

Come, Climb the Ladder!

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Date: 13 February 2022

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[0:00] please take your bibles and go to john's gospel please john's gospel john chapter one if you're visiting with us with us or need a bible that black bible in the chair in front of you you can pull that out go to the back of it they renumber the new testament so find john's gospel find page 71 actually page 70 because they don't put page 71 so you'll see find john chapter one we're going to finish chapter one we're going to do verses 35 to 51 john's gospel john chapter one 35 to 51 i'm going to read and then we'll jump in and do the study and see what what god has to say thus saith the lord john 1 verse 35 again the next day john was standing and two of his disciples and looking upon jesus as he was walking he said behold the lamb of god and the two disciples heard him speak and they followed jesus and turning jesus saw them following and said to them what do you seek and they said to him rabbi which translated means teacher where are you staying and he said to them come and you will see they came therefore and saw where he was staying and they stayed with him that day for it was about the tenth hour one of the two heard john and followed him was andrew simon peter's brother he found first his own brother simon and said to him we found the messiah which translated means christ he brought him to jesus jesus looking intently at him said you are simon the son of john you shall be called cesthas which is translated peter verse 43 the next day he purposed to go forth into galilee and he found philip and jesus said to him follow me now philip was from bethsaida of the city of andrew and peter philip found nathaniel and said to him the one who moises wrote and the prophets we found him jesus the son of joseph the one from nazareth and nathaniel said to him can any good come out of nazareth philip said to him come and see jesus saw nathaniel coming to him and said to him behold an israelite indeed in whom there is no guile 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 nathaniel answered him rabbi you are the son of god you're the king of israel jesus answered and said to him because i said to you that i saw you under the fig tree do you believe you shall see greater things than these verse 51 he said to him truly truly i say to you you shall see the heavens opened and the angels of god ascending and descending on the son of man i like to tell the story of different things that happened with chris's grandparents they have since passed away but there's one story that humors me and yet it's not humorous when it actually happened you know grams and gramps lived in social and laguna hills and and this house that they lived it's a cul-de-sac and about six seven houses down uncle glenn lived he still lives there today and they knew the neighbors

and the one of the neighbors called glenn and said glenn you might want to come down and and talk to your dad because he's up on the roof and it looks like he has a rope around his waist so glenn trucks down now chris's grandparents mind you they're about in their 80s at this time so gramps he had the idea he needed to go check the roof forget ladders in the two-story house that they lived he went out the two-story window forget the ladder went out the two-story window and was checking the roof and and he had a rope around his waist and come to find out grams was holding the rope and and yet now now be careful because he actually had the rope tied to the bed i heard so i mean hey so he was thinking about everything so glenn said dad what are you doing i'm checking the roof dad why don't you come down trying to figure out how to get him down since he didn't use a ladder kind of be hard but um well probably shouldn't even be using a ladder let alone be on the roof to check the roof after using a ladder anyways it was one of the interesting stories about grams and gramps because that's gonna help right ladders the roots the roots of the functional design of ladders as we know them today can actually be traced back to the ancient Hebrews and Egyptian cultures believe it or not these are the civilizations that developed and perfected it and yet it was

John H Balesley well he was a master carpenter and inventor he actually invented a practical folding wooden stepladder and received the first U.S. patent issued for a safety stepladder in the mid 1800s that's the history of ladders ladders are good they're gateways to places we cannot reach like in my house trying to clean the vaulted ceiling windows Michael Matthews was kind enough to let me use his ladder to extend it up sorry I'm on the ladder trying to clean the windows right they're gateways we ascend and descend by means of the gateway that's what ladders do that's the function of the ladder we ascend and descend on the gateway on the ladder and that's the picture we see of Jesus here he's the ladder he's the gateway and as we come to this part in John's gospel remember John saying come receive Jesus or come trust Jesus or come know Jesus or come believe in Jesus today we'll see come climb the ladder come climb the ladder God has the perfect revelation of himself and that's Jesus Jesus is God's perfect revelation of himself on how to get to God Jesus is the gateway to heaven he is the only ladder to God the Father he's the gateway to heaven he's the only ladder to God the Father there is no other way so follow the person of Jesus there's no other way you will find no other way interesting the number of times you see the verb found in this text you will find no other way because there is no other way I brought up to you in previous weeks that

