

Being Disciples
By Rev. J. Hugh Odhner

Lessons: True Christian Religion 791
John 13:34-35

“After this work was finished the Lord called together His twelve disciples who followed Him in the world; and the next day He sent them all forth throughout the universal spiritual world to preach the Gospel that Lord God Jesus Christ reigns, whose kingdom shall be for ages and ages ... This took place on the nineteenth day of June, 1770.” (TCR 791)

The True Christian Religion tells us that the Lord called together His twelve disciples and sent them out to preach the Gospel that Lord God Jesus Christ reigns. This is said to have taken place on June 19th 1770. Everyone in the New Church now celebrates this day. Some call it New Church Day, some the Church's birthday, while others call it the Nineteenth of June. The Word doesn't call it any of these. It simply tells us what occurred and that this happened on the 19th day of June 1770.

What is said in the True Christian Religion is more than just a bit of church history. It is a representation of deeper Spiritual and Celestial truths. These truths can to some degree be seen when we consider what is said elsewhere in the Word about the twelve disciples.

There is a striking similarity between what the Lord said to His disciples in True Christian Religion 791 and what He said to them 1700 years earlier when they were all still in this world. In Matt 28: 18,19 we read that Jesus came and spoke to his disciples, saying,

“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

In the gospel of Matthew, He tells the disciples that all authority has been given to Him in heaven and on earth. In True Christian Religion 791, He instructs the disciples to declare that he reigns in His Kingdom.

According to Matthew, the disciples are to go out and make disciples of all nations. According to True Christian Religion 791, the Lord sends the disciples out into the whole spiritual world. In Matthew the disciples are told to baptize and teach. In True Christian Religion 791, they are told to preach.

But again, this is not mere history. These parallels between what the Lord instructed the disciples to do at the time of His first Advent and then at His Second Advent; to teach and preach, and to baptize all have relation to our instruction and regeneration.

When it is said that the Lord called together His disciples who followed Him in the world, this applies to each of us today. We are also His disciples -- if we are following the Lord by living according to His Word. And even if we are not living according to His Word, still the Lord calls out to us to do so. Listen to these words of the Lord:

“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)

If we abide in – if we live according to – the Lord’s Word, we are His disciples indeed. And when we do that, when we live in His Word, He is able make us spiritually free, that is, to free us from bondage to our own spiritually self-destructive habits, obsessions and lifestyles.

Being disciples of the Lord means we also have a part to play in the preaching, teaching, and evangelizing of the world around us. For some this use is a vocation, as in the case of a preacher. But for all of us, this preaching, teaching, and evangelizing is evident in the lives we live and in the uses we perform. John 15:8 tells us, *“By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”*

Conjugal Love 9, describing what is meant by glorifying God says that,

“(Glorifying God) means to bring forth the fruits of love, that is, to perform the work of one's occupation faithfully, honestly, and diligently. For this is the effect of love of God and love of the neighbor, and it is what binds society together and makes its good. It is by this that God is glorified, and afterwards by worship at prescribed times.” (CL 9)

When each of us does our work or duty faithfully, honestly, and diligently, from a love of God and the neighbor, we are glorifying God and being disciples of the Lord. By the work that we do, by the fruit that we produce, we are known as to our quality and our love, and by the fruit or works that we do the Lord is glorified. This is clear also from what is said in Matthew 5:16, *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”*

The Lord tells us:

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:34-35)

Think about that – *“By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”* When others can see that we have love for one another, then they can see that we are followers or disciples of the Lord.

On the other hand, --- when others observe us backbiting, gossiping, not doing the work of our occupations honestly and faithfully, lacking kindness and charity – well -- there is little chance that we will be seen as disciples or followers of the Lord. And consider, as we hope and try to spread the New Church and its teachings, what can be more disheartening to a newcomer or new member than to be exposed to anger and gossip about others in the Church. If we are not seen as followers of the Lord, then are we not seen as followers of our own worldly and self-centered loves?

When our thoughts reflect on the Nineteenth of June, it is almost inevitable that we will also think about the growth of the Church. This is useful especially if we see that the Lord is calling us also to be His disciples and to go out and make other disciples, teaching them to observe all things that the Lord has commanded us. And it is then a good time to reflect upon the state of the Church, not just about the state of the Church organization but more so of the state of the Church within us. And as to the Church within us, are we acting as disciples of the Lord? Would anyone recognize that we are? And as to the Church organization, what do we need to do that it may come to truly be that Holy City descending from God out of Heaven?

AMEN

Prayer:

It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and it shall be lifted up above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it, and many nations shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. Amen (Micah 4:1-2)

Lessons

True Christian Religion 791.

“After this work was finished the 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, according to the prediction in Daniel (7:13, 14), and in Revelation (11:15).

Also that blessed are those that come to the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:9).

This took place on the nineteenth day of **June**, 1770. This is what is meant by these words of the Lord:

He shall send His angels and they shall gather together His elect, from the end of the heavens to the end thereof (Matt. 24:31).”

John 13:34-35

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”