

# Nathaniel - a Key to Breaking the Power of Our Predictable Christianity

by Art Katz

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*Art Katz explores Nathaniel's journey as a catalyst for breaking free from predictable Christianity and awakening to a deeper spiritual reality.*

**Scripture:** John 1:47

**Topics:** "Authentic Faith", "Awakening from Predictability"

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## Description

Art Katz emphasizes the story of Nathaniel as a representation of those disillusioned with conventional Christianity, urging believers to seek a deeper, more authentic experience with God. He highlights Nathaniel's skepticism and the transformative moment when Jesus acknowledges him, suggesting that true faith requires awakening from the slumber of predictability in church life. Katz calls for a church that transcends ordinary experiences, becoming a conduit for divine encounters that can liberate others from the confines of cultural norms. The sermon challenges listeners to aspire for greater revelations and to embody an apostolic presence that connects Heaven and earth.

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## Transcript

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In the gospel of John, there is a strange statement that Jesus makes to a man by the name of Nathaniel. I sense that Nathaniel is typical of a disillusioned man both then and now. Perhaps he could be likened to someone who desires something beyond an inadequate, conventional Judaism or conventional Christianity, with things evangelical and nice. There is something in his heart that marks him as an Israelite indeed, and that he has not been satisfied with anything that he has so far seen--even what is best in the charismatic or pentecostal world of his generation. He had come to the place where he was almost cynical--"Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?"

And then,

Jesus saw Nathaniel coming to Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!" Nathaniel 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" (John 1:48).

The recognition that Jesus had seen him under the fig tree was enough to satisfy Philip. The scriptures are silent and discreet, and do not explain to us what this little exchange means. I have a sense that Nathaniel was a man who had come to a place of dejection with things as they are, with religious things as they are, and could not see a way out. Jesus saw a heart that was divinely agitated and discontent. And so His answer to Nathaniel is extremely instructive for us.

Jesus answered and said to him, "Because I said to you that I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You will see greater things than these. And He said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man (John 1:50-51).

Jesus alludes to the dream that Jacob had in Genesis 28, when he was in flight from his brother Esau, and saw the ladder ascending to heaven. It says that on seeing the vision, Jacob "awoke from his sleep." We need to have something that will bring us out of the sleep of normality, of things as they are, of things as we have understood them to be, of things conventional and predictable, and of things that pertain to how we have enjoyed our church services. We need the kind of seeing and stretching that really opens us to the reality that will make us indeed an apostolic presence in the earth. How else can we free those who are bound by conventional predictability and the things that lock us in time and in this earth?

If our church life is ordinary and predictable, and is just an instrument by which services are mediated to men and by men--however biblical and however correct--we will never be a gate to Heaven for those who would otherwise perish. There is a conjunction between Heaven and earth, where we need to ascend and descend as the angels of God, bringing something from Heaven into a people and a place, who would otherwise perish in their national culture. Have we seen the greater thing? Have we awakened from our sleep?

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