

# Arise From the Dead

by Richard E. Bieber

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*We must wake up and rise from the dead to receive God's light and fulfill His call.*

**Scripture:** Jonah 1:1-2, Romans 13:11, Ephesians 5:14

**Topics:** "Spiritual Awakening", "Gods Calling"

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## Description

Richard E. Bieber preaches about the importance of waking up, rising from spiritual deadness, and allowing Christ to give light for our walk. He emphasizes the need to respond to God's call to service and not allow distractions to lead us away from our purpose. Using the story of Jonah, he illustrates the consequences of fleeing from God's call and the necessity of facing reality and making a decision. The sermon highlights the process of awakening, crying out to God for help, and taking the necessary steps to fulfill our purpose and receive God's light in our lives.

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## Transcript

"Therefore it is said, 'Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead and Christ shall give you light.'"

Ephesians 5: 14

Whenever we hit a dry season in our life with God we put the burden on Him. "Why did God let me drift this far from him? I know I can't revive myself! God is going to have to revive me. Why doesn't he?"

God will revive us. But we have to take the first step.

"Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead and Christ shall give you light."

First, you have to wake up and rise from the dead.

Then the Lord will give light for your walk.

Most of us first began to know the Lord in the same way the disciples did. When Andrew, Peter, James and John left everything to follow Jesus, they were not conscious of being "saved," or "born again." The only thing that was clear to them was that they had received a call. "Follow me and I will make you become fishers of men."

To believe in Jesus Christ ...to open our hearts to receive Him as Lord...always involves a call to service, to a spent life.

In the beginning, that call is vivid. But with the passing of time it seems to fade.

The reason it begins to fade is because we allow ourselves to become distracted, taken up with other things. We change direction.

Consider Jonah:

"Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah, the son of Amittai, saying, 'Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness has come up before me. But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went on board, to go with them to Tarshish away from the presence of the Lord.'

Jonah 1:1-3

At this point, the driving force of Jonah's life is not to fulfill God's call, but to escape it.

Who of us hasn't tried that one?

We know how to go through the outward motions, saying, "Yes, Lord, I'll go to Nineveh." Perhaps we head for Nineveh outwardly, but inwardly we're on the ship to Tarshish.

When in our hearts, we are on the ship for Tarshish, we may be asleep down in the darkness, but every time that ship rolls, every time a shudder goes through it, we know what's wrong. We know.

"But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up. Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried to his god; and they threw the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down, and was fast asleep. So the captain came and said to him, "What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call upon your god! Perhaps the god will give a thought to us, that we do not perish."

Jonah 1:4-6

And when they haul us up on the deck, and ask us who we are, where we're going, we know who God is after! He's after us! We are under a call and we won't have any peace until we deal with it.

"Then they said to him, 'What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us? For the sea grew more and more tempestuous. He said to them, 'Take me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you; for I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you.' Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring the ship back to land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them. Therefore they cried to the Lord, 'We beseech thee, O lord, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not on us innocent blood; for thou, O Lord, hast done as it pleased thee.' So they took up Jonah and threw him into the sea; and the sea ceased from its raging. Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows. And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights."

Jonah 1:11-17

The ultimate destination of every person who runs from God's call is the belly of the fish. The belly of the fish is a form of death. It's a twilight zone, a place of quarantine prepared for those who consider themselves separate from the world as Christians, but who are fleeing their call.

It may not look like the belly of the fish. Life may seem to be treating us very well. Things on the outside are going fine. Nobody could imagine what's going on in our hearts. But we know, and God knows, that down inside we're numb. We're experiencing a mysterious isolation from reality.

In His mercy, God brought us into the belly of the fish. He holds us there so we can't go to Tarshish. For a while at least, we can't go anywhere. Held in suspension, we are being given a chance to face reality - to decide what we are going to do about that call.

When Jesus says in John 5, "The hour is coming and now is when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live", he's not talking about us. He's talking about the sons and daughters of Adam who have never yet heard the call of God. When they hear that call, they will come to life.

But when the Spirit of Jesus, speaking through Paul, in Romans 13 says, "Besides this you know what hour it is, how it is full time for you now to wake from sleep." Here he's talking to us.

"Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead and Christ shall give you light."

First we were in the ship. Then we were thrown into the sea. Now we're in the fish. And waiting for us out there on dry land is a life to live, a work to perform. But here we are suspended, in this twilight zone!

"Awake, O sleeper, arise from the dead and Christ shall give you light"

Two commands and a promise.

First: Wake up.

When the captain went down into the bottom of the ship and began shaking Jonah, telling him, "Wake up and call on your God!" Jonah didn't really respond. He only half woke up. He forgot to call on his God. But when Jonah found himself in the belly of the fish, then he woke up. It took him three days and three nights, but he woke up and indeed began to call on his God.

"Then Jonah began to pray to the Lord from the belly of the fish saying, 'I called to the Lord, out of my distress, and He answered me; out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and thou didst hear my voice.'"

Jonah 2:1-2

In the same way we have to come to the point where we decide to wake up. We shake off the dullness of soul and say, "This is ridiculous! What am I doing here?"

Suddenly we realize that half the things we're telling everyone else to do we're not doing ourselves. We're sliding by. Our union with the Lord is shot through

with mediocrity. "This can't go on. This road that I am on is death. It's the prelude to hell itself. I have to get out of here."

Now we begin to shake the dullness out of our hearts - to put aside the things that are holding us back. We shrug away the powers of darkness and put on the armor of light. We begin to make changes.

"Besides this you know what hour it is, how it is full time now for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer now than when we first believed; the night is far gone, the day is at hand. Let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us conduct ourselves becomingly, honestly as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarrelling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts."

Romans 13:11-14

Second: Rise from the dead

The place where Jonah rose from the dead was not when he was vomited out on the seashore. The place where Jonah rose from the dead was in the belly of the fish. He rose from the dead when he began to cry out to God.

And exactly the same thing has to happen with us. Even when we're still in the belly of the fish, we come to life when we begin crying out to God for help.

"I don't know exactly what I'm supposed to do. Lord, but I am now making a start."

And the first positive step we make in the belly of the fish is to begin to pray.

The proof that we were stuck in the belly of the fish was that our prayer life was dead. The first step toward life is a cry from our hearts for help: a real prayer: "Lord, get me out of this thing! I'm tired of rolling around in here. Help me to do something! "

Suddenly we are no longer crying out from inside the fish's belly. We're alive, standing on the shore, scraping off the stuff that came with us as we left the fish.

"Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the belly of the fish and the Lord spoke to the fish and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land."

Jonah 2:10

"Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead and Christ shall give you life."

"Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, 'Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you.' So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord."

Jonah 3:1-3

The minute we choose to wake up and come alive, the Lord will be there with light, with a clear word. If we don't have any light, and if no clear word is coming, it's only because we're asleep. There's no such thing as crying out to God for help and getting nothing.

Those of us who are rolling around inside the belly of the fish can be sure that if we cry out for God's help, we will be delivered.....and we will receive light.

"Go to Nineveh."

"Be reconciled with your mate."

"Give your cousin some money."

Whatever it is God wants us to do, he will make clear. And in the doing of it, our light will increase. Just as surely as we need to learn every day how to die to ourselves, we also need to learn how to rise with Christ.....to get out of the belly of the fish.

May God bring us to the point where the inside of the fish becomes an intolerable place, so intolerable that we will take these words of the Spirit to ourselves and act on them.

"Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead

and Christ shall give you life."

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Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/richard-e-bieber/arise-from-the-dead/>

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