

THE DISCIPLES . . . who had sleeping sickness
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(Luke 9:32)

"But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory. There are three instances of sleeping disciples mentioned in the New Testament, and in each case the time spent in slumber proved to be exceedingly costly. When the Lord Jesus led His faithful followers into the Mount of Transfiguration they did not realize what amazing events were about to take place. Determined to remain with Him during the night watches, they sat down on the ground and were soon asleep. That they awakened just in time to see a transfigured Lord, and then to accompany Him into the valley, seems to suggest that they had slept for most of the night. We shall never know how much they missed.

They Slept and Missed His Glory

"When they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him." Their brief vision left such an indelible impression upon their memories that even after thirty years the apostle Peter wrote, "We were with him in the holy mount" (2 Pet. 1:18). The disciples never forgot the soul-stirring vision of the face that shone as the sun, and the garments which were white and glistening. They remembered how God said, "This is my beloved Son: hear him." With awe and amazement they recalled how Moses and Elijah spoke of the "decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem," and probably speculated as to the reason why both the Law and the Prophets were so informed of the Messiah's death. The glory of that resplendent scene was indescribable. Radiance emanated from their beloved Master, and He seemed more like the King of angels than the hero of poor fishermen. All this happened just prior to the dawn, and we are obliged to ask what untold revelations might have been theirs had they remained awake and watchful. Perhaps their slumbers accounted for their subsequent defeat in the valley.

They Slept and Missed His Passion

There was a strange and eerie silence in the garden of Gethsemane on the night when Jesus was betrayed. The stillness preceding the breaking of the storm only accentuated the heartbreaks of the Lord Jesus. Fully conscious of His great need, He temporarily withdrew from the crowds and, accompanied by three disciples, "went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives . . . 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. And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow" (Luke 22: 39-45). Indeed we are left with a question: If these men were sleeping, who witnessed the sufferings of Christ? Possibly one of the men who had been left outside the garden became a little impatient and came in search of his friends. If this happened, then he arrived in time to witness the indescribable. The love of God's heart was overflowing, and the streams of eternal compassion were reaching out to earth's remotest end. Yet if the disciples had remained awake during those moments of agonizing conflict, their appreciation of the price paid for our redemption might have increased immeasurably. Their

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sleep in the garden preceded the fear that made them
forsake their Lord.

They Slept and Missed Eternal Joys

When the disciples asked for signs of the Lord's return, He described ten virgins going forth in anticipation of a wedding (Matt. 25:1-13). While the bridegroom tarried they all slumbered and slept, but when the cry went forth, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh," they immediately arose and went forth to meet him. Thereupon five foolish virgins became instantly conscious of their need, and while they vainly sought hurriedly to prepare for the future, their moment of opportunity passed by. The five wise virgins entered into the marriage, and had great joy in the presence of the bridegroom. Yet each one of the five should have been accompanied by a convert! The Lord Jesus cited this as an indication of conditions to exist in the world prior to His return. Souls would be perishing while Christendom remained inactive and sleepy. His word has been fulfilled. "Watch therefore. for in such an hour . the Son of man cometh."

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