



It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep. (Psalms 127:2)

BUT I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. 15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. 16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words. (1 Thess 4:13-18)

It is a great challenge to imagine the sweet dreams of our beloved kin and friends who have fallen asleep in Christ. They are kept in perfect peace, and, if they do dream, those dreams would fill a lifetime of joys. Of course, for every head-side of the coin, there is a tail-side. I do not even wish to imagine the nightmares that must pervade the restless sleep of those who have died without the grace and mercy of the Redeemer.

Sound sleep is a blessing, and so are many wonderful dreams which can only accompany such sleep. Sleep is a state of lack of consciousness and awareness of present circumstances; however, there is often a beautiful consciousness beyond the veil of wakefulness that is hidden from the world and known only to the dreamer.

There are some interesting dreams recorded in history by remarkable fellows. One such dream was reported by John Wesley – I know not if a real event, or simply an

illustration: Mr. Wesley wrote, "I dreamed I died and went to Hell. Standing without the ominous, iron-bound gate, I inquired of the gateman: Do you have any Methodist down here, to which the gatemen responded, Yes, many. I ventured to ask if there were any Presbyterians? Yes, many, was the answer. How about Church of England men? Oh, yes, many." He then cited another dream that followed on the heels of the first. "I dreamed I died and went to Heaven. At Heaven's gate I asked St. Peter: Are there any Methodist up here? Sorry, no Methodist here, responded St. Peter. What about Presbyterians? No, was the response. Are there any Church of England men here? No Church of England souls here, he replied. Then who do you have here, I asked? Only Christians, was the response."

In the Holy Scriptures, dreams were often employed to reveal scriptural truth to a chosen prophet or prophetess. The Canon of Scripture being complete in our time, dreams are no longer sent as enhancements of God's Word. It is possible that God may visit a believer, or even an unbeliever, in a dream to call attention to truth once and for all revealed previously in Scripture; but none can say 'amen' to the dreams of another since they cannot be confirmed in Holy Scripture. The Bible is sufficient for us in faith. The same is true of random babblings and guttural outburst in churches from what some call 'speaking in tongues.' God is not the author of confusion, and His clarion call is forever clear and devoid of misunderstanding to the believer.

The nature of sleep to the believer is identical to that of a blessed passage from earthly life into heavenly bliss. *51 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.* (1 Cor 15:51-52) I do not know the precise meaning of death at the moment of passage, but I do know that our Lord referred to the death of Jairus' daughter and of Lazarus as a sleep. I remember those sound sleeps of youth following an evening of running and playing. I did not want to give up on the day, but my mother was stern in her counsel, "It is time for bed!" Spoken in this manner, there was no recourse. But I was usually more exhausted than I realized. Within seconds of getting to bed, I often fell into a blissful and happy sleep. But, almost immediately, I would open my eyes and the sun would be rising on a new day! The sleep was so very sound that it seemed that I had only blinked my eyes and morning had arrived. In actuality, several hours had passed. That may define the sleep of death to the child of God, but the soul does not sleep in a body of clay. It is carried at once by the angels to Paradise. There is joy always in Paradise.

Some believers sleep before their time due to some besetting sin or unfaithful walk. Paul tells us: *28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. 29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. 30 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.* (1 Cor 11:28-30)

Unfortunately, many Christian are spiritually asleep, especially in our modern day. They are either oblivious to the counsel of God in Scripture, or they have ceased to care, believing that modern social mores have replaced the biblical morality commanded by God. These will be awakened by alarming horror and guilt when the last Trump sounds.

10 Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. 11 And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. 12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. 13 Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. (Romans 13:10-13)

There is a time to sleep and a time to work. We work while it is yet light, and sleep in the dark solitude of the night when no man can work. *"6 Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. 7 For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. 8 But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation."* (1 Thess 5:6-8)

Who are the literal DEAD? Why, it is those who die in their sins. There are living dead; and there are those who are dead and buried eternally. The living dead are those who walk, talk, speak, and act while their souls are dead. These are Satan's favorite ZOMBIES. *1 And you hath he quickened, who were DEAD in trespasses and sins; 2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: 3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5 Even when we were DEAD in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) 6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: 7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.* (Eph 2:1-7)

I would rather be a dead corpse who lives, then a living soul who is dead. We must be alert to the call of the Holy Ghost just as Lazarus was dead and alert to the voice of our Lord in the tomb at Bethany. *"14 Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."* (Eph 5:14)

Are you alive in Christ, or dead in sin? Wake up before the long sleep!