

HOPE CALLS DEATH A SLEEP

“While he yet spake, there cometh one from the ruler of the synagoge’s house, saying to him, Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master. But when Jesus heard it, he answered him, saying, Fear not” believe only, and she shall be made whole. And when he came into the house, he suffered no man to go in, save Peter, and James, and John, and the father and mother of the maiden. And all wept, and bewailed her: but he said; Weep not, she is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead.” – Luke 8:49-53

When Jesus and the apostles returned to the vicinity of Capernaum, the people were on the lookout for them, especially Jairus, one of the rulers of the synagoge. He came and fell at our Lord’s feet in great distress. He besought the Great Physician to come and heal his little daughter who lay at the point of death.

As they went to the house of Jairus, the multitude followed and crowded around and delayed the procession. Meantime a messenger arrived from Jairus’ house telling that the child was dead. But Jesus said to the bereaved father, “Be not afraid, only believe.”

Three of the apostles went on with Jesus and Jairus, leaving the multitude behind. When the small party arrived, they found a great tumult connected with the customary weeping and wailing. Our Lord astonished the mourners by telling them not to weep, that the maiden was not dead, but asleep. Jesus meant that the dead are not dead in the sense that brute beasts are dead, because God in his plan had made an arrangement for the resurrection of humanity from the death state, whereas he has made no arrangement for the resurrection of the beasts.

GOD’S PROVISION FOR MAN’S RESURRECTION

The provision for man’s resurrection was that God would provide a Redeemer to satisfy the claims of divine justice against Adam and all his race. This Redeemer would become the Great Deliverer, and establishing his Messianic Kingdom, would release all mankind from the power of death. The Lord through the prophet Jeremiah sends a message of consolation for the heart of every bereaved parent trusting in him:

“A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children, refused to be comforted because they were not. Thus saith the LORD: Refrain thy voice from weeping and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy,”—Jeremiah 31:15-17.

Notice this scripture.

- 1. It shows sorrow for the dead, which is universal; as the Apostle declares, “The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together.”

- 2. The nature of the comfort is described—the hope of a resurrection, the hope of the recovery of the dead—“They shall come again,” they shall be restored to life.
- 3. In death our dear ones are in “the land of the ENEMY;” in harmony with the Apostle’s declaration, “The last ENEMY that shall be destroyed is death.” –1 Cor. 15:26
- 4. The labors of the parents in endeavoring properly to rear their children are not lost; “Thy word shall be rewarded.”
- 5. This is the Word of the Lord, which cannot be broken—the Word which is sure of fulfillment.

MARY, MARTHA & LAZARUS

Mary and Martha had not thought of the possibility of Lazarus dying, because they so thoroughly believed in the power of Jesus to make him well. They were greatly dismayed when Jesus did not come and restore their brother to health.

Mary did not even go to meet their dear Friend when he did come—“too late,” according to her expectations. Martha met him with the chiding remark, “If you had come when we informed you, our brother would not have died.”

Jesus did not dispute that Lazarus was DEAD. Jesus did not say that Lazarus was better off in heaven—more alive than ever. Jesus merely promised that Lazarus would rise again.

Martha knew that. She believed Jesus’ teachings that all would rise in the resurrection at the Last Day, but she did not think of his awakening her brother NOW.

BACK FROM THE TOMB

When our Lord awakened Lazarus, he first told the sisters that in him were the resurrection and the life power. Then he went to Lazarus’ tomb—not to call him back from heaven, nor from purgatory, nor from a fiery hell, but from the TOMB. The DEAD ONE came forth.

This wonderful exhibition of Jesus’ power was given to the intent that his disciples then and since might realize that in him is vested the resurrection power. All who are in their graves are to hear his voice and come forth. Now that Jesus’ death has opened the new and living way, the Church will come forth to perfect heavenly living. The world will come forth (still imperfect) and will be tested to develop their fitness for life on earth.

From this standpoint, God’s standpoint, no human being is dead in the sense of being extinct at death like an animal. Their awakening will be accomplished by Messiah’s

Kingdom, and all will then have fullest opportunity to coming to a knowledge of God's character and His will respecting them: and all will be assisted back to harmony with God, if they so desire, that they may thus reach again the perfection of life lost by disobedience. It is in view of this divine intention, the awakening of the dead, that Jesus spoke of death as a "sleep," a period of rest, of quiet, of unconsciousness.

A SAINT HAS DIED

Grandpa Jones died last week. He was ninety years old—a ripe old age. He had lived a triumphant, full life; this was a good time to die.

If it was such "a good time to die," why is Grandma Jones so stunned, so quiet, so hurt? Can it be that it's hard to lose your life's partner—the one with whom your whole being has been intertwined for all these years—even if he is a very old man?

Why are the children crying? They have their own families and their own interests. Just because they'll miss his sense of humor, his comfortable chats of wisdom--don't they know it was "time for him to die?"

How about the grandchildren? Did they think he would go on whittling toy horses for every coming generation? Did they really expect him to go on sharing the fun of fishing trips with all their little ones forever?

DEATH IS AN ENEMY

But what was it Grandpa Jones used to say about death? He said he WANTED to go to be with the Lord!

Grandpa was a Christian—not a Sunday-morning, pay-your-dues, nominal Christian, but a real follower of Jesus. Whenever he had to make a decision, he would always ask, "What would Jesus do if he were in my place?"

It's easy to understand how someone like Grandpa Jones would be described in Psalm 17:8 as "the apple of God's eye"—very precious, very special.

Sometimes he would seem quiet, like praying with his eyes open. When asked, he would quote Psalm 16:11, "In God's presence is fullness of joy." Now he can go on to say, "At His right hand are pleasures FOR EVERMORE."

