

FROM REJECTION TO GLORY (3)

Scripture Reading: Matt. 16:13-17, 18-19, 21-27, 28; 17:1-2, 3-5, 8

Now we come to the last point of following the Lord Jesus during the time of His rejection. **The way to follow Him is to be absolutely outside religion.** In Matthew 15 there was a Canaanite woman who was enjoying Christ as the crumbs in a living and nourishing way. While this Gentile woman was enjoying Christ in such a way, the priests were worshipping in the temple, offering sacrifices and burning incense to God. It is very likely that these two things were occurring simultaneously. In a Gentile land far away from the holy place, there was a Gentile woman who knew little about God, the Scriptures, the temple, the altar, the sacrifices, the priesthood, and the worship of God. Although she knew little of these things, **she was enjoying Christ as her nourishing food.** At the same time, many priests who were trained in the proper worship of God were worshipping God according to the Scriptures. In a sense, these priests had much knowledge about God and what they were doing in the temple was for God and toward God.

Suppose you had lived in the land of Israel at that time. Which side would you have taken—the side of the priests worshipping in the temple or the side of the “Gentile dog”? We surely would have all joined the priests who were in the holy temple with the sacred Scriptures. Where was God at that time? God was with a Gentile dog. Strictly speaking, the Lord Jesus was God Himself, and He was with that woman. He was the very God whom the religious people were worshipping in the temple. **However, God was not with them in the temple. He was far away in a place that was considered unworthy of Him.**

The principle is exactly the same today. Christianity as a religion worships God according to the Bible, but I am afraid that God is not there. Where is God? God is wherever the Lord Jesus is. **And the Lord does not care about the outward situation. He only cares for one thing—that people will take Him into them.** This is completely different from religion. The Lord did not tell the woman of Canaan, “You must learn how to worship Me. I am the very God of Israel.” The Lord did not say such a thing, and He did not speak about anything religious. He did not talk about worshipping God. Instead, He talked about bread and about dogs. Is this not strange? Once again we see that **Christ is versus religion.**

If we would follow the Lord Jesus during the period of His rejection, we must realize five basic things: **Christ, the church, Satan, the cross, and the self including the soulish life**. These are five basic matters that we all must know while we are following Him in the kingdom. All the kingdom people must be familiar with them. If you remain in the “holy place,” these five items cannot be revealed to you. You must leave Jerusalem, the holy place, and go to Caesarea Philippi. You must leave that religious territory in order to see a vision of these five things.

CHRIST

Who is Christ and what is Christ? After reading the last chapter, you may answer that Christ is the bread, the crumbs under the table. This is correct. However, we need to know the element, the constituent, the ingredient, or the composition of Christ. Christ is not simple. In Matthew 16:16 Peter recognized that He was the Christ, the Son of the living God. **These two titles relate to the ministry of Christ and the person of Christ. The Son of God is the title of His person; Christ is the title of His ministry or work.** As to His person, He is the embodiment of God. As the Son of God, He is the very expression of God and the embodiment of God. All of God is embodied and expressed through Him as the Son of God.

He is also the Christ of God. Christ means “the anointed One.” The Son of God was anointed by God to accomplish God’s purpose. He was anointed and appointed to fulfill the purpose of God. In accomplishing God’s purpose, He took several major steps. First was the step of **creation**. Second was the step of **incarnation**. The following steps were **crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and descension**. After this, He **established and is building the church**. In the future, He will take a further step—to **set up the kingdom of God on earth**. By this we can see that from the creation through the establishing of the kingdom, Christ took a number of basic steps. All these are the major steps of Christ’s ministry. For this work He has the title of Christ. To know Him as Christ we must understand all these major steps in His work, and to know Him as the Son of God we must know Him as the very embodiment and expression of God.

Christ is marvelous and profound. It is not easy to realize who He is. Christ is not poor—**He is all-inclusive**. In Ephesians 3:8 Paul says that he preached the unsearchable riches of Christ. Consider His person: He is the embodiment and expression of God. Consider His ministry, the major steps of His work: creation, incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, descension, the building of the church, and the establishing of

the kingdom. What a work is this! **The riches of Christ are unsearchable.** Day by day in the churches, **all the kingdom people need to know Christ in such a rich way.** If we need doctrines, we need the kind of doctrine that reveals all the riches of Christ to us.

THE CHURCH

What is the church? We need many words to describe the church. Here I can only mention a few points. No one can surpass the Lord Jesus in His speaking. His word is simple, yet it is profound and full of implications. He told Peter, “You are a stone” (Matt. 16:18, lit.). We need to see that we are stones for the building. Matthew 16:18 mentions both a stone and a rock. We are all stones, and the rock is Christ. Both the stones and the rock are for the building. **The church is built with Christ as the rock and with us as the stones. We may have the rock and the stones, but we need the building.** Many seeking Christians talk a great deal about the Body, but they neglect the building. They simply discuss the Body in a doctrinal way, but we must have the building in a practical way. In every respect this building is a practical matter.

