

Whose Gift is Under the Tree

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[0 : 0 0] for some of us, we have to actually go back all the way to yesteryear, back when we were younger and Christmas was more exciting and all that stuff as a younger person. But go back, go back to the excitement and the anticipation of all those unopened gifts just sitting under the Christmas tree, waiting to be torn into the gifts that have been lying there with your name on it, mocking and teasing you all week long, maybe all month long. And you're so excited. And then Christmas day is here.

And as each gift is being handed out, you receive yours and you hurriedly open it and you discover what makes you the happiest that you've ever been. It's a new gadget, a new toy, a new game, a new book, and today a new phone. The chances and opportunities are endless. It's going to be the perfect gift. It makes you so happy and thankful and it's going to make you complete until the next gift comes around and then you start that process all over again. Well, all right, so get out of the theater of your mind. Come back. We're now today, it's the day after Christmas. Christmas has come and gone. And of course, littering your room when you got up this morning, all over the house, the furniture and the underneath the tree and stuff, there's all the wrappings, the discarded wrappings and the boxes and the bags all torn to smithereens and the gifts strewn about. Unless you're one of those people that nicely stack things, then those gifts are nicely stacked. So, you know what? For some reason, when you got up this morning, you found out that the, what, the trash fairy didn't come in over the night and clean up. So maybe she'll do it while we're at church this morning.

Maybe. You can only hope when you get back home. Anyway, when you get up this morning, not only did you notice the mess that the inconsiderate fairy left, but if you're like me, back in yesteryears, I would always take one last glance and look underneath the tree. Was there a gift that was missed? Is there one still underneath there? Maybe it got forgotten? Maybe. And if there's one underneath there, is it for me? Does it have my name on it? Ooh. Maybe that's just me, but that was, anyway, greedy, I guess, probably. All right. So even though you didn't see anything, I'm here to tell you that there is probably, not probably, positively another gift underneath the tree. Okay? It got missed. Nobody saw it. It was wrapped just a little differently. It wasn't so obvious. But whose name is on it?

Is it yours? Turn with me, if you could, to the Gospel of John, chapter 1, and we'll be looking at verses 35 through 51. I'll be reading out of the, well, I should tell you first, in the Pew Bible, it's at page 886. In my Bible, it's page, what, 1815. So if you have my Bible, you're good.

I have it. I have it. I'm there. But anyway, I'm reading out of the NASV, so it may be just a little bit different than the translation that you have, but you'll follow along. If you're able, please stand with me for the reading of God's Word.

[4 : 0 5] Gospel of John, verse 35, chapter 1. This is the first disciples are being called.

The next day, John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked at Jesus as he walked, and he said, Behold, the Lamb of God. The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.

And Jesus turned and saw them following, and he said to them, What do you seek? They said, Rabbi, which translated means teacher, where are you staying? He said to them, Come, and you will see.

So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour, about four o'clock in the afternoon. One of the two who heard John speak, and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He found first his own brother, Simon, and said to him, We have found the Messiah, which translates means Christ. He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, You are Simon, the son of John. You shall be called Cephas, which is translated Peter.

The next day he purposed to go 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 Nathanael and said to him, We have found him, of whom Moses and the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. Nathanael said to him, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?

[5 : 59] Philip said to him, Come and see. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him and said of him, Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit. Nathanael 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. Nathanael answered him, Rabbi, you are the son of God. You are the king of Israel.

Jesus answered and said to him, Because I said 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.

So read the word of God. Let us pray. Father, we thank you for this book, the Bible, a book we can read and glean truths and revelations about you, pages that are filled with the word that became flesh, Jesus.

And Holy Spirit, we ask that you be the one to be our teacher this morning, that we would hear only your voice and not man's.

[7 : 24] This we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Please be seated. That last part about praying and saying that we only want to hear from the Spirit.

I loved how Zach put it the other day. And he said, What is not from me, may it never be remembered. I love that. So that is definitely the prayer today, that whatever is not from me, throw it away.

I mean, not from the Holy Spirit. Yeah, you can. There we go. Yep, get that out of the way. Woo! Me too.

I am also. You are not the only word. So, somewhere hidden in these passages, obviously, there's a gift that was missed.

Did you see it? Hmm? It's not so obvious at first glance. And, of course, I didn't see it either until it was shown to me. So, let's take a closer look.

