

Life after Death

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Gotthold Beck

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I am so grateful for this wonderful opportunity to think together about the Bible, which consists of the words of God, at this cinerary ceremony for our beloved brothers and sisters. "Death is not an end." In fact, "everything begins after the death." This is the important fact that we all should keep in mind. This life in this world is merely a preparation period before entering the eternal world. Our brothers and sisters for whom we gathered today to have this cinerary ceremony have this conviction now.

The Lord Jesus is not a religious leader, but he is the "true" God. Religions keep telling us to study hard and work hard to establish ourselves in this world, but these are false words, which only make us turn to worthless things. They even ask for our money to get these worthless things. However, all things the true savior gives us are free, which are namely the forgiveness of sins, peace with the God, strength to live and eternal life. Indeed, these things can't be bought by money.

Jesus, who died on the cross to sacrifice himself for us, is not a religious leader. In fact, he has nothing to do with any religion. Jesus promised, "I am the resurrection and the life. The person who believes in me, even though he dies, will live" (John 11:25). Brothers and sisters who were taken up to heaven are now convinced of this. Off course, we can neither see them at this moment nor hear their voices. Nevertheless, they are still alive because of the promise Jesus made to them. They are more vigorous than us now and, being free from weakness, pain or loneliness, they are filled with joy. I actually wish I was with them now. They became that way because they relied on the words of God in the Bible. The Holy Bible is not a book to study to understand. However, it gives us strength to live if we humbly believe it. It helps us to lead a life that is filled with hope and peace. These brothers and sisters have experienced it.

The true living God created and governs all things. He is the one who understands what lays at the bottom of our hearts, the one who loves all mankind unconditionally for who he is. The Creator God, Governor of all things, manifested himself to us as Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ has many names. One of such name is "the God of Hope." He is also called "the God of solace." The family members left behind must be feeling sad.

However, "death is not the end." The Lord God, who governs the whole world and knows all things, has one comprehensive plan for us. All things are working together for good according to this plan. The Lord God is absolutely flawless, and so is his plan. With the help of Jesus, we finally can be convinced of this.

The Lord God does not intend to make people suffer. He would rather provide each one of us with the best thing. Jesus once said:

John 13:7

You do not realize now what I am doing, but later on you will understand.

As long as we are in this world, we can't help but keep wondering "why" on every aspect of our life. But this is the question to which we never get the answer. The Lord God neither makes us worry needlessly nor makes us suffer meaninglessly. The plan of the Lord God is just far beyond our comprehension. The creator of all things stands behind everything to lead us according to his purpose. Our view of things is so narrow that, no matter how hard we exert ourselves, we will never be able to understand. However, our Lord God, creator of all things, is flawless and never makes mistakes. Although there are many things that cannot be explained, the Lord God has his idea to make everything work best for us.

Jesus clearly said, "How blessed are those who mourn," as we see in the Gospel according to Matthew, 5:4. What we regard as suffering is an indispensable part of our life to be truly blessed, in order to obtain true salvation. The true God, who doesn't lie, has promised, "Everything the Father gives me will come to me, and I'll never turn away the one who comes to me" in John 6:37. This means that those who humble themselves, those who bow to Jesus and plead for his mercy will definitely be accepted. Without admitting your incompetence, helplessness and sinfulness, there will be no true faith in Jesus. The Bible clearly states that those who humble themselves will be exalted by the Lord God and accepted. True salvation can neither be obtained through human efforts nor by learning the Bible, but it is merely a manifestation of grace of the Lord God. If our beloved brothers and sisters could somehow come back here from heaven now, they would absolutely tell us that it was good to humble themselves, it was so good that they asked for His mercy, and that no one will regret being humble.

