

STRAIGHTWAY

And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him [Mark 1:18].

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“Why Sleep Ye?” Luke 22:46

Dr. H. T. Spence

The *Straightway* articles this calendar year have commenced with both the burden for the need of revival in Fundamentalism and the necessity that our pursuit be for the right kind of revival. In our readings of past revivals and longings for one in our day, we tend to long for “repeat” manifestations rather than to truly seek what God desires for our present needs.

A revival must come to Fundamentalism or the movement will be assimilated into Neo-Christianity. We are already witnessing several leanings and proclivities in Fundamentalism. May God give us discernment before such assimilation becomes a reality.

The Parable of the Virgins

The parable of the ten virgins

in Matthew 25 is an urgent call to believers living in the End Times. Although these virgins are divided into the wise and foolish, it is important to note that such distinction is *only* discerned at the last moment—at the cry of the Bridegroom.

The unfolding of this parable can easily represent three periods of Church History along with their views of the second coming of Christ. Matthew 25:1 may represent the time of the early church’s expectancy concerning the imminent return of Christ. The Apostles wrote of this expectation believing He would return in their lifetime. Such believers were virgins who “took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.” They were not expecting any delay. Had He come in that first period, there

would never have been “foolish” virgins; all ten virgins had oil and “went forth to meet” Him. But something happened—He did not come. It was this delay that prompted the slumbering and sleeping.

Matthew 25:5 depicts a subsequent period of Church History: “While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.” This long period of spiritual lethargy included the Dark Ages and the Reformation, leading up to the Revivalists of the 1700s and 1800s. Although Bible doctrine dominated the time of the Reformation, it was only later that “spirituality” flowed from the doctrine of Scripture and became a burden among God’s people.

Matthew 25:6-7 may depict a return to a consciousness of Christ’s imminent return:

And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.

STRAIGHTWAY

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Of all the periods of Church History, the greatest revival era was the Philadelphia Age from about 1750 to 1900. Although “doctrine” was the great burden of the Reformation and post-Reformation among the Puritans, the burden for the *Christian life* and *spirituality* did not come to importance until this time. From Reformation doctrine flowed Philadelphia revivalism and spirituality; then in the mid-nineteenth century, from revivalism and spirituality flowed a renewed burden and expectancy for Christ’s second coming. This time was the beginning of the latter-rain outpouring of the Spirit. We are now at the end of this latter-rain outpouring. Probably more Christians would have been ready for Christ’s coming at the beginning of the Philadelphia Church Age than in this Laodicean Church Age.

The End Time will be the hardest period to find “true” Christians; it is the midnight of history. Because of the present increase of the apostasy within the Institutional Church, fewer individuals are truly in touch with God than even one hundred years ago. The public Christianity of our times is a false Christianity; it proclaims another Gospel of another kind. Christ is outside the Church knocking, endeavoring to find individuals within who will open the door for Him at this supertime of history. Thus, for God’s remnant this midnight hour is the period of the awakening. But what Neo-Christianity is calling an awakening

the Bible calls an apostasy.

The time of awakening comes when a voice is heard, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him" (25:6). This is what has brought the burden of revival among the remnant in the past 200 years; it is the clear consciousness of the second coming of Christ. Now that the call has come, the crucial key for the remnant concerns how much oil is needed for the preparation. The parable of Matthew 25 indicates that they *all* were virgins, they *all* slept, they *all* awakened, they *all* had lamps, and they *all* had wicks which they trimmed. The only difference between being wise and being foolish was having or lacking the additional oil.

The Power of Sleep

The burden of this article draws from the awakening of these virgins. One of the powers of the End Time has been the power of sleep, which must be understood in its specific biblical aspects. The first sleep in the Bible is found in Genesis 2:21, where God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam; this is a type of death, to be found in the shadow and type of Christ's death (the last Adam). Out of this sleep God brought forth Adam's Bride; out of Christ's death was procured the Bride of Christ. Adam declared, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man" (Genesis 2:23). This will

be also declared of Christ's Bride and her relationship to Him, "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones" (Ephesians 5:30). Physical death in the New Testament is often referred to as "sleep" especially when speaking of the death of the righteous (Matthew 27:52; Acts 7:60, etc.)

