

UNDERSTANDING
DEATH
and
Life
—FROM THE—
BIBLICAL
STANDPOINT

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Foreword

Though death has been man's lot for about six thousand years now, this phenomenon is still largely misunderstood. What exactly is death, how did it come in? What can be done about it? Is there any hope for mankind and for those alive at this time? This little pamphlet examines these questions in the light of six vital principles of truth revealed in the Holy Scriptures (the Bible, which is the Word of God).

May the Lord God Almighty cause you to read, understand and give heed to them, in Jesus mighty name. Amen.

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Chapter One

■ Truth Principle 1 ■

Death Was Never and Is Still Not God's Design for Man

The first principle of truth we want to establish in this pamphlet, and which need to be clearly understood, is the fact that death was **never**, and it is **still not**, God's design for man. We will give more space to establishing this principle, as it forms the basis for understanding the other truth principles that will be discussed later.

God's original and unchanging plan for mankind is given to us in Genesis 1:26-31.

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over

every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to everything that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so. And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

The human race (Adam and his offspring) was created to reflect the image and likeness of the Almighty God. They were also to live forever in an ever-expanding paradise, a world where they experience unlimited peace, joy, and fulfilment in harmony with their Creator, Father and God, whom they would increasingly get to know and adore.

The Bible, God's word, reveals that our first parents, Adam and Eve, experienced some measure of this blessedness, even though we are not told how long it lasted. It also reveals how the grand design of God for the human race was truncated. Man allowed the enemy, the evil one, to rob him of his promised estate. The Covenant he had with God was broken and death became his lot (Genesis 3).

What is Death?

But what exactly is death? From the Biblical perspective, (that is, from the standpoint of God), death, in the context of our meditation, has three successive parts. These are all indicated in

Genesis 3 and we will mention and explain them in turn.

1. *Separation from God*

Death, first of all, means separation from God, the Creator, Author and Giver of life, the ONLY ONE that can give life to His creation and sustain them in a state of conscious existence and wholesomeness. It includes the inability to contact God, have fulfilling fellowship with Him, and receive the supply of His life in a continuous and increasing manner. ...*This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God...* (John 17:3). With the Almighty God is the fountain of life. Only in His light can man see light (Psalm 36:9). The path of life is with Him; in His presence is fullness of joy and at His right hand pleasures forever more (Psalm 16:11).

Separation from God is where death begins. Man was driven out of God's presence and became disconnected with His Creator and Maker

(Genesis 3: 22-24). He no longer had access to that symbolic tree of life. In dying he began to die.

2. *The effects/consequences produced by a cursed environment*

The second meaning or expression of death is seen in the effects that a cursed world (living “*outside the garden*”) bring upon man (Genesis 3: 17-19). These include “*thorns and thistles*” (a symbol of hardship and unfruitfulness in *all things* despite heavy toil), “*sweat*” and vexation, absence of peace (disharmony within and without), insecurity, fear, anxiety, lack, unfulfilled longings, sorrow of heart, sicknesses and pains, physical and emotional trauma. All these and more became man’s lot in a world increasingly hostile and afflicted by evil forces.

These experiences, which are more graphically discussed in Deuteronomy 28:15-68, make man’s life to hang in a balance. They produce heavy toll on his soul, vital organs (life-supporting system) and physical body. They are said to be the “*curse*”

of the law" (Galatians 3:13). In practical terms, they constitute the *dying process*; the processes by which man's natural powers are gradually weakened and degraded until he breaks down in physical death. In the words of Deuteronomy 28:20 (see also Deuteronomy 11:17), they make man to "perish quickly" from off the face of the earth.

3. *Physical death*

This is the terminal part of the phenomenon called death and occurs when man finally let go the breath of life, either through a sudden destruction or when his physical body and life supporting system have become too weak to carry on. With this man's life (his conscious existence) comes to an end. The body returns to dust and the spirit (that which may be preserved of man) returns to God who gave it, to be held before the Almighty in remembrance (Ecclesiastes 12: 7).

