

## **"And This, Knowing The Season ..."**

"... that already it is time for you to awake out of sleep: for now is salvation nearer to us than when we first believed" (Rom. 13:11). "It is high time for you to awake out of sleep." "Sleep" is used in the scriptures in at least three ways. Its primary meaning is physical sleep. "Sleep" also is spoken of one who is dead. Thus Jesus said, "Our friend Lazarus is fallen asleep" (Jn. 11:11). Stephen was said to have "fallen asleep" (Acts 7:60). Paul did not wish the Thessalonians to sorrow over those "fallen asleep" as they might for those who had no hope (1 Thess. 4:13). "Sleep" is also used (as in this Roman passage) of one who is insensible -- as one who is in a stupor. "Sleep" in this sense is not found as often as "sleep" in the other two senses, but if does appear in other of Paul's writings. "Wherefore he said, awake thou that sleepest, arise from the dead, and Christ shall shine upon thee" (Eph. 5:14). There are some passages in which it is a bit difficult to know how the word is used in the passage, one such passage being 1 Corinthians 11:30 where Paul warns brethren that they not eat the Lord's Supper in a proper way. He said. "For this cause many among you are weak and sickly, and not a few sleep." Does "sleep" equal physical death or spiritual death?

It is high time that we awake out of sleep "for now is salvation nearer to us than when we first believed." We are not to suppose Paul intimated that our Lord would come in his lifetime or the lifetime of the Romans. He clearly rejected such a notion in his letter to the Thessalonians (2 Thess. 1:1-12). But, whenever our Lord comes, whether while we yet live or in a distant generation, each day which dawns brings us one day nearer the time when Christ will come and reward His faithful.

And, if we are going to accomplish anything for Christ, we must do it now. We dare not boast ourselves of the morrow for there is no assurance that tomorrow will come for us. Because life is speeding away, we must be more and more alert to the certainty of the closeness of judgment and know that we would be a loser even should we gain the whole world, yet lose our own souls (Mt. 16: 26).

The night is far spent, the day is at hand (13:12). We have been indolent long enough. We have slept long enough. Opportunities are fleeing from us. WAKE UP! And -- to truly "wake up" we must "cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light" (13:12). Putting off wickedness and evil doings and putting on goodness and well doing is often likened by the apostles as taking off or putting on clothes. We are urged to put away anger, wrath, malice, railing, shameful speaking out of our mouths and in the stead of these, holy and beloved, we are to put on a heart of compassion, kindness,

lowliness, meekness, longsuffering, forbearing one another, forgiving one another (Col. 3:8-14).

We are to walk becomingly, as in the day. To do that there are certain things we must abstain from. The apostle then gives a triplet of couplets: "*not in revelings and drunkenness; not in chambering and wantonness; not in strife and jealousy*" (Rom. 13:13). It seems that the first word of each couplet is the result of the second word of the couplet. Thus reveling is the result of drunkenness; chambering (illicit intercourse) is the result of wantonness, lewd or shameless behavior; strife is the result of envy, jealousies. These are not to characterize the Christians' walk: they must all be put away.

We must, on the other hand, put on the Lord Jesus; put on His salvation, put on His character. We must make no provisions for the flesh (the sinful, carnal desires) to fulfill the lusts thereof, and, if we wake out of sleep and become alert to the true needs of our soul; we will heed the apostle's instructions!

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