

I. Introduction

- A. 1 Corinthians 15:20-26
 - 1. The dead in Christ are only asleep.
 - 2. The last enemy for the saint is death, and that is compared to rest.
- B. Hebrews 4:1ff. = rest from labor = death and entrance into eternal rest.

II. v. 11 “These things He said. And after this, he said to them, “Lazarus, our friend, has fallen asleep. But, I go in order that I might wake him.” Therefore, the disciples said to Him, “Lord, since/if he has fallen asleep, he will be saved/awakened.”

- A. “These things He said...” = the previous statements.
 - 1. v. 4, v. 7, vv. 9-10.
 - a) v. 4 = Lazarus’ sickness ≠ death.
 - b) v. 7 = Let’s go back to Judea -> death by the Pharisees.
 - c) vv. 9-10 = obtuse statements about light and night.
 - 2. Why?
 - a) This was to set up the opportunity to see the glory of the Son of God (v. 4), leading to the maturing of their belief in Him (v.15).
 - b) Jesus put the disciples, purposefully, into the position that went way beyond what they understood as normal.
 - c) This is extremely important to remember in this narrative, and in your following of Christ.

- B. “And after this, He said to them...”
1. John purposes to show Jesus’ purpose in arranging the timing this way.
 2. Jesus, under the authority of the Father, said these things and the sequence of events played out this way, in order to lead to the pinnacle of demonstration of power from Jesus Christ.
 - a) *This would have the greatest impact on their faith.*
 - b) *This would set up the greatest opportunity for the Pharisee’s attack.*
 - c) *This would generate the greatest talk among the people.*
 - d) *This would promote the greatest challenge to the disciple’s understanding.*
 3. Once all was said that needed to be said, He says something that moves things forward.
- C. “Lazarus, our friend, has fallen asleep. But I go in order that I might wake him...”
1. Jesus is speaking to the disciples here.
 2. Jesus asserts three things:
 - a) *Lazarus is a friend of all the disciples and of the Lord.*
 - b) *Lazarus, that friend of them all, is asleep.*
 - c) *Lazarus is to be woken up by the Lord.*
 3. Remember, Jesus is possibly as much as a day’s walk away from Bethany.
 - a) *For Jesus to say that a man is asleep, and that He wants to go to wake him up, seems a little absurd!*
 4. Further, to go back to Judea, the center of the shark frenzy, in order to do that is certainly absurd!
 5. So, the disciples were, no doubt, wondering what in the world Jesus was doing.
- D. We know that is how they were thinking by the next statement (vv. 12-13).

III. vv. 12-13 "Therefore, the disciples said to Him, "Lord, if/since he has fallen asleep, he will be saved/be restored.""

A. "Therefore" = based upon what Jesus just said ("Lazarus is sleeping"), the disciples retort.

B. "Lord, since he has fallen asleep, he will be saved/restored."

C. Conditional statement = first class = understood as true.

1. The disciples literally believed Jesus was concerned about Lazarus' sleep patterns.

2. This demonstrates something about the disciples.

a) v. 13

b) *Disciples unaccustomed to God's eternal purpose in Christ, are often in the dark when it comes to the "invisible" workings of God.*

(1) John 4:27-33

(a) = "No one brought Him anything to eat, did he?"

(b) They thought Jesus was concerned about literal food.

(c) Notice that John shows that many believed in Christ (city of Sychar), which served to demonstrate the glory of Christ to the disciples as a result of this lesson.

(2) John 6:5-7

(a) Philip was asked to work out the feeding of 15,000 people.

(b) So, he sat down and figured up what they had and what they needed and concluded that they did not have enough to carry out Jesus' request.

(c) Andrew identified their only source of food - five loaves and two fish (v.9).

(d) Notice, again, that many believed in Christ because of this, which served to strengthen the disciple's learning and faith as a result (v. vv. 13-14).

(3) John 9:2ff.

(a) "...who sinned...?" = a cold statement about the justice of God in this man's case.

(b) Jesus understood it as another demonstration of the power of God, not an issue of justice.

(c) Again, the result was faith in Christ by this man, serving to show to the disciples how ministry must be done.

(4) John 12:3-5

- (a) Mary anoints Jesus.
- (b) Judas, leading the other disciples (Matthew 26:7-8; Mark 14:3-9), complained that the perfume was not sold by the woman and the money donated to the disciples (which would then allow Judas to pilfer the disciple's money box [v. 6]).
- (c) Jesus understood the purpose of God and His anointing as more important than the temporal value of money and perfume (vv. 7-8).