He loved to help folks around him, but he said he would be able to help them much better as a heavenly, kingly priest (Rev. 5:10), blessing all the families of the earth. God planned the blessings, but Christ and his Church will perform them: Wipe away all tears from mankind's eyes, No more (Adamic) death, sorrow, crying, pain. (Rev. 21:4)

Since Jesus went to heaven to open the new and living way to glory, honor AND IMMORTALITY, St. John wrote TO THE SAINTS: “We shall be like him...We shall see him as he is.”

Jesus told HIS SACRIFICING DISCIPLES, “Great is YOUR reward in HEAVEN.”

EARTHLY AND HEAVENLY MANSIONS

When he was about to leave the earth, the Lord told HIS FOLLOWERS, “In my Father’s house are many mansions...I go to prepare a place for YOU.” (John 14:2) The earthly resurrection for man will be perfect on the terrestrial plane. But the Little Flock (only 144,000) will be celestial joint-heirs with Christ, who is at God’s right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named.

Although the ages to come will unfold limitless ways of serving and glorifying God, some of the most remarkable miracles He has designated for the Church to accomplish are to work with Christ in healing all the woes of earth’s groaning creation, its sin and sickness and imperfection. They’ll all miss Grandpa Jones, but God is not unrighteous to forget his work and labor of love which he has shown toward His name, and this makes the family glad. As he has been guided by God’s counsel, he has been received to glory. (Psa. 73:24)

THEY ALL SLEPT WITH THEIR FATHERS

- DAVID, the beloved, sweet singer of Israel, the man after God’s own heart.
- SOLOMON, who prayed for wisdom, but whose glory and prosperity outweighed his wisdom.
- REHOBOAM, foolish in ignoring his elders, his heavy taxation split the kingdom.
- ABIJAH, who warned Jeroboam of the folly of opposing God’s kingdom of Judah, and victor in that battle; yet he walked in all the sins of his father.
- ASA, a good king, greatly beloved by his people, but human and imperfect in his alliance with Behadad of Damascus, who then sought not the Lord in his final disease.
- BAASHA, idolatrous, hostile.
- OMRI, evil, vigorous, unscrupulous.
- AHAB, covered by his notoriously wicked heathen wife Jezebel; yet respected by his Assyrian enemy, Shalmaneser III.

- JEHOSHOPHAT, who sought the Lord with all his heart.
- JEHU, the violent destroyer of the sinful house of Ahab.
- JEHOAHAZ, who followed the sins of Jeroboam, but in defeat and humiliation sought Jehovah.
- JOASH, who “did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord,” yet held Elisha in great veneration.
- JEROBOAM II, whose luxury and moral decline were denounced by the prophet Amos.
- AZARIAH, who never deserted the worship of the true God; he raised Judah to a prosperity it had not enjoyed since Solomon; yet, determined to burn incense on God’s altar, he was smitten with leprosy.
- MENAHEM, who continued the calf worship of Jeroboam, and ungodliness, demoralization, and feebleness in Israel.
- JOTHAN, who conducted the government of Judah for his leprous father Azariah (Uzziah) thirteen years; then continued his good works though unable to correct all of the corrupt practices of the people.
- AHAZ, son of Jotham, became tributary to Tiglath-pileser; sent him treasures of the temple and the palace; even appeared before him at Damascus.
- HEZEKIAH, godly, reformer of Judah.
- MANASSEH, fanatical idolater of Judah, encouraged paganism and wizards to thrive, burned children as sacrifices, desecrated the temple, and even persecuted God’s prophets.
- JEHOIAKIM, who burned Jeremiahs’ writings; vicious, irreligious, encouraged idolatry, built magnificent palaces while the people were impoverished by tributes to Egypt and Babylon.

THEY ALL SLEPT WITH THEIR FATHERS.

The good, the bad, the worshipers of Jehovah, the worshipers of false gods; **THEY ALL SLEPT WITH THEIR FATHERS.**

**CEMETERY:
A SLEEPING PLACE**

The word “cemetery” comes from the Greek word “KOIMAEIN,” which means “TO PUT TO SLEEP” (Funk and Wagnall’s Standard College Dictionary)

Martin Luther said: “What is our death but a night’s sleep? For as through sleep all weariness and faintness pass away and cease, and the power of the spirit comes back again, so that in the morning we rise fresh and joyous; so in the last day we shall rise as if we had only slept a night, and shall be fresh and strong.”

The Jews were very familiar with the word “sleep” when death was meant. In Daniel (12:2), they read of “them that sleep.” They were taught “The dead know not any thing.” (Eccl 9:5; see also Job 14:21) The dead are in Sheol, the Bible hell, the peaceful, quiet grave.

Figuratively, both good and bad are considered “sleeping” because of God’s provision for their awakening in the Resurrection Morning. Adulterated creeds follow the serpent’s lie to Eve, “Ye shall NOT surely die,” but God did not alter His verdict. God said, “The soul that sinneth, it SHALL die.” Only Jesus’ death broke man’s death sentence.

Those with noble characters will come forth, delighted with the laws of God’s Kingdom. They will progress well to perfection.

“Children of wrath” shall return to the dishonor they have sown for themselves. They shall come forth to a resurrection by judgments—chastisements and corrections for unacceptable thoughts and acts, all with the intent of reform to righteousness.

Their struggle will be agonizing and difficult, and if they choose to succumb to the irretrievable Second Death of the incorrigible, they will be allowed to do so.

But Jesus Christ “tasted death for EVERY man,” and “Whosoever will” CAN therefore obey and attain life everlasting on this restored earth, Paradise.