It is important to note that physical death is a termination of man's conscious existence. There is no consciousness after death, no remembrance or any activity of man beyond the grave (Psalm 6:5, Ecclesiastes 9:9-10; Isaiah 38:18-19). Man is not anymore alive in death than he was before his death. Death is cessation of life, not a transition from one conscious life to another as the religions of this world will have us believe. When God told man...*in the day ye eat of it in dying ye shall die* (Genesis 2: 17), He did not mean that death will translate man to a higher life. He meant exactly what He said: *that man will die and cease to exist in a conscious state*. It is Satan that sought to make man believe he is immortal and cannot die (Genesis 3:4).

So, physical death is a cessation of conscious existence in any sphere of life. This is what the Holy Scriptures teach and it is absolutely true ... *Man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up: So man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they*

shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep (Job 14:10-12). The fact that man's spirit returns to God in physical death does not secure a conscious existence after death because man's spirit essence thus separated from the body is not capable of an independent existence in a conscious state. Thus, concerning man in his fallen condition, Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 3:18-20

I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts. For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knoweth (can see, observe, understand and interact with) the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast

*that goeth downward to the earth?
Wherefore I perceive that there is nothing
better, than that a man should rejoice in
his own works; for that is his portion: for
who shall bring him to see what shall be
after him?*

What a pitiable state. Like a common beast, fallen man passes away. The spirit goes upward to God, but no one knows (see, observe, understand and interact with) it. Who shall bring him to see what shall be after him? A man that is dead sees nothing, hears nothing and can do nothing. Death brings man to an end, a sorrowful and miserable end. Death is a bondage, *the bondage of corruption* (Romans 8:21), a bondage from which man cannot deliver himself, one that makes him to live a perishing life until he is eventually plugged out of existence.

How Then Did Death Enter Into The World?

But how did death enter into the world of mankind? We are shown clearly in the Holy Scriptures that it was a consequence of the wilful

disobedience of Adam (and transgression of Eve, our first parents) (Genesis 3:1-19). Adam wilfully broke God's law and Covenant (1 Timothy 2:14). Romans 5:12 says *...Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:*

But for sin, man's time would have endured forever. His enemy (the devil) would have been totally subdued and crushed under his feet (for God did put all things under man's feet: Psalm 8: 4-6). He would have been fed with the "*finest of wheat*" and even "*honey out of the rock*" (Psalm 81: 13-16). But tragedy struck. Sin entered into the world and death followed sin.

Sin and death entered into man's nature corrupting his soul, his blood, and his flesh. Man's nature and all his faculties were damaged by sin and by death. In addition, sin and death entered into man's environment creating an atmosphere that promotes and sustain evil and is hostile to life.

All of Adam's children are *conceived in sin and shapened in iniquity* right from their mother's wombs (Psalm 51: 5). They come into the world carrying sin in their members and their bodies already subjected to a dying process. In addition, the world into which they are born lies in wickedness.

Thus, both by nature and nurture, mankind is doomed! Man is by nature a child of disobedience and wrath, and the environment into which he is born reinforces that nature and helps to give it expression. Man is born into the world to fulfill a course already set out and brutally enforced by the "*prince of the power of the air*" (Ephesians 2:2-3), a path from which he cannot deliver himself.

Ever since Adam's fall, the power of death has multiplied upon the earth. Man's world has become increasingly hostile to his survival and human life expectancy has rapidly declined. From just less than a thousand years in the days of Adam, man now lives just about 80 years on

average in the most advanced places in man's planet.

Science and technological advances have helped to cushion some of man's pains but has also brought more dangers. In particular, it has not been able to curtail the rapid progress of death. Today, the presence and fear of death envelopes mankind; *the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now* (Romans 8: 22). It is obvious that without an intervention, the human race is on a journey to extinction.

Chapter Two

■ Truth Principle 2 ■

God Has Abolished Death

We saw in chapter one that death was never God's thought for man, and that it came into man's world as a consequence of sin. Man chose friendship with Satan without knowing the full consequences and practical implications of that word "death". He chose to listen to and trust his sworn adversary, the devil, and to have him, rather than God, his Creator, as master and lord.

