

Notes on the Greek New Testament Day 121 – May 1st – John 1:29-51

Works frequently referenced in these notes on John

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| Barrett, CK | <i>The Gospel According to John</i> , London, SPCK, 1967 |
| Beasley-Murray, GR | <i>John</i> , <i>Word Bible Commentary</i> , vol 36, Word Books, 1987 |
| Carson, DA | <i>The Gospel According to John</i> , Leicester, IVP (Apollos), 1991 |

Verses 29-34

Of this section Carson writes, "The fact that Jesus is so fully and so early recognised to be the Messiah is judged by some to be evidence for the unhistorical nature of John 1:29-51. After all, in the Synoptic Gospels, Peter and the others do not volunteer a formal confession that Jesus is the Messiah until Caesarea Philippi (Mt 16:13-20 par.), well into the ministry. But several factors mitigate the tension between the accounts. If some of Jesus' first disciples had earlier followed John the Baptist, we must suppose that *something* encouraged them to abandon their old master at the peak of his influence, in order to follow a still unknown preacher from Galilee. The best reason is the obvious one: they changed their allegiance precisely because it was the Baptist himself who pointed Jesus out as the one who was coming to fulfil the promises of Scripture. In that case, the confessions of John 1 are not only plausible, but almost historically necessary.

"This does not mean that the followers of Jesus portrayed in John 1 enjoyed a thoroughly Christian grasp of the titles they applied to Jesus. Doubtless they were first uttered more in hope than in faith. In fact, of the four Gospels it is John's that most insistently stresses how much the disciples *misunderstood* what they confessed... In other words, if John records early confessions, he also emphasises how little the first confessors understood... That is an important point for John to make, if he is interested in evangelising Jews in his own day; for it simultaneously encourages his contemporaries to take *steps* of faith, and begins the detailed explanation (needed by all first-century Jews) as to how the first 'converts' came to accept that the promised Messiah had to be crucified, cursed like an abominable criminal."

Verse 29

Τῇ ἐπαύριον βλέπει τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐρχόμενον πρὸς αὐτόν, καὶ λέγει· Ἴδε ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ αἴρων τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου.

ἐπαυριον the next day
 βλέπω see, look
 ἄμνος, ου m lamb
 αἴρω take, take up, take away
 ἁμαρτία, ας f sin

Clearly there is an Old Testament background to John's words here, but what is that background? There seem to be a number of possible elements:

- i) The passover lamb – though that was not explicitly sin-bearing;
- ii) The 'gentle lamb' of Jer 11:19 – though again there is no mention of taking away the sin of the world;
- iii) The lamb of Is 53:7;
- iv) The goat that bore away the sins of the people on the day of Atonement (Lev 16);
- v) Perhaps also an echo of Gen 22:1-14, particularly v.8, "The Lord himself will provide the lamb".

No one of these seems an adequate background of John's phrase. Barrett concludes, "By his amalgamation of Old Testament ideas John indicates that the death of Jesus was a new and better sacrifice. All the ordinances and institutions of Judaism were perfected by Jesus (cf. 2:19; 4:21; 5:17,39,47; 6:4; 10:1; 13:34). No longer are the sins of ignorance of the Jewish people removed by sacrifice, but the sin of the world."

Carson comments, "When the Baptist identified Jesus as *the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world*, he probably has in mind the apocalyptic lamb, the warrior lamb, found in some Jewish texts (*1 Enoch* 90:9-12; *Testament of Joseph* 19:8; *Testament of Benjamin* 3:8 – the latter passages probably, but not certainly, pre-Christian) and picked up in the Apocalypse (Rev 5:6, 12; 7:17; 13:8; 17:14; 19:7, 9; 21:22-23; 22:1-3). If 'Lamb of God' was not a well-recognised, technical expression, the fact that our text uses *amnos* instead of *arnion* offers no great difficulty. Whether we assume that the category lay readily to hand for the Baptist to use, or that he was one of the first to think it up, the impression gleaned from the synoptics is that he thought of the Messiah as one who would come in terrible judgment and to clean up the sin in Israel. In this light, what John the Baptist meant by 'who takes away the sin of the world' may have had more to do with judgment and destruction than with expiatory sacrifice. Certainly the verb *airo* normally means 'remove', 'take away', not 'bear away in atoning death' or the like (for which the more common verb is *anaphero*...)

