

The Foundation of the Church

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Summary

A.W. Tozer reflects on the significance of Christ's resurrection and ascension as the foundational truths of the Christian Church. He emphasizes that the Church began with simple yet powerful declarations: "He is risen" and "He was taken up." Mr. Tozer warns against reducing the resurrection to merely a spiritual or symbolic event, affirming the total resurrection of Jesus—body, soul, and spirit, encouraging believers to rejoice in the fact that they have a representative in glory who intercedes for them.

Message

Our Father, we are refreshed in mind and heart as we read again this true record and hear the words of the Spirit telling us that He ascended up on high. We thank thee for Christ Jesus, the Lord, our Savior, and we pray that thou wilt help us now that we may put away Adam's way of looking at things. We have been with Adam this week.

We have been in the world. We have been in offices and shops and stores and everywhere where Adam is. Now, Lord Jesus, thou second Adam, we pray thou wilt help us that we may purge out of our thinking Adam's ways of thinking and Adam's psychology and that we may think as Christians, think as if this morning Christ had risen. Today, this was the morning that He rose from the dead and that He is now among us, alive, eternally alive. Death hath no more dominion over him. We pray that Thou wilt grant that around this living, risen, glorified Man who is also God, we may gather today.

We may gather in our thoughts. We may gather in our hearts and in all that we may feel and know that the Lord is with us and that we are not alone. That we are not trying to promote a service or manufacture one, but that we as the disciples of old simply gather around our Risen Lord.

Thou remember the poor and the helpless today and the sick and the distressed and help among the nations of the world, O God. Thou knowest we see fulfilled before us the strange dramatic pictures which Daniel wrote and painted for us, and we see and hear the words of our Lord being fulfilled when He told us of wars and commotions and rumors of wars and the hearts of men failing them for fear of things that are taking place on the earth.

Oh, we pray that instead of our being depressed by all this, we may rejoice because our redemption draweth nigh. Wilt Thou help us all over the earth? Wilt Thou remember Thy work, so badly hindered by the devil in so many places. We pray Thee, O God, Thou wilt help in Laos today. Help, we pray Thee, in Vietnam. Help, we pray, in Indonesia and in other parts where the political conditions make it dangerous and sometimes impossible for Thy people to work. They have almost to mark time waiting for Thee to open the door.

We ask That Thou will bless those out from this church on the many fields of the world and in many pulpits throughout the world and sitting at many organ consoles and standing to lead choirs and teaching in schools.

O God, bless Thou we pray, that stream of blessed humanity that's gone out from this small church to all parts of the world over the last years. Help us to pray for them and keep praying for them. Now, Lord, bless us as we wait further upon thee. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

I want to talk to you from the Scripture which was read earlier. And in the second verse of Acts 2: ...until the day in which He was taken up, after that He, through the Holy Ghost, had given commandment unto the apostles whom He had chosen."

Now, I wonder if you have ever stopped to think that the Church of Christ began as no other institution ever did. It began without any political philosophy at all. It had none. If there had been anyone present insisting that before this church could get going, they would have to take a stand on politics. There were many of them that would not have known what they were talking about. It had no economic theory about wealth or anything to do with money. Most of them hadn't any.

And if they had had any ideas, they would have been academic because they had nothing to do with money. They were poor people. They had no thought about international relations, juvenile delinquency, any of the problems that are facing us now. Nobody said, we have the answer. We will fix it up. Come to us. Listen to us. We have the answer to the world's problems. They didn't say that at all.

The Church of God exploded into being. It began like a delightful, glorious, life-giving explosion. And the testimony of the Church can be put into two sentences, one of three words and the other of four. Before Hitler could get going, he had to write *Mein Kampf*, a great big thick book. And before the Communists could get going, they had to write yet another, thicker book. But the Church of God managed to get started on seven words. At least there are seven words in English. The first three were uttered beside the tomb. He is risen. And the other four are written here into the book of Acts, He was taken up.

Now I am not exaggerating or trying to oversimplify. I tell you frankly that these two great battle cries, these two shouts of triumph and victory gave the church their power. It was around this that they rallied. The triumphant joy cry of the church, He was taken up; and the cry beside the tomb, He is risen. It was this that made the church the church. Now our Lord is risen.

This is not Easter. I think it is a trick of the devil to confine the preaching of the resurrection and triumphal ascension of our Savior to Easter time, so we'll only hear it once a year and hear it under circumstances that sometimes make it impossible to have it mean anything to us. But there never should be a sermon preached from any Christian pulpit in the world that should not begin and end with, He is risen, He was taken up. For this is it. This is it. There's a little explanation in between which the Holy Ghost through the mouth of the Apostles wrote. But these are the springs that drive the great church of Christ. He was taken up. He made His triumphal entry.