And God allowed man; haven warned him earlier of the folly in such a choice. Sin would only separate him from his Maker and bring sorrow and pain. Satan cannot give or sustain life; he would only steal from man that which God has given him. He will kill his joy, hope and destiny,

and ultimately destroy him (John 10:10). And that was exactly what happened!

And God looked upon man in his pains, sorrows and afflictions. Man was perishing and there was no remedy. God's heart was moved with love and compassion. But what would He do? *The wages of sin is death* (Romans 6:23). He had presented before man life and death and urged him to choose life, but man chose death. Having entered into the world, death can only be taken away if the sin committed is atoned for, otherwise justice would have been compromised. But atonement would require the shedding of blood in sacrifice; for *without shedding of blood is no remission for sin* (Hebrews 9:22).

Who will make atonement for man? It has to be a fit man, one from among the human race but untainted by sin and death, one that does not stand under the same condemnation he is seeking to atone for; a perfect kinsman, a kinsman Redeemer.

And God saw that there was no man and wondered that there was no intercessor (Isaiah 59:16). There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one (Romans 3: 10-12). Neither man's labours nor the fruit of his loins could atone for his sin! Whatever semblance of righteousness remaining in him had become like filthy rags before God (Isaiah 64:6).

Therefore, God's arm brought salvation unto Him; and his righteousness, it sustained Him (Isaiah 59:16b). The Lord God, the Creator, took upon Himself to be man's Redeemer. And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth (John 1:14).

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his

*Son into the world to condemn the world;
but that the world through him might be
saved (John 3:16-17)*

*But when the fulness of the time was
come, God sent forth his Son, made of a
woman, made under the law (Galatians
4:4). Forasmuch then as the children are
partakers of flesh and blood, he also
himself likewise took part of the same;
that through death he might destroy him
that had the power of death, that is, the
devil; And deliver them who through fear
of death were all their lifetime subject to
bondage (Heb 2:14-15).*

*Surely he hath borne our griefs, and
carried our sorrows...he was wounded
for our transgressions, he was bruised for
our iniquities: the chastisement of our
peace was upon him; and with his stripes
we are healed. All we like sheep have
gone astray; we have turned everyone to
his own way; and the LORD hath laid on
him the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:5-6)*

Yes! God has through His Son, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, destroyed (render entirely idle and useless, brought to naught, put down) him that had the power of death. He has delivered mankind from the penalty of death and is in the business of loosening Adam's race from its grip.

This He accomplished through his redeeming sacrifice on Calvary's cross. He gave his life a ransom for all (1 Timothy 2:6). He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows. He died for you and in your place. He died that you might no longer die but have life and have it more abundantly (John 10:10). And the One that died is alive to save to the uttermost all that come to God by Him (Hebrews 7:25). *Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him* (Romans 5:9).

Yes, God in His foreknowledge knew all along what man would suffer; He subjected man to that experience in the hope of redemption (Genesis 3:15; Romans 8: 20). There is hope of deliverance from death for mankind. And that hope He

revealed and fulfilled in His Son Jesus Christ. About 2000 years ago, a very unusual event happened in the course of human history. Sin was judged and death conquered on Calvary's cross. The one that had the power of death was stripped of his assumed powers over mankind. The human race was loosed from the grip of sin and of death. May all praises, glory and honour be unto His Holy name forever and ever. Amen!

Chapter Three

■ Truth Principle 3 ■

How Deliverance From Death Is Offered And Received?

In the last chapter, we saw that God has made provision for the deliverance of the human race from the power of death. He has destroyed he that had the power of death and delivered mankind from being subject to the bondage (Hebrews 2:14-15). But we may ask: how is that which God has, in love, purchased for man made available to him? How may he receive it? Our focus in this chapter is on providing answers to these questions.

We are shown that deliverance from death and the opportunity to come to an incorruptible life is

freely offered through the gospel (good news) of Jesus Christ. In 2 Timothy 1: 9-10 we read

Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel:

Oh Yes! Deliverance from sin and death and the opportunity to have life in an incorruptible estate is available to the entire human race. But it is only through the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Life and immortality is offered to mankind through the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. He (Jesus Christ) is *“the Resurrection and the Life”* (John 11: 25). None of the human race can hope for deliverance from death and eternal life outside of Him; for none can keep alive his own soul (Psalm 22:29). He is *the Way, the Truth*

and the Life; no man can be reconciled and come to peace with the Father except by Him (John 14:6).

