

**WHAT
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Feb. 3, 2013

Sermon in a sentence: While we sleep, God *reveals* Himself, *redeems* sinners, and *releases* His people for ministry.

Scriptures: Luke 9:28-36; Mark 14:32-42; Acts 12:1-11

At the beginning of Luke 9, we see Jesus empowering His disciples to do powerful acts on ministry. He gave them power over demonic forces, power over sickness, power to preach, and the opportunity to experience God's provision for their daily needs (v. 1-4).

After their return, He took them toward Bethsaida, but the crowd heard of it and followed Him. While they were still in the countryside, "in a desolate place" (v. 12), the day drew to a close and the people were hungry. Jesus told His disciples to feed them (v.13), but they said it was impossible.

After all they had so recently experienced, they still did not understand that God had given them miracle-working power they could use for the benefit of the people. They knew they had power to preach, heal and cast out devils, but they certainly didn't think it extended to feeding folks in the absence of a grocery store. Jesus stepped into the void and fed 5,000 men, plus women and children, with five loaves and two fishes!

He then asked for their opinion and understanding of who He was, which culminated in Peter's revelatory statement that He was, in fact, "The Christ of God" (v. 20).

Luke 9:28-36 NASB Some eight days after these sayings, He took along Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. 29 And while He was praying, the appearance of His face became different, and His clothing *became white and gleaming*. 30 And behold, two men were talking with Him; and they were Moses and Elijah, 31 who, appearing in glory, were speaking of His departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. 32 **Now Peter and his companions had been overcome with sleep; but when they were fully awake, they saw His glory** and the two men standing with Him. 33 And as these were leaving Him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tabernacles: one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah” — not realizing what he was saying. 34 While he was saying this, a cloud formed and *began* to overshadow them; and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. 35 Then a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My Son, *My Chosen One*; listen to Him!” 36 And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent, and reported to no one in those days any of the things which they had seen.

Jesus had taken His three closest disciples up the mountain for a time of prayer. He did the praying. They fell asleep. When they woke up, they saw the most astounding thing they had ever witnessed. Jesus had been transfigured before their eyes – now shining with a glory they could hardly look upon. Moses and Elijah stood with Him and the voice of God was heard confirming Jesus’ divinity and purpose.

While they slept, God was doing an incredible work of revelation. They both saw and heard who He really was. Peter’s recent understanding that Jesus was “The Christ of God”, was now being visibly and verbally confirmed by God Himself.

As the church of the living God, we may well be asleep at a time when God is revealing Himself in unprecedented ways! Yes, He wants to reveal Himself to us as individuals, so that we will see Him as He is, the glorious God who wants to be known!

Around the world, people who were previously (and sometimes violently) anti-Christian, are receiving dreams and visions, signs and wonders from the resurrected Christ. They are turning from false religion to a living faith, and we need to be awake to this fact. We need to be ready to engage them, teach them the Word of God, disciple them in the faith, and be an example of godly living. We need to wake up to these opportunities.

Jesus' transfiguration took place during a prayer meeting, (although He was the only participant). What could happen if we were all awake and active in prayer, not simply sleeping through someone else's prayer? What could we see and participate in regarding the work of God, if we were awake and engaged, rather than being lethargic, lazy and sleepy?

Let us awake to the **Revelation** of the glory of God!

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Mark 14:32-42 NASB They came to a place named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, "**Sit here until I have prayed.**" 33 And He took with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be very distressed and troubled. 34 And He said to them, "**My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch.**" 35 And He went a little beyond *them*, and fell to the ground and *began* to pray that if it were possible, the hour might pass Him by. 36 And He was saying, "**Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will.**" 37 And **He came and found them sleeping,** and said to Peter, "**Simon, are you**

asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? 38 “ Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” 39 Again He went away and prayed, saying the same words. 40 And again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him. 41 And He came the third time, and said to them, “ Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough; the hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. 42 “Get up, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!”

