

Mark 14:40

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when he returned, he found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy,) neither wist they what to answer him.

Analysis

And when he returned, he found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy,)—Mark provides the explanatory note βεβαρημένοι (bebarēmenoi, "weighed down, burdened") regarding their eyes. This suggests not mere physical tiredness but spiritual heaviness, possibly supernatural oppression during Satan's hour (Luke 22:53). **Neither wist they what to answer him** (καὶ οὐκ ᾔδεισαν τί ἀποκριθῶσιν αὐτῷ, kai ouk ēdeisan ti apokrithōsin autō) reveals their shame-induced confusion.

This scene contrasts Jesus' victorious wrestling in prayer with the disciples' prayerless sleep. While Christ agonized toward submission, they drifted toward desertion. Their inability to watch even one hour (v. 37) foreshadows their inability to stand during His arrest. Yet Jesus' gentleness with their weakness—providing the explanatory note about heavy eyes—demonstrates pastoral compassion even in His own extremity.

Historical Context

Ancient Jewish watch-keeping practices made staying alert at night a recognized spiritual discipline. The disciples' repeated failure despite Jesus' warnings echoes Israel's repeated failures in the wilderness despite God's warnings. This pattern of human weakness requiring divine strength pervades redemptive history.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. What does the disciples' physical sleep during Jesus' spiritual warfare teach about the relationship between spiritual alertness and physical discipline?
2. How does Jesus' compassion toward sleepy disciples inform how you should respond to others' spiritual weaknesses during your own trials?
3. What practices of watchfulness and prayer might help you avoid spiritual drowsiness during times of testing?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	ὑποστρέψας	εὗρεν	αὐτῷ	πάλιν	καθεύδοντας	ἦσαν
And	when he returned	he found	him	again	asleep	were
G2532	G5290	G2147	G846	G3825	G2518	G2258
γὰρ	οἱ	ὀφθαλμοὶ	αὐτῷ	βεβαρῆμενοι,	καὶ	οὐκ ᾔδεισαν
(for	G3588	eyes	him	heavy	And	G3756
G1063		G3788	G846	G916	G2532	G1492
τί	αὐτῷ	ἀποκριθῶσιν				
what	him	to answer				
G5101	G846	G611				