For mankind to be delivered from death and *progressively* brought into an incorruptible life, they must hear “the voice of the Son of God” (John 5:25). ***They that hear (and hearken) shall live.*** His voice is sounded through the gospel preached (2 Timothy 1:11, Romans 10: 13-15). The preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ is the channel through which the exalted Saviour, the life-giving Spirit, the Lord Jesus Christ, makes His life available and releases the same to man.

Thus, man must hear the gospel and believe it in order to experience deliverance from death. He must accept the atoning sacrifice as something made for his release. He must by faith offer the same unto God by accepting Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour and Lord (Hebrews 11:4). He must embrace the gospel *wholeheartedly*, **rejoicing in its offers and willingly submitting to all of its precepts and commands** in relation to righteousness. He must sow to himself in

righteousness by means of *the voice of the Son of God* coming to him in order to reap in mercy (Hosea 10: 12; Galatians 6:8; 1 Corinthians 15:42-44).

In other words, man must give attention to the gospel sound. He must hearken diligently to the voice of the Son of God (He that speaks from heaven whose voice is able to shake all things: Hebrews 12 24-28) if he must live. For *man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live* (Deuteronomy 8:3; Luke 4:4).

As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life (John 3: 14-15).

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and

shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life (John 5:24).

Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? Have you made that atoning sacrifice needed to reconcile you back to God, the Father? Have you been to Him for the cleansing power, are you washed in the blood of the Lamb? Are your garments white as snow? Jesus died for you and was raised from the dead to bring you to life eternal.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved (Jhn 3: 16-17).

Have you made Him your personal Saviour and Lord by accepting his death and resurrection as something accomplished for you in particular? He alone by His sacrificial death and the life He

now possesses has the power to change you (delivering you from the guilt and power of sin and its curses) and to change your destiny.

Know assuredly that if you have not met Jesus and encountered His saving power, you are still under the judgment of death; you are condemned already and there cannot be deliverance from that condemnation by any other means. Your life will continue to be miserable; you will physically die and perish in your misery. **But you can do something about it now!** Jesus said *come unto me all ye that labour (under the grievous yoke of sin and the curse of death) and are heavy laden and I will give you rest* (Mat 11: 28).

Yes! You can come to Him in repentance and by faith joyfully accept the sacrifice God made for you. His arms are opened wide; He does not reject all who truly come to Him (John 6: 37). With a repentant heart and total submission, accept Him as your Lord and Savior now and the joy of heaven will flood your soul. Thereafter,

you must make a commitment to live by Him and for Him alone.

Chapter Four

■ Truth Principle 4 ■

Total Deliverance from Death Is Made Possible In the “*Last Day*”

In the last three chapters, we saw that even though death has been with the human race since the recorded history of man, the Lord Jesus Christ has, through death, destroyed him that hath the power of death. **From the standpoint of God, death has been abolished.**

We also saw that the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, was raised from the dead and, for our sake, was made a life-giving Spirit (1 Corinthians 15: 45), is in the business of totally delivering man from all of the expressions of death. He does this by releasing His life in an increasing manner to those among the human race who believe in Him and are yielding to His rule. His Spirit

accomplishes this purpose in the medium of the preaching of the gospel. The gospel (in all of its many-sided wisdom-all of its various parts) preached to man is the sound of the voice of the Son of God. We are assured that those that hear (and diligently hearken to it) shall live.

Our focus in this chapter is to note and emphasize that *total* deliverance from death (including deliverance from physical death), entrance into a life that is incorruptible, a life no longer subject to the dying or ageing process, is possible in these last days through the sound of the voice of the Son of God in the gospel. *And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day* (John 6:39-40).

The *last day* is that period of time in human history set apart by God to bring those of the

human race who fully embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ and submit to His rule into total deliverance from death (full resurrection experience), (1 Corinthians 15: 22-28; Acts 17: 31). This includes those believers who **died in the Lord** and those who are alive and hearkening to His voice.

