

1 Corinthians 15:51

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

Analysis

Behold, I shew you a mystery (ἰδοὺ μυστήριον ὑμῖν λέγω)—The word *mystērion* (μυστήριον, "mystery, secret") refers to truth previously hidden, now revealed by God (Romans 16:25, Ephesians 3:3-6). The imperative *idou* (ἰδοὺ, "behold, look") demands attention. Paul unveils something startling: not all believers will die before resurrection.

We shall not all sleep (πάντες οὐ κοιμηθησόμεθα)—The verb *koimēthēsometha* (κοιμηθησόμεθα, "we will sleep") uses Christian euphemism for death. Paul includes himself ("we")—he expected Christ might return in his lifetime (1 Thessalonians 4:15). Some believers will be alive at the *parousia*. **But we shall all be changed** (πάντες δὲ ἀλλαγησόμεθα)—the future passive verb *allagēsometha* (ἀλλαγησόμεθα, "we shall be changed") indicates divine action. All believers, whether dead (resurrected) or living (transformed), will receive resurrection bodies.

Historical Context

Early Christians expected Christ's imminent return (Acts 1:11, 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17, James 5:8). Paul writes to clarify what happens to those alive at the *parousia*—they won't be disadvantaged compared to deceased saints. Both groups receive resurrection bodies simultaneously, though through different processes (resurrection vs. transformation).

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. Why does Paul call this a 'mystery'—what was previously hidden that's now revealed?
2. How does the promise that living believers will be transformed address concerns about 'missing out'?
3. What does it mean to be 'changed'—how does transformation differ from resurrection?

Interlinear Text

ἰδοῦ,	μυστήριον	ὑμῖν	λέγω·	πάντες	μὲν	οὐ
Behold	a mystery	you	I shew	all	G3303	not
G2400	G3466	G5213	G3004	G3956		G3756
κοιμηθησόμεθα	πάντες	δὲ	ἀλλαγησόμεθα			
We shall	all	but	be changed			
G2837	G3956	G1161	G236			

Additional Cross-References

Philippians 3:21 (Parallel theme): Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

1 Corinthians 15:20 (Parallel theme): But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.