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"FREELY YE HAVE RECEIVED, FREELY GIVE."

– FEB. 20. – MATT. 10:2-15. –

THE LORD selected his disciples from time to time during the earlier part of his ministry, but it was not until they had received considerable instruction from him that they were recognized in their office of apostles, and fully empowered for their special work. They had freely received of the Lord the good tidings of great joy that he was the Messiah, and that the time for the establishment of the Kingdom was at hand; and now they were to give this message to all those who were in the condition to hear it. "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear."

The twelve apostles are mentioned by Matthew apparently in the order of their sending forth, two by two. As someone has said, "One of the ways Jesus took to overcome the imperfections of his followers and to the better prepare them to do a work which required perfection, was by his grouping of the apostles, whose imperfections were perhaps like our own, of the nature of *halfness*: we too frequently see one side of a truth and not the other. We too frequently feel the greatness of some quality to such an extent that we depreciate some other quality which seems contrary but is really complementary. Our Lord seems to have acted with careful reference to this, in sending out his apostles two by two in the order indicated. Peter, the bold, impetuous man, is joined with Andrew, the apostle chosen by the Scotch as their national patron – as far-seeing, careful, cautious. James and John were paired, the former elderly, the latter young. Philip, the slow-witted was paired with Bartholomew (Nathaniel), the quick-witted. Thomas, the doubting, skeptical intellect was joined with Matthew, one of the heroes of faith. James, the son of Alpheus, the advocate of works, was united to Jude, a man of doctrine. Simon, [R2261 : page 46] the zealot, a man of enthusiasm and independence, was linked with Judas

Iscariot, the conservative economist. So, the Master made one full man out of two half men in each case."

Having grouped his disciples, our Lord endowed them with power, gave them of his spirit or power over various diseases (Luke 9:1) and sent them forth. But they were not to go at random, anywhere and everywhere; a particular work was to be done, and no other – the true Israelites only were to be sought, and hence the charge, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not, but go instead to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." How evident it is from this that our Lord's work at the first advent is considerably misapprehended: he very evidently was neither dealing with the world nor teaching the world, but fulfilling his own commission to the seed of Abraham, as he elsewhere expresses it, saying, "I am not sent, save to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." The message which the apostles were to deliver was not for the Gentiles, neither was it for the Samaritans even, altho the latter were a mixed people and had been dwelling for centuries in the land of Israel and claimed Jacob as their father also; – it was a message only to the legitimate Israelites. These were called lost sheep, not because they had wandered out of the land of Israel, for they were in it; nor because of having lost their identity as Israelites, for they had not; but because they had wandered from the Lord and from their covenant. They are similarly spoken of by Isaiah, the prophet (53:6), "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."

The reason for sending the disciples only to the legitimate Israelites is evident when we notice the message they were to carry: "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." God had promised Abraham that of his seed he would raise up the great ruler of the world, Messiah, and the hope that Israel long enjoyed was that when Messiah would come as one of their brethren, they, as his family or nation, would be specially blest and made associates with him in his Kingdom. For eighteen centuries they had been waiting for the fulfilment of this

Abrahamic covenant, and now Messiah having come, all the gracious promises of God, made *to them*, were ready to be fulfilled through him. And therefore, the message was as above.

The ears of all true Israelites would certainly tingle, as they would hear such an announcement; but inasmuch as they had waited long, and with much disappointment, it need not surprise us that they were generally skeptical, and refused to believe that theirs was the favored day, and that the unpretentious Nazarene and his heterogeneous company of disciples were the nucleus of a great Kingdom which should bless the world. Their faith staggered, – that is, the faith of all those who did not have sufficient faith. But, as we have elsewhere seen, the Lord gave special helps to all those who were right at heart; true Israelites indeed – such as Nathaniel, subsequently called Bartholomew.

It will be noticed that the preaching commissioned was wholly different from that done by "Evangelists" to-day. The latter no doubt would feel like criticising our Lord for sending out twelve teachers with any such commission, because their views of what should be preached are so different from our Lord's views. Had they lived at that day, and been confidential friends of our Lord, they no doubt would have offered a suggestion like this: Master, with all deference to your abilities, we want to suggest that the message is not the proper one: you should instruct these evangelists to give the *pure gospel*. They should tell the people plainly and distinctly, "You are all miserable sinners straight on the road to hell fire and eternal torment; repent, therefore, and come to the mourner's bench, if you would escape it." This, Master, is the true gospel that you should send forth, and if you neglect it, these disciples themselves ought to disregard your instructions to the contrary and should go forth to save souls from hell, and to preach accordingly.

But we, dear readers, are not to suppose that our Lord made a mistake, but rather that some of his deluded followers of the present

day are mistaken respecting what constitutes the gospel. The gospel which our Lord and the apostles preached was really gospel, – "good tidings of great joy:" it was, then, a message to that one nation only, but later, in its full development, it will be unto *all people* – to every member of Adam's race.

