Message Four
The Vision of the Self
Scripture Reading: Matt. 16:21-26; Luke 9:23-25; Rom. 6:6; 8:13; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:17a

I. We need to see a vision of the self so that the self may be exposed and denied and that we may hate our independence from God and from the Body—Matt. 16:21-26; John 15:4-5; Philem. 8-14:

A. The self is the soul-life with the emphasis on human thoughts and opinions—Matt. 16:23-25:
   1. In Matthew 16:23-25 three terms are related to one another: *mind, himself*, and *soul-life*.
   2. Our mind is the expression of our self, and our self is the embodiment of our soul-life—vv. 23-25.
   3. Our soul-life is embodied and lived out by our self, and our self is expressed through our mind, idea, thought, concept, and opinion—vv. 22-23.

B. The self is the embodiment of Satan; the self is the essence of Satan in the soul, making the soul independent from God to express its self-opinion and self-will—v. 23:
   1. The origin of the self was Satan’s injecting his thought into the human mind—Gen. 3:1-6.
   2. The soul became the self when something of Satan was added to the soul; the thing that was added to the soul was the thought, or the mind, of Satan—Matt. 16:23; 2 Cor. 11:3.
   3. The self is the soul plus the satanic mind—Matt. 16:23, 25.

C. If we have a vision of the self, we will see what the self is—the self is the soul declaring its independence from God—v. 23; Luke 14:26; Job 42:5-6:
   1. Due to the fall, the soul created by God declared independence from God—Gen. 3:1-6:
      a. Man took the thought, the idea, of Satan into his soul, resulting in the soul becoming the self, which is independent of God.
      b. The soul is especially independent of God in the opinion and in the will—Matt. 16:22-23:
         (1) The self is something of Satan in the soul expressed through the opinions—v. 23.
         (2) We have opinions as the incarnation and manifestation of the self because we are independent of God; the more we are independent of God, the more we have opinions as the manifestation of the self.
   2. Whenever we do something by ourselves without depending on God, we are in the self—vv. 22-23; cf. Phil. 3:3.
   3. Being independent of the Body is equal to being independent of God.

II. The hindrance to seeing the vision of the Body and to practicing the Body life is the self—Col. 1:18; 2:18-20, 23; 3:15:

A. The Body is versus the self, and the self is the enemy of the Body—Matt. 16:18, 23.
B. Because the self is something independent of the Lord and of the Body, the self is the greatest problem to the building up of the Body—Col. 1:18; 2:1-19, 23:
   1. When we have the self, we do not have the Body—Matt. 16:24.
   2. When we have the Body, we do not have the self—v. 18; Eph. 4:16.
C. We should deny ourselves and identify ourselves with the Body; if we do this, the life we live will fully be the Body life, and the Lord will gain the expression of His Body—1 Cor. 12:27; Col 1:18; 3:15.
D. In order for the Body to be built up, the self, the independent soul, must be condemned, denied, rejected, and renounced—Matt. 16:18, 21-26; Luke 9:23-25.

III. We should deny the self, take up our cross, and follow the Lord—Matt. 16:24:
A. For a person to overly care for himself is for him to love the self and to always look at, think about, and consider himself—2 Tim. 3:2.
B. To deny the self is to forget about our self and to forfeit our soul-life; losing the soul-life is the reality of denying the self—Matt. 16:26; Luke 9:24-25.
C. We need to see how to deny the self, to deal with the self:
   1. We need to have the revelation that our old man has been crucified with Christ—Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20.
   2. After seeing this revelation, we need to recognize and accept this fact.
   3. We need to apply to ourselves the death of Christ that He accomplished and that we have recognized; this is the correct meaning of bearing the cross—Matt. 16:24:
      a. This application must be carried out in the Spirit—Rom. 8:13.
      b. When we live and walk in the Spirit, the Spirit applies the death of Christ to us—Gal. 5:16, 24-25; Rom. 8:4, 13.
   4. To bear the cross is to remain under the killing of the death of Christ for the terminating of our self, natural life, and old man; in so doing, we deny the self so that we may follow the Lord, the resurrected Christ, as the life-giving Spirit in our spirit—1 Cor. 15:45b; 6:17; Gal. 5:25.

IV. It is crucial that we deny the self and take Christ as our person for the church life as the living of the one new man—2:20; Eph. 2:15; 4:24; 3:17a; Col. 3:10-11:
A. In the one new man there is only one person—Christ—Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:17a.
B. It is vitally important for us to know that our spirit is the inner man and that the person of this inner man is Christ—Rom. 8:16; Eph. 3:17a:
   1. If we would take Christ as our person, we must see that our spirit is not merely an organ—our spirit is our person—1:17; 3:16-17a.
   2. We should deny our self, our own person, and live by our spirit, our new person—Matt. 16:24; Rom. 8:4; Eph. 3:17a.
C. For the church life as the living of this new man, we must reject our old person and live by Christ as our new person—Luke 9:23-25; Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20.
D. We need an absolute consecration of handing ourselves over to the Lord and yielding our person to Him so that He can be our person; our consecration is to take Christ as our person—Rom. 12:2; 14:7-8; Eph. 3:17a; 2 Cor. 5:15.