"But this does not necessarily mean that John the Evangelist limited himself to this understanding of 'Lamb of God'. Just as John insists that Caiaphas the high priest spoke better than he knew (11:49-52), so it is easy to suppose that the Evangelist understood the Baptist to be doing the same thing. It is not that he thought the Baptist wrong; rather, as a post-resurrection Christian John could grasp a fuller picture than was possible for the Baptist. In particular he understood a great deal more about the significance of the Messiah's sacrificial death. It is hard to imagine that he could use an expression such as 'Lamb of God' *without* thinking of the atoning sacrifice of his resurrected and ascended Saviour."

Verse 30

οὗτός ἐστιν ὑπὲρ οὗ ἐγὼ εἶπον· Ὁπίσω μου ἔρχεται ἀνὴρ ὃς ἔμπροσθέν μου γέγονεν, ὃτι πρῶτός μου ἦν·

εἶπον Verb, aor act indic, 1s & 3pl λεγω
ὀπισω see v.15

ἀνὴρ, ἀνδρος m man, husband

ἐμπροσθεν see v.15 for this and remainder of verse.

Verse 31

κἀγὼ οὐκ ᾔδειν αὐτόν, ἀλλ' ἵνα φανερωθῆ τῷ Ἰσραὴλ διὰ τοῦτο ἦλθον ἐγὼ ἐν ὕδατι βαπτίζων.

κἀγω a compound word = καὶ ἐγώ

ᾔδειν Verb, pluperf act indic, 1s οἶδα know

Not that John did not know Jesus beforehand, but that he did not know him as the coming one.

φανερωθῆ Verb, aor pass subj, 3s φανερω
make known, reveal, make evident
δια τοῦτο for this reason

"δια τοῦτο more frequently precedes a clause which explains it; for this construction in which δια τοῦτο is preceded by its explanation cf. 15:19." Barrett.

ἦλθον Verb, aor act ind, 1s & 3pl ἐρχομαι
ὕδωρ, ὕδατος n see v.26

"The purpose of John's baptism was the public manifestation of Jesus; it was fulfilled therefore in the descent of the Spirit upon Jesus, and this event at the same time made possible the new Christian baptism with the Spirit. Like John himself, his baptism has no independent significance; both exist in order to bear witness (v.7) to Christ, who alone truly takes away sin and confers the Spirit as well." Barrett.

Verse 32

καὶ ἑμαρτύρησεν Ἰωάννης λέγων ὅτι Τεθέαμαι τὸ πνεῦμα καταβαῖνον ὡς περιστέρην ἐξ οὐρανοῦ, καὶ ἔμεινεν ἐπ' αὐτόν·

μαρτυρεω see v.7

τεθέαμαι Verb, pref midd/pass dep indic, 1s
θεαομαι see, observe

The perfect tense reflects a settled conviction.

καταβαῖνον Verb, pres act ptc, n nom/acc s
καταβαινω come or go down, descend
περιστερα, ας f dove, pigeon

Carson comments, "G F Hasel ... detects an allusion to Genesis 1:2, since Rabbi Ben Zoma, a younger contemporary of the apostle, cites a rabbinic tradition to the effect that 'the Spirit of God was brooding on the face of the waters like a dove which broods over her young but does not touch them' ... In light of the recent suggestion of C T Begg that the dove in Psalm 74:19-20 is a symbol of the covenant, based on Genesis 15:9-18, it is tempting to see in John 1:32 an allusion to the promise of the new covenant (Je 31:31-34). The evidence is not strong, however, and John's explicit emphasis on the Holy Spirit makes the dove/Spirit connection more plausible."

