

## AWAKE, AWAKE, O ARM OF THE LORD! (ISAIAH 51: 9-16)

### PAUSE & REFLECT

<sup>9</sup> *Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake, as in days of old, the generations of long ago. Was it not you who cut Rahab in pieces, who pierced the dragon? <sup>10</sup> Was it not you who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep, who made the depths of the sea a way for the redeemed to pass over? <sup>11</sup> And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.*

- 1) [v.9-11] \*Biblical principle – **“WAKE UP, GOD!”** – Calling for His Strong Arm: Calling upon the LORD to awake is purposed to wake up ourselves from our slumber, recalling His strong arm that leaves us to ask, **“Was it not you...?”** The LORD does not need to be woken up, for He has never fallen asleep (Psalm 121:4). Rather, we are the ones who are asleep, in slumber, and need to wake up from assuming He has been inactive to hear or help us. God’s people at the time had been hopeless in His deliverance, asleep to His powerful arm that moved to deliver them in the past from the pride of Pharaoh, described as “Proud One” (=Rahab [Isaiah 30:7]) and “dragon” (Ezekiel 29:3). Although his pride chased them to the sea, it was the LORD’s mighty arm that dried up the sea, making a path for the redeemed to pass over. Call upon the LORD to awake, for you yourself to awake, with gladness and joy, to His powerful arm!
- a. \*FOCUS QUESTION #1 – When have we desperately called for God to wake up? Was it God who needed to be woken up, or you who had fallen asleep?
  - b. \*FOCUS QUESTION #2 – The LORD desires to pierce our prideful and anxious desperation that labels Him asleep. When God appears asleep in our times of desperation, how should our reactions of “sorrow and sighing” be warnings to awake ourselves? In all circumstances, how can we awake to reactions of “everlasting joy upon our heads.... obtaining gladness and joy” in His presence? Share a time when God awakened you to give thanks, rejoice, and pray no matter what the circumstance you found yourself in (see 1 THESSALONIANS 5:16-18)?

<sup>12</sup> *“I, I am he who comforts you; who are you that you are afraid of man who dies, of the son of man who is made like grass, <sup>13</sup> and have forgotten the Lord, your Maker, who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth, and you fear continually all the day because of the wrath of the oppressor, when he sets himself to destroy? And where is the wrath of the oppressor? <sup>14</sup> He who is bowed down shall speedily be released; he shall not die and go down to the pit, neither shall his bread be lacking.*

- 2) [v.12-14] \*Biblical principle – **SNOOZING HIS ALARM** – Forgetting His Comforting Arm: The LORD’s response for Him to wake up is to assure us that He has never fallen asleep. He has remained our **promised comfort and Creator while we have consistently forgotten Him by fearing man and things in creation.** Like pressing the snooze button constantly after the alarm has rung, God’s people were consistently forgetful in their spiritual slumber. He had promised to be their rock of comfort (Isaiah 51:1-3), turning their wilderness back into a garden again. Yet it was the trials and oppression along the way that made them waver from the LORD. They continually set their fear on their captors – the Babylonians – and lost hope in being delivered. Some even preferred life in Babylon over hoping in God’s promised return to their homeland. Snoozing numbs the soul to remember. Stop snoozing! Start arising to His alarm!
- a. \*FOCUS QUESTION #1 – God is always awake and at work within us, around us, ahead of us, for our greatest good and His highest glory. Yet at times, we “snooze” His work, delaying it or forgetting it in our lives. When have you “snoozed” God, asking for Him to come back another time or not come back at all? How are you deferring the work of God by fearing things of creation?

- b. \*FOCUS QUESTION #2 – When the time came for the release of God’s people after 70 years in Babylonian captivity, a large portion of the people did not want to be freed. Instead, they wanted to stay in Babylon under their new rulers (the Persians) because they had grown comfortable to life in a foreign land/language, treated fairly well by their newer captors, and had forgotten God’s word to return them back to their home. In addition, the prospect of the long and difficult journey back home to a ruined city with nothing left for them was daunting and unappealing. Many did not want the added task of rebuilding the demolished temple for worship nor the crumbled city walls. What and where is your “Babylon” – your bed that you have refused to wake up and move out to do what the LORD asks of you? What is the “Babylon” that makes you settle for the prosperity of here and now, cancelling out the narrow road to life with Jesus as something too daunting and unappealing because there’s nothing in it for you? Where are the ruined temples of worship and walls of God’s protection we need to stop delaying and starting rebuilding in our lives?

***15 I am the Lord your God, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar— the Lord of hosts is his name.***

***16 And I have put my words in your mouth and covered you in the shadow of my hand, establishing the heavens and laying the foundations of the earth, and saying to Zion, ‘You are my people.’”***

- 3) [v.15-16] \*Biblical principle – [v.15-16] **“WAKE UP, CHURCH!” – Covered in His Arm: Like the stirring up of the sea so that its waves roar, the LORD stirs us to wake up from our slumber – not uncovered, but covered – by His promised Word to roar them through our mouth.** If we know the LORD has always been awake, and His alarm has gone out to comfort and deliver us, it must move us to arise from our slumber. He stirs us and shakes us to wake up, as He does the sea as it awakes with the roar of its waves. The LORD stirred up His people to move out of captivity in the past. He still does the same today. We arise out of slumber and sleep, fully clothed with His shadow – His image – on us with the words He put in our mouth. Only those awake can roar the words that He has become our God, and we have become His people. Only those He has awakened are stirred up to speak what comes from the power of His arm covering them!
- a. \*FOCUS QUESTION #1 – What are you “stirred up” by? What does God need to “stir up” to get your attention and wake up to His presence, like He stirs up the sea so that its waves roar?
- b. \*FOCUS QUESTION #2 – In the movie “Inception,” the “totem” was an object that could show you if you were still in the dream world or back in the real world. For us, this is the Word of God. When God’s Word remains closed, what dream world are you living in? When God’s Word stays open, what real world is before you? How can we be God-dreamers instead of daydreamers? Read the following Scriptures:
- i. *But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man. (LUKE 21:36)*
- ii. *So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing. (1 THESSALONIANS 5:6-11)*

The central truth of this word was –

Will each new morning of 2024 awaken you to more of His strong arm at work in your life? Let us set our alarms aright – not for God to wake up to our needs, but for us to wake up to His ways. Call upon the LORD’s strength which He is working in you and has worked for you, even from the days of His overwhelming power over Pharaoh’s pride in ancient Egypt, to the way He made by drying up the sea for the redeemed to pass over. Stop snoozing the alarm of His Word ringing to get your attention. Snoozing strengthens forgetting. Do not forget Your Creator who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth! He remains as Your promised Comforter and Deliverer from all oppression! His arm destroys the fear of anything in fallen creation. When we bow down to Creator and not creation, the LORD stirs us up to be freed from our slumber with the roar of His Word indwelling us. Awake, O soul, for your LORD God is not asleep!

– \*How has the LORD spoken to you today through this?

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## HOLY SPIRIT MOMENT

Take a moment to invite the Holy Spirit to fill you, and pray for one another.

*Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*  
(1 THESSALONIANS 5:16-18)

*...do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.* (PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7)