

Can There Any Good Thing Come Out of Nazareth?



Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

*And Nathanael said unto him, **Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?** Philip saith unto him, Come and see.*

John 1:45-46

Have you ever been judged by anyone because of the place you grew up in? The Lord Jesus Christ Himself was questioned as to being the Messiah, because he came from the insignificant place, Nazareth.

Here we find in John 1 the beginning of Jesus' ministry, and him calling His disciples to follow Him, after He was baptized by John the Baptist. Two disciples of John heard him saying Jesus is the Lamb of God, and one of these was Andrew, who told it to his brother Simon. **(John 1:40-42)**

The following day, Jesus called Philip.

The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.

John 1:43-44

Then it was Philip who told his friend Nathanael about Jesus of Nazareth, as being the promised King and Saviour of Israel, and this, Nathanael could not just believe.

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First we must take note that the Jews by this time had this great Messianic hope. They have been waiting for the promised Saviour, especially in this time when they were under the Roman empire, and their pride of being the chosen people of God being trodden upon. They were under a puppet king, and

were forced to pay taxes to a heathen leader, the Roman emperor. All Hebrew people had this anticipation of the Christ, and was a popular topic in the synagogues. If twitter had been available that time, it would always be on the most #trending topics.

Since the beginning pages of the Tanakh, the Hebrew Scriptures, there had already been an allusion to Him. In Genesis 3:15, He was prophesied as the Seed of the Woman who would crush the head of the serpent.

Genesis 3:15 *And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*

He was also spoken of by Moses as the Prophet,

Deuteronomy 18:15 *The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;*

He was promised to David by God through the prophet Nathan,

2 Samuel 7:12-13 *And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever.*

He was also spoken of by the prophets like Ezekiel,

Ezekiel 37:22 *And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all:*

So if we were on Nathanael's shoes, a Jew who is very particularly anticipating the coming of the Promised Deliverer, and your friend comes to you saying, He whom all the nation and the ages waits for has come, you would really want to make sure if He really is the One. And who is this person whom Philip was saying to be the Messiah?

He was Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph. Maybe in Nathanael's mind, *Is Philip really sure?* First, the name Jesus, or Yeshua, which is another form for Joshua or Hosea, was a common name at the time. It did not sound appealing to him. There may be many of the same name in that time, and to distinguish who this Jesus was, Philip specified that He was from Nazareth, and to be more specific, He was the Son of Joseph.

And that is the thing that made Nathanael to question Philip's claim, by asking, *"Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?"* Why Nazareth of all places? Nazareth was a small town in Galilee, and it was an insignificant town at the time. Why would the Messiah come from Nazareth?

As a traditional Hebrew, one would really question the Christ coming from Nazareth. This was also the dilemma of the people of Jerusalem some time after these events;

John 7:40 *Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet. Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?*

The Messiah, as foretold by Scriptures would not be born in Nazareth, but in Bethlehem, the same place where David the King was born. We can find it in **Micah 5:2**,

But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

So Nathanael questioning Jesus by the place He was from has some basis on it, for the Messiah should have been from Bethlehem in Judah and not the insignificant Nazareth. This could have been taught to them by Rabbis in their synagogues. The Messiah would fulfill all the prophecies and that would be the sign for the people of Israel that their redemption has come. They were all looking for these, as anyone could claim He is the Christ if there would be no distinguishing marks as to what the Saviour would be like. So Nathanael was expecting the Christ would be from Bethlehem and not Nazareth.

The truth is, he just didn't know the back story, because Jesus was indeed born in Bethlehem in Judah! Both Mary and Joseph, although residing in Nazareth, was originally from Bethlehem, and when Jesus was to be born, Augustus Ceasar, the Roman emperor, decreed that all people be taxed, in each one's own city. They went to Bethlehem to comply, and that was where Jesus was born in a manger, in fulfillment of the prophecies that the Christ would come from Bethlehem Ephratah. (See **Luke 2:1-6**)

But Herod's attempt to kill the new born King of the Jews made Joseph, Mary and the baby Jesus to flee to Egypt, by instruction of God through an angel until Herod's death (**Matthew 2:13-15**). And when Herod died, they went back to Israel, but in fear of the successor being Archelaus, Herod's son, they did not go back to Bethlehem in Judah, but rather they turned aside to other parts of Galilee, by God's instruction through a dream (**Matthew 2:22**).

