

RE



HN




# FIRST DISCIPLES CALLED





# SEQUENCE

- 
1. The setting in John's Gospel
  2. Comparing Mark and John
  3. Call stories in the tradition
  4. Day 3, scenes 5
  5. Day 4, scene 6
  6. Commentary
  7. And so...

# THE SETTING

Now this was John's testimony (John 1:19) **Day 1**

On the next day John saw Jesus (John 1:29) **Day 2**

Again the next day John was standing there (John 1:35) **Day 3**

On the next day Jesus wanted to set out (John 1:43) **Day 4**

Now on the third day there was a wedding (John 2:1) **Day 7**

**Days 1 and 2** belong together (diptych)

**Days 3 and 4** belong together (diptych)

**Day 7** brings the sequence to a climax

This important sequence lays the foundation for the subsequent ministry of Jesus.

# MARK

**Mark 1:16** As he went along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew, Simon's brother, casting a net into the sea (for they were fishermen). **17** Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will turn you into fishers of people." **18** They left their nets immediately and followed him. **19** Going on a little farther, he saw James, the son of Zebedee, and John his brother in their boat mending nets. **20** Immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

# THEOLOGY OF CALL

- Mk 1:16-20; 2:13-17; 3:13-19; Lk 5:1-11.27-32; 6:14f.
- What distinguishes these narratives, however, is the importance placed on the **initiative of Jesus** and the demand for an immediate and unconditional response.
- On this the tradition is unambiguous: one can become a disciple of Jesus **only on the basis of a call**.
- Indeed there is not a single instance in all the synoptic tradition of an individual **successfully volunteering** to become a disciple.

# FORM OF CALL STORIES

In terms of form, these stories are close to the ancient rhetorical category of the *chreia*, or anecdote, a brief narrative relating a striking saying or deed of some individual.

(The ABD article on *chreiai* is very useful - and brief.)

# "CALL" CHREIAI

- Cast in the form of anecdotes, call stories describe the sudden call of individuals engaged in the ordinary affairs of life, and their immediate response is characterised by a willingness to follow. This is a Hellenistic form portraying how the ideal sage gathers disciples - adapted by early Christian writers.
- The stories are anecdotal and devoid of biographical/psychological interest.
- They imply a theology of discipleship: a division of the world into the saved and the unsaved; the choosing of people not apparently especially gifted for their future tasks; the person undergoes a transformation or conversion.



# SCENE 5 THE QUEST FOR THE MESSIAH

**John 1:35** Again the next day John was standing there with two of his disciples. **36 Gazing** at Jesus as he walked by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!" **37** When John's two disciples heard him say this, they **followed** Jesus. **38** Jesus turned around and saw them **following** and said to them, "What do you want?" So they said to him, "Rabbi" (which is translated Teacher), "where are you **staying**?" **39** Jesus answered, "Come and you will **see**." So they came and saw where he was **staying**, and they **stayed** with him that day. Now it was about four o'clock in the afternoon.

**John 1:40** Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two disciples who heard what John said and **followed** Jesus. **41** He first **found** his own brother Simon and told him, "We have **found** the Messiah!" (which is translated Christ). **42** Andrew brought Simon to Jesus. Jesus **looked** at him and said, "You are Simon, the son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter).

# SCENE 6 QUEST FOR THE ONE FORETOLD

**John 1:43** On the next day Jesus wanted to set out for Galilee. He **found** Philip and said to him, "**Follow** me." **44** (Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the town of Andrew and Peter.) **45** Philip **found** Nathanael and told him, "We have **found** the one Moses wrote about in the law, and the prophets also wrote about—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." **46** Nathanael replied, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip replied, "Come and **see**."

**John 1:47** Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and exclaimed, "Look, a true Israelite *in whom there is no deceit!*" **48** Nathanael asked him, "How do you know me?" Jesus replied, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I **saw** you." **49** Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel." **50** Jesus said to him, "Because I told you that I **saw** you under the fig tree, do you believe? You will **see** greater things than these." **51** He continued, "I tell all of you the solemn truth—you will **see** heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

# COMMENTARY

**John 1:35** Again the next day John was standing there with two of his disciples. **36 Gazing** at Jesus as he walked by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!" **37** When John's two disciples heard him say this, they **followed** Jesus.

- Enumeration of the days
- Standing v. Movement
- Lamb of God a second time
- John's disciples leave their prophet and follow Jesus

# COMMENTARY

**38** Jesus turned around and saw them **following** and said to them, "What do you want?" So they said to him, "Rabbi" (which is translated Teacher), "where are you **staying**?" **39** Jesus answered, "Come and you will **see**." So they came and saw where he was **staying**, and they **stayed** with him that day. Now it was about **four o'clock in the afternoon**.

