

THESE TWELVE JESUS SENT FORTH

Rev. Kenneth O. Stroh

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

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 make dead people come 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 be 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 live in heaven as angels after they die. Yes, each of you may well feel that you would like to be 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, anyone who loves and worships Him, who listens to the teaching of His Word and who does what He says ought to be done. Anyone of you can do these things. And you don't have to be special or important persons 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 fishing 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 money that the people were supposed to pay to the government. They were not important, especially smart, or well-educated men. But they loved the Lord; they were willing to go wherever He wanted them to go and do whatever He wanted them to do.

And all of you, too, can be disciples of the Lord. You do not have to be important or rich. You do not have to be smart so that you always make high marks in school. But you must love the Lord. You must worship Him, and want to learn from His Word how to obey His commandments, so that you may become angels in heaven. Anyone who does these things is a disciple of the Lord.

But you will notice that the Lord's twelve disciples were called by another name, too. Do you remember what that name was? They were called "apostles." Then, what is an apostle? 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 says about the Lord's twelve apostles that "these twelve Jesus sent forth" (Matthew 10:5). He sent them throughout the whole country to teach about His heavenly kingdom, to heal sick people, 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 they do is most important; in fact, the church depends on their work. This fact was shown to the disciple John when he 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 is the work of teaching about the Lord and about heaven. This work was first done by the twelve apostles when Jesus sent them forth in this world to preach about the kingdom of heaven. But it was done also, many hundreds of years later, by these same twelve apostles, who by then 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 would last forever. This was the beginning of the Lord's New Church, whose birthday we celebrate on June 19th.

And as we celebrate the birthday of our beloved church, we should rejoice that the Lord has come again to show the way to heaven, and to make certain that anyone who chooses may be able to go to heaven. We may hope that some of you, indeed, many of you, will become apostles of the Lord's New Church, and will become ministers and teachers of the Word of the Lord in His Second Coming. But all of us can be the Lord's disciples. We all should make up our minds to be better disciples—to learn more from the Word so that we may love and worship the Lord better than we have ever done before. And if we do this, then, slowly we 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.” *Amen.*