ἔμεινεν Verb, aor act indic, 3s μενω
remain, stay, abide

Cf. Mt 3:16; Mk 1:10; Lk 3:22. The whole ministry of Jesus was performed in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Carson comments, "The early church preached that 'God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power' Acts 10:38). When Christians read their Bibles (what we call the 'Old Testament'), they saw in Jesus the fulfilment of God's promises to pour out his Spirit on the coming Davidic king (Is. 42:1) and on the prophetic-figure who announces, 'The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor' (Is 61:1). Small wonder, then, that some visible descent of the Spirit on Jesus served as the God-given sign by which the Baptist would know that this was the long-awaited Coming One."

The Spirit fell on some in the OT at particular moments, such as king Saul, but the Spirit *remains* on Jesus. Carson concludes, "Small wonder, then, that Jesus is equipped to baptise others, not merely (as did John the Baptist) in the medium of water, but in the Holy Spirit. This too anticipates the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies, which looked forward to the time when God's people would have the Spirit poured out on them (e.g. Ezk 36:25-26). That Jesus would baptise his people in the Holy Spirit is therefore simultaneously an attestation of who he is, and an announcement that the promised age is dawning."

Verse 33

καὶ γὰρ οὐκ ἤδεν αὐτόν, ἀλλ' ὁ πέμψας με βαπτίζειν ἐν ὕδατι ἐκεῖνός μοι εἶπεν· Ἐφ' ὃν ἂν ἴδῃς τὸ πνεῦμα καταβαῖνον καὶ μένον ἐπ' αὐτόν, οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ βαπτίζων ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ·

ἤδεν see v.31

πέμπω send

ἐκεῖνος, η, ο demonstrative adj. that (one),
he, she, it

ὅς ἂν whoever

ἴδῃς Verb, 2 aor act subj, 2 s ὄραω see

"Jesus has the Spirit in order that he may confer it; and it is the gift of the Spirit which pre-eminently distinguishes the new dispensation from the old (cf. vv. 26f.); it belongs neither to Judaism nor even to John." Barrett.

Verse 34

καὶ γὰρ ἐώρακα, καὶ μεμαρτύρηκα ὅτι οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἐκλεκτός τοῦ θεοῦ.

Some MSS, chiefly Western, read in v 34 ὁ ἐκλεκτός τοῦ θεοῦ instead of ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ. Many exegetes accept the variant, on the ground that it would be far more likely to be changed to ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ than that the reverse should happen (so e.g. Barrett, Becker, Brown, Sanders, Schnackenburg). Textual critics tend to adhere to the more strongly supported reading ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ (so Metzger ed for the UBS; and Bernard, Bultmann, Dodd, Haenchen).

Carson comments, "A very good case can be made for the view that the best reading here is 'this is the Chosen One of God'... If so ... John is probably making a direct reference to Isaiah 42:1, where God promises to pour out his Spirit on his servant, his 'chosen one' (LXX ὁ ἐκλεκτός). In John's Gospel, the theme that the disciples of Jesus are his elect, his chosen ones, is extremely strong (e.g. 6:65, 70; 13:18; 15:16, 19). But this privilege of believers is ultimately grounded in the fact that Jesus himself is God's chosen one *par excellence* – chosen as the suffering servant, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

Verses 35-42

"It is often said that the 'call' of the disciples in these verses cannot be reconciled with the Synoptic accounts (Mt 4:18-22; 9:9; Mk 1:16-20; 2:13-14; Lk 5:1-11, 27-18). Traditional harmonisation, which postulates that John's account is a preliminary 'call', ratified by a later one reported in the Synoptic Gospels is ruled out of court on the ground that John leaves no room for a second call. But strictly speaking Jesus does not 'call' his disciples at all in these verses (except possibly Philip: cf. notes on v 43). They attach themselves to him because of the witness of the Baptist, and then because of the witness of the Baptist's followers... Indeed, the promptness with which the disciples, according to the Synoptic tradition, abandon their livelihood (whether the fishing business or a tax office) in response to Jesus' explicit call, is psychologically and historically more plausible if that was not their first exposure to him or their first demonstration of fealty towards him. At this point in John, however, these fledgling disciples are still at the 'Come and you will see' (v. 39) stage, the 'You will see greater things than that' (v 50) stage." Carson.