Talk about the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem and it indeed was a triumphal entry when the children cried Hosanna to Him that cometh in the name of the Lord. But He made another triumphal entry a little while later after His death and resurrection. He made that the time that He was taken up his triumphal entry into His ancient position vacated when He came down.

In John 17:5, a prayer that our Lord had prayed a little while before He was crucified, He said, Father, glorify Thou Me with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was. He voided His glory when He came to be born of the Virgin Mary. He reassumed that glory when he was taken up. And all the glory, whatever that means.

Now I know that that word glory as Christians use it, it is an explosive, emotional word and sometimes means very little. I don't know that I know what it all means, but whatever it means, the glory and all the glory that He ever had in the ancient beginning before the world was, He was reinvested with that glory when He went back to the Father again and He made His triumphal entry into full and eternal favor with God, the Father Almighty.

Now remember one thing, that the Eternal Son was never out of favor with the Father. It would be impossible for reasons which any theologian knows, for the Eternal Father and the Eternal Son to be anything but in perfect and holy, unspeakably holy harmony with each other. But Jesus was more, that is, He was something in addition as far as we're concerned, to being the Eternal Son. He was the Eternal Son made flesh to dwell among us. And that flesh that dwelt among us because it identified Himself with mankind, identified Himself with all that we are and all the demerits we have and all that is against us, all that you see over the world today, every evil thing you read about or hear about, because He identified Himself in His manhood with our manhood.

I say then that when He rose from the dead, He was reinvested with all of the favor with God the Father. The Eternal Son had never been out of favor, but the Son made flesh. God had turned His back on Him on the cross and He cried, my God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? But now the Father receives Him again into full favor and He sits down at His throne. And He made His triumphal entry into the lordship over creation and the headship over the church and the kingship over the earth. These are things we ought to keep saying. We ought to keep saying them all the time.

When one goes about preaching and he just says something like this, he just talks about God and Christ. And people come up to you and surround you as if you were a visitor at an orphan asylum, and the poor little love-starved, emotionally starved children couldn't get enough of a pat on the head, so people would come and gather around you. Not because you preach well. I know better than that. I hear myself on tape and as I told Brother Platt, I wouldn't go across the street to hear myself preach. But it's what you're preaching about, what are you talking about; you're talking about three things. He is risen and He was received up. He ascended; He was taken up.

Now this is what the people want to hear and it's a strange thing that we're letting the church starve to death. For this is the food of the church. This is the pillar that upholds

the church and yet we don't tell them these things. But He was seen of them forty days and forty nights before He ascended up, a period of testing and verification.

And they saw and they heard, and they touched Him, and they ate with Him and they questioned Him and their eyes looked on Him and their ears heard Him and they knew that this was the very same Jesus. So, the Lord Jesus that walked among them was present in His total resurrection.

Now I believe in the total resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and I believe in the total resurrection of man. Unbelief has come in and nicely smoothed this over and said yes, I believe that Christ's Spirit marches on. I believe the same thing about Socrates and Lincoln. I believe that Lincoln walks at midnight. I believe that Lincoln's spirit of liberty and freedom for all men will never die.

I think that Lincoln lives on in the hearts of his admirers. Well now there's a poetic sense in which that's true. In everybody that loves Abraham Lincoln there's a sense in which Abraham's memory lives on. Lincoln's memory lives on in the hearts of the people. But let us not yield to the blandishments of the devil and acknowledge that nothing but the memory of Jesus lives on. Jesus lives on, my brethren. He is risen. He was taken up. Not his memory, not gratitude in the hearts of His people. That's there too. But Jesus Christ rose from the dead by a total resurrection.

The Bible, the early part of the early church fathers and the Bible writers would not have known what you meant if you had talked to them about the spiritual resurrection of Jesus. They knew that this same Jesus which went into the grave came out of the grave. This same Jesus that they saw standing among them, now is leaving them to be taken up.

And that same Jesus that is taken up will surely come again. Whatever they put into the tomb, God brought out of the tomb. He is not here. He is risen. It does not say His body is here, but His spirit is risen. It says, He is not here and the pronoun He, takes in body, soul, and spirit and all that had been Jesus and all that was Jesus and all that is the Lord Jesus. Crucified, buried the third day, He rose again says the creed.

Now it tells us here that this One who had risen from the dead. And before He was taken up, spoke to them of things pertaining to the Kingdom. That was about the greatest Bible conference of all.

