

Message Twelve

**Denying the Self, Taking Up the Cross, and Losing the Soul-life
for the Building of the Church**

Scripture Reading: Matt. 16:16-28

I. In Matthew 16 the way to build up the church and the enemy of the building are revealed:

- 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, attacks 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 the church is to be crucified and resurrected—cf. 2 Cor. 4:10-12; Gal. 2:20.
- 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—Matt. 16:24-26:

- A. We need to learn to exercise the key of denying the self—v. 24:
 - 1. The self is the embodiment of Satan; the self is the soul plus the satanic mind, the mind of Satan—Gen. 3:1-6; Matt. 16:22-23:
 - a. 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.
 - b. Behind these three is Satan, who manipulates the self in order to damage the church—v. 23.
 - 2. 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.
 - 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:
 - (1) 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.
 - (2) 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.

- (3) When we are dependent, the self is gone, and instead of the self, we have the Lord's presence and are full of peace.
 - (4) If we exercise the key of denying the self to lock up the self, it would be impossible for us to be offended—cf. Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60.
 - (5) Only when the self 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.
- 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—cf. 26:39:
 - a. 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; 2 Cor. 4:12.
 - b. 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.
 - 3. 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 of the saints that we would have the genuine oneness—John 17:21-23; Eph. 4:3, 13; 1 Cor. 1:10; Phil. 2:2.
 - 4. We need 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.
- 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. 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.
 - b. 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.
 - c. 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.
 - d. 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 or not we save our soul-life in this age or lose it—Matt. 16:25-28; 25:21, 23.