This observation raises two questions. The first is “what happens to the believer in Christ Jesus who dies before *the last day*? The second is whether or not we are already in the last day as described by the Lord Jesus Christ in John 6:39-40.

Let us see what the scriptures teach in relation to the first question. The Bible shows that at the point of salvation, the believer receives eternal life both as a **present possession** (John 3:15; 6:54; 10:28; 17:2; Romans 6:23; 1 Timothy 6:12; 1 John 3:15; 5:13) and also a **hope** to be fully realized in the fullness of time (Mark 10:30; Romans 2:7; 5:21; Titus 1:2; 3:7). If he lives in the light of that hope, submitting to the demands of the gospel and

rejoicing in its offers, there is already secured for him an incorruptible inheritance in Jesus Christ, which he would fully enter into in *the last day* (2 Timothy 4:8).

However, should he or she die before the time period described as the "*last day*", the body would return to dust while the spirit will return to God who gave it, **to await the appointed time to enter into fullness of life**. At the time appointed, God will give it a body that befits his new estate and which is needed to express the life that was sown in him or her (1 Corinthians 15:38). The scriptures teach that the body that the Lord Jesus Christ will give the believer at that point of his resurrection will be a spiritual body (1 Corinthians 15:44). Only at that point will the believer come again unto a consciousness existence as a spirit being.

What happens to the true believer who followed the Lord Jesus Christ faithfully at the point of physical death? What is his or her state between the point of physical death and the "*last day*"

when he is raised up into full resurrection life? Well the answer is not far-fetched. Like all others, when the believer dies, he loses all conscious existence. The body returns to dust while the spirit returns to God who gave it. But then, there is a great difference. **Unlike others who have no hope, because the believer has already trusted in Jesus Christ unto eternal life, he or she is not said to be dead but to be asleep** (1 Corinthians 15: 18, 1 Thessalonians 4:13, 14).

As it is in the natural world when a man truly sleeps, though he is no longer in a state of active consciousness, he is still alive. That condition of inactivity only lasts for a season as he will after some time wake up to conscious activities. So also, it is with the believer who dies in the Lord. Though not in any conscious (active) existence, because he already has the hope of eternal life realized in him, he is said to live in the sight and presence of God (Mathew 22:32; Mark 12:27; Luke 20:38). He will ultimately be awakened from that sleep unto a conscious and glorious life over which death no longer has any power.

Thus, for the believer who died in the Lord, death is no longer an issue; deliverance from death in all its ramifications is already a settled matter because he has received the gospel of Jesus Christ (the promise of life in Christ Jesus) and sown unto himself in righteousness. The fact that he will be raised up from the unconscious state into an incorruptible and glorious life in *the last day* is an accomplished matter. Glory to the name of the Lord on High!

Jesus said unto her, *I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live* (John 11:25). Yes, even though the believer dies, yet shall he live. He shall have a new life, not the same kind of dying life he had before, but a new life of incorruption, power and glory (1 Corinthians 15:42-43). But until *the last day* sets in, he will have to wait in sleep.

That brings us to the second question. How may we know when the *last day* sets in? Well, the *times and seasons* set apart for the fulfillment of different aspects of the Father's redemptive plan

for mankind are kept in His own power (Acts 1:7). However, God allows His people to know when a particular *time* and *season* has set in by opening their eyes to the evidences in the prophetic scriptures and also by the witnesses of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8; John 16:13).

It is not our burden in this pamphlet to establish this (materials dealing on the particular subject matter could be made available on request) but to just let you know that by the witnesses of the written word and by further (secondary) witnesses of the Holy Spirit to His people, we know that the beginning period of *the last day* has already set in. The events unfolding in the earth today give abundant evidence to all discerning minds that the last days are here. *The time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation* has already started And in Daniel 12:1-2 we are told ...*And at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake.*

The realization that we are already in the *evening* or *beginning* period of the *last day* ought to register itself strongly upon the hearts of all of Adam's children alive in the earth today. (Note that God's day begins in the evening and ends in the morning: Genesis 1:5). In this evening time God is giving abundant light (Zechariah 14:7). In particular, there are two principles of truth related to our subject-matter that flow from this knowledge that should be of great concern to us. We will be dealing with these in the next two (concluding) chapters.