Next Sunday I will be beginning at New York City at Brother Reidhead's church on Times Square with Brother Reidhead and Brother McAfee in an eight-day conference. And I will be in a conference with Baptists before I leave there, and believe it or not, I'll be preaching to a conference of Pentecostal preachers. I'm not particular, I just preach wherever they want to hear me. If the Pope would send for me, I'd go preach to him. So, I'm preaching to conferences.

But the greatest Bible conference in all the greatest of them, all must have been this one; when a few breathless disciples standing around Him in wonder listened to Him talk of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. What did He say to them? Well, I suppose

that what He said to them was an extension of what He had been saying to them like His previous teaching, very likely. We dare not introduce anything here.

A man said to me once, he set forth a certain doctrine and when I asked him where he got Scripture for it, he said, well it was one of those things which Jesus had talked to the disciples about after His resurrection. If you permit that method of approach, pretty soon that'll be a basket into which the enemy can dump any kind of weird fanatical teaching in the world. You may be perfectly sure that whatever Jesus said after His resurrection accorded with the Old Testament and the New that was later written. For He was the Lord of the Old and He is the Lord of the New.

You may be sure that whatever He said you may find somewhere in the Psalms or the prophets or Moses or the Apostles or the Acts or the Revelation, I suppose that being the Eternal Son, He would talk about the Eternal Father. Being the Savior of men, He would talk about the atoning death which He had made. Being the Head of the church He'd talk about His church. Being the light of the world, He would talk about world evangelization. Being the anointed One, He'd talk about the gift of the Spirit. Being the One, He'd talk about His return. What he had to say was not different from what He had been saying, but perhaps an extension of it, which we got later in the New Testament when it finally got down to print.

Well, He is the Eternal Son, that is what I want particularly to mention here now. He is the Eternal Son and He is risen, and He was taken up. He is the Word of the Father. Hebrews 1:1-3 says that God has spoken unto us by his Son whom He hath appointed heir of all things by Whom also He made the worlds, Who being the brightness of God's glory and express image of His person and upholding all things by the word of His power when He had by Himself, purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Now, He had equality with the Father, and when He was taken back on high, He was reinvested with all the equality which He temporarily veiled or laid aside. And that place He freely surrendered for us. For He did surrender for us that place in the heavens above. For it says in Philippians 2, being in the form of God, Jesus thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but He emptied Himself and took upon Him the form of a servant, and went on down to the cross. And at His ascension, the Eternal Son was placed no higher than before His resurrection.

Let's remember that the Eternal Son was not elevated when He was taken on high. He could not be elevated. You cannot elevate that which is itself elevation. You cannot raise higher that which is higher than the highest. And Jesus, the Eternal Son, the Word of the Father, the Ancient Logos, the Word of the Father, was before the world was, and you could not elevate that which was the pinnacle of all being, God.

But remember, He took on Himself the form of a man, not the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham. And now, what is God going to do with man. What's God going to do with this Man? Jesus became man and identified Himself with man so that He can't escape it, not that He wants to. For He took upon Himself man's flesh voluntarily. He assumed it because He willed to do it, and therefore He doesn't change His mind and He still wants to be man. But He is there now as a man, forever a Man.

If you were to see Jesus now, you would recognize the form of a man. You ought to keep that in mind. Not a spook not a ghost, not a strange weird, white shape floating about. You would recognize a man, a man who could sit down, stand up, crouch down, stretch His hand out, raise His hand up, and kneel to pray. You would recognize a man, Adam's man, Adam's flesh born, except sin accepted and mortality accepted.

He became man to dwell among us. He became flesh so that at His ascension, the Eternal Son was not elevated but the Man was elevated. This is what the church told the world. This is it. The church said we have Somebody. We have Somebody in the greatest place in the universe. We have a representative there.

Don't you think those Russians feel good. They look upon with all their boasting and bragging and condemning the United States. They look upon the United States as being the heaven, heaven itself and they're troubled with a deep in sense of inferiority because they know that this is the greatest nation in the world, and don't you suppose they're wild with glee over there because they have a representative over here. I hate to mention him. I don't want advertise him, but I'll just illustrate him.

They've got a representative over here, somebody that stands for them and he did stand for them. You'd have to say that. Some of our Americans go over there and talk us down, but he came over here and wouldn't say a good thing about us and said everything good about his own country, bad as they are. So at least you've got that in his favor. Even the devil, you know, works overtime. You can say that in his favor.

