

## What To Do When You Wake Up In A Grave Matthew 28:1-10, 1 Peter 1:3-4

### **Slide 1**

If you have a fear of being buried alive, then you have taphophobia (ta-pho-pho-bia) and you're not alone. Lord Chesterfield once wrote, *"All I desire for my own burial is not to be buried alive."*

George Washington instructed his family, *"Have me decently buried, but do not let my body be put into a vault in less than two days after I am dead."*

While Frederic Chopin insisted on even more extreme measures when he said, *"Swear to make them cut me open, so that I won't be buried alive."*

In the 1800's there were many designs for what were referred to as safety coffins.

One of the features included a breathing tube to the surface and a string running to a bell next to the headstone that you could ring to alert people that you weren't dead.

The good news is that today with autopsies, embalming, and more people being cremated, being buried alive is the least of your worries.

But, if being buried alive is still a major concern of yours, and it keeps you awake at night, write this down.

Bob Newhart, *Stop It*. Google that, watch the video, and everything will be okay.

This Sunday concludes our Worst-Case Scenario series as we studied various Worst-Case Scenarios from the Bible.

Since the beginning of this series, I've given you tips on how to survive various scenarios.

This morning's helpful hint is: How to Survive an Avalanche.

1. Struggle to stay on top of the snow by using a freestyle swimming motion.
2. If you are buried, your best chance of survival is if someone saw you get covered.
3. If you are only partially buried, you can dig your way out with your hands or by kicking at the snow.
4. If you are completely buried, chances are you will be too injured to help yourself.

Well, that wasn't entirely helpful, was it? But the book did come with pictures. Today our Worst-Case Scenario is: What to Do When You Wake Up In A Grave.

In chapter 28 of Matthew, we're given one of the four descriptions of the resurrection found in the Gospels.

Now there are some who'd point out the differences in these four accounts and say this is proof the Bible is filled with errors, but for me they make them more believable.

If three or four of us all witnessed the same event, we would all see it different. Our eye-witness accounts would be different because of where we were looking and when we were looking.

Our individual accounts would include what was important to us, what was worth remembering, and what seemed trivial and not worth mentioning.

The resurrection is the cornerstone of our faith. Without the resurrection, Jesus was just a deluded teacher Who thought He was God.

Paul reminded the early church of that in 1 Corinthians 15:14, *“And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.”*

I find it mind boggling that there’re preachers and churches who deny the bodily resurrection of Jesus. I think, why do they even bother to go to church?

But the resurrection isn’t just an integral part of our faith, in that we can point to an empty tomb and say, *“See, He’s not there He’s risen and that means everything He said is true.”*

Even though it’s true that the resurrection is a foundational point of what and why we believe, it goes so much deeper than that.

In his first letter to the church Peter writes, 1 Peter 1:3-5, *“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.”*

So, this morning I want to focus on one part of this passage, verse 3b, *“In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”*

It’s here that Peter makes a link between the resurrection of Jesus and our new birth as a Christian.

Now, I suspect that most of us are familiar with the term “Born Again,” sometimes people add the word, “Christian.”

I'm sure you're familiar with the term "Born-Again Christian," but that term is actually redundant. Being born again is what makes you a Christian. You can't be a Christian if you haven't been born again.

The first time we hear this term is in a discussion that Jesus had with a religious leader by the name of Nicodemus, found in the third chapter of John's gospel.

Let's pick the story up in John 3:1-3, *"Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.' Jesus replied, 'Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.'"*

Did you catch the last statement that Jesus made here? John 3:3, *"Jesus replied, 'Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.'"*

## **Slide 2**

If the resurrection is a type of new birth, then from the resurrection we should be able to find out what this new birth should look like. So, what should you do if you wake up in a grave?

Mark 15:37 & 39, *"With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, he said, 'Surely this man was the Son of God!'"*

The first thing you need to do, if you wake up in a grave, is to understand that you were dead!

For the those who can't accept the reality of Christ's resurrection, the easiest theory to default to is that Jesus wasn't really dead, they just thought he was dead.

This is called the swoon theory. There are some people and even some churches that teach Jesus wasn't dead.

They teach that He was simply unconscious and, in the coolness of the tomb, He revived. So, people just thought He had been raised from the dead.

If you understood the reality of the crucifixion, you would realize just how implausible this theory is.

The Romans crucified people all the time. It was done to kill people not just render them unconscious. They knew the difference between "He's dead" and "He's simply sleeping."

Think about it, by the time Jesus got to the trial He had already been awake for 24 hours. Then He was repeatedly flogged by a Roman soldier and forced to carry a cross to His place of execution.

He had a crown of thorns pressed into His head, was nailed to a cross, left for hours in the Palestinian sun, and then had a spear thrust into His side.

When one of Jesus' followers asked for permission to remove his body for burial, this is what happened.

*Mark 15:44-45, "Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph."*

So, according to some people, a Roman centurion, who supposedly had all kinds of experience at this kind of thing, pronounced him dead.

Then He was pulled down off the cross and stuck into a cold tomb where, apparently with no medical help, He spontaneously revives, moves the rock in front of the tomb, and slips by the Roman Guard.

Then, this half dead, bedraggled man in desperate need of medical help, convinces His Apostles that He's the risen Lord and conqueror of death.

The reason people teach this is because they find the resurrection hard to believe. Jesus. Was. Dead. The Apostles knew that. Pilate knew that. The centurions knew that and apparently Jesus knew it.