John is going to tell you about who Jesus is and why it matters why it should matter to you this is why it matters who Jesus is because Jesus is the Lamb the Rabbi the Messiah the Old Testament fulfiller the Son of God the King of Israel the Son of Man you'll find that he's the only gateway to God the only ladder that can bring us to God so follow him so Christian you keep following him follow him works won't do you any good being a good person won't do you any good having a certain political viewpoint won't do you any good it's not about that it's as we said as we sang it's in Christ alone it's only him this is a significant part to this gospel because this is where we see the first disciples come to follow Jesus the only one

[9:17] Jesus called is Philip the others come because of first John's witness but then the witness of others following Jesus following Jesus has to start somewhere and you'll see read these guys saying things and they're speaking better than they knew I mean you you can go to the end of the book and read the end and you get that they're living in this time and as these words come out of their mouths they're speaking better than they knew they really in some sense had no idea what they were saying or they had their only viewpoint what they thought they were saying and that's why Jesus is gonna really unfold who he is to these guys these first disciples and really unfold in the beginning of this gospel who he really is he's the gateway to God we see things differently than them well do we are you at a place in your following

Jesus where you have arrived not a chance these guys began to follow Jesus only knowing a short amount of info regarding Jesus and you'll see their following him will grow and get stronger their belief in him will grow and progress these first disciples would learn begin to learn who Jesus was and what it meant to be his disciple his challenge would be climb me understand that I'm the gateway you must come through me that's a huge challenge which that's where we'll start actually Jesus is the only ladder to God let's go to verse 51 and he said to them truly truly I say to you you shall see the heavens open the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man now I'm going to talk more about this verse later but I want to point out initially first when he says you're going to see this you're going to see the glory of God because I am the way to God as Jacob saw a ladder going up to heaven with angels ascending and descending upon the ladder these disciples will see that

Jesus is the ladder to heaven to God to see God's glory if you like go to Genesis chapter 28 because I'm going to read that for you Genesis 28 starting in verse 10 Jesus is making reference to this Genesis 28 verse 10 then Jacob departed from Beersheba and went toward Haran and he came to a certain place and spent the night there because the sun had set and he took one of the stones of the place and put it under his head and lay down in that place and he had a dream and behold a ladder was set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven and behold the angels of God were ascending and descending on it the ladder and behold Yahweh stood above it and said I am Yahweh the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac the land in which you lie I will give it to you and to your descendants your descendants shall also be like the dust of the earth and you shall spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south and in you and in your seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed and behold I am with you and will keep you wherever you go and will bring you back to this land for I will not leave you until I have

done what I have promised you then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said surely Yahweh is in this place and I do not know it and he was afraid and said how awesome is this place this is none other than the house of God and this is the gate of heaven Jesus says this on purpose Jesus makes reference to himself here on purpose Jesus is the only ladder to God now this is huge you might say okay yeah I get that well this is so much against our culture which says there's many ways to God we live in a culture that believes in pluralism a many paths lead to God mentality Jesus is clear I'm the only way to God period if you say this to somebody you're accused of being arrogant in some cases you'll be persecuted for saying this you'll get huge backlash because our culture does not believe that there's not many paths to God there's one path and that's Jesus Christ Jesus the Messiah the scary part is people who call themselves evangelicals are doubting this very truth as well people that call themselves followers of Jesus doubt this very truth that I'm saying this is why this matters

[15:00] Jesus is the only ladder to God and as you climb the individual steps on this ladder lamb rabbi messiah old testament fulfiller son of God king of Israel son of man seven you'll find Jesus to be the only way to God follow him so on our ladder we have seven steps not like a step like but there's going to be seven steps on our ladder that describes Jesus being this gateway to God I'm going to give you these seven steps actually John does so notice the first step step number one he's the lamb of God verse 35 to 36 here's the step on this ladder that Jesus is again the next day John was standing with two of his disciples and he looked upon Jesus gazed upon him intently these two were John the Baptist they were his disciples they'll leave him for Jesus and we find out later one was

