

An Israelite Indeed

Ponder: Are you a true Israelite?

Scripture: “Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, ‘Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!’” (John 1:47, NKJV).

I get the impression that just before Jesus spoke to him, Nathanael had been meditating on the patriarch Jacob, whose name God changed to Israel. The Genesis record shows that Jacob, in his early years, had been something of a rascal! Even in the course of being born he had unconsciously grasped his twin brother Esau’s heel, as if to trip him. That earned him the name Jacob (“supplanter”). As he grew, he lived up to that name in ways that are not complimentary. He took advantage of Esau’s extreme hunger to obtain the birthright. Esau’s own worldly-mindedness played a role, but Jacob’s behavior demonstrated no brotherly love. Later, at the behest of his mother, he deceived his aged, blind father into giving him the blessing (Gen. 25:24 – 27:29).

As Jacob fled from Esau’s wrath, he received some poetic justice. His father-in-law, Laban, deceived and cheated him repeatedly for twenty years! Jacob learned his lesson. As he returned to Canaan, he feared Esau might still hold a grudge. The night before Esau arrived, Jacob wrestled with a “Man” (a manifestation of God) and refused to turn Him loose until He blessed him. God then changed his name from Jacob (“supplanter”) to Israel (a combination of the words “strive” and “God”). He had wrestled with God and prevailed! With God’s blessing, the reunion with Esau went better than Jacob could have imagined. No longer would he be the conniving deceiver. From this point he would trust God and seek His blessings legitimately.

Jesus complimented Nathanael for being “an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit.” Nathanael had an attitude problem; he didn’t think anything good could come out of Nazareth. But he was honest! When Jesus gave him evidence, he said with amazement, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the king of Israel!” (John 1:49).

May each of us be an Israelite indeed! And as we encounter honest souls like Nathanael, let us provide them with the evidence of who Jesus is. Perhaps we may then hear them confess Jesus as the Son of God, the king of Israel.

Song: “I Believe In The One They Call Jesus”

Prayer: Holy Father, You know the temptations we face to be deceitful. Help us to be Israelites indeed, in whom is no deceit. Give us courage to present the truth to all who are willing to hear it. In Jesus’ name, Amen.