**ANASTASIS**

***Jesus’ Sleep Clinic***

It was June 20, 2009. I was 57 years old and being wheeled on a gurney into the operating room. There were several mask-covered doctors and nurses busy preparing the room for my upcoming hip surgery. I remember seeing a very long table lined with what looked like dozens and dozens of surgical tools. I naively asked the surgical nurse which ones the doctor was going to use in my operation. Through her mask I could hear an almost silent chuckle, then she just looked at me with as much seriousness as she could muster and replied, “Why, Mr. Lanning, we hope to use ALL of them, for if we don’t then something went wrong.” I made a mental note to ask her later in the recovery room if ALL the tools were dirty.

I had already spoken to Dr. Palmer, my surgeon, and made sure he used his Sharpie to mark the correct hip (although in my case it wouldn’t really matter, since in six weeks we had already scheduled the hip replacement for the other one too). But the main guy I wanted to speak with was the anesthesiologist. I wanted to tell him we were in the same business, only he used gas, while I used long hypnotic sermons. Both methods put folks to sleep, only my method was much cheaper. He humored me by laughing.

Do you know what the most important job of an anesthesiologist is? Most people believe it is getting the patient to sleep so that he or she doesn’t feel any pain during the surgery. But that is not his most critical work. His most important job is actually raising you out of sleep! Waking you up in a slow, progressive, methodical way is where life and death are played out. For instance, my dad could not tolerate certain drugs while under anesthesia. It would sometimes take hours to bring him out of surgical sleep, so much so that the family became very alarmed when he wouldn’t respond to our calls.

Anesthesiology comes from the Greek word *ANASTASIS*. Anastasis means “rising up,” and the Greeks used it to refer to someone getting up after a night’s sleep. The New Testament gives it a fresh meaning by translating it “resurrection.” Over and over again Christ and His apostles referred to death as but a “sleep.” Jesus had taken a 12-year old girl who had died and pronounced, “*The child is not dead, but* ***sleeping***.” The mourners laughed at Him. He got the last laugh when He took her by the hand and said, “*Talitha cumi … Little girl,* ***arise*** (wake up).” (Mk 5:39-42).

When Jesus stood before the four-day old tomb of His friend Lazarus, He had previously pronounced "*Our friend Lazarus* ***sleeps,*** *but I go that* ***I may wake him up***." When the fearful disciples said if he is sleeping then he will get well, Christ clearly told them, "*Lazarus is* ***dead***.” (Jn 11:11-14). He boldly announced to all those present “***I am the Resurrection and the Life***!” The Great Physician was saying in effect, “I am the world’s Anesthesiologist.” Lazarus sleeps, but I will raise him up.

Paul repeatedly comforted the Thessalonian saints by announcing that their departed loved ones were merely sleeping and awaiting the announcement from Christ to “wake up!” Read it carefully, for it applies to all of us too:

13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have ***fallen asleep***, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who ***sleep in Jesus***.
15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are ***asleep***. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And ***the dead*** in Christ ***will rise*** first.

The Bible tells us that we all have an appointment with Jesus’ Sleep Clinic (Heb 9:27). All those who have died have merely “*fallen asleep*.” But, let not your heart be troubled, for Paul says, “*For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who* ***sleep in Jesus***.” Death is but a drifting off into sleep, only to one day be awakened by our wonderful Anesthesiologist, Dr. Jesus. Don’t go to sleep without Him.

It is an astounding thing to me to think of the drugs modern medicine has discovered that allows anesthesiologist to put people into such a deep sleep that they never feel the violent things being done to their body. Brain surgery has to top that list, closely followed by open heart surgery. My orthopedic doctor told me that hip replacement surgery is perhaps the most violent operation in the surgical world. I can’t imagine going through that without being put into such a deep sleep that I could not feel the slightest scalpel cut or bone-jarring crow bar that popped my hip out of its socket (yep, they really use a crow bar). But then the doctor can then work his magic and say, “Rick, I say unto you, arise!” Amazing!

But consider the true miracle of resurrection. From the first funeral of Abel (Gen. 4), to all the multiple billions who have died over the past six or more millenniums, God has kept their ashes and dust in His care to put those bodies back together and call them from the grave (read I Cor. 15:35-57). As easily as Christ called Lazarus from the tomb after only four days (Jn. 11:43), He will on that Resurrection Morning call every man, woman and child out of the marked and unmarked cemeteries of the earth (Matt. 25:32). Paul put it best, “*whether we wake or sleep we should live together with Him*” (I Thess. 5:10).

The next time you are in the dentist chair with numbed lips and gums, or being wheeled into the O.R. for major surgery, thank God for the amazing power of anesthesia. But then think of that word *ANASTASIS* and thank God infinitely more that He has made death but a going to sleep, only to arise at His command to the glory of immortality.

Sweet dreams. – Rick

P.S. – They used all the tools in my surgery. I’ve been pain free for 11 years.