But we have Somebody. That's the message of the cross. That's the message of the Christ. That's the message of the church. We have a Representative in the glory. We've got Somebody over there representing us. And that's the message that the church took to the world. He is risen. He was taken up. He's out of the grave. He's into the heavens, and this is where the power of the church lies. And as soon as we lie down around the cross and begin to sob and moan and talk about His dying and try to go through all of His dying, we've forgotten that He died, but He's not dead now. He is risen.

And when we go to the tomb and stand, as some of the songs say, that we learn how to die and we look in the tomb, that's past. That's history. That's no more. He was taken up. And it's the signal to all Adam's race that everything's all right now, if you'll only believe. Everything's all right.

A Rescuer came. A David came to slay your Goliath. A Moses came to deliver you out of Egypt. And if you'll only believe it now and believe on Him, everything will be all right because there's a man in the glory, a real Man, Christ, the God-man, has been exalted. God had always been exalted, but Christ the God-man is now exalted and humanity is invested with deity.

When He came down here, He took upon Himself humanity and invested His deity with humanity. But when God took Him to the right hand of the Father, He invested His humanity with all the prerogatives of deity so that there isn't anything in the sovereignty of God that isn't in the hand of Jesus Christ our Lord. God hath put all things in His hands. God hath put all judgment in his hands. God hath put resurrection in His

hand. The Father hath life in Himself and He hath also given to the Son to have life in Himself. That was the cry of the church. Jesus is risen. Jesus is exalted.

Jesus is at the right hand of God. He was taken up after He had been seen and identified. And we know it's Jesus He's taken up. That was the cry of the church. We've bogged down. We've bogged down in modes of baptism and church polity, whether you should have deacons or elders or whether you should call them deacons or elders, whether you should call pastor a pastor or an elder. We've bogged down. We get all confused. But the church wasn't confused, that early church. They looked up and they saw one great thing, I repeat, that He had risen and that He was taken up. The Man is exalted.

In second chapter of Acts, remember that Peter argued that way. He said, you men of Israel, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs which God did by Him in the midst of you; Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken. And by wicked hands you have crucified Him and slain Him. But God has raised Him up, having loosed the pains of death because it was not possible that He should be beholden of death.

Now, that's what the Holy Spirit says here by the mouth of the man Peter, you men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? He is risen. He was taken up. This Jesus Christ made this man whole. He said this Jesus whom ye denied and crucified, God has raised Him from the dead.

Now I think we ought to emphasize this. I think we ought to bear down on it. I think we ought to sing more about it. I think we ought to testify more about it. I think we ought to get our minds slanted in that direction. I think we ought to let the winds of heaven blow across our heart and get this dust away and begin to think about the One who was risen again from the dead. And so, He stands. He stands.

One man said about this Christ rising from the dead and ascending to God's right hand, he said this was mystery to the Jew, and it was produced by the Greeks. But it's wonderful glory to the Christian, the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. He stands in the full possession of His manhood and in the full exercise of His Godhead and there isn't anybody else like that in all the universe, nobody. There's nobody that has the prerogative of God and prerogatives of man. Nobody in this world, this race that we're part of, this sick race, sin-pocked race that we're part of; had a head and it was Adam.

But the new race was born of Jesus Christ, born of the water and the blood; has a Head and it's Jesus Christ who was God and man. You know that's the great fact. Is it dramatic? I wonder why somebody hasn't made a movie out of that. I guess they have. I remember seeing it years ago before I was converted. What did they call it? King of Kings, yes, King of Kings. I was a sinner sitting there, a little sharp-eyed sinner and I sat watching the thing.

And when it was over and they played Near my God to Thee and everybody was supposed to blow their nose around me and walk out, I walked out disgusted. I wasn't even a Christian. I knew that couldn't be God. I knew that this wonderful mystery couldn't be acted by a man with breath in his nostrils. Even a sinner that I was,

unconverted, I had spiritual sense enough to know that you couldn't reduce this to tape, reduce it to celluloid.

This wonderful mystery, that Man stands there in possession of all that manhood is, and all that Godhood is. This is Jesus, this is our Lord, that's the great fact. Our human Brother, exalted to equality with God, given all the authority of the Most High God, our human brother.

Somebody wrote me a letter and scolded me or scolded somebody who had written in the magazine for calling Jesus, brother. I don't want to be more spiritual than the apostles. I'm satisfied if I can stand up to the knees of the apostles, black their shoes without swooping down. But I think He's my brother. He is the human Brother, and He knows our frailties. Given all the authority of God, He can command obedience everywhere, anywhere, and at all times. He can command obedience. This is neglected truth, you know. Other aspects, as I said, take over. We are robbed of our rights, but we have a right to expect the Lord Jesus Christ to work from heaven as He once worked on earth.