Chapter Five

■ Truth Principle 5 ■

“Blessed Are the Dead Which Die In the Lord from Henceforth”

In the last chapter, we mentioned that there are two things related to the burden of this study flowing from the realization that we are already in the evening period of the *last day*. These have to do with the activities of the Lord Jesus Christ towards those of the human race that are physically alive and have believed on Him. That is, they relate to the work of the Lord Jesus Christ in the lives of persons who are physically alive, have wholeheartedly embraced the gospel and are sowing to themselves in righteousness.

The first, which we shall look at in this chapter, is given to us in Revelation 14: 13. It relates to

believers who were physically alive when that time period referred to by the Lord as *the last day* sets in but who later die at a point during the time period. The passage reads as follows

And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.

Here, we are shown that when *the last day* sets in and begins to run its course, those who die in the Lord at that point have a unique blessedness. They experience something which all other saints up until that time did not experience. This blessedness consists in the fact that they enter into *rest* from their labours and *their works do follow them*.

What does it mean to enter into “*rest*” from one’s labours as used in this context? Note that it does not suggest a state of unconsciousness or

inactivity, because we are told that their works follow them, implying that they continue in their services of love and devotion towards God. “*Rest*”, in this context, implies a life of total liberty from the bondage of corruption and from the weaknesses of the human nature. It means entering into the fullness of the promise of life that God has prepared for the believer in redemption. This is the rest all believers are enjoined to labour to enter into in Hebrews 4:9-11. It is a cessation from labouring in a sphere of imperfections and limitations and an entrance into a state of perfection and glory.

These believers who die during the *last day* are said to be blessed because they do not have to wait in *sleep* (unconsciousness) to enter into this rest. Unlike previous saints who died in the Lord and had to wait until *the last day* before they can be awakened into an incorruptible life, these ones enter into that life almost immediately after departing from this world. For them, the time of waiting is totally cut short; physical death is like a transition from a life of dishonor, limitations and

weaknesses to one of honour, power and glory. ...*And their works follow them.* They continue their works in the invisible sphere doing so in absolute rest. Praise the name of the Lord Most High forever!

As we conclude this chapter, it is important to note again that what is said concerning the “*blessed dead*” in Revelation 14:13 is not the usual or normal experience of those who died in the Lord. The phrase, **from henceforth**, set out the time period during which this is true. It also implies that up until that time, those who die in the Lord did not immediately enter into their rest. They entered into a time of inactivity (sleep) until *the last day* sets in and full resurrection life is made available to them. Secondly, this honour does not pertain to all those of the human race who die during the onset of *the last day*. It belongs ONLY to those who die in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Chapter Six

■ Truth Principle 6 ■

“We Shall Not All Sleep”

We now come to the last principle of truth we want to set out in relation to our present burden: the fact that we shall not all sleep.

The “*Last Day*” is a very momentous period in human history, a period like none before it; neither shall there be any after it carrying as much signification for the human race. This period is particularly special for the believers in Christ Jesus, as it opens up before them the opportunity to enter into redemption experiences that were hitherto inaccessible. One of these experiences, as mentioned in the last chapter, is the blessedness that anyone that dies in Christ enters into during the period. Revelation 14:13 says they enter into rest and their works do

follow them. They do not wait long in sleep before entering into incorruptibility and life. The second, which is the focus of this chapter, is the glorious privilege reserved for those believers that are “*alive and remaining*” (1 Thessalonians 4:15) during this great period.

Let us look at this thought as presented in 1 Corinthians 15. We read verses 51-57.