The second sleep of Scripture is mentioned in Genesis 28:11 when Jacob fell asleep and dreamed his dream. When Jacob awakened out of his sleep, he exclaimed, "Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not" (28:16). This natural sleep is a type of spiritual sleep of all sinners and how the New Birth is the result of an awakening out of spiritual death or sleep to the awareness of God.

Romans 13:11-12 present yet another context of sleep:

And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.

The Believer can be in a spiritual sleep needing to be awakened. "For now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." The Coming of Christ, the consummation of our salvation, is nearer than when we first believed. "The night is far spent": the night of history is nearing its end as we are nearing the coming of Christ; "the day is at hand." The

Apostle pleads with his readers to cast off the works of darkness as they anticipate this day to come.

Sleep places us in one of the most vulnerable states of our daily existence. It is a time physically when we are unaware of life, in an unconscious/subconscious season. Research has suggested that man tends to be in his deepest and best sleep between 10:00 P.M. and 2:00 A.M. Spiritual sleep is a time when we are unaware of our surroundings, unaware of God, unaware of our spiritual condition, unaware of the world. Virgins sleep; disciples sleep. The deepest sleep spiritually will be at the call of the Bridegroom, at “midnight” (Matthew 25:6). Midnight is the greatest, most vulnerable hour for sleep. The spiritual principle is also true: the most dangerous sleep is the sleep of apostasy and sleep during the time of the worst apostasy.

The Sleep of Apostasy

Romans 11:8 speaks of the sleep of Israel that has continued until our present day: “(According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day.” Of all the nations, why is this stated of Israel? Having received the deep light of Old Testament truth with the prophecies of their coming Messiah, they have rejected all; therefore God has sent them a spirit of slumber no other nation has known.

This principle stands true for any nation, such as America, that has received the light of the Gospel and eventually has rejected it. This principle is also true for the entire planet when the Gospel has been preached to all. There can be no apostasy without the rejection of the Gospel; there can be no rejection of the Gospel until there is the proclamation of the Gospel. Global apostasy in the End Time becomes a reality only after some form of the Gospel has been preached to the ends of the earth (Matthew 24:14).

Rejection is not simply denial. Rejection can be a desire for a perverted Gospel: “I don’t want the Gospel the way it is, but I will accept it if you change it.” “I want a new view of the Gospel, I want a new Christianity, one that is compatible with my love for the world and the flesh.” This too is rejection of the true Gospel.

Second Thessalonians 2:10b-11 states, “Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.” When the love for the truth is rejected, it brings both a delusion from God and apostasy. This principle is also seen in II Timothy 4:4, “And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.” This is what brings the sleep to the Church in the End Time. Revelation 3:16-17 presents sleep in the context of lukewarmness; such

people are unaware of their surroundings, their world, and even themselves. The Philadelphia Church Age brought deep, spiritual truth for godly living through the preaching and music, but Laodicea has rejected that truth, and thus our church age has fallen into the deepest spiritual sleep of history. As Christ's first coming was at Israel's darkest hour of apostasy, so His Second Coming will be at the darkest hour of the Institutional Church. Only a few knew Him at His first coming; only a few will know Him at His Second Coming.

The Crisis Hour: Warning Against Sleep

Each believer today must be careful about personal sleep of soul and life. Although one part of the definition of sleep suggests an honorable rest for the body and mind, sleep also carries the meaning of a "lack of ordinary consciousness." How conscious are we of the Lord's imminent return?

Believers of the true Body of Christ on earth today are in a crisis hour. The crisis hour of Jesus Christ began in the Garden of Gethsemane late Thursday night before His crucifixion. This night of nights was the great testing of the "oil." The very name of the garden He entered, Gethsemane, means "the judgment of the oil, or the oil press." Now His body, the remnant saints today, are in the crisis-hour season. The virgins are being tested as to the

presence of sufficient oil within each life for this critical hour.

In Luke 22:40 the Lord told His disciples, "Pray that ye enter not into temptation." The temptation eventually came to prove whether they were strong or cowardly. Had the disciples prayed, they would not have yielded to the overpowering sense of weariness and sleepiness. In Luke 18:1 Christ declared, "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint." A constant heart of prayer is the antidote to fainting, to sleep, to weakness, and to compromise. Prayer prompts awareness of some temptations that come to us; prayerlessness leads us into temptation.