[8 : 28] Let's go mining into the Word of God. Setting up the passage that we just read. Up to this point, Jesus had been baptized by John the Baptist.

The Holy Spirit had descended on him and has taken him to the wilderness for 40 days to fast and to be tempted by Satan. Jesus has now returned to the place of his baptism near the Jordan.

The day before this reading, John the Baptist saw Jesus and proclaimed him, Jesus, as the Messiah. And that's where we pick it up here.

That the next day, John was standing with two of his disciples. John's disciples. And he looked at Jesus as he walked.

Let's just stop there for a second. It is so neat about Scripture, how God has placed nuggets of truth and little gems that just pop out at you.

[9 : 34] And so, this part that John looked at Jesus as he walked. Isn't it neat to look at Jesus as he walked?

And what that, the illustration that it gives is the model for us to walk. John looked at Jesus as he walked.

And he said, he couldn't help but say again, Behold, the Lamb of God. And then the two disciples who heard him speak, what did they do?

When they heard that, they followed Jesus. See, John was pointing already his own disciples, the people, the men that were following him, he was already pointing them to Jesus.

And they, as John said, that he had to decrease and Jesus had to increase. And so, this is already occurring. And so, his disciples are leaving John, and now they're going to go follow Jesus.

[10 : 39] And verse 38, And Jesus turned and saw them following, and he said to them, What do you seek? It's interesting because in the Gospel of John, these are the very first words of Jesus.

Interesting to me. What do you seek? That's what he asks a follower of his. If you are a follower, he asks that of you also, of me.

What do you seek? It's an interesting question. And one that doesn't get answered. That also amazes me.

Because when he says, What do you seek? He's asking, You know, What, what is it? I mean, the deep, why are you following me?

What is it that you're seeking? And they, instead of answering it, they said to him, Rabbi, which translated means teacher, where are you staying? Okay.

[11 : 47] What do you seek? Well, where are you staying? As if that has anything to do with it. But it's like we don't want to answer the question when we get asked it, of ourselves.

Why are we following Jesus? Well, Jesus, instead of, you know, going after that question, he goes ahead and goes along with them.

And when they say, Where are you staying? And he says to them, Come, and you will see. I think that's neat also, that he's saying, Travel with me, and I'll show you the way.

He didn't give them directions. He's going to show them the way. Where are you staying? Come, I'll show you. Follow me. I'll show you. That's just so neat.

Jesus is the way. So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. Again, about four o'clock.

[12 : 47] So, you know, the disciples, they wanted to hang out with him. I want to be where you're at. Going on to verse 40. One of the two who heard John speak, and followed him, Jesus, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

Now, what was the first thing Andrew did, when he spent the day with Jesus, the day before? What did he do? He went and found first, his own brother, Simon.

See, after spending the day with Jesus, we're supposed to tell others what we found. We're supposed to share that, and Andrew does that.

So, he, finds first his brother Simon, and said to him, we have found the Messiah, which translated means Christ.

And then, what did he do? He not only told him that he found Jesus, but the next thing he did was that he brought him to Jesus. That's what we're all supposed to do, is bring people to Jesus.

[13 : 58] Well, Jesus looked at him, and said, you are Simon, the son of John. Yeah, you shall be called Cephas, which is translated, Peter.

We'll get into that, in a little bit here. The next day, he purposed to go into Galilee, and he found Philip. And Jesus said to him, follow me.

Now, Philip was from Bethsaida. Bethsaida means, house of fish, because this was a seaport city. Oh, by the way, whenever you see the word Beth, it always means house, and then Seda, in this case, means fish, house of fish.

Okay, just like Bethany. Oh, I got to get my notes. I knew I would forget. Bethany means, house of figs.

I got a few examples. Let's see. Bethlehem, means, house of bread. Bethel, means, house of God.

[15 : 08] So, anyway, you get the picture, you understand. When you see the word Beth, there's no immediately, it's house of something. It's neat to look up the words, the meaning of the words, because it brings a fuller picture of what you're reading about.

It's, for me, it is anyway. I really enjoy looking up meanings of words. So, where was I? Bethsaida, verse 44, of the city of Andrew and Peter.

Philip found Nathanael and said to him, get this, this is funny. For me, it's funny. And he said to Nathanael, we have found him, of whom Moses and the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

Nathanael's so excited, he's saying, we found him, just like we do. We're telling people, I found the Lord. And yet, if we go back up a few more verses, a few verses back up to 43, let's see, the next day he purchased, Jesus was going into Galilee and he found Philip.

