

The Second Coming of the Lord.

February 9th, 2016, Kichijouji Bible Study
Gotthold Beck

主の再臨

2016年2月9日、吉祥寺学び会
ゴットホルド・ベック

1 Thessalonians

5:1 Now you do not need to have anything written to you about times and dates, brothers,

5:2 for you yourselves know very well that the Day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.

5:3 When people say, "There is peace and security," destruction will strike them as suddenly as labor pains come to a pregnant woman, and they will not be able to escape.

5:4 However, brothers, you are not in the darkness, in order that the Day of the Lord might surprise you like a thief.

5:5 For all of you are children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to darkness.

5:6 Therefore, let's not fall asleep like others do, but let's stay awake and be sober.

5:7 For people who go to sleep, go to sleep at night; and people who get drunk, get drunk at night.

5:8 But since we belong to the day, let's be sober. We must put on the breastplate of faith and love, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.

5:9 For God has not destined us to receive wrath but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus, the Messiah,

5:10 who died for us in order that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him.

5:11 So then, encourage one another and build each other up, as you are doing.

[International Standard Version]

Today, I would like to have a discussion with you based on the first half of chapter 5, which would cover verses 1 to 11. Needless to say, the subject of this part is the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus. The evidence of true conversion is that one always keeps in mind the Second Coming of Jesus and eagerly waits for it.

In this regard, Paul once said that we were not saved just to be saved, but we were saved in order to wait for the return of Jesus. He wrote that it was in order to wait for Him that we received the grace of conversion.

1 Thessalonians

1:10 "And to wait for his Son whom he raised from the dead to come back from heaven. This Jesus is the one who rescues us from the coming wrath."

Jesus will come. In the days this letter was written, believing that Jesus would come back gave all believers great consolation, courage, and joy. How are we living in this present time in this regard? Do we find consolation and joy when we think of the second coming of Jesus? When we really accept the truthful words of the Lord, we are always given consolation, hope, and courage.

Now, I would like to raise three questions and discuss the answers.

What was Paul's answer to the question about when Jesus would come back? In order to answer this question, the first thing Paul did was to clearly state who was coming back. Secondly, he explained in what way the Lord was coming back and thirdly, he gave a clear answer as to when the Lord would appear.

Firstly, it is explicitly stated that Jesus Himself would come again. Today, our society is very concerned about the problems of youth crimes. People are worried about how all of the ongoing wars around the world would end, and it makes them so anxious about the future of this world. However, no human or religion can answer these questions. It is only the Bible that can give an answer to them.

Matthew

24:8 "But all these things are only the beginning of the birth pains."

To put it another way, the Bible is telling us that the state of this world could become even worse in the future. According to the Bible, it will be such a horrible place that mankind would never have experienced it before. It is wrong to expect this world to get better little by little in the coming days.

When we think of Jesus, who will eventually come back in glory, it gives us hope to move forward into the future, free of anxiety. Jesus will truly come back with immense power. This is as true as the fact that He once powerlessly shed His blood when He suffered on the cross. Furthermore, it is absolutely true that just as He won over death at His resurrection, Jesus will return as the Lord of all heaven and earth, the dead and the living.

So-called time bombs are planted and set up to explode after a certain amount of time has passed. Just like that, it is absolutely certain that the resurrected Lord Jesus will one day come back for the second time. His resurrection itself serves as the proof that His second coming will definitely occur too. Jesus will come back. This is the foundation of all our joy.

Secondly, Paul also wrote clearly about how the Lord would come back. That is to say, it is written that Jesus will return unexpectedly just like a thief who sneaks in at midnight. Thieves would not dare to tell the residents of the house what time they are going to arrive in advance.

We may not be able to imagine how the second coming of Jesus will occur realistically, but it still is a possibility that it can occur today. It makes us feel truly blessed and encouraged when we think of this. However, I suppose that there are still some believers who do not truly rejoice when they think of His return. What about the people in here today?

Thirdly, Paul also gave a clear answer to those who are eager to know when Jesus is coming back. His answer was that the Lord will come when people do not expect Him at all but are enjoying peace and safety of life. Today, wherever we go, people are talking about how peaceful this country is, and they never doubt that their lives are totally safe.

However, the Bible clearly states that it is wrong to believe that way. As is written in verse 3, to those who refuse to believe that Jesus is coming back and do not wait for that day sincerely, the second coming of the Lord is nothing but the destruction of their lives. When we think of the fact that Jesus is absolutely coming back, it makes us feel so blessed.

Now, let us discuss briefly what the “people of the night” refers to and how they see things. They are the ones who believe that Jesus will never come or at least, He will not come for a while.

However, the consequence of such attitudes is fear and tribulation and their lives will end up in destruction. It only leaves these people hopeless and helpless. According to the expression used in the Bible, they are asleep and they are drunk.

We have seen the typical behavior of drunk people. Drunk people lack the ability to bear their responsibility; they cannot make proper decisions because the condition of their spirit is troubled. If we are caught while driving drunk, our driver’s license will be lifted. In the Bible, non-believers are compared to the drunk people.

That is to say, just like the drunkards do not know what they are doing, non-believers do not realize the foolishness of what they are doing, which is to refuse the salvation offered to them.

It is because they do not realize that the consequence

of refusing Jesus is their destruction. The Bible also says that non-believers are asleep. It implies that non-believers neither wait for Jesus nor accept the Word of God seriously, instead, they unwisely choose to go the way they choose.

Those who have not yet experienced Jesus would naturally ask a question like this; how could they become children of the light? Paul answered in the Epistle to the Romans:

Romans

3:23 “Since all have sinned and continue to fall short of God’s glory.”

Isaiah

64:6 “All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like a filthy rag.”