Matthew 2:23 *And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.*

So Jesus being from Bethlehem of Judah, as prophesied regarding the Saviour, grew and lived most of His human life in Nazareth, and was called a Nazarene (dweller of Nazareth), fulfilling the prophets. Now, where in the Scriptures was the Messiah foretold to become a Nazarene?

The general explanation would be in Isaiah.

Isaiah 11:1 *And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:*

The Messiah here was called the Branch, */netzer/* in Hebrew, which was also the root word or etymology of Nazareth. Also, there seemed to have had proverbial despising and contempt of Nazareth

in those times, being an insignificant place. It has no historical value to the Jews, and also held no particular importance in their Scriptures. So the Messiah being foretold as a Nazarene also meant that He would live a humble life, and that He would be despised and rejected by people.

Isaiah 53:3 *He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

So Nathanael was like, “Jesus Who? Son of Joseph, from Nazareth?” This was so, because the Jews expected the Messiah to be coming in glory to finally relieve them from the oppression of the Romans. They expected Him to be a royalty, from the royal lineage of King David, and not a son of a nobody from Nazareth. Well, little did Nathanael know, that the Lord Jesus really was of royal lineage.

Although living in the humble place of Nazareth, both Mary and Joseph (Jesus’ foster father) were from the house of David. We can find Joseph’s lineage being traced from David in Matthew 1:1-16, while on the maternal side, also from the family of David, in Luke 3:23-38. The Jews expected their Saviour to be a Royalty coming in glory to deliver them and conquer the oppressors as a Mighty King, but who came to them, was a Royalty indeed, a King indeed, but presented Himself as a humble carpenter from Nazareth, and this most did not expect and accept.

John 1:11 *He came unto his own, and his own received him not.*

So although Nathanael’s prejudice might have some bases, we must say that there’s really more to the person than the place and family one came from. Many people tend to judge a person’s worth by the place they live in, among other things such as their past, educational attainment, and possessions. That’s why there are many people who assume fake cyber identities on Social Media nowadays, posing to be living in nice subdivisions, in a nice house with nice cars and possessions, although not true, to present themselves as persons who they are not, to impress people no one knows who. Many are even ashamed of their own family and neighborhood, in fear of judgment from their peers.

Man having lost his sense of worth because of sin and alienation from God, tend to find his value from external things such as material possessions, achievements, credentials, and even gets pride and prestige even from the community he is from. Being desperate in trying to retrieve lost sense of importance, we sometimes resort to such things, all the while, turning away from God, of whom we can really find our true worth from. So when a person happened to come from a depressed community, or situation, or family, it usually becomes a cause of intimidation, fear and shame, therefore losing sight of his/her own value which derives from God and not on these external factors. These become hindrances for people to fulfill God’s plan and stand up to their full potential.

We must remember, not with God! He uses the rejected and despised to meet the strong! We could site many examples such as Gideon and his 300, David vs. Goliath, among others.

1Corinthians 1:27-28 *But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of*

the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:

God in His great wisdom, chose to manifest in the flesh as *Jesus of Nazareth*. He could have been *Jesus of Jerusalem*, and the scribes would have revered Him. Or He could have chosen to become *Jesus of Bethlehem*, and that would have been more appealing to the Jews for being the town of David. Or He could have been *Jesus of Rome*, and the heathens could have been terrified in hearing His name. Or why did He not chose to be *Jesus of Athens*? The Greeks would have been impressed. But no, He chose to become *Jesus Christ of Nazareth*, to be despised, humble and insignificant, that the glory would not be derived from the place where He grew up in, but that He be known because of the power of God manifest in His works, that a Pharisee would confess, *no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. (John 3:2)*

