

LIVING IN THE REALITY OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

(Saturday—First Morning Session)

Message Four

The Exercise of the Kingdom for the Building Up of the Church

Scripture Reading: Matt. 16:16-18, 21-28

I. Matthew 16 reveals the way to build up the church and also reveals the enemy of the building:

- A. Christ, the Son of the living God, builds the church on Himself as the rock, with stones such as Peter, a transformed person—vv. 16-18.
- B. The gates of Hades, Satan's authority or power of darkness, attack the church to frustrate the Lord from building up the church—v. 18.
- C. In order to build the church, the Lord had to pass through death and enter into resurrection—v. 21:
 - 1. The church was produced through Christ's death and resurrection—John 12:24.
 - 2. The way to build up the church is to be crucified and resurrected—cf. 2 Cor. 4:10-12; Gal. 2:20.
 - 3. The church exists and is built up only in the realm of resurrection through crucifixion—Gen. 2:21-22; cf. Eph. 4:15-16.
- D. Peter, with a good heart, rebuked the Lord and tried to prevent the Lord from going to Jerusalem to be crucified—Matt. 16:22:
 - 1. It was not Peter but Satan who came out through one of the gates of Hades, the gate of Peter's self, to try to frustrate the Lord from building up the church—v. 23.
 - 2. The self, the mind, and the soul-life are the main gates through which Satan comes forth to attack and damage the church—vv. 23-26.

II. The building up of the church depends on the shutting up of the gates of Hades through the exercise of three keys—vv. 24-26:

- A. We need to learn to exercise the key of denying the self—v. 24:
 - 1. The flesh is the created body corrupted by sin, the nature of Satan (Rom. 6:12, 14; 7:8, 11, 17, 20); the self is the created soul plus the satanic mind, the mind of Satan.
 - 2. When the mind, the thought, of Satan was injected into the human soul, the human soul became the self, the embodiment of Satan—Gen. 3:1-6; Matt. 16:22-23:
 - a. Before Eve took the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil into her body, the thought, the mind, of Satan was injected into her soul.
 - b. After Eve's mind was poisoned by Satan's thought, her emotion was aroused, and then her will was exercised to make a decision to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge.
 - c. By this time every part of the soul—the mind, the emotion, and the will—had been poisoned.
 - d. The self is the embodiment of the soul-life, which is expressed through the mind; thus, the self, the soul-life, and the mind are three-in-one.
 - e. Behind these three is Satan, who manipulates the self in order to damage the church—v. 23.
 - 3. The self is the soul declaring independence from God:

- a. The Lord does not have regard for what we do; rather, He has regard for our dependence on Him—7:21-23; cf. Josh. 9:14.
 - b. The enemy of the Body is the self; because the self is something independent, the self is the greatest problem, the greatest frustration and opposition, to the building up of the Body.
 - c. We should depend not only on God but also on the Body, on the brothers and sisters—Exo. 17:11-13; Acts 9:25; 2 Cor. 11:33.
 - d. The Lord and the Body are one; hence, if we are dependent on the Body, we are also dependent on the Lord, and if we are independent of the Body, we are spontaneously independent of the Lord.
 - e. When we are dependent, the self is gone, and instead of the self, we have the Lord's presence and are full of peace.
 - f. Only when the self-life has been utterly dealt with by the cross are we able to touch the reality of the Body of Christ and come to know the Body.
4. The following are some expressions of the self (see *Hymns*, #866, stanzas 5 and 6):
- a. With the self there are ambition, pride, and self-exaltation—Matt. 20:20-28; 1 Pet. 5:5; Rom. 12:3; Num. 12:1-10; 16:1-3; Phil. 2:3-4.
 - b. With the self there are self-righteousness, self-justification, and exposing, criticizing, and condemning others—Matt. 9:10-13; Luke 18:9-14; 1 Pet. 4:8; John 3:17; 8:11; Luke 6:37; Matt. 7:1-5.
 - c. With the self there are introspection and self-despising—S. S. 2:8-9; 1 Cor. 12:15-16.
 - d. When we are in the self, we can be offended by the church, the leading ones, or the saints—Matt. 6:14-15; 18:21-35; Mark 11:25-26; Col. 3:13.
 - e. With the self there are disappointment and discouragement—cf. Rom. 8:28-29; 2 Cor. 4:1.
 - f. With the self there are self-love, self-preservation, self-seeking, and self-pity—Matt. 13:5, 20-21.
 - g. With the self there are murmurings and reasonings—Exo. 16:1-9; Phil. 2:14.
 - h. With the self there is natural affection (friendship) based on natural taste and preference—Matt. 12:46-50; Phil. 2:2b; 1 Cor. 12:25.
 - i. With the self there are the matters of being opinionated and dissenting—John 11:21, 23-28, 39; Acts 15:35-39; cf. 1 Cor. 7:25, 40.
 - j. When we are in the self, we are individualistic and independent—16:12.
5. If we exercise the key of denying the self to lock up the self, it is impossible for us to be offended; blessed are those who are not offended—cf. Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60:
- a. If we can be offended, it is proof that we are full of self.
 - b. If my self has been locked up, I will not be offended no matter what you do to me or how you treat me—Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60.
6. We need to learn to exercise the key of denying the self to lock up the self in every situation:
- a. Whether a situation is for us or against us, whether the brothers love us or hate us, we must lock up the self—2 Cor. 12:15.
 - b. If the self is locked up, the church will be built up.
- B. We need to learn to exercise the key of taking up the cross—Matt. 16:24:
1. To take up the cross simply means to take up the will of God; the cross is God's will—26:39; John 18:11:

