

John 1:43-51  
*Come and See*

It was one of the strangest and coolest experiences in my life. An opportunity to go swimming in the Dead Sea. It was part of the planned itinerary during a trip to Israel in 2010 with other seminarians, pastors and professors. As you might know, the Dead Sea is named as such because no marine life, aside from some microbes, can live in it. It has a salt concentration roughly 9 times that of the ocean. And because it's so salty, the density of the water is much higher than fresh water and therefore it provides a natural buoyancy for anyone swimming in its waters...in other words, you float with no effort at all. Just to give you an idea of what we're talking about, the Dead Sea is so buoyant that the guides there instruct you to walk in backwards and slowly sit back down into the water. Because your experience tells you you can just walk into the water like any other lake or pool you've been in. But if you do that, there comes a point where too much of your lower body is being held under. And like trying to hold an inflated ball under the water, your legs will actually shoot up from under you and you can faceplant. Which normally isn't much of a problem except you do NOT want to get this water in your mouth or your eyes.

It was one of the strangest and coolest sensations I've ever experienced. You can float straight up and down without having to do anything. You can float on your back with your legs and arms sticking up straight into the air. A strange but very cool experience.

But something I found equally strange and fascinating was my experience when we were driving to go for our swim. I knew all those facts I just listed. I knew it meant what the physics said about how my body would react to water that salty. I knew all of that. But I just couldn't shake this feeling that I wasn't going to float. Because every single one of my experiences to that point in my life had been the same. Fresh water or salty ocean water in which I could swim, but took some effort. I couldn't just stand straight up and down let the water hold me. I'd sink right to the bottom. I just couldn't shake that feeling that it wasn't going to work for me. Strange, right?

There are some things you just have to experience. To anyone who was feeling the same skepticism about a swim in the Dead Sea, I'd just say, you have to go and do it and then you'll understand.

When a man named Philip had experienced something new and, frankly, life changing...an encounter with Jesus...and was met with skepticism, he did the exact same thing.

Jesus had been not too far from the shores of the Dead Sea in the second half of John chapter 1. John the Baptist's ministry had been taking place across the Jordan River just north of there. In the verses before our text, one of John's disciples, Andrew, had left John behind at John's own insistence to follow Jesus, the one John had pointed out was the Lamb of God. Andrew told his brother Peter who also joined the crew. We aren't told exactly how the next events unfolded but it would appear that Philip, a fellow resident of Bethsaida with Andrew and Peter, possibly a fellow fisherman with them, had connections with them and this led to an encounter with Jesus. Like he'd done with Peter and Andrew, Jesus called on Philip to follow him. And in with whatever words Jesus used in that private get together, Philip came away convinced. This is the **one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote.**

When you discover something like that, how can you keep that to yourself? So Philip went and found his friend, Nathanael to let him know what he'd found.

But all Philip found in return was skepticism. *Nathanael, Jesus of Nazareth, he's the one!* **Nathanael said to him, "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?"** If not a rival high school football team, people will find some reason to look down on the "other". The Messiah was supposed to be great and mighty. He was supposed to be a king. Nazareth? Pfff. Right.

And so what did Philip do? He didn't get offended or combative. He didn't sulk or feel self-pity. He didn't even try to get persuasive. Other than to simply say. **Come and see!** Philip knew that the only way Nathanael was going to understand would be for him to experience what he'd just experienced. Come and see.

Isn't that refreshing? No gimmicks. Just, come and see. Isn't that a relief? No burdensome expectation of having to be the one who says the exact right words to convince another. Just, come and see.

We can address skepticism with the same simple strategy. Just come and see. When the skeptic's heart cries out that Christians are nothing but superstitious simpletons. We can simply say, come and see. Come and examine the claims made by Christ. Come and see for yourself what those of

the past witnessed and testified to. And then tell me what conclusion seems proper. When the skeptic's heart cries out that Jesus can't be the only way. What of all the others. We can simply say. Come and see. Come and see what God expects and ask yourself if any other answer will do. When the skeptic's heart cries out that Jesus doesn't do enough. That if really is all he's cracked up to be, why is there so much trouble in this life and hardship? We can simply say. Come and see. Come and see how Jesus speaks about life in this world. Come and see what the true source of those problems are. Come and see the hope he gives in the face of it all. Come and see.

An especially important reminder when the biggest skeptic any of us will face comes calling...our own hearts. How can Jesus want anything to do with me? Should Jesus really be that important to me? The skepticism of our own hearts cries out.

And what Philip told Nathanael is what the God who reveals his Son says to us. Come and see.

As Nathanael went to go and see, it was Jesus began to tell Nathanael what HE was seeing. <sup>47</sup>**Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said about him, "Truly, here is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit."** <sup>48</sup>**Nathanael asked him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered, "Before Philip called you, while you were under the fig tree, I saw you."**

When our skeptical hearts are called to come and see, we find a Savior who's looking right back at us. One who sees us in all truth. We find one who knows us intimately...in all our ugliness. Who sees what's in our hearts that no one else ever sees. Who sees our doubts...sees our fears...sees our perversions...sees our anger...see our lovelessness...see our rebellion. Sees it ALL. See everything that makes us skeptically wonder, how can he want anything to do with me?

To Nathanael Jesus said, **"You believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that!"** <sup>51</sup>**Then he added, "Amen, Amen, I tell you: You will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."**

When Old Testament patriarch Jacob was on the run from his brother, Esau, Jacob saw a dream of a ladder reaching up to heaven with God enthroned at the top and angels going up and down, sent by God, ministering to his purposes. Nathanael marveled at the knowledge Jesus had of him but far greater revelations were coming. Nathanael would see heaven itself opened

with Jesus as the stairway that reconnects God with man. That a stairway that we might climb up to God, but one on which he descended down to us.

How can Jesus want anything to do with me? Because the way he opened heaven for you is by taking bit of your sinful truth and putting it on himself. Dying a death which would satisfy the wrath of God against your doubt and fear and perversion and anger and lovelessness and rebellion. Every. Single. Bit of it. Come and see a Savior who sees you and wants you still because he has made you to be everything your God wants you to be.

Come and see. And all those other questions of a skeptical heart get answered too. Should Jesus really be that important to me? Should I give him my time and my energy. Should I deny my longings and chase after the good he brings? Should I follow him?

Come and see. Come and see a Savior who knows more than we could ever understand because he is the Son of God with all wisdom and knowledge. Come and see a Savior who answers that skeptical question with a promise that there are greater blessings that await those who follow than the temporary joys of our sinful pursuits. Come and see a Savior who promises that a life of following him, though difficult to be sure, will not disappoint because it lives for the glory of the one who has opened heaven to us and it ends in that eternal home he has prepared. So come and see.

For us who know Jesus as Philip and Nathanael came to know him, it certainly is strange that would ever have a skeptical thought in our heart...stranger even than have doubts that the physics of water buoyancy would work. And yet we live as sinners who do. And so our God continues to reveal his Son to us as Philip did to Nathanael. And he continues to offer the simple invitation. Come and See. Like Nathanael of old, we won't be disappointed. Amen.