Andrew the other was most likely John the Evangelist who's writing this very gospel in verse 36 he looked upon Jesus actually the word means he fixed his gaze upon Jesus he looked directly at Jesus intently this would definitely get the attention of his two disciples and notice he said behold the lamb of God and remember we looked at last week John's testimony his thinking was a lamb for judgment for us we know Jesus is the lamb who takes away all our sin he's a sacrificial lamb but here's this first step of this gateway this ladder the first step Jesus is the lamb of God here's step number two another step is he's the rabbi verse 37 the two disciples heard him speak and they followed Jesus when they heard John say this they began to follow Jesus follow means follow as a disciple they took the first steps of as one writer put it quote genuine discipleship they stopped following

John to follow Jesus which is the fruit of his witness as far as John's concerned he's like perfect mission accomplished that's my goal that's what I wanted to do I'm decreasing Jesus must increase now of course they didn't fully understand what exactly they were getting themselves into that's okay these initial steps are two steps that need to be taken for there to be true discipleship look at verse 38 turning Jesus saw them following him and he said to them what do you seek turning God turned to his people in answer to the prayer to bring Messiah he's turning and then he says are you ready to seek me are you seeking me what do you seek a confronting question by the word Messiah really to anybody who's going to seek to follow him are you following

Jesus he's asking you what are you seeking are you seeking Jesus and notice what they say here's the step what do you seek and they said to him Rabbi which translated means teacher so now there's Rabbi Master we are your students we're your students we're here to learn from you we're placing ourselves under you now did they understand fully how they were addressing him probably not I mean you look back to verse 49 Nathaniel answered him Rabbi he calls him Rabbi here too but initially they're saying teach us we want to be where you will be leading us we want to follow you notice Rabbi where are you staying staying they wanted to be where he was interesting there's actually a deeper meaning to their question because

Jesus will call his disciples to stay with him John 15 the same word will you remain with Jesus will you stay with Jesus is what it means to follow him look at what Jesus says verse 39 he said to them come and you will see they came therefore and stayed where he was staying and they stayed with him that day for it was about the tenth hour which was about 4 p.m.

[19:54] here's the beginning of their intimate relationship with Rabbi their action of going with him shows what true discipleship entails they stopped doing this and they started doing that and of course did they understand everything of course they didn't when they called them Rabbi did they understand that no when John said Lamb of God no they didn't they didn't understand everything about that but that's okay it was these initial steps because to come and see is to place ourselves in

discipleship mode and it's not a task that you complete really a true follower of Jesus is constantly striving to be centered upon Jesus I keep following Jesus it doesn't stop it continues right they stayed with him yeah you see the practical outworking of John's statement the word became flesh and remained with us so he's the lamb that's the first step another step on this ladder he's the rabbi here's a third step on this step three he's the

Messiah verse 40 this is where this part begins one of the two who heard John and followed him was Andrew Simon Peter's brother and the other one most likely we think is John the evangelist who's writing this gospel notice what he does verse 41 he found first his own brother Simon and said to him we found the Messiah which translated means Christ first he went and found his brother to tell him about Jesus the most common and effective evangelism is the private personal witness of one friend to another one relative to another he says come we found the Messiah which means the anointed one it means or denotes the king of Israel in the Old Testament anointed in the Old Testament was for consecration to set someone apart for the work of God and here Messiah it's God's anointed one he's anointed to be his prophet he's anointed to be the priest he's anointed to be the king the prophet priest and king again Andrew's speaking better than he knew did he really understand everything that was involved in this I'll talk a little bit more about that later notice he gives a translation there at the end of verse 41 which translated means Christ for Hellenistic Jews reading this and others verse 42 he brought him to Jesus Jesus looked intently at him the same gaze that John gave to Jesus in verse 36 he intently looked and fixed his gaze on Simon and he was intent on something he renamed him you are Simon the son of John you shall be called Cephas which is translated Peter the word meant the rock in Aramaic it's the first time Jesus renamed Peter or Simon and later

Matthew 16 he gave the significance of his name change he becomes a Jesus follower so here's these steps Lamb of God Rabbi Messiah here's another step on this ladder of Jesus being the gateway step four he's the Old Testament fulfiller he fulfills the Old Testament verse 43 through 46 notice the next day he purposed to go forth into Galilee he found Philip now the he could be Andrew or the he could be Jesus it's hard to determine who it was who this he is I vote for Jesus because he's the closest and decedent the gospel talks about Jesus moving not any disciples so I think it's him Jesus he found Philip and he's the one that called Philip to himself the only one he called the only disciple Jesus called himself in this gospel Philip would not understand Jesus power or his relation to the father it was actually