Philip didn't find him, Jesus found Philip. It's just one of those funny things that you read and you're going, eh, that's us. I'm just like Philip, all excited.

[16 : 30] I found you. It's all me. I found him. It was me. Guess what? Dead people can't find anything and we're dead to our sins. So, nope, Jesus has to find us.

Anyway, I just find that funny. Nathanael said to him, oh, this is where stuff starts to get weird in this, the rest of this passage here. This is a little weird stuff going on.

Nathanael said to him, can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip said to him, come and see. When I was studying about Nathanael, it was funny to me in the sense, boy, a lot of things are funny to me, aren't they?

It was strange to me. It was unusual to me to hear him say that he was told that Jesus of Nazareth is the son of Joseph and he says, can anything good come out of Nazareth?

And it's like, what's wrong with you, Nathanael? There's prophecies that talk about that. It should be one of those clues that this is where the Messiah was going to come from.

[17 : 39] So, I was looking that up and saying, I'm going to go look up that scripture, you know, where the prophecy's at. And, you know where I found it? In the book of Matthew. And, let's see if I can find it in my notes.

I'm bad at this. Anyway, in Matthew, it talks about that Jesus of the Nazarene.

And so, I'm thinking, well, that sure points to Nazareth. So, then I'm looking up, all right, where did Matthew get that from? Where did it come from? It is nowhere to be found in the Old Testament.

I didn't know that. There is no prophecy that says that Jesus is going to come from Nazareth. And, maybe, anyway, that's an interesting study.

And I'll leave that, actually. I was going to unpack that a little bit and show you more about that. But I'm going to leave that one to you guys to look up. Because it was a, tantalizing thing for me.

[18 : 45] Because it's the inerrant word of God. And if Matthew's saying it, then how did that come about? It's interesting. I'll leave it to you guys.

Look that one up. I'm going to tease you with it. All right, so, I'm going to find out where I'm at on my notes. We're not there yet. So, can anything good come out of Nazareth?

Philip said, come and see. And now, it gets even weirder. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him and said, of him, Nathanael, behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit.

there's no deceit. He's saying, found in you, Nathanael. And yet, he just proclaimed, can anything good come out of Nazareth?

Again, these are weird things that are happening here. Weird conversation. Weird dialogue that's going on here. Okay, so, in whom there is no deceit.

[19 : 49] Meaning, he's not a deceiver or is he easily deceived? And that's why Nathanael says to Jesus, how do you know me?

Because Nathanael probably prides himself in this, that he works at this. He wants to make sure that he knows the truth, that he's not just espousing things that he heard from somebody else or something else, but he wants to tell the truth.

He wants to tell the truth. He wants to know the truth. And so, he's not arguing with them that, oh, that's not who I am. No, he's saying, well, how do you know me? And Jesus answered and said to him, before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.

We're going to find out what that fig tree is all about too. That's coming up. All right. So, basically, what Jesus is saying that when I was a far off, I saw you.

Mystery, mystery going on here. Nathaniel answered him, Rabbi, you are the son of God. You are the king of Israel. And I love what Jesus says that because I said to you that I saw you under the fig tree that you believe, really, that's all I had to say?

[21 : 09] And now you're a believer? There's something there. Something's going on. You can find out what it is. You will see greater things than these. And he said to him, truly, truly, I say to you, you will see the heavens open and the angels of God ascending and descending on the son of man.

Strange response. Strange dialogue. What's going on? Well, it's time to dig even deeper. Bear with me as we dig deeper. All right.

Jesus says, behold, an Israelite in whom there is no deceit. And then he says, I saw you supernaturally under the fig tree. Nathanael responds with, you are the son of God.

And Jesus says, stick around. You'll see the angels ascending and descending on the son of man. All of this is cryptically relates to a story which gives a couple of hints as to what that last gift under the tree is.

Okay? This idea of a ladder where angels are ascending and descending, the idea of a man called Israel, remember that Nathanael's called an Israelite, the idea of a man who is without deceit, it all comes together in an Old Testament story of a man named Jacob.

[22 : 39] You know the story. The story told in the book of Genesis about twin brothers Jacob and Esau. During the birth process, Esau was coming out of the womb first and Jacob grabbed his heel trying to hold him back so he could be born first.