His last words are recorded in John 19:30 & Luke 23:46, "*Then Jesus shouted, "It is finished! Father, I entrust my spirit into your hands!"*" With those words he breathed his last."

But here's the reality. In order for us to experience new life, we first have to realize that we're dead.

Paul reminds us in Ephesians 2:1, "*As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins.*"

Now obviously Paul isn't speaking about being dead physically. We, eat and drink, breathe and move around. For all intents and purposes, we're alive, but we're dead spiritually.

We've been cut off from God because we've chosen to rebel against Him and disobey Him.

We're told in Isaiah 59:2, "*But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.*"

The consequences of being cut off from God are spelled out in Romans 6:23, "*For the wages of sin is death.*"

Again, not a physical death, because we all know that regardless of our relationship with the Giver of life, we're all going to physically die.

The resurrection began with a death, so our new birth needs to begin with the reality that we're dead. Because, if we aren't dead then we don't need to be reborn.

### **Slide 3**

The second thing you need to understand is that you're now alive.

*John 20:1-5, "Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!" So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in."*

After Jesus had been taken down from the cross, His body was claimed by Joseph of Arimathea. What happened then is what you would expect to happen 2000 years ago to a dead person.

*Mark 15:45-47, "When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph. So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where he was laid."*

Jesus' body was wrapped in a burial shroud and placed in a tomb, exactly what should have happened.

When the women got to the tomb on Sunday, bringing with them the things they needed to prepare His body, they expected to find... His body,

But when the women got to the tomb, it was empty except for the linens in which the body had been wrapped.

Now their first reaction was someone had stolen the body. That has actually been presented as another theory to disprove the resurrection.

Think about that for a moment. That the same disciples, who had been cowards just hours before, had all of a sudden become ninja's.

They snook up on a group of highly trained Roman soldiers, rolled aside the stone that sealed the tomb, and disappeared into the night carrying the body of their friend.

Then they used this act of deception to establish a religion based on a high moral code of integrity and honesty. Seems a little far-fetched to me.

But there's no record of the soldiers being punished for falling asleep on duty, no record of the Apostle's being forced to tell where the body was hidden.

Add to that the fact that every one of the disciples eventually faced persecution and death for their faith and not one of them broke and admitted where they hid the body.

They were a braver bunch than I would have been. I hate pain. I would have made up secrets and even told them who really shot JFK!

Now, I know there're all kinds of people who're willing to die for what they believe. Remember 9/11 and all the suicide bombers we heard about on the news.



They were willing to die for their faith because they believed that it was true, but if the Apostles had stolen the body of Jesus, would they have been willing to die for something they knew was false?

Why was the tomb empty? Why were the grave cloths left behind? Because tombs and grave cloths are for the dead. Jesus was alive.

The resurrection wasn't just a spiritual resurrection, it was a bodily resurrection.

Jesus' body was dead. There was no pulse. There was no breath. There was no brain activity. Jesus was dead and then He wasn't.

We probably don't think about it, but Jesus' body was put in the tomb dead, and at some point, He wasn't dead.

He opened his eyes and realized that He was alive. Not only did he realize that he was alive, He saw that he was in a tomb.

So, He took off His dead man's clothes and He left His dead man's tomb. Because the living don't belong with the dead.

When we've been born again, when we've been given new life spiritually, we need to leave the things of the dead behind.

#### **Slide 4**

##### Conclusion

Let's finish a couple of the scriptures we looked at earlier, Romans 6:23, *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

It's not enough that we're no longer dead, we need to leave the grave clothes and the tomb behind.

The Bible's very clear that, when we experience our new birth, things are going to change. After all, it's a new birth!

Colossians 2:12-13, *"When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins"*

Did you catch that? We were dead and then God made us alive. Paul expands on that in 2 Corinthians 5:17, *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"*

Old behaviors, old attitudes, and old priorities are to be replaced with a new behavior, new attitudes, and new priorities.

When Jesus was explaining what it would be like to be His follower, He said in Matthew 6:33, *"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."*

A part of that is changing our behavior. As difficult as it may seem, part of that might be changing with whom we associate.

Not because we don't care for them, but because hanging around with them means doing things, watching things, and saying things that displease God.

The early church was reminded of this in Romans 6:9-11, *"For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus."*

I heard a story a few years ago about a guy who was walking along with a scruffy looking mutt on a leash. A friend stopped him and asked, *"What type of dog is that?"* to which the first man replied, *"He's a police dog."*

His friend looked at the mutt and said, *“He sure doesn’t look like a police dog.”* To which the owner replied, *“That’s because he’s undercover.”*

I’ve met people who profess to loving God and have had a personal encounter with Jesus, but you’d never know it by the way they behave.

One thing the Bible is clear on is, there are not supposed to be any under-cover Christians.

What are the grave clothes that you need to take off now that you’re alive? What’s the tomb you need to leave?

Let’s go back to verses in John 20 that we read earlier where the two Mary’s had arrived at the tomb only to discover the stone had been rolled away and the tomb was empty.

The angel who had moved the stone told them that Christ had risen from the dead and instructed them to go and tell the disciples what had happened.

You still with me? As they turn to go, we pick up the story in Matthew 28:8-10, *“So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them. “Greetings,” he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”*

If you were dead and then you were alive you need to let people know that you’re alive. If you’ve been given new life through Jesus, you need to let people know.

Let me leave you with Paul’s words to the church in Rome...

Romans 10:8-11, *“But what does it say? “The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,” that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim: If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. As Scripture says, “Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.”*