

WE SHALL NOT ALL SLEEP.

Believing the Bible teaching concerning death, that it is the extinction of life, and that it is only likened to a sleep in view of a promised resurrection, we have special interest in the statement of Paul relative to the awakening of the Church, the first or chief resurrection. He says: "Behold I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed – 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. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." The time for this instantaneous change is here shown to be under the sounding of the last trumpet, elsewhere referred to as "the seventh trumpet," "the trumpet," and "the trump of God." The sounding of six of these symbolic trumpets is already in the past, fulfilled in events which have transpired on the earth corresponding to the symbolic prophecies foretold in connection with them; and we are now living under the sounding of the seventh trumpet, during which the resurrection of the Church is due.

The sounding of this seventh symbolic trumpet marks some of the most momentous events that the world has ever known, though at first they come so gradually as to be observed only by the watchers – the faithful students of the sure word of prophecy. We find ourselves today in the very midst of these events.

Notice some of the striking events of this trumpet. During its time of sounding "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven." He "shall gather together his elect," the "little flock" of faithful ones, his "jewels," "from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other," out of Babylon. (Matt. 24:31.) "The dead in Christ shall rise." (1 Thes. 4:16,17.) The living members of the body of Christ – "shall be changed." (1 Cor. 15:51-52.) "The nations" become "angry." (Rev. 11:18.) "The kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of God."

(Rev. 11:15.) Reward is given to the prophets and saints (verse 18), which implies their resurrection, since they could not be rewarded while dead; and the dead world will be brought to judgment – trial (verse 18). Briefly stated, it is the time of the Lord's second glorious presence and reign; the time for the gathering together and exaltation of his elect church, both from the grave and from among the living; the time for the overthrow of the present powers that be, and the establishing of the new power – the kingdom of God, both in its spiritual and earthly phase; and then the awakening and judging of the nations – the great work of restitution.

These events do not all succeed each other, requiring that one must be finished before the other can begin, but several parts of the work progress simultaneously. While the church is being gathered, the nations are mustering their forces for the great conflict; and while some of the saints are being changed from human to spiritual, others remain in the flesh, and probably some will so remain until the great conflict is almost over. This would appear from the words of the Psalmist, suggesting the proper attitude of mind for those who shall remain through these troublous times: – "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear though the earth [the present organization of society] be removed; and though the mountains [kingdoms] be carried into the midst of the sea [overthrown by the unrestrained forces, the "sea" class]; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swellings thereof." – Psa. 46.

Already we hear the roaring of the troubled waters, and feel the shaking of the mountains, yet we fear not; nor will we, if permitted to remain even till they sink in the midst of the sea. God's truth is our shield and buckler, and therefore none of these things move us; they only cause us to rejoice the more, because we realize that all this is necessary in order to bring the nations to the recognition of and submission to God.

It is to this time of the sounding of the seventh trumpet, this time of the advent, that Paul directed attention, saying "We shall not all sleep." Paul and all the Church from that day to this, have slept waiting for the day of Christ, now being ushered in. Now the blessed time has come to which they in hope looked forward. – 2 Tim. 4:8.

Those who die in this day of the Lord's presence do not sleep, but the instant that the human body sinks into death, the new spiritual body is received, and according to Paul's word, not an instant of unconsciousness intervenes. Because the spiritual body is invisible to humanity, none can know of the change except by faith in the promise of God.

The work of the new kingdom is now in progress, and the body of Christ, whether in the flesh or in the spirit, (resurrected,) are all actively engaged as co-workers together with our Lord and head. What a blessed privilege to realize that such is the case. If the work to be done while in the flesh were all finished, then doubtless all of the elect company would be speedily changed to the spiritual plane where they can work to advantage. "Ye are my witnesses," said the Lord, and it seems that the world has never yet been left without a human witness for God. And it is our privilege to be his witnesses now, and to stand as witnesses for God until "changed" to the higher plane. So long as the saints now abide in the flesh, it is an evidence that God has a work for them to do, either for themselves or others here. However humble, then, may seem the sphere of any of the consecrated ones, they should remember that God has a work for them to do here and now – a work which, if engaged in heartily, as unto the Lord, will not only enlighten others, but specially discipline and develop themselves spiritually. If idlers in the vineyard of the Lord, or if we go about his work complainingly and grudgingly, as if by constraint, we are proving ourselves unworthy of the great reward, and the Lord who reads the heart will make no mistake in judging us.

Let us appreciate our privilege of service, considering that we are workers together with the Lord and the risen saints, present with us, though invisible, except to the eye of faith. We need not expect large results in the present time. Neither Jesus, nor the Apostles, nor any of the saints, saw large results of their labors; but they were willing to work for the small results, and trust the future under God's providence, to justify the sacrifices made in the service. We may sow in tears, but shall, in due time, reap in joy.

With such a glorious hope in view, to be realized as soon as this weary humanity shall have exhausted its strength in the present service, who of this faithful consecrated class may not profitably sacrifice himself in the blessed service, and rejoice even in the midst of tribulation with joy unspeakable and full of glory? Truly we should rejoice in the Lord always, and in everything give thanks, knowing that our labors are not in vain in the Lord, and that the trial of our faith is for our profiting and development as new creatures. "Count not your lives dear unto you," for "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth" – their labors shall cease, but their work shall continue. Rev. 14:13.

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