Jacob's name literally means heel snatcher. or full of deceit, both being a deceiver and being deceived.

Jacob is a deceiver. He's a trickster. He snatched his brother's heel. He snatched his brother's birthright. He snatched his brother's blessing.

He deceived his father. later, later, he is deceived by good old uncle Laban. And then much later, he is deceived by his own sons when they sold Joseph into slavery.

Oh no, he's been killed by wild animals. Here's his bloody coat. This is the Jacob. He will do anything to win.

[23 : 59] He is a heel snatcher, a man full of deceit. But later on, years and years later, between the time of Laban's deceiving him and his sons deceiving him, between that time, Jacob will be transformed as he wrestles with the angel of the Lord, Jesus himself.

The Lord said to him at that encounter, what is your name? See, Jesus knew his name, of course, but he wanted Jacob to admit who he was.

My name is Jacob. All these years of deceiving and snatching and doing things and being deceived. Jesus wanted to know, what's your name?

My name is Jacob. I'm the heel snatcher. I'm the deceiver. I get deceived. And then Jesus said, no more.

Not only will your name be Jacob, man full of deceit, but Israel struggles with God. I want to pause there for a second too.

[25 : 14] And again, looking up all this stuff and remembering back to sermons that I had heard over the years that always told that Jacob meant heel snatcher, deceiver.

But then I was told that Israel meant, what did they always say, that Israel meant, governed by God.

And I'm going, ah, that is so cool. So you go from being a heel snatcher and deceiver and stuff until God changes your name and you become governed by God. Oh, that is so neat.

And it's like, oh, that's wonderful. And so you start looking up what these names really mean and it's, no, Israel means struggles with God. Oh, it doesn't have anything to do with that.

Governed by God and struggles with God. Yeah, you're struggling because you're fighting up against God all the time. You're, you're, you're just, you want your way, you're doing your thing.

[26 : 16] So you're just saying, Israel, you're going to be, that's who you're going to be from, that's what the nation is going to be doing for the rest of its existence, is struggling against God.

Again, these were things that I just found interesting. These are the things, how I like to study scripture, looking up words. I love looking up words and their meaning. It just, again, brings fuller stuff to it.

But also, this was the other part that really got me, and I'd never seen this until just yesterday and restudying going over this stuff again, that when Jesus is changing his name, he says, then Jesus said, no more will your name be Jacob.

But that, what that means is, not only will your name be Jacob, but Israel. Meaning that Jacob will still be Jacob and he'll now be Israel as well.

Meaning he's got that dual part of him that just goes back and forth, just like we all do. When we're walking with Jesus, when we're trying to do what we're supposed to do, we have a new name, we don't know what it is, but we have a new nature, the new man, but we struggle all the time between the two.

[27 : 47] We keep going back and forth. I remember always thinking, man, what is this about? I thought the old man was dead. How come he keeps getting resurrected?

That's necromancy and that's not good. So this explained it to me. This was really, really neat. Not only would you be Jacob, man full of deceit, but you can be Israel also and you're going to struggle with God.

There's another character and I told you we'd get back to him and that was Simon. Remember? Jesus changed his name back up in 41, verse 41, that he brought him to Jesus.

Jesus looked at him and said, you are Simon, the son of John, you shall be called Cephas, which is translated Peter. So, looking up those names, Simon, I was always told, means shifting sand.

Old Simon, he's going from this to that. He's never stable or anything like that. And of course, we know what Peter means, rock. So Jesus is saying, no longer are you going to be sifting sand, you're going to be rock.

[29 : 04] Well, that's not true either. Man, you've got to be careful what you listen to or what you think you know what scripture says. We need to look it up for ourselves and we need to be the Berean that we're checking this stuff out.

Well, I took it, you know, the pastor, sure, he knows what he's talking about and sure sounds right, but no. Simon does not mean sifting sand.

It means to hear. Huh? Well, that doesn't fit with the, you know, transition there of being from sifting sand into the rock.

That sounds much better. No, to hear to the rock. Now, what does all that mean? Again, we'll leave it for you to discover. There's another mystery for you to discover.

How does that work together? It's neat. Once you unveil it, after you discover it, after God shows it to you. Anyway, oh, here's another interesting part that in verse 42, it says, you are Simon.

[30 : 16] You shall be called Peter. It means he's not called Peter yet. Not time. We're not calling you Peter yet. You are Simon.