- Following – a key verb
- Lit. What are you looking for? Cf. John 20:15; *the human question*
- Indirect reply
- Staying = remaining
- 4 o'clock = the tenth hour.
- 10 is a number of completion (10 commandments, 10 plagues, 10 trials of Abraham etc.)
- Timing is significant: noon (4:6 and 19:14); seventh hour (4:52)
- Hour will be immensely significant



# COMMENTARY

**40** Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two disciples who heard what John said and **followed** Jesus. **41** He first **found** his own brother Simon and told him, "We have **found** the Messiah!" (which is translated Christ). **42** Andrew brought Simon to Jesus. Jesus **looked** at him and said, "You are Simon, the son of John. **You will be called** Cephas" (which is translated Peter).

- Andrew: John 1:40, 42, 44; 6:8; 12:22
- Reverse order: Andrew and then Simon
- Simon: John **1**:41; **6**:8, 71; **21**:16
- Simon Peter: John **1**:40; **6**:68; **13**:6, 9, 24, 36; **18**:10, 15-16, 25; **20**:2, 6; **21**:2-3, 7, 11, 15
- Peter: John **1**:44; **13**:8, 37; **18**:11, 17-18, 26-27; **20**:3-4; **21**:19-21
- Cephas: no reason given; this Aramaic name is otherwise only Paul's letters

# COMMENTARY

**John 1:43** On the next day Jesus wanted to set out for Galilee. He **found** Philip and said to him, "**Follow** me." **44** (Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the town of Andrew and Peter.)

- In Greek, v. 43 has no pronoun, only "he".
- deute opisō mou: **Matt** 4:19; **Mark** 1:17
- akolouthei moi: **Matt** 8:22; 9:9; 19:21; **Mark** 2:14; 10:21; **Luke** 5:27; 9:59; 18:22; **John** 1:43; 21:19; **Acts** 12:8
- To follow: **John** 1:37-38, 40, 43; 6:2; 8:12; 10:4-5, 27; 11:31; 12:26; 13:36-37; 18:15; 20:6; 21:19-20, 22
- Philip: John 1:43-46, 48; 6:5, 7; 12:21-22; 14:8-9
- Bethsaida: John 1:44; 12:21

# COMMENTARY

**45** Philip **found** Nathanael and told him, "We have **found** the one **Moses** wrote about in the law, and the prophets also wrote about—Jesus of **Nazareth**, the son of **Joseph**." **46** Nathanael replied, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip replied, "Come and **see**."

- Nazareth: John 1:45-46; 18:5, 7; 19:19
- Moses John 1:17, 45; 3:14; 5:45-47; 6:32; 7:19, 22-23; 8:5; 9:28-29
- "Isn't this Jesus the son of **Joseph**, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?" (John 6:42)
- The origin ("whence") of Jesus is a key theological topic throughout the Gospel
- Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus), **Nathanael** (who was from Cana in Galilee), the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples of his were together. (John 21:2)

# COMMENTARY

**47** Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and exclaimed, "Look, a true **Israelite** *in whom there is no deceit!*" **48** Nathanael asked him, "How (= *pothen*) do you know me?" Jesus replied, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the **fig** tree, I **saw** you." **49** Nathanael answered him, "**Rabbi**, you are the **Son of God**; you are the **king of Israel!**"

- Israelite = descendant of Jacob  
= deceiver
- Allusion to Psalm 32:2 and to Zeph 3:13
- Jewish tradition: the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil was a fig tree (Gen 3:7)
- In the Gospel, the fig tree is already a symbol of the Temple and the Law
- Under the fig tree = sitting, studying the Torah
- Philip makes important confessions of faith



# COMMENTARY

**50** Jesus said to him, "Because I told you that I **saw** you under the fig tree, do you **believe**? You will **see greater** things than these."

**51** He continued, "I tell all of you the solemn truth (= *Amen, amen*\*)—you will **see heaven opened** and the angels of God **ascending** and **descending** on the **Son of Man**."

\*Amen, amen: John 1:51; 3:3, 5, 11; 5:19, 24-25; 6:26, 32, 47, 53; 8:34, 51, 58; 10:1, 7; 12:24; 13:16, 20-21, 38; 14:12; 16:20, 23; 21:18

- **Greater:** John 1:50; 4:12; 5:20, 36; 8:53; 10:29; 13:16; 14:12, 28; 15:13, 20; 19:11
- **John 14:12** I tell you the solemn truth, the person who **believes** in me will perform the miraculous deeds that I am doing, and will perform **greater** deeds than these, because I am going to the Father.
- **Believe** x 98 times in this Gospel.
- **John 1:7** He came as a witness to testify about the light, so that everyone might **believe** through him.
- **John 1:12** But to all who have received him—those who **believe** in his name—he has given the right to become God's children

# COMMENTARY

**50** Jesus said to him, "Because I told you that I **saw** you under the fig tree, do you believe? You will **see** greater things than these."