In order to become the children of the light, we need to realize how miserable we are and that we are covered with sins. We need to admit and confess how lost we are. Furthermore, it is then necessary to move away from what we are now.

Proverbs

28:13 “Whoever hides his transgressions will not succeed, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will find mercy.”

Whoever hides his transgressions will not succeed and will not accomplish anything as it is written here. As I just mentioned, in order to become children of the light, it is necessary to admit that you are filled with sins, confess that you are lost and then move away from such status. The next important step is, not merely to understand the words of the Lord, but to believe in them wholeheartedly. For example, we can see the arrival of the wonderful joy described in the Epistle to the Ephesians:

Ephesians

1:7 “In union with him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our offenses, according to the riches of God’s grace.”

Sometimes, it is helpful to replace some plural words in the Scripture with singular words to understand them better; for example; “In union with Him I have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of my offenses.” If you can say it this way, it is a true blessing.

71 years ago, I was led to salvation through these words in the Bible:

Isaiah

43:1 "But now this is what the Lord says, the one who created you, Jacob, the one who formed you, Israel: 'Do not be afraid, because I've redeemed you. I've called you by name; you are mine.'"

Matthew

9:2 "All at once some people brought him a paralyzed man lying on a stretcher. When Jesus saw their faith, he told the paralyzed man, "Be courageous, son! Your sins are forgiven."

The problem facing many people today is not physical disease, but it is the loneliness in their hearts. In other words, it is their unfulfilled and desperate desire for forgiveness. How can we believe that we are forgiven? Fortunately, we have Jesus, the founder of the faith. We do not need to declare, "Yes, I begin to believe in Him today." It is meaningless. It is not something to understand in your head. Instead, you should say, "I tried hard to believe it, but I couldn't. Please have mercy on me. Please help me to have a faith in you, which I do not have now." If you take an attitude like this, it is just enough.

John

5:24 "Truly, I tell all of you emphatically, whoever hears what I say and believes in the one who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged, but has passed from death to life."

Isn't it a wonderful promise? Then, the next step is to thank Jesus, who shed His precious blood to cancel your sins. You should not exalt emotionally, but you need to take to your heart each word, each promise of God, which is written in the Bible and appreciate them. The last step is to testify and confess everywhere you go without hiding your feelings for Jesus, without hesitation.

Romans

10:9 "If you declare with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

10:10 "For one believes with his heart and is justified, and declares with his mouth and is saved.

10:11 The Scripture says, 'Everyone who believes in him will never be ashamed.'"

Finally, what kind of people are "children of the day," which is the opposite of the "people of the night" I just mentioned? According to verse 6, "children of the light" refer to those who stay awake and are sober. In other words, they wait for the return of Jesus. They are filled with hope and joy. According to verse 8, they wear the breastplate and helmet.

In other words, they are very well equipped. Here, breastplate represents the faith that believes in Jesus and the love for Him. They no longer rely on themselves, instead cast everything to the Lord, put Jesus first above all other things and love Jesus more than anybody else when they are perfectly equipped with breastplates. This way, they face off against all kinds of enemies.

A helmet symbolizes the conviction and joy that Jesus is absolutely coming back. Those who do not wait truthfully for Jesus every day, that is to say, those who do not wear this helmet are in extreme danger; they can be shattered by arrows or stabbed by spears at any moment.

These armors: breastplate and helmet are indeed the gifts from the Lord. All kinds of gifts of the Lord are granted to us with some task or mission to be accomplished with them. In the case of these armors, it is to stay awake and remain sober. When people fall asleep, they do not sense what is happening around them. Therefore, they cannot realize the coming danger; they are no longer a part of the battle.

Those who are drunk are totally defenseless. We are expected to continue to stay awake, stay sober and help each other in everything. As it is written in verse 11, "Encourage one another and build each other up." Our faith grows through fellowship with each other, so if we want our faith to grow, we should build each other up.

Are we the "children of light" or "the people of the night"? Which are we? Are we asleep or are we awake? Are we the ones who are drunk so to speak. And are we dead? Do we live a hopeless life or do we live in a lively hope? Are we the ones who are filled with anxiety?

Or, are we the ones who are filled with joy? Are we totally defenseless to our enemies? Or, are we perfectly equipped for the battles to come? We ought to continue to keep in mind, the importance of the second coming of Jesus. How is it significant to our lives?

The fact that Jesus is coming back is forcing each one of us to make a decision. Jesus is eagerly desiring an encounter with us. Now, are we prepared to accept Jesus today or do we still hesitate? Today, this very moment is a great opportunity for you to make your decision. If you don't, you will absolutely regret it at a later time.

The time of God is now. It is the time of salvation and it is today at this very moment. This very fact that Jesus

will come back is compelling us to serve the Lord. The time is running out for us; we should stop thinking of ourselves alone and enjoying an easy and restful life.

We are the ones who have been called by Jesus to bear fruit for Him. To bear fruit on behalf of Jesus refers to leading others to salvation so that they can obtain eternal life. This very fact that Jesus will come back delivers us from all kinds of anxieties.

Many people are caught up in worries and anxieties; they try to avoid thinking seriously about their future. However, for us, it is a manifestation of our disbelief in Jesus, if we just worry about the future and feel uneasy about what will happen to us in the days to come. Jesus clearly stated that we do not need to worry or fear at all:

Revelation

1:17 "When I saw him, I fell down at his feet like a dead man. But he placed his right hand on me and said, 'Stop being afraid! I am the first and the last, 1:18 the living one. I was dead, but look—I am alive forever and ever! I have the keys of Death and Hades.'"

Jesus gave these words to us. The living one, who is Jesus Himself, will come again. If we entrust and cast everything to Him today, we will instantly rejoice in the truth of His second coming. This is exactly what the Lord wants us to do.

End