That's who you are. You hear things. You hear. That's good. But you shall be in the future. Not right now. In the future, you will be called rock.

Hmm. What does that mean? Interesting. In the future. And as it happens to be, that future didn't happen for another three years for Peter.

That it happened at, let's see, Matthew 16, 16, when Jesus is asking the disciples, who do you say that I am? And Peter responds, you are the Christ, the son of the living God.

And of course, Jesus says, blessed are you, Simon Bartholomew, that flesh and blood has not revealed that to you, but the father in heaven. What happened there?

[31 : 24] There was a transition that happened. The father opened up Peter's eyes, Simon's eyes, and he now could proclaim truly, honestly, who Jesus was.

I get it. You are the Christ, the son of the living God. And how does Jesus go on to talk about this?

Not only that it's been revealed by the father, but Jesus now says of Simon in verse 18 of Matthew 16, you are Peter.

At that moment, he became Peter. Something clicked, something happened. So, I say this, as an encouragement that our walk, who knows how long it's going to be, how far do we have to get into it before we change, before we accept truly, truly.

Back over here in our story, Nathaniel answered, Rabbi, you are the son of God, you are the king of Israel. Did he mean that to the degree that Peter was saying that you are the Christ, the son of the living God?

- [32 : 49] I don't know. That I don't know, but Jesus didn't make that same comment about Nathaniel. Nathaniel, flesh and blood, did not reveal that to you, but the father in heaven.
- So, I don't know if that's what was going on there. God to me, it was more like, Jesus, you are Lord. We call Jesus Lord all the time, but is he?
- Is he Lord of our life? And we know what that means. Is he Lord over everything? And if we're honest with ourselves, we say, no, he's not.
- Anyway, so, you are Peter. He became Peter at that point. Until we know who Jesus is, we don't know who we are.
- To the degree that we know who Jesus is, is the degree that we know who we are. Never wondering, who am I? Find out who Jesus is.
- [33 : 52] He'll reveal it. Now, here's another, because this is how my mind thinks, I'm going, wait a minute, as I read the gospel accounts, I'm seeing Peter's name all over the place.
- Him being called Peter. Peter here, Peter there, Peter, Peter, Peter. And it's like, I thought he doesn't become Peter until Matthew 16, after the confession.
- What is that all about? What is this going on? You're driving me crazy. And anyway, that goes along with we think we know what scripture is saying and yet when we go to dig into it, we're going, that's not what it's saying.
- Most likely, and this one I'll give to you rather than telling you to look it up yourself. most likely, that you got to remember when this was written, it's in an after account, and they just keep referring to Peter as Peter, because that's who he is when this is being written.
- At times he's called Simon, at times he's called Peter, but I think it's that, oh, it was Peter. You know who Peter is, so that's who it was when talking about Peter in the different stories in the Gospels.
- [35 : 06] Okay, so I'll give you that one. At least that's my conclusion, and I'm sticking to it today, tomorrow I may change. Alright, so, just like Jacob, oh man, I go on bunny trails, don't I?
- Just like Jacob, he, and both Simon and Peter for a long time, no, let's see, never mind, forget that, scratch.
- Alright, let's look, let's get back to what we were looking at. Let's look at the hints so far that are pointing, to that gift that's still under the tree.
- Okay, hint, number one, going back to our text, in verse 47, Jesus said, behold, a man of Israel in whom there is no deceit.
- Unlike Jacob, Nathaniel wasn't deceived, or one to be deceived, we've already talked about that, because he challenged things, he studied scripture, he sought the truth, and that's why he said, can anything good come from Nazareth?
- [36 : 15] Okay, so there's that, that Jesus is saying, an Israelite in whom there is no deceit. What story did we just hear about of a person having, he was full of deceit?
- Jacob. Hmm, something, again, he's relaying something here, he's pulling something out here, he's bringing something together. Hint number two, I saw you under the fig tree.
- This is a neat part, this, when I learned this, I thought it was pretty cool, fig tree, what the heck does that got to do with anything, a fig tree, let's see, that's a symbol of national Israel, okay, but in Israel, even to this day, they have a saying that, what have you learned under the fig tree?

it would be akin to us saying, what did you learn in your quiet time? That was the place under a fig tree was symbolic of where you read God's word, you meditated on it, you prayed about it, so Jesus is saying, basically, I saw you meditating on my word, on dot to word, we'll look again at that in just a little bit more, so it doesn't have to be a literal fig tree, just like your quiet time doesn't have to literally mean a quiet time, it's nicer than it is, but you can have a quiet time, let's say, like in Starbucks or something like that, so you get the idea, so under the fig tree, what have you learned under the fig tree?

