

DISCIPLES AND APOSTLES

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Readings: Matthew 10:1-16, True Christian Religion 108 (end)

Disciples

Wouldn't you like to be a disciple of the Lord? Think how wonderful it must have been to follow Jesus when He was in the world—to see Him, to touch Him, to watch Him heal sick people and bring dead people back to life, to see Him walk on the water of the Sea of Galilee, and to be there when He fed five thousand people with only five loaves of bread and two fishes. And it would have been especially wonderful to hear Him talk, to listen to Him tell about Himself, about His church and heaven, and about what people must do if they want to go to heaven after they die. Yes, each of you may well feel that you would like to have been one of the Lord's disciples.

But you *can* be a disciple of the Lord, because a disciple of the Lord is anyone who follows Him, who loves and worships Him, listening to the teachings of His Word and doing what He says ought to be done. All of you can do these things! And you don't have to be a special or important person to do them. None of the Lord's twelve disciples who followed Him in the world were important men. Most of them were simple fishermen whose work was to throw nets into the Sea of Galilee and to sell the fish that were caught in these nets. One of them was a publican, a tax collector, who collected the money that people were supposed to pay to the government. They were not especially important, or smart, or well-educated men. But they loved the Lord and were willing to go wherever He wanted them to go and to do whatever He wanted them to do.

So, you, too, can be a disciple of the Lord. You do not have to be important or rich. You do not have to be smart or always make high grades in school. But you need to love the Lord. You need to worship Him, and want to learn from His Word how to obey His commandments, so that you may become an angel in heaven. Anyone who does these things is a disciple of the Lord. And although you cannot see and hear the Lord physically, He will speak to you from His Word. For He said, "If you abide in My Word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32).

This is why it is so important to learn to read well. For then you can read the Word and find out the wonderful things that are taught in it. These things are called truths, and the truths of the Word show us how to live like the angels in heaven. They tell us not to hate and want revenge, but to love other people. For

the Lord said, “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35). And those who become disciples of the Lord have contentment while they live in this world, and afterward they will have the deep happiness of heaven.

Apostles

The Lord’s twelve disciples were also called by another name. When they were following the Lord they were called *disciples*, but when they were sent out to preach and to heal, they were called *apostles*. An apostle is a person who is sent by the Lord to do His work, to teach about His Word, to tell people about Him, about His church and about heaven. And so the Word tells us that the Lord sent these twelve men throughout the whole country to teach people about His heavenly kingdom, to heal the sick, and to chase evil spirits away from anyone who needed and wanted this kind of help. And because these twelve men were sent forth to teach about the Lord and to do His work, they were called apostles.

So all people who follow the Lord and learn about Him are His disciples. But His apostles are those who, after they have learned, teach others about Him. Ministers and teachers of the church do this work, and so they may be called apostles. And this work is very important; in fact, the church depends on this work. This fact was shown to the disciple John when he was on the Isle of Patmos and saw into the other world. The Lord showed John a vision of the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven. It was a most beautiful city of gold, with a great, high wall around it, with twelve gates of pearl that were always open, and having streets of pure gold. This beautiful city rested on twelve foundations that were decorated with all kinds of shining, precious stones. And on each of the twelve foundations was written the name of one of the Lord’s twelve apostles.

This magnificent city which John saw was a picture of the New Church which was to begin many years later. And the names of the twelve apostles were written on the twelve foundations of the city to show how very important the work of teaching about the Lord and about heaven is. The twelve apostles first did this work when Jesus sent them out in this world to preach about the kingdom of heaven. But those same twelve apostles did this work again, many hundreds of years later when they were angels in heaven. For on June 19th, in the year 1770, the Lord called these twelve together and sent them throughout the whole *spiritual* world to tell the good news that the Lord Jesus Christ is the one God of heaven and earth, and that His heaven and His church will last forever. This was the beginning of the Lord’s New Church.

Some of you may become apostles for the Lord and preach or teach about the truths of His Word. But all of you can be a disciple of the Lord. And you can continually work to become a better disciple—to learn more from the Word so

that you may love and worship the Lord better than you have ever done before. And if you do this, then, slowly you can come to know and understand the true meaning of that wonderful message that the twelve apostles spread throughout the whole spiritual world, the good news that “the Lord God Jesus Christ reigns, whose kingdom shall be for ages of ages” (*True Christian Religion* 791).

Amen.

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[T]he twelve apostles were called together by the Lord, and were sent forth through the whole spiritual world, as they formerly were through the whole natural world, with the command to preach this gospel; and to each apostle was assigned a particular province; and this command they are executing with great zeal and industry.

True Christian Religion 791

[T]he Lord called together His twelve disciples who followed Him in the world; and the next day He sent them all forth throughout the whole spiritual world to preach the Gospel that THE LORD GOD JESUS CHRIST reigns, whose kingdom shall be for ages and ages....