwise acquire.

Joh 1:48 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."

Messianic Jews studied under the shade of fig trees because the tree was the symbol of the nation of Israel and because of God's promise to bless Israel in the future. Zechariah 3:10 says, "In that day," says the LORD of hosts, "Everyone will invite his neighbor Under his vine and under his fig tree." "

Jesus knew Nathanael's heart and his habits. Jesus was omniscient, but this is the Holy Spirit giving Him knowledge.

Joh 1:49 Nathanael answered and said to Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"

Jesus' exercise of the word of knowledge brought glory to God.

Our gifts are not, as Warren Wiersbe says, "Toys to play with." They are for ministering to others.

Nathanael's reaction seems extreme. Someone may have told Jesus that Nathanael had the reputation of being without deceit.

It was a good guess that he read under fig trees. The following two verses put the entire scene into perspective.

Joh 1:50 Jesus answered and said to him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these."

Joh 1:51 And He said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see Heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

"Deceit," or "guile," as some Bibles translate it, is the word for "Jacob." Jesus knew the very portion of Scripture Nathanael was reading under the fig tree. It is from Genesis: "[Jacob] dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to Heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it" (28:12).

Jesus quoted the passage, even giving the correct order of the words "ascending and descending."

Putting it all together you see why Nathanael's mind was blown.

Jesus knew his heart, saw him under a fig tree, and told him what he was reading. Then He revealed that it was a message to Nathanael, a prophecy of things to come. To top it off, Jesus was claiming that the ladder represented Him.

O, yeah, this is the Messiah!

Jesus used the term "Son of Man" of Himself more than eighty times. It underscores Jesus' identifying with us as human beings. He is the Son of Man in that He is our example of a man upon whom the Holy Spirit remains.

As far as church planting, we say this: **You're** the church, and God has planted **you** in your life and its circumstances. Tell others to "Come and see" Jesus and watch what happens.