

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN - PART IV

THE COMPLETION OF THE FIRST WEEK (JOHN 1:19-2:12)

I. On the fourth day, or at the end of the third day, Andrew brings Simon to Jesus.

A. The Apostles thus begin their evangelization. Andrew has come to the recognition of Jesus as the Messiah (the "anointed one," or Christos in Greek).

1. In the Old Testament times, kings and priests were anointed. See Lev. 4:3-5; 1 Sam. 2:10, 38, 12:3-5; 2 Sam. 1:14-16. Isaiah also describes himself or a future prophet as anointed. See Is. 61:1. There are also some ambiguous references to what seems like other prophets being anointed. See 1 Chron. 16:22; Ps. 105:15. There were numerous prophecies of an anointed one, or one of the line of David, returning to bring God's people to glory and launching a worldwide kingdom. See, e.g., Ps. 2; Is. 11; Dan. 9:24-27; Micah 5:1-4; Zech. 3-8.

2. There were increasing expectations of a Messiah coming into the world and here Andrew connects that expectation to the Lamb of God identified by John. The Gospel leaves mysterious the implications of this discovery, to be revealed later, as Jesus cleanses the Temple, restores creation by His miracles and finally by His resurrection, and is declared a king even by Pilate himself.

3. On the next day, Philip will begin witnessing to Jesus also. This Gospel connects Andrew and Philip together again in the multiplication of the loaves, and when the Gentiles come to see Jesus. See John 6:6-9; 11; 12:20-22. These two apostles naturally cooperate in bringing the Gospel to others.

B. Having been named Messiah by Andrew, Jesus then names Simon Cephas, or Peter, which means "rock." Again, John leaves mysterious what this designation will mean. At the end of the Gospel, the point becomes clearer as Peter clearly emerges as the leader of the Apostles and Jesus tells him to tend and feed His flock. John was probably also assuming a background knowledge of the later role of Peter in the Church and very possibly, as described in the other Gospels, that Jesus appointed Peter to lead the Church. See Matt. 16:18.

- John describes a prediction of the designation (although not the appointment itself) here, indicating the role of Simon

Peter in the new creation. Assuming that this day is the fourth day, there is also a connection to the ordering of the light that occurred on the fourth day of creation. In addition, the stars were created on that fourth day, and the idea of evangelizing that Andrew represents may be symbolized by the stars of the sky. See Phil 2:15. The book of Revelations also uses the stars and eventually the moon to symbolize the angels of individual churches, guided by the Apostles and their successors, and possibly the universal church, guided by Peter and his successors. See Rev. 1:20, 12:1.

- Noteworthy, for all that the Apostles sometimes argued, there is no indication that Andrew was jealous of Peter's greater role.

II. Jesus then personally calls Philip, who in turn calls Nathaniel, who is apparently called Bartholemew in the other Gospels. See Mark 3:18.

A. The scene here shifts to Galilee, indicating a shift from the desert area of the preaching of John the Baptist to the lush green fields around the sea of Galilee. There is an image of leaving the desert and entering the Promised Land.

B. The call to Philip is very direct and to the point, reflecting a certain bluntness that is present as well as mystery and gradual enlightenment. Again at the end of the Gospel, Jesus' final message to Peter will be "Follow me." See also Matt 4:19, 8:22, 9:9; Mark 2:24. The details of the call are not specified, but rather Jesus calls him to follow Him first, and then receive more details.

- However, the call to follow Christ, for Philip as well as Peter, involves bringing the Gospel to others.

- Philip describes Jesus as "the one whom Moses wrote about, and also the prophets." The reference to Moses could be a general reference to the Torah, or the first five books of the Old Testament, which are commonly attributed to Moses, or more specifically to Moses' prophesy that another would rise and speak in God's name. See Duet. 18:15-19; 33:7. Philip is beginning to recognize the fulfillment of all the prophesies of the glory of Israel in Jesus.

C. Nathaniel's first response is to question how the good of Israel can come from Nazareth, which was a small town where many pagans and outsiders resided. This response may have been a proverb.

1. Philip does not try to argue the point, but invites Nathaniel to experience Jesus for himself. He is a model of effective

evangelization through subtle invitation.

2. Unlike others who also questioned how the salvation of Israel could come from such a town or one of a humble profession, see John 6:41-42, 7:40-52, Nathaniel is willing to test the theory and find out.

3. As result, Jesus refers to him as a true Israelite, one without guile. There is a bit of an irony here because the name Israel came from Jacob, whom God names Israel, i.e. one who sees God, after Jacob wrestled with an angel, a messenger of God. Gen 32:29, 35:9. Jacob, however, was not at all without guile, using deceit or at least underhandedness it to gain an inheritance, a blessing, and greater pay. See Gen. 25:29-34; 27:1-45; 30:25-27. Guilelessness is a strong sign of the just man and finally of the messianic figure in Isaiah. See, e.g., Ps. 32:2, Is. 53:9. By naming Nathaniel a true Israelite, Jesus in implying that he will indeed see God (as he already does without knowing it) better and better because of his guilelessness. See Matt 5:8. This idea of contrasting the guile of people who abandon God with the vision of the faithful new Israel fulfills the Isaiah's prophesy of God coming to be known personally by His people after a chastisement. See Isaiah 30:9-26.