Verse 35

Τῆ ἐπαύριον πάλιν εἰστήκει ὁ Ἰωάννης καὶ ἐκ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ δύο,

ἐπαυριον see v.29

παλιν again, once more

εἰστήκει Verb, pluperf act indic, 3 s ἵστημι
and ἵστανω stand

μαθητης, ου m disciple, follower

δύο gen & acc δύο dat δυσιν two

On the partitive use of ἐκ, see point 7 in the introduction.

Verse 36

καὶ ἐμβλέψας τῷ Ἰησοῦ περιπατοῦντι λέγει· Ἴδε ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ.

ἐμβλέψας Verb, aor act ptc, m nom s

ἐμβλεπω look straight at, see

περιπατεω walk, walk about

ἀμνος, ου m see v.29

Verse 37

καὶ ἤκουσαν οἱ δύο μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ λαλοῦντος καὶ ἠκολούθησαν τῷ Ἰησοῦ.

λαλεω speak, talk

ἀκολουθεω follow, accompany, be a
disciple

Elsewhere in John, ἀκολουθεῖν predominantly bears the sense of 'follow as a disciple'. Though here it probably has a more general sense, yet an allusion to discipleship cannot be excluded.

Verse 38

στραφεῖς δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ θεασάμενος αὐτοὺς ἀκολουθοῦντας λέγει αὐτοῖς· Τί ζητεῖτε; οἱ δὲ εἶπαν αὐτῷ· Ῥαββί (ὃ λέγεται μεθερμηνεύμενον Διδάσκαλε), ποῦ μένεις;

στραφεῖς Verb, aor pass ptc, m nom s

στρεφω turn, turn around

θεασάμενος Verb, aor midd dep ptc, m nom s
θεασμαι see v.32

ζητεω seek, search for, look for

"The Evangelist wants his readers to reflect on a deeper question: the Logos-Messiah confronts those who make any show of beginning to follow him and demands that they articulate what it is they really want in life." Carson.

ῤαββι rabbi, teacher, master (honorary title of address)

μεθερμηνεω translate

διδασκαλος, ου m teacher

ποῦ interrogative adverb where

"The verb rendered 'are staying', viz μενω, is often translated 'to remain' or 'to abide', and is so characteristic of John's Gospel (especially Jn 15) that it may well be the Evangelist again assigns more symbolic depth to this question than the Baptist's disciples could have intended at the time." Carson.

Verse 39

λέγει αὐτοῖς· Ἔρχεσθε καὶ ὄψεσθε. ἦλθαν οὖν καὶ εἶδαν ποῦ μένει, καὶ παρ' αὐτῷ ἔμειναν τὴν ἡμέραν ἐκείνην· ὥρα ἦν ὡς δεκάτη.

ὄψεσθε Verb, fut act indic, 2 pl ὄραω see
v.33

εἶδαν Verb, aor act indic, 3 pl ὄραω

ἐκεῖνος, η, ο see v.33

ώρα, ας f hour

δεκατος, η, ον tenth

"Customary usage in the gospels, including John, is to reckon a twelve-hour day from dawn to sunset – very roughly, from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. On this mode of reckoning the incident took place at 4 p.m." Barrett.

Verse 40

ἦν Ἀνδρέας ὁ ἀδελφὸς Σίμωνος Πέτρου εἷς ἐκ τῶν δύο τῶν ἀκουσάντων παρὰ Ἰωάννου καὶ ἀκολουθησάντων αὐτῷ·

εἷς, μια, ἐν gen ἑνος, μιας, ἑνος one

ἀκολουθησάντων Verb, aor act ptc, gen pl
ἀκολουθεω

Some speculate that the other was the 'beloved disciple'.

Verse 41

εὕρισκε οὗτος πρῶτον τὸν ἀδελφὸν τὸν ἴδιον Σίμονα καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ· Εὕρηκαμεν τὸν Μεσσίαν (ὃ ἐστὶν μεθερμηνεύμενον χριστός).

εὕρισκω find

πρῶτον adv. first, in the first place, first of
all

A few MSS read πρῶτος which would mean 'first Andrew found his brother...' implying that the other disciple then did the same – perhaps John finding James. However, the stronger textual evidence supports πρῶτον.