Now the fact that some have carried that too far and have put on great dramatic meetings that have ultimately ended in glorifying men and not God, don't let that scare you. We have a perfect right to expect that He shall work from heaven as He once worked on earth. Because He is exalted, we have a perfect right to believe that He will work in us as He once worked for us. We have a perfect right to believe that He will work for us above as He once worked for us below. And He will work through us to others as He once worked through others to us.

I don't know why Christians are ever anything but delightfully happy. Really, I don't. When you just think it over, just think it over like this, and it does something for me, I don't know what it does for you, but it does something for me, just to think it over. Wonderful Man in the glory, my Man in the glory, our Man in the glory, God's Man in the glory, risen up there and not standing in a state of uncertainty, but sitting. Men stand, but kings sit on thrones. And He sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. We ought to be the happiest people in all the wide world. I think we've been cheated of our birthright, my brethren. We've been sidetracked. We've been told other things. This is the gospel.

Why did A. B. Simpson hit the evangelical church like an explosion? Because he was a great preacher? He was a good preacher, sure. Because he was a great scholar? No. Why? Because he came telling them, believing what he told them. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever he said. He's the same yesterday, today, and forever. And they said, do you hear that man Simpson and said, that fanatic. And others said, let's go hear him. Moody said, I want to go down to hear Simpson. He preaches to my heart as no other man can.

What could that all mean? Only one thing, that the church had lost for a little time the wonderful sense of His having risen. And they were busy preaching other things, how to reach the masses, and how to get on with your mother-in-law, all the trivialities. But he came saying, He's risen, and reached the masses. He reached them, because he kept

saying, He's risen. And if the church of Christ would just believe this once more and expect Him to work from heaven as He once worked on earth.

We have the message. You don't have to send to Ireland to get the messenger. You don't have to go somewhere around to seek. The word is nigh, even in thy mouth. And we don't have to circle the world to find a man to preach to us. If a man will come and say, He's risen, He was taken up, you got Him. And if you keep saying that and keep saying that and keep saying that, the Holy Ghost will bless that and give power to it and fire to it and life to it, and dying sons of men will gather around that.

And some say it must be awfully hard on the church; you been there thirty years and now leaving. And I tell them, no, no it's not. Because I never preached myself but Him. You've got Him and you'll have Him if you have nobody else. And you'll always have Him. I know there are lots of pleasant fellows that make everybody love them and when they go, people weep and all that. But what are we doing there? We're simply loving a man. We're gathering around a man. That's patting a man. But I'm here to tell you He's risen, and He was taken up and that's it. And He sent the Holy Ghost to confirm the fact that He was risen and taken up.

And so, we're not tied to any man. When Simpson died, the church went right on. When Wesley died, the church went right on. And so, it will be here, and so it will be wherever Jesus Christ is the center, the Source, the core of love and life and thought and prayer and hope and belief, Jesus, the sinner's friend, Jesus, the Lord of Glory. So, let's keep believing that. Let's sing a lot of songs about the King Eternal, about the Lord of Glory, about the Savior marching on to victory.

Keep that thought before your mind, otherwise you will get awfully blue. If you get awfully blue listening to commentators and read newspaper accounts of juvenile delinquents murdering their streetcar conductors, you get awfully blue. But if you keep your eyes on the Man in the glory and recognize that He's up there representing us. He's up there representing us, mind you. Our names are on His hand, on His forehead, on His chest and shoulders. He represents us there.

There's a great lawyer, if I was in trouble, and a great lawyer with worldwide fame said, I'll take your case on. I'll represent you; I'd go fishing. I wouldn't worry about it, because if the man you've got representing you is great enough, you'll get by, you'll get through. Unfortunately, sometimes even when you're guilty, if you get big enough of a man representing you, you'll get through.

But in the glory, here Jesus Christ represents nothing but guilty men. He represents no clients but guilty men. And those who say, I'm not guilty, He dismisses them and says, all right, get somebody else to represent you. He's up there representing guilty men. He represents you and me because we're guilty, brother. We've been guilty before God, of sin, guilty before the world, and he takes on such cases. We say, I'm guilty. He says, that's all I want to know. If you say you're guilty, I'll represent you. I am the Man in the glory, you know. He's called an Advocate, an Advocate above.

Well, that's all I want to say this morning. But I've just been thinking about this, thinking it over, thinking how wonderful it is that we have a Representative in the glory, and I

thought I'd like to tell you that this morning. I hope it'll do you some good. I hope you'll go away believing it. If you do, everything will be all right. Amen.