4. Nathaniel understandably asks what the basis of this judgment is. Jesus' response is ambiguous, but most likely refers to Micah's promise of a Messianic kingdom. Micah 4:1-8. Nathaniel may have been thinking about that prophesy when he questioned Philip about Jesus' origin, for the Messiah was supposed to come from Bethlehem, see Micah 5:1. Or perhaps Philip had been thinking about his place in the Messianic kingdom. Jesus' reference may also have been to the prophesy of Zechariah about the restoration of a purified priesthood, with the priests sitting under fig trees, that would then lead to a renewed monarchy. Zech. 3:6-4:14. In the alternative, there may have been a secret prayer Nathaniel offered under a fig tree, perhaps for the salvation of Israel. In any case, there is something prophetic about Jesus' response that causes Nathaniel to believe that He is in fact the Son of God and the King of Israel. In ancient Israel, the king was often referred to as an adopted son of God, see, e.g., 2 Sam. 7:14; Ps. 2, 89:27, and Nathaniel seems to be recognizing in Jesus the fulfillment of the long lost monarchy. However, there is a greater meaning, that Jesus is the divine Son of God, likely not as yet known, or only vaguely known to Nathaniel. Jesus will later say more plainly that it is He, as God's Son, who reveals God. See John 6:45-47.

5. Jesus then promises a greater vision of the angels ascending and descending on the Son of Man. This promise seems to

combine the vision of Jacob, when he saw angels ascending and descending upon the earth, with the prophesy of Daniel that one like a son of man would come to judge the earth and put an end to the dominance of evil kingdoms. See Gen. 28:10-22; Dan. 7:13-14.

- The reference is first to angels ascending and then to angels descending, for the angels first honor Jesus as God and then come to Him now having taken human nature.
- Jacob had said he had seen God in the angels. Jesus promises an even greater vision. Later in the Gospel, Jesus will indicate that Abraham and Isaiah, who also powerfully experienced the presence of God, had in fact seen the day of Jesus Himself. John 8:56, 12:41. The Gospel will speak later of the voice of Jesus as bringing judgment. See John 5:22-29.
- As with the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus uses the Son of Man image to prophesy about His future death, but focuses much more on the glory brought about by this death. See John 3:14-15, 8:28, 12:23-24.

III. Jesus then completes the week by performing the miracle of turning water into wine at a marriage in Cana.

A. Cana was a small town of Galilee about 8 miles from Nazareth. As the home town of Nathaniel, it establishes a link to the previous day of the Gospel. The scene of a wedding feast, which generally lasted about a week, also fulfills the Messianic prophecies of Isaiah. See, e.g., Isaiah 62:1-5, , 65:17-25.

B. The introduction indicates that Jesus was there because His mother was invited. The entire miracle emphasizes the importance of His mother's intercession. The queen mother was a powerful figure in ancient Israel. See, e.g., 1 Kings 15:2,10; 22:42; contrast with 1 Kings 2:12-25, 15:13. And so, having introduced Jesus as the new king of Israel, although for now hidden, the Gospel also introduces His mother, who likewise takes on a subtle role hiding her power.

C. Although the terms new Adam and new Eve are not used, there is an implication of Jesus and Mary beginning to reverse the fall.

1. Jesus refers to Mary as "woman," which was a polite but formal term, such as "Mrs." The symbolism is probably that, as Eve is first referred to simply as "the woman" in Genesis, so Mary is the new woman. Gen. 2:23, 3:12. Jesus will again

use the same term from the Cross when He entrusts her and John to each other. See John 19:26. Revelations picks up on this term in describing "the woman clothed in the sun." Rev. 12:1

2. The serpent was a symbol of the decadent fertility cults. Jesus' first miracle is here at a marriage.

3. Eve began the fall by paying too much attention to the clever serpent and none to God or Adam. Here Mary is attentive instead to the naive couple and then turns to Jesus.

4. Adam and Eve sought to become like gods. Here Jesus is reluctant to show forth His power. The response, "What is this to you or to Me?" conveys a temporary refusal but openness to further discussion or developments. Compare with Judges 11:12; 2 Kings 3:13-15. Jesus is indicating that the hour has not yet come for the beginning of the show of His glory, but upon Mary's request it will now soon come.

5. Eve persuaded Adam to disobey God. Here Mary tells the waiters to obey Jesus.

6. The Fall resulted in Adam and Eve turning on each other, and in the earth bringing forth thorns and being difficult to cultivate. Here Jesus agrees to Mary's request, and the earth again obeys this the new Adam with ease.