• *In other words, they cannot see with eyes of spiritual understanding in order to interpret food, clothing, provision, justice, world-events, by means of the purpose of God the Father in Christ the Son.*

- D. They believed that Jesus was concerned for Lazarus' sleep.
 - 1. This was certainly not worth risking life and limb over.
 - 2. "This surely can't mean that we are going to Judea again to awaken Lazarus."

IV. V. 13 “But Jesus had already spoken concerning his death. But, these thought He spoke of the sleep of slumber.”

- A. “But Jesus had already spoken concerning his death” = pluperfect verb = an event in the past which has results produced in the past.
- B. Jesus had already spoken of Lazarus’ death in the past.
1. When?
 2. vv. 3-4 = the messengers said Lazarus is sick/weak (obviously, to the point of death).
 - a) *Jesus said that his sickness would not end in death.*
 - b) *It would be easy to conclude that his sickness would not end in death, as Jesus said.*
- C. Therefore, because of the discussion of sickness and not leading to death, since Lazarus is simply “sleeping it off,” he will recover.
1. Realize that the disciples did not understand what Jesus understood.
 2. Realize that the disciples did not know that:
 - a) *Lazarus had just died.*
 - b) *Jesus would raise him from the dead.*
- D. The disciples had good reason to conclude that Lazarus was asleep, as a result of being very sick. And, Jesus’ prophecy that Lazarus would not die was good enough for them.
1. So, they would have concluded that Jesus spoke of literal sleep.
 2. This is a legitimate conclusion, if you do not realize the other side of the event from the purpose of God.
- E. This does not mean that the disciples weren’t spiritually dull, however.
1. Don’t forget the heart of the disciples at this time.
 2. Mark 10:32-45!! (see Mark 9:32)
 - a) *Jesus tells these two, with their mother, that they do not understand what they were asking (v. 38).*
 - b) *Notice that this is their concern just after Jesus finished telling them about His despicable fate (vv. 33-34).*
 - c) *This is spiritual dullness = “a lack of concern for the thing that concern Jesus Christ.”*

- Remember, Jesus is capitalizing on their dullness in order to have to have the greatest impact for their learning, and thus usefulness.

V. vv. 14-15 “Then at that time, therefore, Jesus said plainly to them, “Lazarus has died and I am glad/I rejoice through/for the sake of you all, in order that/because you might/will believe, that you were not there. But, I go to Him.”

- A. What is it that caused Jesus, here, to have joy from this tragic event of the death of His friend?
1. What caused Jesus to rejoice is seeing the faith of these men increasing as a result of what He knew would be the outcome of Lazarus’ death.
 2. Jesus plainly said that Lazarus has died.
 - a) *This would have hit the disciples hard.*
 - b) *They would have no doubt looked at each other in awe.*
 - (1) Jesus just finished saying that Lazarus was sleeping.
 - (2) And their reply, divulging a selfish heart of self-protection, was to let him awaken on his own.
 - c) *But Jesus is now saying that Lazarus is not asleep, but is actually dead.*
- B. This is a very important topic to discuss as this point.
1. The disciples learned a valuable lesson that day = those who follow Christ, and die, are only asleep.
 2. However, He did teach, a few months earlier, that those who die in their sins stay dead/actually die.
 - a) *John 8:21-24*
 - b) *Those who are left in their sins, and are not in Christ, will remain in that condition forever.*
 3. Consider:
 - a) *Ezekiel 18:4 4 “Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine. The soul who sins will die.*
 - b) *Ezekiel 18:20 20 “The person who sins will die. The son will not bear the punishment for the father’s iniquity, nor will the father bear the punishment for the son’s iniquity; the righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself.*
 - c) *Romans 6:23 = the wages of sin is death.*
 4. Eternal death is the result of sin, one sin, any sin (Genesis 2:16).
 5. However, for those who are actually born of God, they will live forever, even though they die.
 6. The idea of death as sleep is a concept somewhat familiar in the OT.
 - (1) Genesis 3:17-19
 - (a) Adam will return to the ground from which he was taken.

(b) He was created laying down, and laying down will be his final position.

(c) He will lay down in the dust.

1 Kings 2:1010 Then David slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of David.

(2) Daniel 12:1-3

(a) “sleep” = 1 Samuel 26:7 & Psalm 78:65 = “sleep”

(b) It means exactly what we think. It is the posture of laying down and falling into slumber.

(c) What does Daniel mean?