The Lord showed His power doesn't depend on the place He was from, for the truth is, He was God incarnate, and *His going forth was from everlasting*. God does not *share His glory unto another*, and He does not need to associate His name with a great renowned place, for His name is already great by Itself! He does not need to indicate He was from Harvard, nor did He need to write *Jesus Christ, PhD* to convince the people they needed to listen to Him. Rather, what the Lord chose to be the suffix to His name *Jesus* is the insignificant town of Nazareth. So everywhere, Jesus became known as Jesus of Nazareth. Even after His death and resurrection, this was the same name the Apostles used to heal the lame man in the temple, among many others.

Acts 3:6 *Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.*

Even now, we use it often, in our prayers and preaching, we call the Lord, *Jesus Christ of Nazareth*. How far did *the insignificant town* go, since Nathanael asked this question, if ever a good thing will come out of it!

Also, our own prejudice could make us hesitate to step in faith. *Yea, they spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? (Psalms 78:19)* Many times we are Nathanael, asking and doubting the Lord in our lives. *God, is this really possible? Can you really use someone like me? Can a great thing come out of this? Would this really work?* Some of us do not have the need of somebody else to doubt us, and criticize us, and cast prejudice and despising upon us, because we are the big doubters of ourselves. We always have a hundred reasons why things won't work. While some of them are legitimate concerns, *most of them* are just our own fears and prejudices. How many times have you missed an opportunity because of doubt?

We must not let the past, and even our current situation, our *Nazareth* to hinder us, and cripple our faith in the Lord's power to work things out for us. The family and community we have been born into, are some of the things we did not choose, so we should accept it, and even if in case we have been born in a not-so-good circumstances, (so they call it) it should be the "despite of" of our determination, and not become a "because of" of our stagnation and demotivation. If you grew up in a depressed community, so what? Even Jesus was born in a manger, was attempted to be murdered, grew up as an

immigrant in Egypt as a child, then stayed in Nazareth, a not so significant place in the time. All these, while He was the destined King, not to mention, the Son of God, Himself.

Can a good thing come out of insignificant places? Is it possible that wonderful things can happen out of the despised and the rejected? Can great ends spring out from humble beginnings? The Lord taking Nazareth with Him as His surname seems to convey to us a message, that there is no telling what God can do even with things and people that are broken and not preferred. Prejudice and despising must not hinder a person in allowing God to move in his/her life. The fear of rejection most of the time paralyzes great potentials and gifts God has placed upon lives. This must not be, as the precious plans and the future that God intends for us would be laid to waste if we cower down in intimidation.

It's a good thing Nathanael had a good friend in Philip. When Nathanael started questioning this Jesus of Nazareth whom Philip claimed to be the Messiah, he did not argue with him. He did not debate with him on points on prophecy. What he gave was a simple invitation, *Come and see*. I know, Nathanael, you have some questions and good points at that, but instead of arguing and theorizing, why don't you just meet Him in person, why don't you just let Him speak to you directly, why don't you just allow yourself to flow and see for yourself what He can do. Instead of just contemplating 100 reasons why He cannot be the Messiah, why don't you just approach Him and see for yourself why He must be the One. Some people have many bad things to say about the Lord, His will, His Words, His church, without experiencing firsthand. *O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him. Psalms 34:8*

That is the same invitation to everyone. If you haven't experienced His goodness, His plan, His Word, His presence, his salvation, *Come and see*. If you haven't realized your future in the Lord, trust Him, *come and see*. If you think nothing good will ever happen in your life, and it has been ruined, and broken, He can fix it, no, rather, He will make all things new, just *come and see*. If you feel like everything in your life seemed insignificant just like Nazareth, and nothing good nor right is going on, *come to Jesus, and you will see*. If you will just let Jesus speak to you, just like Nathanael, you would see the heaven open in your life (**John 1:51**), and you will see God is able to make good things come out of your Nazareth.

All quoted Scriptures are from the King James Version.