Philip who said Jesus show us the father and he'll be enough for us as Philip is going to ask that question found Philip called him to follow him he's from the same hometown as Andrew and also from Philip excuse me Andrew and Peter excuse me notice verse 45 Philip found Nathanael he goes Andrew found Peter Philip finds Nathanael and look at what he says we have found him of whom Moses and the law and the prophets wrote Jesus the son of Joseph of Nazareth we notice the motley crew is growing this band of nobodies as new followers come to receive or know Jesus they become his witnesses to others who also become his followers and the whole process repeats itself this is vital here because notice that the personal testimony of a new follower of

[25 : 14] Jesus is probably one of the most fruitful ways to lead others to become followers of Jesus there's a place for open air evangelism that's true but it's that personal connection that you have with somebody with another person that gives greater validity because they see your life Nathanael was a personal name for Bartholomew he was in three of the four lists of the apostles notice he says we have found him of whom Moses and the law and the prophets wrote yes it's true Jesus fulfills Old Testament scripture he fulfills the law he fulfills the prophets again he spoke better than he knew he says he was the son of Joseph the one from Nazareth the name of this village is where Jesus was from a common way in first century to address someone in Palestine look at verse 46

Nathanael said to him what good anything good come out of Nazareth Galileans were despised by those in Judea but the Nazarenes were despised by everybody everybody hated people from Nazareth they were losers Jesus was born in Bethlehem but he grew up in Nazareth he was a nobody in the eyes of the culture he was a loser Philip said to him come and see come and see this one is worthy of your attention challenge to Nathanael from Philip to see Jesus for himself along with a challenge to anyone today who's not trusted in Jesus Christ it's a challenge for you are you here and do you not know

Jesus come to him and you will see him come to him and he'll save you he'll forgive you of all your sins come and follow Jesus he'll show you mercy and grace it's a challenge to you come and see that is not what we say to people as they're they're grappling through Christianity we should just say just read the scripture for yourself let it speak for itself come and see well notice what happens which leads us into the fifth step on this ladder and the sixth step on this ladder the fifth and sixth step he's the son of God he's the king of Israel verse 47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him and said to him behold an Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile a true Israelite Nathanael was true with no guile one writer says without pretense no deceit

Nathanael was an Israelite without any two-faced hypocrisy he was a true seeker of God devoted to him look at verse 48 Nathanael said to him how do you know me Jesus Andrew said to him before Philip called you when you were under the fig tree I saw you how do you see me how do you know me I saw you Jesus declared his supernatural knowledge now we don't know what exactly Nathanael was doing at the fig tree and the guy's trying to speculate oh he's picking figs he was doing this we don't know what he was doing who cares why does that matter it doesn't matter if it mattered John would tell us John doesn't tell us because that's not the point the point is not what he was doing what matters most is that Jesus made known his supernatural knowledge which entailed not just his physical location but a spiritual one too he knew the state of Nathanael's heart he knows the state of your heart too

Jesus knows it perfectly notice what Nathanael says verse 49 here are the steps Nathanael answered Rabbi we saw that one the teacher you are the son of God you're the king of Israel definitely Nathanael was speaking better than he knew and yet with no shadow of a doubt he described Jesus with these three different titles rabbi means teacher remember second the son of God being the true Israel he's Messiah again speaking better than he knew because for us as John readers we know when John here the evangelist writes about Jesus being the son of God son of God means his unique relation to and intimacy with the father remember John 1:18 who's in the bosom of the father

[30:26] John 1:1 the word was with God in a personal relational intimate way son of God describes not just his title as the Messiah but his metaphysical relationship to God as given in the prologue he's in the bosom of the father the father has the eternal or the son is the eternal generation from the father and full of love from the father to the son of God notice he says you're the king of Israel king which means the anointed one who would be consecrated to be the king of Israel again he spoke better than he knew because someone who's going to be the king of Israel is going to be the Messiah as far as the first century Jews were concerned they expected a political military king who would come in and kill the Romans