Behold, I shew 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. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O

grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

What do the Scriptures mean by the phrase, “*We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed*”? As we observed in chapter four, to sleep in this passage means to die in the hope of full redemption. It is a term applied to believers in Christ Jesus who experience physical death. Thus, the statement, *we shall not all sleep but we shall all be changed* means that it is not all believers in Christ Jesus that will experience physical death before they obtain full redemption and are transformed from a life of corruption and weakness to one of incorruption and glory. While all believers who have whole-heartedly embraced the gospel of Jesus Christ will without doubt experience the change (the transformation from death and a dying experience to incorruptible life) and majority will die first before being raised up into that life, there are

some that will experience total change without having to pass through physical death. *Behold, I show you a mystery, we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.*

We are told that this is a mystery. A “mystery” in the language of scriptures, is something in the plan of redemption that was not made known unto men before but is now revealed through the preaching of the gospel (Mark 4:11; Romans 16:25; 1 Corinthians 2:7; Ephesians 1:9; 3:3; 6:19; Colossians 1:26). The implication is that this experience, which is reserved for the saints “*alive and remaining*” has always been in the eternal plan of God. God had purposed in redemption that some among men, while yet physically alive and visible upon the earth, will experience total deliverance from death by the gospel. In them will be fulfilled a prophecy that is written in the scriptures, *death is swallowed up in victory* (1 Corinthians 15:54; Isaiah 25:8).

This mystery of redemption was hidden to men in generations past but is now clearly revealed

and declared in the gospel of Jesus Christ. It has not been the normal experience of men, even believers in Christ Jesus. The Lord's people have had to sleep in death even though the hope of life was sown in them. Many have had to enter into glory through the way of death. Bu the hour has come for a new experience to be revealed: *we shall not all sleep.*

Oh Yes! The mystery is now to be fulfilled and completed (Revelation 10:7). There are a people who will not have to go the way of death, a people that shall be totally changed and made to have total victory over the bondage of corruption while yet physically alive. In them, death will be swallowed up in victory. While yet in their visible human estate, they *put on* incorruption and also put on immortality, they break out from among men who are physically alive but subject to death, into a life over which death no longer has power. They are caught up unto a new reality, into a glorious experience, while yet living among men. Then (and only then) shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, *Death is*

*swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting?
O grave, where is thy victory?*

Why did the Lord reserve this experience for a people alive and remaining *in the last day*? To what end? How will this glorious experience be worked into the “alive and remaining” ones? What does it mean to be *alive* and *remaining*? The answers to these questions are taken up in significant details in the Book, *The Raising up of the Dead That Are Physically Alive (The Out-Resurrection)*, which is available on request.

May the gracious Lord cause you to be one of those in whose lives this mystery and song of victory will be fulfilled. May you be among the *alive and remaining ones*, as you whole-heartedly embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ, owning Him as your personal Saviour and Lord, and learning to live by all of the gospel’s demands.

Note that this experience is not wishful thinking. It is not even something man could have imagined, given the weight and strangling hold

of sin and death. It is a provision in redemption. *He that hath wrought us for this selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit* (2 Corinthians 5:1-5).

The “*last day*” is already upon us. These are no longer ordinary days. There is a salvation that is ready to be revealed in a people in this *last day*. It is a salvation which even angels had desired to look into (1 Peter 1:5, 12). You can be a partaker of this as you begin to open up yourself to the gospel of Jesus Christ in an uncommon manner. The time past of our lives suffice to have served sin *when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries* and even “*played church*”, following the Lord in mouth only, living in hypocrisy, deceiving our own selves. We must *no longer live the rest of our time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God* (1 Peter 4: 2-3).

You may have given your life to Jesus Christ (you are already born again) but are you living true to Him? Do you prove that you believe in Him

through a passionate love for Him and a life of obedience? Are you eagerly seeking Him, denying the world and its lust? Are you living in Him and hearing His voice? Do His words make meaning to you; do you believe His words and cleave to them? *Whosoever lives in Him, hearing His voice daily, and believes in His words and in His Person, cleaving to Him and seeking His appearing shall never die. Believest thou this?* (John 11: 26).

Oh Yes, we can believe because He said so. And because we have whole-heartedly yielded our all to Him, making Him the Pillar that holds our lives, we shall not be ashamed. You have a choice between life and death (Deuteronomy 30:19, Jeremiah 21:8). You can make a destiny-changing decision now! You can choose life and live! May the Most-High God be glorified in your life and in ours also; Amen!

For a more detailed study on "*The Resurrection of the Dead and Eternal Judgment*" and further help, feel free to contact

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