May mean 'first thing' i.e. in the morning

ἴδιος, α, ον one's own

εὕρηκαμεν Verb, perf act indic, 1 pl εὕρισκω
Μεσσίας, ου m Messiah (Aramaic and

Hebrew equivalent to Greek Χριστός)

μεθερμηνεω see v.36

"He became the first in a long line of successors who have discovered that the most common and effective Christian testimony is the private witness of friend to friend, brother to brother." Carson.

Verse 42

ἤγαγεν αὐτὸν πρὸς τὸν Ἰησοῦν. ἐμβλέψας αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν· Σὺ εἶ Σίμων ὁ υἱὸς Ἰωάννου, σὺ κληθήσῃ Κηφᾶς (ὃ ἐρμηνεύεται Πέτρος).

ἤγαγεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s ἄγω come, bring
ἐμβλέψας see v.36

"The same understanding gaze as John has directed upon Jesus (v.36; cf. 5:29)." Barrett.

The majority of MSS support Ἰωῶνα but the majority of the UBS committee considered this an assimilation to Mt 16:17, preferring the reading Ἰωάννου supported by p^{66, 75} & B* *et al.*

Κηφᾶς, α m Cephas (Aramaic equivalent of Πέτρος, rock).

Cf. 1 Cor 9:5; Gal 1:18.

ἐπρηνευω interpret, explain; pass mean, be translated

Verses 43-51

"Two more are now added to the list of Jesus' disciples: Philip and Nathaniel. In this way the chapter provides concrete examples of a point made in the Prologue: although in general his own people did not receive him, yet some did, believing on his name and gaining from him authority to become children of God (1:11-12)." Carson.

Verse 43

Τῇ ἐπαύριον ἠθέλησεν ἐξελθεῖν εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν. καὶ εὕρισκει Φίλιππον καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς· Ἀκολουθεῖ μοι.

ἐπαυριον the next day
θελω wish, will

The subject of the initial verb is undefined. Most assume that Jesus is the subject, but it could be Andrew. Carson comments, "In that case Andrew *first* (v 41) found his brother Simon Peter, and *then* found Philip. This interpretation not only gives extra significance to that '*first*' (cf. notes on v 41), but also explains why 'Jesus' is actually named in the second sentence of v 43... This view ... is supported by the fact that everyone else who comes to Jesus in this chapter does so because of someone else's witness; if Andrew is the subject, there are no exceptions. Theologically, the Evangelist is reinforcing his theme of the importance of bearing witness."

"By Galilee is meant the area to the west of the lake of that name, governed in the time of Jesus by the tetrarch Herod Antipas (Luke 3:1), and separated from Judaea by Samaria." Barrett.

ἀκολουθεω see v.37

Verse 44

ἦν δὲ ὁ Φίλιππος ἀπὸ Βηθσαϊδά, ἐκ τῆς πόλεως Ἀνδρέου καὶ Πέτρου.

πολις, εως f city, town

Bethsaida was at the north-eastern extremity of lake Galilee. Mark 1:29 states that the home of Simon and Andrew was at Capernaum, at the north-western end of the lake. Carson suggests that just as Jesus was viewed as being from Nazareth even though he seems to have moved to Capernaum early in his ministry, so also "If Andrew and Peter were reared in Bethsaida, they would be viewed as from Bethsaida, irrespective of where their mature years found them living and working."

Verse 45

εὕρισκει Φίλιππος τὸν Ναθαναὴλ καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ· Ὃν ἔγραψεν Μωϋσῆς ἐν τῷ νόμῳ καὶ οἱ προφήται εὕρηκαμεν, Ἰησοῦν υἱὸν τοῦ Ἰωσήφ τὸν ἀπὸ Ναζαρέτ.

Some have suggested that the Nathaniel of John is the Bartholomew of the Synoptics. There is no real evidence for this conjecture.

γραφω write

νομος, ου m law

εὕρηκαμεν Verb, perf act indic, 3 s εὕρισκω

I.e. the Messiah.