Jews raise up yeah alright go go go Jesus yeah you'll find out later in John's gospel John chapter 6 they were going to take Jesus and force him to be king make him king by force and Jesus had to stop that process that was they wanted a political military king not a dying king look at Jesus response verse 50 he answered and said to him because I said to you I saw you under the fig tree you believe this could be a question or it could be a statement either way there's true faith here small yes immature for sure but he's saying you think that was awesome you're going to see greater things than that pal Nathaniel will see the glory goodness grace truth of God notice Jesus promised this to them you know interesting too just make a note of this Nathaniel was the first one designated by Jesus in this gospel to believe and Jesus didn't doubt his belief only the depth of it and that's where he's going to challenge that you trust Jesus it can be a mustard seed type trust of course but you know what's going to happen he's going to challenge that trust and he's going to squeeze do you really believe me are you really seeking me because as leads to the step on this ladder the seventh step that we see he's the son of man he said him truly truly I say to you that phrase truly truly you see this a lot in John's gospel Jesus will say that a lot in John's gospel and it means this this is confirmed it's like in the Old

Testament thus saith the Lord this is what the Lord says one writer puts it like this it's an authoritative preface in other words listen strong and hard to what I'm about to tell you this is a big deal so wake up I'm not saying to you to wake up go back to sleep sorry notice he says truly truly I say to you you shall see now you can't see this in the English but in the Greek the you is plural it's not singular it's amen which is plural so he's not just speaking this to Nathaniel it's not just directed to Nathaniel it was directed to all the disciples who are standing there he's going to expand their expectations of what they were actually seeking in Jesus you shall see the heavens open and the

angels of God ascending and descending on the son of man son of man is an authoritative title tied tied to eschatological times this goes back to

Daniel chapter seven the ancient of days will come and the son of man is there one like the son of man and Jesus will designate this about himself not as much as in the synoptics but a few times that he does this in John's gospel and it's a title that has themes associated to it themes of the cross resurrection exaltation so when Jesus uses this title about himself son of man and speaking about all of Jesus person and all of his ministry it will show that he is the authoritative way to the father you will see the heavens open and the angels of God ascending and descending on the son of man on me I'm the ladder I'm the gateway there's the challenge you will see the glory of God because I am the way to

[36:06] God as Jacob saw a ladder going up to heaven with angels ascending and descending upon the ladder these disciples will see that Jesus is the ladder to heaven to God he's the glory of God he's the goodness of God and for a Jew reading this this would be huge wait a second you mean to tell me that you're the ladder that Jacob saw in Genesis 28 uh-huh it's me I'm the gateway it's only found in me Jesus relayed this to himself this is huge because Jesus is the gateway to heaven he's the only ladder to God the father he's God's perfect revelation of himself on how to get the God there is no other way follow him and you will face huge backlash if you say this and if you believe this and sad you even have backlash from people who call themselves

Christians there is no other way he's the lamb the steps on this ladder lamb rabbi messiah old testament fulfiller son of god king of israel son of man that's the ladder that's who he is and you'll find that he is the only gateway to God the only ladder that can bring us to God keep following him Christian keep climbing the ladder we put all our hope in the lord Jesus Christ that's why we say in Christ alone it's through Christ alone the father loves us it's through Christ alone that we have salvation it's through Christ alone that his spirit is working in us to make us more like Jesus it's Christ alone keep following him he's the only way to God your good works aren't going to do it your coming to church isn't going to do it you're doing this and doing this it's not going to do it it's Jesus he's the gateway let's take a moment and pray and so Jesus we ask that you would help us by your spirit to keep following you we live in a world that denies this truth and it's it grieves us that there's even churches that deny this truth and so help us to hold this with humility and yet with passion to stand firm in this truth with grace and yet with gentleness help us as a church not to waver and remind us father remind us that when we sin when we fall short it's not going to be it's not going to be repenting that's going to bring us to you it's Jesus who does that because Jesus you're the gateway so may it bring about a response of repentance and bring about a response of trusting you I'll encourage you at this time which we do each week to take this moment these few moments to fill your mind with truth may you ponder on what we've seen from God's word this morning and you know we'll we do that sing a couple songs we pray as ways for you to respond and singing and way to respond and praying let this time be between you and the Lord a sweet time to fill your mind with truth and to think on these things please do that now sweet love you peace but yes to to we can gar see here