Jesus is saying to Nathaniel, not only did I see you supernaturally sitting under the fig tree, but I know where you were reading and meditating on, the story of Jacob, a man full of deceit, and you were reading Genesis chapter 28, the part about Jacob's ladder, deceit, and he was saying, not only did I see you under the fig tree, that's why Nathaniel was amazed when he said, I saw you under the fig tree, because Jesus just before that had just said, a man of Israel, an Israelite, a man in whom there is no deceit, that correlation, reading about Jacob with deceit, that was full of deceit, and Nathaniel that was not, tried hard not to be, and how did you know that, well I saw you under the fig tree, you are the son of God, because Jesus revealed something big there, that he knew, but how did

[39 : 17] Jesus know this stuff, he's a man, he came down to earth, he's a man, there's another mystery for you, because there's a little bit more into it than you think, oh well he kept his divine nature and his ability, his omnipotence and his all-knowing and everything else, and omniscience and everything else, and well did he?

Study it, find out, so something else is going on there, and it's to me very fascinating, all right, let's see, so Genesis chapter 28, I'm just going to give you a quick recap on that, that Jacob had just stolen, or snatched the birthright and the blessing of Esau, and Esau is not too happy as you can imagine, even though he sold his birthright, so he didn't really much care about it, but he wanted the blessing, anyway, so Esau's not real happy about it, in fact he's so angry about it, he wants to kill Jacob, mama steps in, and oh, you better run for your life, and better go over to go see my brother Laban and get a wife up there and stuff, and we'll do that whole ruse and everything, to Isaac and everything, so anyway, so Jacob is running for his life, he's been running all day, the sun's set, he stops at a place called Luz, and he finds a rock for a pillow, that has no significance, by the way, at least that I found,

I looked and looked, there's something to it, it was just a common thing, that you've rocked for pillows, so if you find something, let me know on that one, because I didn't see anything, anyway, so while he's sleeping, he dreams that Jacob is dreaming of a ladder where the angels are ascending and descending, God is standing above it, meaning that he's in charge, and he reasserted to his promise to Abraham, to Jacob, he reminded Jacob of the promise that he gave his grandfather, that hey, I'm going to build a nation, and it's not only through Abraham, but now it's going to continue on through you, he's just reminding Jacob of that, because Jacob's not much into spirituality right at this point, and so what happens is that Jacob awakes, he's been sleeping up to this point about the things concerning

God, hmm, what does he say when he wakes up, surely the Lord is in this place that I knew it not, see when we're sleeping we don't know the things about the Lord, but when we wake up, surely the Lord is in this place when our eyes are open, is, present tense, not past tense, not he was in this place, he is in this place, okay, and then the saddest, very sad comment, and I knew it not, how sad, the Lord is in this place and I knew it not, I didn't recognize it, so what's he do, he calls the place instead of loves, he renames it to Bethel, what does Beth mean?

House, L means God, so he calls that place house of God, all right, you guys got it, all right, all right, back to our study, we just learned what the dream was that Jacob had about the angels ascending and descending, Nathaniel not only, so Jesus is basically saying to Nathaniel, Nathaniel, not only did I know what you were thinking about, meditating on, but the verse you were concentrating on about Jacob's ladder where the angels were ascending and descending, but guess what, that ladder is me, the ladder is me, Nathaniel, I am the way to heaven, I am the way, the truth, and the life, stick around Nathaniel, everything you were reading about, meditating on, it all points to me, all right, we got the story out, what does that all have to do with the gift still underneath the tree, we're still, wait, what's the gift,

[44 : 01] I don't get it, and more importantly, whose name's on it, because my name's on it, what do you think the gift is, did you see it anywhere in there in our story, did it jump out at you anywhere, just still hidden, hmm, it's funny because when I first was putting together this message, the gift was going to be our gift to God, and that gift was taking the time to meditate on God's word, that was what this whole thing was going to lead to, but God has a funny way of turning things around, it's not about us, who's it about, him, everything about him, so what's the gift, what's that gift that's still under the tree, it's his word, the Bible, the written word, that's the gift to us, and why I say that it's still underneath the tree, because we leave it there so often, we don't pick it up, we don't recognize it as the fantastic gift that it is, the book that we can take and open and read and learn about him, meditate on it, we're so busy in our life, we always mean to, the question gets asked, why are you following me?