**51** He continued, "I tell all of you the solemn truth (= *Amen, amen*\*)—you will **see heaven opened** and the angels of God **ascending** and **descending** on the **Son of Man**."

\*Amen, amen: John 1:51; 3:3, 5, 11; 5:19, 24-25; 6:26, 32, 47, 53; 8:34, 51, 58; 10:1, 7; 12:24; 13:16, 20-21, 38; 14:12; 16:20, 23; 21:18

- **Gen 28:11** He reached a certain place where he decided to camp because the sun had gone down. He took one of the stones and placed it near his head. Then he fell asleep in that place **12** and had a dream. He saw a stairway erected on the earth with its top reaching to the heavens. The angels of God were going up and coming down it **13** and the LORD stood at its top. He said, "I am the LORD, the God of your grandfather Abraham and the God of your father Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the ground you are lying on."
- Jacob: John 4:5, 12
- Amen, amen = a word of revelation

# COMMENTARY

**50** Jesus said to him, "Because I told you that I **saw** you under the fig tree, do you believe? You will **see** greater things than these."

**51** He continued, "I tell all of you the solemn truth (= *Amen, amen*)—you will **see heaven opened** and the angels of God **ascending** and **descending** on the **Son of Man**."

- "Opened" has a special resonance
  - (1) Heavens opened = a messianic sign, valid for the time of Jesus' ministry and significant for the readership
  - (2) The ascending and descending of the angels = the constant relationship between the Father and the Son
  - (3) The little word "on" signals that Jesus is *on earth*.
- Thus, Son of Man points to the incarnate Messiah. The disciples may now see God's glory through the incarnation of Jesus, through his humanity and destiny.

# COMMENTARY

**50** Jesus said to him, "Because I told you that I **saw** you under the fig tree, do you believe? You will **see** greater things than these."

**51** He continued, "I tell all of you the solemn truth—you will **see** **heaven opened** and the angels of God **ascending** and **descending** on the **Son of Man**."

- **Son of Man:** John 1:51; 3:13-14; 5:27; 6:27, 53, 62; 8:28; 9:35; 12:23, 34; 13:31
- **Dan 7:13** I was watching in the night visions, "And with the clouds of the sky **one like a son of man** was approaching. He went up to the Ancient of Days and was escorted before him.
- **John 3:13** No one has **ascended** into heaven except the one who **descended** from heaven—the **Son of Man**. **14** Just as Moses *lifted up the serpent in the wilderness*, so must the **Son of Man** be lifted up...
- **John 6:62** Then what if you see the **Son of Man** ascending where he was before?
- **John 13:31** When Judas had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the **Son of Man** is glorified, and God is glorified in him."



# SHAPE OF THESE STORIES

Link	Quest	Christology
John to <b>Andrew</b> and another	What are you <b>looking</b> for? <b>Come</b> and you will see	Lamb of God, Rabbi
Andrew to <b>Simon</b>	We have <b>found</b> the	Messiah
(Jesus) found <b>Philip</b>	<b>Follow</b> me	Son of Joseph, from Nazareth
Philip found <b>Nathanael</b>	We have <b>found</b> the one about whom	Moses and the Law wrote
Philip to Nathanael	Come and see	Rabbi, Son of God, King of Israel, Son of Man

# AND SO...

- In terms of **method**:
  - Comparing the Synoptic Gospels and John
  - John has a more humanly credible psychology and spirituality
  - This does *not* mean, John is more historical / biographical
  - Symbolism of descent from Jacob

# AND SO...

- In terms of **Christology**:
  - Constant underlining of the identity of Jesus using both "titles" and actions.
  - Lamb of God; rabbi; Messiah; Son of God; King of Israel; Son of Man
  - Jesus, already "descended" will eventually "ascend"

**John 20:17** Jesus replied, "Do not touch me, for I have not yet **ascended** to my Father. Go to my brothers and tell them, 'I am **ascending** to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

# PRAYER

From our earliest days, O God, you call us by name. Make our ears attentive to your voice, our spirits eager to respond that, having heard you in Jesus your anointed one, we may draw others to be his disciples.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever.  
Amen.