There is this line in the Bible: "Prepare to be summoned to your God (Amos 4:12)." This verse is telling us to be prepared so that we can accept death peacefully and with conviction. As in the famous

saying, "Be prepared and have no regrets," those who do not fear death but firmly believe that they are destined to go to heaven are truly blessed. Jesus said, "The person who believes in me, even though he dies, will live." These brothers and sisters died once. However, they are still alive. They are in a dream world, a world without death. It is the world with no pain, no worry, no loneliness. I am so envious of these brothers and sisters. How about us left on this side? I don't believe that so many of us wake up every morning and feel grateful and happy for still being alive. We all suffer from something. We suffer because it is necessary for our lives. People don't seek help until they suffer from worries and pains. Unless we seek help, we have no chance to know the savior. It is nothing but a tragedy. Jesus said, "The person who believes in me, even though he dies, will live."

What kind of man is Jesus? He accepts anyone who humbles himself. Jesus has nothing to do with so-called Christianity or any man-made religions. Jesus Christ is non-religious. Religions exist because people are naive and easily deceived. Religions are nothing but a business to make profits. No matter which religion you choose to belong to, you will end up feeling that you were deceived. You will never regret it if you humbly rely on Jesus himself instead of belonging to Christianity.

Again, Jesus is not religious. He has nothing to do with any religions. Then, what kind of man is He? There are three incidents recorded in the New Testament where Jesus brought dead people back to life.

The first one was the daughter of a well-respected synagogue leader, Jairus. His daughter passed away. She was a very attractive 12-year-old girl. When this girl died, people tried to console her parents, but nobody really could do anything. However, when Jesus arrived and commanded her, the dead child came back to life.

Secondly, the son of the widow was raised from the dead. The son's body was being carried to the graveyard. When Jesus came across the funeral cortege, He commanded "get up" and brought the widow's son back to life (Luke 7:14).

The third incident occurred to Lazarus, and he was brought back from the dead after having been in the tomb for four days. His body was already rotten. However, when Jesus called Lazarus, "Come out!" as recorded in John 11:43, he was resurrected and came out of his tomb.

What conclusion can we draw? Jesus is life itself. When Jesus shows up, even death runs away. He is the true God who created all things. The Bible clearly

states that all things exist for Jesus Christ.

Colossians 1:16-17

All things have been created through him and for him. He himself existed before anything else did, and he holds all things together.

All humans worry. We can't save ourselves. Nevertheless, our brothers and sisters for whom we are having this memorial cinerary ceremony are firmly convinced that the Lord Jesus paid the price to redeem them and forgave all their arrogance and sins.

The Lord God is not the one who commands us to study hard or to be perfect. He would never ask for money, needless to say. The Lord God just wants to tell each one of us gathered here today, "I love you," as was said in Isaiah 43:4. He promised that "He loves us just the way we are." This is not an empty, hollow promise. The creator of the whole universe, who governs all things, is calling to tell us that "He loves us." When we rely on the Lord Jesus, we will absolutely obtain forgiveness of our sins, peace with the Lord God, and eternal life.

Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. The person who believes in me, even though he dies, will live."

The true salvation, which is provided through the Bible, is totally different from so-called joy, happiness, health or temporal solutions for the problems in our lives. The salvation of the Lord God is to overcome your past. It is deliverance from your sins. It is also a relief from the fear of death. Regardless of when we die, we are sure of where we are going, because "our citizenship is in heaven." Those who have this conviction are truly blessed, aren't they? Unfortunately, the Bible doesn't say a lot about heaven. It is because our human mind cannot understand the greatness of heaven anyway. No words can express the glory of heaven. The Bible only states that "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There won't be death anymore. There won't be any grief, crying, or pain (Revelation 21:4)." This is a dream world. It is a world with no sickness, a world with no pain, a world without loneliness. It is a world beyond our imagination. But these brothers and sisters have now reached that world.

The glory waiting for us is magnificent. The Bible explains it in plain words:

Romans 8:18

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed to us.

Those who have this conviction will be truly blessed.

Note: This was preached at a ceremony before the cineration at Miyota on September, 2012. It was followed by the testimony of seven brothers and sisters.