(i) *He means that those whose bodies are put into repose, into the dust of the ground (echoing back to the punishment of Adam, Genesis 3:17), will awaken and come out of the ground.*

(ii) *This is the resurrection.*

(a) Notice that Daniel is told that only those who are “many” and awake from this sleep will awaken to everlasting life.

(b) These are those who will shine in the kingdom of the Son (v. 3).

(c) However, notice that the rest will remain in the dust “asleep”

Isaiah 26:19

19 Your dead will live; Their corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy, For your dew is as the dew of the dawn, And the earth will give birth to the departed spirits. Ezekiel 37:11–14 11 Then He said to me, “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel; behold, they say, ‘Our bones are dried up and our hope has perished. We are completely cut off.’ 12 “Therefore prophesy and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God, “Behold, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, My people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel. 13 “Then you will know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves and caused you to come up out of your graves, My people. 14 “I will put My Spirit within you and you will come to life, and I will place you on your own land. Then you will know that I, the Lord, have spoken and done it.” declares the Lord.’ ”

7. The resurrection of the saints into life is seen as sleeping.

C. It is the same teaching of the NT as well, based upon Jesus’ own instructions:

MATTHEW 27:52–53 52 THE TOMBS WERE OPENED, AND MANY BODIES OF THE SAINTS WHO HAD FALLEN ASLEEP WERE RAISED; 53 AND COMING OUT OF THE TOMBS AFTER HIS RESURRECTION THEY ENTERED THE HOLY CITY AND APPEARED TO MANY.

ACTS 13:36–37 36 “FOR DAVID, AFTER HE HAD SERVED THE PURPOSE OF GOD IN HIS OWN GENERATION, FELL ASLEEP, AND WAS LAID AMONG HIS FATHERS

*AND UNDERWENT DECAY; 37 BUT HE WHOM GOD RAISED DID NOT UNDERGO
DECAY.*

*6 AFTER THAT HE APPEARED TO MORE THAN FIVE HUNDRED
BRETHREN AT ONE TIME, MOST OF WHOM REMAIN UNTIL NOW, BUT SOME AHAVE
FALLEN ASLEEP;*

1 CORINTHIANS 15:6

*18 THEN THOSE ALSO WHO AHAVE FALLEN ASLEEP IN CHRIST HAVE
PERISHED.*

1 CORINTHIANS 15:18

*20 BUT NOW CHRIST HAS BEEN RAISED FROM THE DEAD, THE BFIRST
FRUITS OF THOSE WHO CARE ASLEEP.*

1 CORINTHIANS 15:20

*13 BUT AWE DO NOT WANT YOU TO BE UNINFORMED, BRETHREN, ABOUT
THOSE WHO BARE ASLEEP, SO THAT YOU WILL NOT GRIEVE AS DO CTHE REST WHO
HAVE DNO HOPE. 14 FOR IF WE BELIEVE THAT JESUS DIED AND ROSE AGAIN, AEVER
SO GOD WILL BRING WITH HIM BTHOSE WHO HAVE FALLEN ASLEEP IIN JESUS. 15
FOR THIS WE SAY TO YOU ABY THE WORD OF THE LORD, THAT BWE WHO ARE ALIVE
IAND REMAIN UNTIL CTHE COMING OF THE LORD, WILL NOT PRECEDE DTHOSE WHO
HAVE FALLEN ASLEEP. 16 FOR THE LORD AHIMSELF BWILL DESCEND FROM HEAVEN
WITH A ICSHOUT, WITH THE VOICE OF DTHE ARCHANGEL AND WITH THE ETRUMPET
OF GOD, AND FTHE DEAD IN CHRIST WILL RISE FIRST. 17 THEN AWE WHO ARE ALIVE
IAND REMAIN WILL BE BCAUGHT UP TOGETHER WITH THEM CIN THE CLOUDS TO
MEET THE LORD IN THE AIR, AND SO WE SHALL ALWAYS DBE WITH THE LORD. 18
THEREFORE COMFORT ONE ANOTHER WITH THESE WORDS.*

1 THESSALONIANS 4:13FF

*4 AND SAYING, “A WHERE IS THE PROMISE OF HIS BCOMING? FOR EVER
SINCE THE FATHERS CFELL ASLEEP, ALL CONTINUES JUST AS IT WAS DFROM THE
BEGINNING OF CREATION.”*

2 PETER 3:4

D. This became the terminology, as realized in the teaching of the Messiah, of the death of the saints, not of the wicked.

VI. v. 15 - Jesus wants to see His disciples manifest faith.

- A. The way for this to happen involves the death of a loved one.
- B. That is always how it is for the saints.