In announcing that the Kingdom was ready, if Israel was ready to receive it, and to constitute its channels of mercy for the blessing of all nations, it was appropriate that some signs or proofs respecting this matter should be given. Hence, the miracles which our Lord performed, his apostles were commissioned to perform also. These were to be understood as manifestations of divine favor coming with the Messiah as proofs of his Messiahship; and they were so understood, and the disciples merely represented themselves as being the advance agents and heralds of Messiah, and properly did not claim any of the powers exercised as being their own. The cures performed were merely foregleams of the blessings which in fuller measure would result from the inauguration of Messiah's kingdom, in which, according to the prophets, they understood to expect that all the blind eyes would be opened, all the deaf ears unstopped, all the lame leap for joy, etc. **[R2261 : page 47]**

The apostles had something to give, but not to sell; freely they had received, freely they were to dispense God's mercies. They were, nevertheless, to live, to obtain their daily bread, from those to whom they ministered. To this intent they were not to make advance provision, neither in money nor in clothing, nor even an extra cane: in other words, they were not to go as travelers, but rather as persons who were thoroughly at home, and who expected to find a home and the necessities of life wherever they went, giving back, in exchange for these temporal blessings, the blessings they had been empowered to bestow; namely, (1) the physical healings and (2) their peace or blessing. The Lord evidently intended by this method that all should be witnesses that his gospel was not one of self-seeking, nor for show, nor for money making. Not only was there no uniform provided, but

no arrangement was even made for carrying gifts, let alone taking up collections, for they were to take with them no scrip; that is, no valise or satchel wherein to carry surplus.

On entering a city they were to seek for the worthy ones – they were not to be careless respecting where they lodged, nor to expect that any except the worthy would appreciate their message: nor were they to go from house to house as beggars for their meals and lodging, but rather to expect to remain with some true Israelite during the period of their brief stay in each village. If received into a house, their peace or blessing was to be with it – they were not to stay in any place where the Lord's blessing would not be appreciated. There is a special sense in which a blessing goes with every true child of God wherever he may go, now as well as then; but apparently a special blessing was designed of the Lord to rest upon those who entertained his special representatives, when bearing the harvest message in the end of the Jewish age. The family would be blessed of the Lord because of the presence of his representatives, and they would lose nothing by having entertained a herald of the Kingdom. Similar instances are recorded of olden times, for instance, Elijah's stay with the widow and her son: the divine blessing going with the prophet caused that the barrel of meal did not exhaust, neither the cruse of oil. Likewise we remember it is written that while the ark of the Lord was in the home of Obed-Edom, a special blessing rested upon his house, his family, his affairs. Here we have a lesson respecting hospitality and how the divine blessing rests upon all those who endeavor to do anything for the Lord's disciples, because of love and respect for him – even a cup of cold **[R2262 : page 47]** water to one of the least of these shall have a reward, we are assured.

We are forcibly reminded here of the fact that we are now living in the harvest time of the Gospel age, the exact parallel of the Jewish harvest; and that our same Master and Lord is now sending forth to the nominal "holy nation and royal priesthood," Christendom, a similar message, "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!" and is sending this

message in much the same manner that he sent the message to the fleshly house of Israel. It seems now also to be his general method to send the messengers, who bear to the household the present truth, in couples. These take with them a more elaborate message as represented in the various volumes of MILLENNIAL DAWN; but it is the same message that was carried at the first advent, namely, "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." True, the methods are slightly different as the times are different, but the general principle is the same, in that the messengers in the present truth are not self-seekers or money-gatherers, but merely accept, in exchange for the blessings which they confer, enough financial support to meet their expenses, economically. And we have no hesitation in saying that whoever may receive these representatives of the Lord and the present truth will receive into their homes with them some measure of the divine blessing in compensation for any service they may render them.

The shaking off of the dust from the apostles' feet when leaving a house or a city where they were not received, was not to be done as a vindictive expression of hatred, but rather as a closing part of their declaration, namely, that if their message was not received, if their hearers were not interested in the Kingdom, the result would be that they would fall under judgment as being unworthy of any part or lot in that Kingdom. It was a symbolic act implying that they renounced all responsibility for what the consequences of the rejection might be.

Our Lord's words confirm this thought, for he says, "It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment than for that city." As a matter of fact, the people and cities of Israel, after the rejection of our Lord, were given over to a great time of trouble which resulted in very general loss, trouble, calamity upon all except the few who did receive the Messiah, and who were gathered out as "wheat" for the garner of the new dispensation. It may be said truly, that in some respects the destruction which came upon Sodom and Gomorrha was less awful than the destruction which came

upon Jerusalem and other cities of Palestine during the burning day at the close of the Jewish "harvest."

The remainder of the discourse (vss. 16-42) would seem to indicate that the work done by the apostles then sent forth was designed to be representative or typical of the entire work of the Gospel age; and so it has proved: not many have received the Kingdom message gladly; but enough will be found to complete the elect "little flock" to whom it will be the Father's good pleasure to give the Kingdom.