What is it that you want? Well, we want to grow in knowledge, but we don't do it, we don't take the time. Jesus is showing us with this cryptic passage, that when we are in our quiet time, under the tree, meditating on, studying the word, remember, Jesus is called the word, so we're studying Jesus, that he will reveal its meaning in how it all points to him.

When we take that time to meditate, get underneath the tree, get under that fig tree, get into your quiet time, and you know what?

this is for those who are puzzlers, that love to do puzzles and things, because that's the way your mind works, you've got to keep busy all the time, and talk about puzzles, I found a million of them when I was studying for this, puzzles everywhere, you should see the sheets I had everywhere in my office, oh this note, and this note, and this note, and this note, and then trying to bring it all together, it didn't come together until about three o'clock this morning, because that's again the way my mind works, and Sherry often tells me, you've got enough material there for ten sermons, please don't try to give all ten sermons at one time, and it's like, I can't help it, so then I rush through things, and don't explain it well, and people walk away, huh, what was that about?

That was as cryptic as what we just read, what was that about? Anyway, but I do want you guys to walk away with this, is that this is the gift that's still under the tree, pick it up, look at it, it is so, it's one of those gifts that on the surface you're going, oh, that's nice, but when you start digging into it, it's like, oh, wow, there's some nuggets in here, there's some gems in here, this is really neat, this is good stuff, but it takes time, seek, and you will find, meaning, keep on seeking, don't just do it once, do it all the time, you're wondering about things, you're, you're, you're, you're, while you're reading, you, you come across a passage, and you go, that just sounds funny, there's something about that, well, take the time to meditate on, you don't have to keep going, oh, no, but I'm in my one year study Bible, and all you have to do is keep going, no, stop, if you come across something, stop, meditate on it, get into your quiet time,

[48 : 34] I was looking at this for, I don't know, Pastor, when did you ask me to teach, month and a half ago, two months, maybe, seems like a long time anyway, just yesterday, just yesterday, but, so I've been meditating on this, all this time, there were answers that were not coming, and I'm going, how can I deliver your message, when I'm not even getting it, I'm not even understanding the full scope of it, and I'm sure that I still have not understood the full scope of it, but, take the time, I didn't move on, I didn't, oh, well, I'll just start reading other things, no, now, granted, by reading this, it led me to this passage, and this passage, and this passage, because, as we know, scripture is all woven throughout with each other, and that's also the neat thing, is when you get to see that, when you, your eyes are open to that, and it's like, whoa, I remember that, that was over here, or that ties in with this, that fits in perfectly, now that makes sense, and so, anyway, that's another gift from

God. all right, one last thing, true disciples not only follow, but they learn, a student, that's who a disciple is, one who studies, when you became a follower, did you also become a learner who studies, did you ever answer the question, what do you seek, Jesus asks it, what do you seek, be honest with him, what do you seek, don't go on to some other question, stick with that one, start there if you need to, and then after that, will you share it with others, and speak of the great things that God has done, and you've seen that he's revealed to you, Malachi 3:16 says, those who feared the Lord, and spoke to one another, the Lord gave attention and heard it, and it was written in a book of remembrance,

God takes note when we talk to one another about him, he's blessed when we do that, yeah, there you go, you got it, you learned, talk about it with each other, how you doing today, oh, I'm fine, I'm fine, just amazes me how we do that, I'm fine, instead of, what did the Lord show you during your week, how was your week, oh, it was fine, what did the Lord show you during the week, what has he shown you, in your quiet time, in whatever, in your work, in your walk, what does he show you, share with me, I want to know, because it bolsters me up too, it encourages me, all right, there we go, I think that's all I have, Father, we do thank you for your word, we thank you for the gift of your word, that we at any time, have access to it, especially with today's technology, that we can pull it up on our phones, we can carry your word with us, and Holy

Spirit, as you nudge us in a direction of something, you prick our minds with it, that we can look it up and start to research it and meditate on it and stuff, so Father, thank you for that, we are in such a unique time in this world, and to be able to do that, may we do that, take the time, may we open up that gift, and be blessed by meditating on your word, and look forward to how you and what you will reveal to us, say this in Jesus your name, amen.

Amen.