Luke 22:45 reveals the peculiar quality of the disciples' sleep: "He found them sleeping for sorrow." Men who could toil all night fishing in a ship were men who could not pray a few hours through the night. Three times Christ spoke to these three men during that dreadful watch; the only thing that mattered to them was their ease and comfort. This night of nights gave evidence of a certain power that lulled them to sleep; it was heaviness of sorrow. This sorrow seems to have been produced by the presence of the Devil in that garden. Three times Christ prayed; three times He checked on the disciples. We see His personal importunity in prayer while the powers of evil caused the disciples to sleep.

There were two aspects of Christ's

prayer at this crisis hour in His life. There was the prayer to the Father: "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42). Jesus uses the Greek infinitive instead of the imperative here. It deepens the note of humility and resignation; He was not expecting any response from the Father. "Father, if thou art willing to remove this cup from me..." but the answer was already in His prayer, "nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." Also found in this crisis hour was the following aspect: "and being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." This was the beginning of Jesus' battle with the Devil. The "agony" of His prayer was not concerning the Father and His will; such a conflict would indicate that Christ sinned. The agony of Christ here was His beginning confrontation with the Devil. The greater the pressure on the soul, the greater will be the cry of that soul. Amidst this powerful conflict "he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: for the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:40, 41).

The Sorrows of the Times

We find ourselves in these moments of history in the sorrow of the times. Matthew 24:12 states,

"And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." This iniquity, this lawlessness, is truly abounding both in the secular world and the Christian world. The Institutional Church is dominated by carnality, worldliness, and lawless Christian living. Many professing Christians have entered a state of heart that cares not how they live. More and more, an unconscious universalism is being accepted. All of this abounding of iniquity and lawless living, not only in the world but also in the churches, is because people are spiritually asleep. When Christ promised in Matthew 16:18, "and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," this was a promise to the true Church, not to the Institutional Church. For the gates of hell have already prevailed against the Laodicean Institutional Church.

Not only has the increase of iniquity caused the *agapae* of Christians to wax cold, but also three other sorrows have brought a sleep to the End-time professing Christian. The first is the sleep of self-indulgence and sin. It is evident from Romans 13:11-14 that spiritual lethargy could take over the Christian leading to sin that leads to spiritual sleep. Sleep is identified in this passage with darkness and the works of darkness. The use of "let us put on the armour of light" suggests that we will have to wage a

– article continues after insert –

war against this sleep. This “sleep” is the power of lukewarmness that causes a blindness to any consciousness to problems in the world, the churches, and even to self.

Secondly, there are the cares of life that produce sleepiness in the Christian. In Luke 17:22-37, Christ warned that the cares of life can rob the Christian of a consciousness and concern for the things of heaven and Christ’s soon return. He pled with them in 18:1, “that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.” In Luke 21:34-36, He exhorted His disciples:

And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

The word *watch* in all of the contexts of Christ’s coming is the Greek word meaning, “to be sleepless.” Yes, the Christian can be lulled asleep by the increase of cares in his life.

A last sorrow caused by sleep concerns God’s appointed watchmen:

His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping,

lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter. Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant (Isaiah 56:10-12).

Many preachers of our time have fallen into this spiritual commentary. They have not the spiritual discernment that would enable them to lead the people aright. Further, they are dumb dogs. Instead of acting as faithful watchdogs, warning of approaching danger by barking, they remain apathetic and utter no warning at all. It is as if they pass their lives in sleep. If a preacher truly is without knowledge, it is better to be “dumb” than to speak. But to have knowledge, to be able to direct and warn others, and to have undertaken the office of a preacher, and then to draw back and remain silent through slothfulness and spiritual laziness, this is a most dangerous position for a preacher. For a preacher to refuse to warn the people about the present Neo-Christianity personalities, the false theologies that are rising in Christendom, the contemporary “Christian” music of our times, and the falling away of churches and educational institutions is truly an indication that the preacher is blind, dumb, and sleeping. He is not the

man that God wants him to be! It is sad but true, God's men are becoming sidetracked by an overemphasis upon contemporary evangelism and building their churches (when Christ should be the one building it); they are afraid to offend anyone and will not deal with the apostasy to warn the people. Thus such a climate of pulpit sleep has added to the End-time sorrow. Preachers tend to be given to comfort, ease, and unconsciousness of insight for the times. Such men are unfaithful to their calling.