Here is the account of another prayer meeting featuring the sleepers Peter, James and John. In this instance, Jesus wasn't even requiring them to pray, but simply to stand guard and keep watch while He poured out His soul to His Father before His crucifixion. They promptly fell asleep. They didn't stand, walk around or make any other attempt to stay awake. They didn't discuss the words Jesus had spoken to them at the end of their supper. They didn't encourage each other and spur each other on to be a strong support system for Jesus in the hour of His greatest need. They simply got comfortable and went to sleep.

Could it be that we are so calloused in our spirits that when the Lord calls upon us to 'watch with Him' for an hour as He agonizes over the fate of a lost soul, we are totally unconcerned and ignore His plea without a care?

While they slept, God's plan for the Redemption of humanity began its final phase. Jesus prepared for it with prayer. We need to wake up and work alongside Him as He performs His redemptive acts. We are called to be 'labourers together with Him'.

How do we begin our Year of New Birth? With prayer! Pray for the redemption of those we are reaching out to. Pray for the word of God to penetrate their carnal, stony

hearts and perform a transplant (Ez. 11:19). Pray that God will help us to be “living epistles” of His grace, mercy and transforming power, pointing others to Him.

Let us awake to the **Redemption** of lost humanity that Jesus came to accomplish!

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Acts 12:1-11 NASB Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church in order to mistreat them. 2 And he had James the brother of John put to death with a sword. 3 When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. Now it was during the days of Unleavened Bread. 4 When he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out before the people. 5 So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God. 6 On the very night when Herod was about to bring him forward, **Peter was sleeping between two soldiers**, bound with two chains, and guards in front of the door were watching over the prison. 7 And behold, **an angel** of the Lord suddenly appeared and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter's side and **woke him up**, saying, "Get up quickly." And his chains fell off his hands. 8 And the angel said to him, "Gird yourself and put on your sandals." And he did so. And he said to him, "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me." 9 And he went out and continued to follow, **and he did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision**. 10 When they had passed the first and second guard, they came to the iron gate that leads into the city, which opened for them by itself; and they went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel departed from him. 11 When **Peter came to himself**, he said, "Now I know for sure that the Lord has sent forth His angel and rescued me from the hand of

Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.”

By the time we get to this point in the history of the early church, a lot of amazing things had already taken place. The Holy Spirit had been poured out, thousands at a time were being converted, great persecution had arisen in Jerusalem and incredible signs and wonders were taking place. The first Christian martyr had died, his arch persecutor had been converted to Christianity, and the gospel had been spread and received by the Samaritans, an Ethiopian, the Italians, and other gentiles.

King Herod arrested and abused many of the believers in his realm and went as far as killing James, one of the three chief apostles. Seeing that the Jews were onside with his aggression against the Church, he had Peter arrested and decided to kill him also. *(This was shortly before his own miserable death for appropriated God’s glory unto himself (see Acts 12:20-23)).*

Peter was in prison on the night before his death, chained between two soldiers, and he was fast asleep! He wasn’t crying, he wasn’t pacing the floor, he wasn’t making a last-minute appeal for clemency, he wasn’t even praying – he was asleep. (However we may choose to interpret this, at some level we have to applaud Peter for his evident “peace in the midst of the storm”!)

As with the previous two incidents we’ve looked at, a prayer meeting was going on while he slept, (this time at the house of Mary, John Mark’s mother). And while he slept, God was orchestrating his release!

In the middle of our troubles, when we are sick, tired, exhausted and asleep, God is well aware of our situation

and could well be working out our release – as we sleep. Let us wake up and see what God is doing. Like Peter, it may be so unreal that we think it must be a dream, but our God is the God of release!

We know He is not interested in His people being bound – especially in their spirits. He is the God of release.

We do not know which angel may be on his way to deliver us! Angels don't die, so it could be the very same one who delivered Peter.

So let us wake up and begin praising God for His release from whatever prison we may be confined in!

Our God is the God of Revelation, the God of Redemption and the God of Release. He continues His divine work even while we sleep.

Songs:

Open The Eyes Of My Heart

I See The Lord