Ἰησοῦν υἱὸν τοῦ Ἰωσήφ "Elsewhere in the Fourth Gospel the unbelieving Jews try to discredit his claim that he came down from heaven by identifying him as 'the son of Joseph' (6:42), and there the irony to which John frequently resorts is obvious. It is in accord with this frequent use of irony that John 'should allow Jesus to be ignorantly described as "son of Joseph" while himself believing that Jesus had no human father' (Barrett...)." Carson.

Verse 46

καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ Ναθαναήλ· Ἐκ Ναζαρέτ δύναται τι ἀγαθὸν εἶναι; λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ Φίλιππος· Ἐρχου καὶ ἴδε.

δυναμαι can, be able to, be capable of
ἀγαθος, η, ον good, useful, fitting

Nathaniel came from Cana in Galilee (Jn 21:2) and would have treated Nazareth as an obscure village; "It has no mention in the OT, the Talmud or Midrash, or in any contemporary pagan writings." Beasley-Murray.

εἶναι Verb, pres infin εἶμι

ἴδε Verb, aor act imperat, 2 s ὄραω

ἴδε is often used with exclamatory force, 'Look', 'Behold' – see the following verse. "Honest inquiry is a sovereign cure for prejudice." Bruce.

Verse 47

εἶδεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς τὸν Ναθαναήλ ἐρχόμενον πρὸς αὐτὸν καὶ λέγει περὶ αὐτοῦ· Ἴδε ἀληθῶς Ἰσραηλῆτης ἐν ᾧ δόλος οὐκ ἔστιν.

εἶδεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s ὄραω

ἀληθως adv truly, in truth

'Truly, an Israelite ...' not (as NIV), 'Here is a true Israelite ...'

δόλος, ου m deceit, treachery

"In view of the use in v.51 of Gen 28:12 it seems probable that there is here a reference to the cunning of Jacob (later called Israel) in robbing Esau of his blessing (cf. Gen 27:35, ἐλθὼν ὁ ἀδελφός σου μετὰ δόλου ἔλαβεν τὴν εὐλογίαν σου)." Barrett. "Nathanael is regarded as a descendant of Jacob-Israel who does not share in the notorious deceit of his ancestor." Beasley-Murray. There may also be an echo of Ps 32:2.

Verse 48

λέγει αὐτῷ Ναθαναήλ· Πόθεν με γινώσκεις; ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ· Πρὸ τοῦ σε Φίλιππον φωνῆσαι ὄντα ὑπὸ τὴν συκῆν εἶδόν σε.

ποθεν interrog adv. from where, how

ἀπεκρίθη Verb, aor midd dep indic, 3 s

ἀποκρῖνομαι answer, reply, say

εἶπεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s λεγῶ

σε Pronoun, acc s συ

φωνεω call, call out

συκη, ης f fig tree

Some have argued that 'under the fig tree' is a figurative expression, perhaps for the study of the Law, implying that Jesus knew that Nathaniel was a careful student and teacher of the law. However, it is more probably a simple statement of where Nathaniel was when Philip found him, "the supernatural knowledge of Jesus could not be brought out without reference to some landmark." Barrett.

Verse 49

ἀπεκρίθη αὐτῷ Ναθαναήλ· Ραββί, σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, σὺ βασιλεὺς εἶ τοῦ Ἰσραήλ.

ραββι see v.38

βασιλευς, εως m king

Refers back to the claim that Jesus is the Messiah (v.45) which Nathaniel now confesses. "The true Israelite acknowledges the true King of Israel." Sanders. However, at this time the disciples did not understand these claims fully or properly.

Verse 50

ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ· Ὅτι εἶπόν σοι ὅτι εἶδόν σε ὑποκάτω τῆς συκῆς πιστεύεις; μείζω τούτων ὄφη.

ὑποκατω prep with gen under, beneath
πιστεω believe (in), have faith (in)

Barrett prefers to understand as a statement though Sanders prefers to read it as a question.

μειζων, ον and μειζοτερος, α, ον (comp of μεγας) greater

ὄφη Verb, fut midd dep indic, 2 s ὄραω

This saying forms an introduction to the 'signs' which occupy the greater part of chs 2-11.