SATAN

The Lord goes on to mention the gates of Hades (v. 18). Hades is the place where the dead are kept, and the gates of Hades is a term denoting the authority of death, which is the power of Satan. It also represents Satan, the embodiment of death. **As the Lord Jesus is the embodiment of life, so Satan is the embodiment of death, represented in Matthew 16:18 by the gates of Hades.** The church is built with the rock and the stones. Wherever you find the building of the church, there will be warfare, because the power of death will rise up against it. But the power of death can never prevail against the church. Death may prevail against individual Christians but not against the builded church. In every battle against the church, Satan will be defeated. Satan can never prevail, because the church can bind. Is Satan able to bind? Some Christians seem to have more faith in Satan than in the Lord Jesus. They constantly talk about the power of Satan, saying that they do not know how to handle it. However, in the local churches we not only bind the strong man, but we also plunder his house and seize all his vessels. The builded church has the authority to bind the strong man. This is not my word; this is the word of the Lord Jesus. *“You are a stone (lit.), and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it”* (v. 18). We must stand upon this word. The gates of Hades shall never prevail against the church. The church can bind, and whatever the church binds, the heavens will bind (v. 19).

The keys of the kingdom are for the producing of the church, and the church life is the kingdom. Eventually, we can see **five points regarding the church: the rock, the stones, the building, the defeat of the gates of Hades, and the kingdom.** The church is the kingdom. If we are going to realize the builded church today, not a church in doctrine or in talk, the church must be built up with many living stones. The local churches are built with stones upon the rock. This is the kingdom. Because the kingdom has the authority to bind and loose, it can never be defeated by the gates of Hades.

THE SELF

Satan is first represented by the gates of Hades. In addition to this, **Satan is incarnated in the self.** On the one hand, Peter was a stone; on the other hand, he suddenly became Satan (v. 23). It is hard for us to imagine that this could be. Peter became Satan because his self was the incarnation of Satan. The Lord rebuked Peter, saying, “Get behind Me, Satan!” Satan could never be successful simply by exercising the power of the gates of Hades. Satan is far more subtle than that. He not only employs the power of Hades; he also gets into us and works himself into our inward being. This is a dreadful, subtle thing. Satan cannot prevail against the church by his power of death, but he can damage the church by his subtlety. Where is Satan’s subtlety? His subtlety resides in the self of man. If we read Matthew 16:23-26 very carefully, we will see the connection between four items—**the natural mind, the self, the soulish life, and Satan.** The Lord Jesus rebuked Peter for being Satan because Peter’s mind was on the things of men, not on the things of God. Later the Lord spoke about the soul and denying the self. In a few brief sentences the Lord mentioned Satan, the mind, the self, and the soulish life. **These four things are actually four-in-one. Satan is in your mind, your mind is in your self, and your self is in the soulish life.** Wherever there is the soul-life, there is the self; wherever there is the self, there is the mind; wherever there is the mind, there is Satan. Although Satan cannot prevail against the church by exercising his power and authority, he can damage the church by his subtlety of being one with you in your mind. Satan’s subtlety is to unite with you in your mind, in your opinion, and in your dissenting thought. If in any church there is a dissenting situation, that situation is of the mind, of Satan, of the self, and of the soulish life. It makes no difference about the reason for your dissenting opinion. As long as you are dissenting, you are under the subtlety of Satan. All dissenting elements are found not in your spirit but in your mind. If you exercise your mind, you will immediately have dissenting opinions. What then shall we do? Do not say now that we should bind the strong man; that is the wrong weapon. Rather, keep yourself on the cross. **Whenever you keep yourself on the cross, you will see that Satan is destroyed.** By death Christ destroyed him who has the

might of death (Heb. 2:14). As the subtle one, Satan is not afraid of our binding, but he is afraid of the cross. If we remain on the cross, Satan will be terrified.

In this short portion of the Word, **we have two descriptions of Satan: the gates of Hades and the self in the mind with the soul-life.** Do not think that only the gates of Hades are Satan. You must realize that the self also is Satan incarnated. Peter became occupied by Satan because he forgot his spirit and exercised his mind, expressing his dissenting thought. Every dissenting thought is the incarnation of Satan. Do not listen to any dissenting thoughts. The best way to kill Satan is to put your dissenting thoughts on the cross.

