

August 10, 2025 Memorial Service for the Dead Sermon

"Two Deaths" Pastor Takaaki Inoue
Romans 6:19-23, John 8:42-47

❶ **【The world without God is called death】**

This year marks the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II, and August is a time when we especially recall the war: the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima on August 6 and on Nagasaki on August 9. We mourn the deaths of those who died in the atomic bombings and remember that peace was given to us through the sacrifices of so many people, and we would like to offer a moment of silence for peace.

We offer this day a service in memory of the deceased who have gone to their eternal rest. They all lived in this world and died when the time came. In time, we too will die and join their ranks. What is death? Most people think of death as simply a physiological phenomenon. They think that death is when the body is destroyed by aging, disease, accident, war, disaster, etc., and when the body stops breathing and the heart stops beating. However, Christianity teaches that death is the wages of sin. "The wages sin pays is death" (Romans 6:23). (Romans 6:23). The person who sins is dead even though he is physiologically alive. Man is doomed to die and has a mortal phase from the time of his birth. This is because humans sin. Thus, we must know that there are two kinds of death: physiological death and religious death.

● Last month I attended the funeral of a Christian. The month before last, I attended the funeral of an Anglican. Since it was a priest who passed away, the preacher spoke carefully about the deceased's fine works and character during his life. However, if he was talking about the deceased's great works, character, and memories during his life, he could have talked about them at a Buddhist, Shinto, or non-religious funeral service. If that is all there is to a Christian funeral, it is no different from any other religion. What is it that only Christian funerals have? It is God. It is to look at death through the eyes of God and to talk about death. Otherwise, we will be swallowed up emotionally by the immediate physiological death, crushed by grief, and lose hope. I often think, "I didn't feel God at the funeral today; it was all about people. That is how much we have come to see death only in terms of physiological death.

According to the Old Testament, after God created man, He said "From the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat. For if you eat from it, you will surely die." (Genesis 2:17) But the devil deceived man, saying, "You will never die. God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened and you will know good and evil like God" (Gen. 3:5). So, believing the words of the devil, man took the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and ate it, and death began.

However, death did not occur immediately; the soul died first, and then the body, which is one with the soul, died as well. The purpose of the devil is clear. It is to destroy and kill human beings. Therefore, Jesus said, "The devil is a murderer from the beginning, and he does not have the truth as his foundation. For in him there is no truth." (John 8:44).

You may think that this is absurd, that I can't believe such unscientific things, that these are myths written by the ancients. It is indeed written in the form of a myth. With the figurative expression of eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, it is trying to teach us that man, having acquired knowledge and science and technology, began to live without fear of God and without need of God, and that is death. Man does not need God, but the resources of this world, money and knowledge, medical developments and technology to live longer. We compete and wage wars to obtain them. Look at society today. No one listens to God. Everyone plots without regard to God. (Isaiah 30:1) That is exactly the world without God that the devil tried to create. Man has become a child of the devil who hears the voice of the devil and believes it. That is why Jesus told the Jews, "You are of the devil. This has permeated every corner of this world. Wars will continue to be fought, natural disasters will become worse, new pestilences will appear, and heaven and earth will eventually be destroyed by human sin. We are already seeing signs of this, such as this summer's heat. But does that make the biblical accounts absurd? No. It is foolishness for man to ignore God and boast of knowledge and science.

●Motokichiro Osaka preached thus. "The cause of this death is the devil, according to John 8:44, for the devil is a murderer. The Lord said, "Satan, withdraw. You are a hindrance to me. You think not of God, but of men." He rebuked Peter. Originally, man was created in such a way that he could not live without thinking of God, and this is the true nature of the creatures God created. In other words, God is with us. However, it is the devil who has made it possible for us to live our lives without thinking of God. To be deceived by this devil and not believe in the image of God in us, this is true death."

② **[The world that lives with God is life]**

If death is to live a life that does not need God, a life that does not listen to God, then we can see that life, on the contrary, is a life lived in union with God, a life that needs God and listens to God. When we were dead, Christ breathed into us and brought our souls back to life. That is called the first resurrection. The resurrection has already begun in me. It is like a prelude to eternal life. And although this earthly body will return to the earth once, in the last days I will be resurrected and receive a heavenly, incorruptible body. That is called the second resurrection. Since man is a composite of soul and body, and since death has

extended to both, the resurrection also extends to both. It is the resurrection of the soul and the body. The spirit alone is half. The resurrection is completed with the resurrection of the body. That is why those who die in faith are religiously said to be asleep, not dead. The death of a Christian is not death but only sleep.

●There was a teacher named Murakami in the theology department of Doshisha. He was a man of great faith and was expected to be a future leader of Doshisha, but he was called up at the end of the Pacific War and lost the war in Karafuto. He was taken prisoner by the Soviet Union and engaged in logging work. Life there was miserable: black bread with straw, soup that was like hot water, and rotting salted herring, of which there was very little. The POWs fought each other for food and lived like starving ghosts. Every morning, Dr. Murakami shaved his beard, dressed neatly, and quietly read the Bible in the midst of the noise. He silently gave his food to those who had their food cut short because they could not meet their quotas. However, during a logging operation, he became trapped under a tree and was called to the land of the dead. At the time of his return to Japan, his fellow workers took none of their own belongings, but split up to deliver the teacher's belongings to his wife. They delivered his belongings to his wife, including a Bible, hymns, and books.

When one thinks of teacher Murakami's life on earth, it would appear to be an unrewarding life. But while he was on earth, he was already living in the eternal world with God before his eyes. He will receive the undying reward of eternal life in that kingdom. The person who lives quietly in this world with God is the one whose life in the next world will be reflected in this world as it is in the mirror. God is pleased with those who live in this way. Let us live with God and become people who truly live.