We made in the last *Straightway* article (January/February 2006) the following observation:

At this time in history, four burdens must be consistently evident in every true remnant preacher: (1) the existence of the apostasy, (2) the urgency of the second coming of Christ, (3) the need of daily communion with God, and (4) the call to the remnant for revival unto the glorious Christ. If amidst his declaration of the Gospel these four areas are not a regular cry from his preaching heart, then he has capitulated to the Neo-Christianity of his times.

A minister must always be examining himself: is he awake and conscious of the apostasy of the times? Or does his preaching give indication to his parishioners that he is asleep? Is he the watchdog of God, barking and warning the people of the encroachment of danger? Is he trying to preach "safe" messages

staying away from controversy? Is he more concerned for the unsaved than he is for the spiritual welfare and living of God's sheep? Does he have discernment of the times, and is he preaching that discernment? There are more ministers who are the enemies of God than who are the friends of God! True men of God will be hated not only by the world but also by the nominal Christianity of our times. Like the prophet Jeremiah, they will be viewed as men of "contention" in the earth. Though they may not have a large church and ministry, it will be a faithful one to the Truth and the God of Truth.

Conclusion

"Why Sleep Ye?" Christ asked his disciples in Luke 22:46. The question is an important one for our times. Is the answer to be a lack of will, a lack of communion, or a lack of desire? Is it because of the age, unconfessed sin, or worldly pursuits? The Lord is coming soon! We must be watching (sleepless) and praying in order to overcome the temptation of our times. If a preacher is not in communion with God and His Word, he will not be a remnant preacher! He will allow his people to be overcome by this age, or lead them astray into the "Neo" Christianity of our times. Years ago we heard more preaching from the Fundamentalists against the apostasy and the absolute need for biblical separation. But such preaching has become a thing of the past; the desire to be accepted

by the modern-day “Christian” world has become more important.

May God awaken us before the public, final collapse of historic Fundamentalism takes place and before more “unwise” virgins are left in an enigma of life because they lack the oil that will be needed for His coming.

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The Skin of Things

It should be noted with care that in the Garden of Eden the very first emphasis upon the need of a sacrificial offering was for a covering—the need for the skin of things. Here again, nakedness overshadows the earlier index of man's great need: sin must be covered—gotten rid of, indeed!

Across our beloved country of America and around the world, there needs to be a revival of the wardrobe, a revival of the dress and the suit, and the clothes of man and woman. The skin of things, the appearance of a Christian's body, must be adorned in humility, holiness, purity, and modesty. It is a sad commentary on the times the way professing Christians are carrying themselves in impropriety and actually providing and producing temptation for people to exploit them through assault and plunder upon their bodies with sin. We need a revival of a humble understanding of what a sanctified wardrobe ought to be. We need to take our stand for Jesus Christ by wearing a male wardrobe as men, a female wardrobe as ladies. Every male and female must be identified before the world as such; this vindicates some reality of the human spirit. The world is not a good judge of motive, of things in general; therefore, they often place the worst construction on our appearance because so many hearts are filled with sin and diverse lusts. Sexual identity is a part of Christian identity, as well as the propriety of each sex within itself. Summer sins are enumerated predominantly by the presence of immodesty.

We are living in a time that any preacher who dares to consider the skin of things is automatically considered a clothesline preacher, a legalist, and one who pursues the negative in the English language. We are not holding to the truth of the skin of things in a legalistic way; we believe we have come to an epidemic condition of lust. Generally speaking, in the world today we do not see that the appearance of a Christian's life should bespeak holiness, propriety, and purity. May God take these rather plain words today to our hearts, so we may better understand the skin of things.

— Dr. O. Talmadge Spence
Human Spirit, Vol. 1

NEW PUBLICATION

Crucial Truths for Crucial Days

Volume II · H. T. Spence, Th.D. · 276 pages

Crucial Truths for Crucial Days is a compilation of articles taken from *Straightway*, the published voice of the Christian Purities Fellowship, an outreach arm of Foundations Bible College. Volume II includes all editions from January 2003 through December 2005. Below are some of the articles.

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