

Not Dead but Asleep

And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth.

To every human being there comes a time when he stands beside the coffin of one dear to him and knows that the body before him will never again speak and respond to his affection. It is a terrible moment, particularly for those who do not know the Word of God. All the clever plans and schemes of life, all its joys and sorrows, all its hopes and fears, end in darkness and silence, if human knowledge is the only place where we can seek an answer to the problem of death.

The Bible, however, being God's Word, gives us truth that we could not possibly gain in any other way. It tells us that death is not the end at all. It is merely a pause in the functioning of the human body. It is somewhat similar to the experience of sleep which comes so often in the course of our lives. It is merely a change in a mode of existence. To the wicked it means a change from a life of mingled joy and sorrow to an experience of unalloyed torment. To the righteous, it means the end of a situation in which Christian joy is mixed with the misery that is common to this life, and the beginning of eternal bliss and happiness. It is a change of situation. It is not death or cessation.

Of course, death is not like sleep in the sense that it means loss of consciousness. It means a break with the normal experiences that are so common here, but an entry into a new type of conscious experience. It is like sleep in that it is an intermediate mode of existence. It is like sleep in that there is to be an awakening from it, an awakening into even greater joy at the resurrection of the dead.