May we all receive a clear vision! Christ is here, and the church is here, but that subtle one, Satan, is also here. Your dissenting thoughts, like Peter's, may spring from a good intention, but you are nevertheless possessed by Satan. **As long as you cling to your dissenting opinions, you will either be obsessed or possessed. In the local churches we all must be alert against any dissenting thought.**

All the saints in the church life must be very careful about dissenting. Never dissent. Dissenting is just the awful exercise of the mind. Regardless of your intention, as long as you are dissenting, you have been snared by the subtle one. Do not think that you are so holy and so spiritual. Within a very short period of time the Lord called Peter "a stone" and "Satan." The stone became Satan. You may say that you love the church, and I have no doubt that you do. You may feel that whatever you say is spoken with a good intention. Many dear saints have damaged the church and yet claim that they had a good intention, that they loved the church. It is not a matter of a good or bad intention. You must ask yourself whether or not you are dissenting. Are you one with the church? **Only oneness keeps you alive, and only oneness kills the enemy.** Tell the enemy, "Satan, I don't care for these reasonings. I only care for the oneness of the Body. I don't care about anything else. For the sake of the Body I will not exercise my dissenting mind. I will go to my spirit and stay there." This is what it means to take the cross.

THE CROSS

Now we come to the cross. **The best place to keep your self is on the cross.** Do not claim that you have a good intention; that is merely an excuse to hide the self. Do not say that you love the church—that is another excuse, another dwelling place, for the self. The proper place for you to keep your self is on the cross. Constantly, by the grace

of the Lord, you need to tell yourself, “Little self, remember that your place is on the cross. Don’t go anywhere else. You were put on the cross two thousand years ago. Now go back to the cross and stay there. Don’t get off the cross. The cross is the place for you.” This is the true meaning of the Lord’s word in Matthew 16:24. To bear the cross is to realize that you have been put on the cross already. Since the Lord has put you on the cross, you now need to bear it. One saint in the Lord said something that is very good: “If you will bear the cross, the cross eventually will bear you.” **Christ has put you on the cross; now you must bear the cross and keep your position on the cross. Do not come off the cross, and do not leave your position. Stay there. Eventually, the cross will bear you. The cross will not be a burden to you; you will become a burden to the cross. Do not argue, do not reason, and do not make excuses—just keep yourself on the cross.**

THE SELF AND THE SOULISH LIFE

Now we come to the last item, the self, including the soulish life. The soulish life is in our self, and the self is in our mind. In Matthew 16:23-25 we find the mind, the self, and the soulish life. The Lord Jesus told Peter that his mind was not set on the things of God and that he needed to deny himself and follow the Lord. **The mind, the self, and the soulish life are all related to the soul and in fact are in the soul. These things are absolutely different from the spirit. We all must learn to do one thing: turn to the spirit and stay on the cross.** This is the way to grow, to be transformed, and to be fully occupied and possessed by the Lord Jesus. This is what it means to gain an extra portion of oil in the vessel, and this is also what it means to allow Christ to make His home in our hearts. This is the growth of the kingdom, the gradual coming of the kingdom. If we practice turning to the spirit and staying on the cross, we will be matured, and the kingdom will come. **After we have seen Christ, the church, and Satan as the power of Hades and as the subtle one, we need to see that the self must be kept on the cross. If we will turn to the spirit and keep the self on the cross, we will be in the kingdom. Eventually, we will experience the full coming of the kingdom.**

A REWARD

In Matthew 16:27 the Lord Jesus spoke of coming in the glory of the Father with a reward for His people. This does not refer to salvation, because **salvation is not a reward but a gift. A gift is free; a reward requires us to pay a price.** When the Lord comes in the glory of the Father, He will reward us. What is this reward? It is the marriage feast mentioned in Matthew 25. The ones who are ready will be rewarded with the marriage feast. **If you have the extra portion of oil, meaning that you are**

prepared, matured, possessed, and occupied by Christ, you will enter into the marriage feast as your reward. I am quite concerned that so many among us may miss this reward. They are saved, but they may miss the reward of the marriage feast. We have already considered the five foolish virgins who were truly saved but who were not allowed to enter into the marriage feast. They could never lose their salvation, yet they were unable to enter the marriage feast. To be saved is one thing; to enter the marriage feast is another. To be saved is a matter of salvation; to be in the marriage feast is a matter of reward. **How can we obtain this reward? It is by denying the soulish life, by denying the self, and by keeping the self on the cross.** Now we can see the bylaws of **the two kingdoms**. If you remain in your mind, you are for the kingdom of Satan. If you turn to your spirit, you are for the kingdom of God. If you stay in your mind, you are for the spreading of the kingdom of Satan. If you turn to your spirit, you are for the spreading of the kingdom of God. **The spreading of the kingdom of God today is the growth of the church.** If you stay in your mind, the growth of the church will be severely limited, even torn down, affording Satan an opportunity to increase his kingdom. So you must keep yourself on the cross. Then you must turn to the spirit. As you continue turning to the spirit, you will know the spreading of the kingdom until it reaches maturity.