

October 12, 2025 Sunday Morning Service Sermon
"The Dead Hear the Voice of the Son of God" Pastor Takaaki Inoue
Daniel 12:1-4, John 5:24-30

① 【Christ Will Judge at the Last Judgment】

Why did the Jews kill Jesus? It was because Jesus claimed to be “equal with God,” and for Jews who believed in one God alone, this was intolerable. Today, Jesus explained to such Jews that He possesses the same authority, life, and power as God the Father.

First, Jesus has “the authority to judge at the last judgment.” “For the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, so that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.” (John 5:22-23) God the Father and God the Son, Jesus, are both God. Therefore, they possess the same authority, the same dignity, and the same power. This is because God is perfect. If there were even the slightest flaw, He would cease to be God. If there is any difference between the Father and the Son, it is only that the Father is the One who begot, and the Son is the One who was begotten. Therefore, they must be honored equally. If you bow down to the Father, you must also bow down to the Son. It is not that the Father is the greatest, with the Son Jesus beneath Him. Long ago, a believer said, “I understand God, but I just can't grasp that Jesus is God.” That is completely backwards. People cannot see or know God. Therefore, God the Father revealed Himself through Jesus. So whoever has seen Jesus has seen God. Jesus' words, actions—everything about Him—is the word, action, and will of God the Father. The Father and the Son are one and the same. To this Jesus has been entrusted with all authority for judgment. Jesus will sit on the throne of glory and carry out the final judgment. Because Jesus became human, He understands human affairs perfectly.

● Judge Caprio, known as the kindest judge in the world, presided in America. A father with his child came to court after being fined for running a red light. Judge Caprio had the child sit beside him and asked, “Is your dad guilty or not guilty?” The child replied, “Not guilty.” “Then let's watch the video together,” he said. The video showed the father's car turning left on a red light. After watching, Judge Caprio said, “Your dad ran the red light, didn't he?” The child replied, “Yes.” Judge Caprio then asked, “Is your dad guilty or not guilty?” The child answered, “Guilty.” Judge Caprio then declared, “This child is honest and cares deeply for his parent. I'll reduce the fine.” To a young homeless woman sleeping in her car, he offered aid from his own fund. The young woman tearfully asked, “May I hug you?” She hugged Judge Caprio and thanked him. Witnessing such scenes warms the heart because one sees the love of Christ within him. I have never seen a judge who would pay a defendant's fine out of his own pocket.

The prophet Isaiah told the people of Israel, “Your Maker will be your husband” (Isaiah 54:5). In the Old Testament, God and Israel were likened to a married couple. God is the husband, and Israel is the wife. But Israel ran after idols and betrayed her husband, God. Therefore, Israel was divorced and became a slave to Babylon. Yet God declares He will redeem such a wife. That is redemption. We are the same; through baptism, we are united with Christ and become His spouse. Christ is the bridegroom; we are the bride. We had a debt of sin and death, but our husband, Christ, paid it, and we became Christ's. At the final judgment, we will stand before Christ. But Christ will pay my debt of sin and say, “Your sins are forgiven.” I am grateful.

② 【Jesus Can Give Life to the Dead】

Second, Jesus “has the same life as God.” “Just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he wishes.” (John 5:21) Only God possesses undying life, eternal life. God needs no life from anyone; He alone gives life to all existence and is the inexhaustible source of life. For God, who created humanity from nothing, it is easy to restore existence to what once was, even if it has been destroyed. He need only give His own life. This power to create and recreate is equally possessed by Jesus, who is God, because He holds within Himself the fountain of imperishable life. Therefore, Jesus too can give life to the dead. This is evident from His raising Lazarus and the widow's only son. “The Son gives life to whom He wills” means whether we live or die depends on Christ's will.

“The hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live” (John 5:25). Here, the “dead” does not refer to those in graves, but to people whose souls are spiritually dead, even though their bodies live. That is, people who do not know God. They are those who make this world their friend, who think and live without God. Yet true life is found in “God,” and a life separated from God is a dead life separated from life. If such a person reads the Bible, hears Christ's voice, believes His words, and begins to live by them, that person comes back to life.

③ 【The Dead Awaken from Their Graves at Christ's Voice】

Thirdly, Jesus possesses the power to resurrect the dead. “Do not be amazed at this, for the hour is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.” (John 5:28-29) The Bible clearly states that the resurrection of the dead will occur. This was also foretold in the Old Testament book of Daniel: “Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake. Some will rise to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.” (Daniel 12:2-3)

●My friend Father Masaaki Mizuguchi wrote this in his commentary on the 'Prayer for the Dead': "Eternal rest is written as 'eternal sleep,' but this 'eternal' does not mean forever. ... The term 'eternal rest' implies ... that they will eventually rise again. It was Christ's resurrection that made death a sleep." "A common misunderstanding is interpreting the souls of the dead as being asleep. The Church does not teach that the souls of the dead are asleep, devoid of consciousness, and remain motionless until the Last Judgment. The souls of the eternally sleeping... possess consciousness, are awake, and share in a communion of love with us." "The Church views salvation, forgiveness of sins, and rest... as an endless process. Even in heaven, people do not cease growing toward holiness. Since God is infinite, it is inconceivable that there could be a point where salvation by God is complete. Regarding forgiveness of sins, too, when we receive God's forgiveness, sins do not suddenly vanish and disappear. We are gradually healed and forgiven."

The person in the grave hears Christ's voice, which means they are conscious and listening. What is astonishing is the teaching that "even in heaven, people do not cease to grow toward holiness." Protestants say death is the end! But traditional churches say otherwise. In fact, since they are resurrected and transformed into Christ's likeness, they will grow. Even after death, they can still change and continue to grow.

By the way, the Book of Daniel says those who awaken will shine like the brightness of the sky and the stars. Paul explains further: "The glory of the heavenly body is different from that of the earthly body. There is a sun, a moon, and stars, each with its own brilliance, and the brightness of one star differs from that of another. So it will be with the resurrection from the dead." (1 Corinthians 15:40-41) He says that in heaven, people will each have a different brilliance. I believe this is determined by how one lived in this world. People in this world might think that after death, everyone goes to heaven and receives the same reward, but that is not the case. Each person's brilliance will indeed be different. All people may enter heaven. Yet just as those without wedding garments were cast out, souls unable to endure God's light will depart of their own accord. Can those who did not live this life with God as their master truly serve Him in heaven? This world and the next are the same. While we have time, let us practice serving God. And may we become those who shine in the life to come.