

One For All

Experiencing the Exclusive Claim of Christ

"The love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all." (2 Corinthians 5:14)

Written by the Rev. Steven E. King

Introduction

After the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came upon the first believers in Christ, they were sent out into the world with a very specific message. Borrowing the phrase from the news media, you could say that the apostles had been granted "an exclusive" — and they were sent out with this Good News to all people.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ, as it is described and exemplified in the Scriptures, is a unique promise. It centers in the death and life of Christ alone, who gave himself "once for all" (Hebrews 10:10) — for our sake, and the sake of the whole world. As the apostles testified:

"There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

This Bible Study series will seek to explore the unique and exclusive promise of Jesus — not only the claims that he made about himself, but the claim that he makes on our lives of faith. Knowing that true faith "comes through what is heard, and what is heard comes through the Word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17), it is our hope that this study will deepen and strengthen your faith in the promise of Christ alone, the "One for all."

- The Rev. Steven E. King

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Session 1

Come and See!

Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth." Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." (John 1:45-46)



Opening Prayer

Lord God, you have come to us in Christ, just as the Scriptures foretold. We give thanks to you for the salvation you have prepared for us in Jesus. By your Holy Spirit, direct our attention and focus to him, that we may experience the new life that is found in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen



Scripture Text for Session 1

READ: John 1:19-51

Initial Observations:

- a) How does this text express the uniqueness of Christ? What claim is made about Jesus?
- b) How does this text express Christ's exclusive claim upon our lives?

Introduction to the Word

The first chapter of John's Gospel captures a sense of the excitement that the original disciples felt upon meeting Jesus for the first time. In a series of introductions of Jesus by one friend to another, Andrew, Peter, Philip, and Nathanael were caught up in a story larger than their own.

Clearly there was something special about the Rabbi Jesus — something unique. There was something distinctive enough for a cynical but honest man like Nathanael to exclaim within moments of meeting Jesus, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" (John 1:49) Jesus had made an impression.

One of the phrases repeated in this section of Scripture is the invitation to "come and see." It is heard first on the lips of Jesus himself as he invites Andrew and another man to join him. (John 1:39) Later, this same invitation to "come and see" is extended by Philip to Nathanael. (John 1:46) The precipitating event for this life-changing encounter with Jesus was not a convincing argument or apologetic debate; it was an invitation. It was an encounter and experience with Jesus himself that made the difference.

The same is true for us in our lives of faith. We do not come to the acknowledgement of Jesus as the one true Lord and Savior as a result of intellectual explanation or persuasive argument, but by a personal encounter with the living Christ. As the Apostle Paul wrote:

"When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified." (1 Corinthians 2:1-2)

Paul knew that his job as an evangelist was simply to introduce others to Christ and let them experience the exclusive claim that Jesus has made on their lives.

Those of us who live some 2000 years since Jesus walked the shores of the Sea of Galilee are invited to "come and see" — to spend time with the One who is unlike any other, and to discover that Christ is, in fact, the only Son of God. He is the true King, not only of Israel, but of every people and nation throughout all time.

Session 1 - Scripture Conversation

Discuss: John 1:19-51

- 1.1 What information did John the Baptist give to his disciples about Jesus? What do you think that information meant to them at the time? Why do you think they left John to follow Jesus?
- 1.2 How much would you say that you know about Jesus — in terms of practical biblical knowledge or theological doctrine? How is knowing *about* Jesus different from having a relationship *with* Jesus?
- 1.3 What are some of the titles applied to Jesus in this text? Can you define what is meant by these terms? Do you think that the meaning of these titles deepened for the disciples the longer they knew Jesus? In what sense?
- 1.4 Many Christians describe their faith in terms of having a “personal relationship with Jesus.” What does this phrase mean to you? By way of contrast, what might an *impersonal* relationship with Jesus be like?
- 1.5 Would you say that the disciples’ behavior in this lesson demonstrated a “live and let live” attitude? Do they appear to assume that others will come up with their own beliefs and opinions apart from external input? Or, on the other extreme, would you say the disciples were being pushy or arrogant in their behavior? Explain.



Picture This

Imagine yourself at work or at a social gathering, where several people you know are talking enthusiastically about a new movie they have seen — one that you have not. They tell you that you just “have to see it” and that “you’ll love it.”

- 1.6 Have you ever heard others talking about a movie or television show that you have never seen? Why is it difficult to be part of the conversation? Would you find such a conversation interesting or annoying?
- 1.7 How might you be able to tell if the interest and excitement your friends express about the movie is warranted? What might you want to know? What could you do?
- 1.8 What was Nathanael’s initial reaction to Philip’s news? (John 1:43 ff.) What changed his mind? In particular, what did Nathanael seem impressed with?
- 1.9 Why was it necessary for Nathanael to personally meet Jesus for himself? How do we get to “meet” Jesus in our lives? Would you like to know Jesus better? How so?

Closing Prayer

Lord God, we give you thanks for calling us to faith through the promise of your Son, Jesus Christ. Help us to use the opportunities you give us every day to be witnesses to what we have experienced in you, by inviting others to “come and see” as well. In the name of Jesus, our Savior and Lord. Amen