Verse 51

καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ· Ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ὅψεσθε τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀνεωγῶτα καὶ τοὺς ἀγγέλους τοῦ θεοῦ ἀναβαίνοντας καὶ καταβαίνοντας ἐπὶ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.

"This solemn formula [ἀμην ἀμην λεγῶ ὑμῖν] of asseveration occurs 20 times in John; with σοι for ὑμῖν, 5 times more." Barrett.

Note the plural ὑμῖν – the promise is not made to Nathaniel alone. "The vision is probably for all the disciples, and by extension, for those also who would follow them." Carson.

Of the future tense ὄψεσθε, Beasley-Murray says this refers, "not to a future beyond the death of Jesus (as in Mark 14:62), but to the entire gamut of the action of the Son of Man for the kingdom of God: from the heaven that became open at his baptism, the blessings of the saving sovereignty will be poured out through him – in the signs he performs, the revelation of his word, the life that he lives, the death and resurrection that he accomplishes (his 'lifting up'), till the goal is attained when the Son of Man welcomes the redeemed to the Father's house (14:3)."

οὐρανός, ου m heaven

ἀνεφώγῳτα Verb, perf pass ptc, m acc s

ἀνοιγῳ open

ἀναβαίνω go up, come up, ascend

καταβαίνω come or go down, descend

See Gen 28:12. Jesus is himself the bridge or way between heaven and earth. "John ... reflecting on the meaning of the incarnation, sees in Jesus, the Son of man, not merely an eschatological but an eternal contact between heaven and earth, God and man, and uses the ladder and the ascending and descending of angels to express his conception. The Son of man is both in heaven and on earth (3:13); he descends to give life to the world (6:27, 53); he ascends again to his glory (6:62), but his ascent and glorification are by way of the Cross (3:14; 8:28; 12:23, 34; 13:31)." Barrett. "He is the point of contact between heaven and earth, the locus of the 'traffic' that brings heaven's blessings to mankind." Beasley-Murray. Carson adds, "What the disciples are promised ... is heaven-sent confirmation that the one they have acknowledged as the Messiah has been appointed by God. Every Jew honoured Jacob/Israel, the father of the twelve tribes; now everyone must recognise that this same God has appointed Jesus as his Messiah. If there is a hint of the 'new Israel' theme, it is here, not in v. 47. Jesus is the new Israel. Even the old Bethel, the old 'house of God', has been superseded. It is no longer *there*, at Bethel, that God reveals himself, but in Jesus ... – just as later on Jesus renders obsolete such holy places as the temple (2:19-22) and the sacred mountains of the Samaritans (4:20-24). Through him comes the fulness of grace that surpasses and replaces the earlier grace."

Of the phrase τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου Carson writes, "Jesus' self-designation, 'the Son of Man', was an ambiguous expression. Both in Hebrew and in Greek a 'son of man' could be a circumlocution for a human being, and on occasion Jesus apparently used it instead of 'I' or 'me' (e.g. 6:27; cf. 6:20). At the same time, the expression enjoyed obvious affinity with the 'one like a son of man' in Daniel's vision (Dn 7:13-14), the one who is granted universal authority by the Ancient of Days. Precisely because the expression was not narrowly tied to one eschatological figure, Jesus could take it up and use it without fear of being misunderstood because of doubtful associations in his hearers' minds. Titles like 'the King of Israel' and 'the King of the Jews', while appropriate at a certain level, were so loaded with messianism that they could not be adopted without restraint and appropriate caveats. 'Son of Man', on the other hand, lay ready to hand as an expression that could be filled with precisely the right content. In the New Testament the title refers only to Jesus, and occurs almost always on his lips. In other words, he himself shapes its content, and under its rubric fuses the authoritative figure of Daniel 7 with the righteous sufferer motif from the Old Testament, a motif that reached its high point in the 'servant songs' of Isaiah 42:1-53:12. In the Fourth Gospel, the expression occurs thirteen times, and is most commonly associated with the themes of crucifixion (e.g. 3:1; 8:28) and revelation (6:27, 53), but also with eschatological authority (5:27; 9:39)."