- a. The Lord Jesus was not forced to go to the cross like a criminal; He was willing to go because the cross was God's will—Matt. 26:39.
 - b. The Lord Jesus was willing to be crucified so that through His death, His life might be released to produce and build up the church—John 12:24.
 - c. The cross was a great suffering to the Lord, but He cared not for the suffering but for the fulfillment of God's purpose—Heb. 12:2; Col. 1:24.
2. *Let him...take up his cross* (Matt. 16:24) means that we are not forced to bear the cross but that we willingly take it up:
- a. Our husband, wife, and children are God's will and are therefore our cross.
 - b. The one church is God's will, and every brother and sister in the church is God's will; thus, to bear the cross is to bear the church and to bear all the saints so that we would have the genuine oneness—John 17:21-23; Eph. 4:3, 13; 1 Cor. 1:10; Phil. 2:2.
3. We need not only to take up our cross but also to carry our cross, that is, to remain on the cross, keeping our old man under the termination of the cross day by day—Luke 14:27; Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20; Phil. 3:10; 1 Cor. 15:31:
- a. We have received the divine life through the Lord's crucifixion; now, in order to be built up in this life, we need to willingly and happily take up the cross.
 - b. We should not care for our taste, feeling, or consciousness; rather, we should care only for God's will, which is that we would have the genuine oneness—John 17:21-23; Eph. 4:3, 13; 1 Cor. 1:10; Phil. 2:2.
- C. We need to learn to exercise the key of losing the soul-life—Matt. 16:25:
- 1. To save the soul-life is to please the self by allowing the soul to have its enjoyment; to lose the soul-life is to lose the enjoyment of the soul:
 - a. God created man as a soul (Gen. 2:7) with the need for enjoyment.
 - b. Receiving God into man's spirit and expressing God through the soul should be man's joy and amusement—cf. Neh. 8:10; Rom. 14:17.
 - c. The Lord Jesus lost the enjoyment of His soul in this age so that He might find His soul-life in the coming age (John 10:11; Isa. 53:12); we must do the same (John 12:24-26).
 - d. If we save our soul-life in this age, we will lose it in the coming age, but if we lose our soul-life in this age, we will find it in the coming age—Matt. 16:25.
 - e. We need to love the Lord Jesus and to hate and deny our soul-life, not loving our soul-life even unto death—1 Cor. 16:22; 2:9; Luke 14:26; 9:23; Rev. 12:11.
 - 2. If we are willing to lose all our present soulish enjoyment for the Lord's sake, for the sake of the church, and for the sake of all the saints, others will be nourished by us and will be built up through us; this is not a suffering but a joy—Heb. 12:2.
 - 3. The kingdom reward of sharing the King's joy in ruling over the earth in the manifestation of the kingdom depends upon whether we save our soul-life in this age or lose it—Matt. 16:25-28; 25:21, 23.