

THIS JESUS GOD RAISED UP

“This Jesus God raised up, of which we are all witnesses! Therefore, having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father, He poured out this which you* now see and hear. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: ‘The LORD said to my lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, until I put Your enemies [as] Your footstool for Your feet.’” [Psalm 110:1] Therefore, let all the house of Israel know securely [fig., without a doubt] that God made Him both Lord and Christ-this Jesus whom you crucified!” (Acts 2:32-36 ALT)

When we read the book of Acts, we stand amazed at the life of these early pioneers of the ecclesia. Reading about their history brings a sense of awe and hunger in many of us to experience the life and the glory of the early ecclesia.

See *The Upward Call*, issue #02-0806, January 18, 2008, *Ekklesia—Out-Called Body*, and issue #03-0936, March 4, 2009, *The Ecclesia Within the Church*.

In fact, many saints expend great energy trying to develop something that looks like the ecclesia in Acts; that is, they try to build what they call a “New Testament church.” Unfortunately, it seems that when some try to imitate what is seen in Acts and other portions of the New Testament, they fall far short of the glory of the early ecclesia. The vitality seems to be lacking. Why is this so? After all, we might think that if we can just copy what we read in the Bible, then it should work the same way. So, what is the key?

As we read the book of Acts, we discover that the early disciples of Christ were full of awe and amazement.

And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. (Acts 2:43)

They were in awe more than we are as we read the record of their lives. But what amazed them? Was it that they had repented and turned to the Lord? Salvation is a tremendous thing to all of us, but was this the entire source of their awe? Was it the miracles that followed? Was it the manifestation of the power of God?

Today, many of the Lord’s people seem to want miracles and power, and they have come to believe this is what the Christian life is all about. The result is that they go searching for gatherings that emphasize miracles. They jump from one place to another, as if this is what their life is to be. No longer do they want to hear the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Denying self, taking up their cross, and following the Lord, even unto entering into the sufferings of Christ, are foreign to

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them. Instead, they are searching for things that make them feel good and give them excitement.

I have noticed something else from those who seek for power and supernatural manifestations of God in this day. When, as they claim, something supernatural occurs, it seems that they do not react like the early pioneers by proclaiming that “this Jesus God has raised.” Often, it seems that the attention turns to the one manifesting the power (or whatever) or to the one who holds center stage as the master of ceremony.

The early church knew nothing of this. Surely, they stood in awe of the manifestation of miracles and power, but these were merely a product of something else. There was a driving force, a key to this drive that swept this small gathering of people into history in such a way that the world has never been the same. What was it?

It was the Lord Jesus Himself; the one who was raised from among the dead.

This Jesus.

In the opening verses, we read that ***this Jesus*** has ascended into the heavens. When He was received among the celestials, He was exalted to the right hand of God the Father. Because of His exaltation, the promise of the Holy Spirit was poured forth upon the born-from-above body of Christ. Suddenly out from heaven came a noise like a violent, rushing wind as the Holy Spirit came not only to fill the place in which the disciples were gathered but to dwell in the very house of God, whose house we are, **the dwelling of God in spirit** (Ephesians 2:22).

Jesus had been glorified, and the Holy Spirit came as the spirit of the glorified Lord to bring glory to Him on earth. You may recall, the Lord told His disciples before His departure through the cross that the Holy Spirit would come and “**that will be glorifying Me**” (John 16:14 CV).

The early pioneers were in awe of the risen, exalted, glorified Jesus who had been made both Lord and Christ. He was the entire driving force and vision of the ecclesia, which is the body of Christ. They knew this Jesus whom God had raised from the dead.

In many places, we find statements like “**God raised Him up again**” (Acts 2:24; 13:30-33; 17:18, 30-31; 25:18-19; 26:22-23).

Risen and exalted.

The message and even the life of the early church was Christ whom God raised from the dead. This was their witness to the world. In fact, He had become their very life. And when they stood in His life, God proved to the world that indeed He

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had raised His Son from the dead and had exalted Him to His right hand. Jesus, the Son of God, was now seated upon His Father's throne. The promised Holy Spirit manifested many signs and wonders to not only bring glory to the Son but to declare to Israel that the One they crucified is the risen One, Messiah, the Christ.

It was not that the early ecclesia had any power in its own right. All that was manifested was a working of the Holy Spirit, testifying of the risen and exalted Christ. The disciples of Christ were a witness and testimony of this fact. Their lives testified to this fact. They were a walking testimony of Christ.

What was the view of the early ecclesia? What did they see? They saw only the risen, exalted, and glorified Christ. The Lord Himself was in view. They had only one vision, and that vision of Him led them to break all ties with this earth. They were now connected to the One who was seated among the celestials (Ephesians 2:6 CV). They were a celestial people with a heavenly citizenship (Philippians 3:20), and they were waiting for the Celestial One to come out of heaven (1 Thessalonians 1:10).

Today, in the church-at-large, we see so many people attempting to start new ministries, conduct great crusades, and build great organizations; and it seems that there are often struggles to either get them started or keep them going. The appeals go out for money, for workers, and for people to come to the Lord. But in the early ecclesia we see spontaneity. Things happened!

The early disciples stood as a witness and testimony of their risen Lord by their very lives.

At Pentecost, Peter stood and declared to the Jews that God had made Jesus both Lord and Christ. The people cried out, "**What shall we do?**" The reply came, "**Repent.**" The Holy Spirit moved, people repented, turned to the Lord, and began to serve in the body of Christ. We find no record of new converts running out and saying, "I have been called. I am starting my own ministry now, with my name on it." There was none of this.

Further, we find no record of the early ecclesia having some sort of rule book that told them what to do, when to do it, or how to do it. Why do you think this was so? Because they were to take all their orders and direction from their risen Lord, the Head of the body!

Which is operative in the Christ, rousing Him from among the dead and seating Him at His right hand among the celestials, up over every sovereignty and authority and power and lordship, and every name that is named, not only in this eon, but also in that which is impending: and subjects all under His feet, and gives Him, as Head over all, to the ecclesia which is His body, the complement of the One completing the all in all. (Ephesians 1:20-23 CV)

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And He is the Head of the body, the ecclesia, Who is Sovereign, Firstborn from among the dead, that in all He may be becoming first....
(Colossians 1:18 CV)

In a natural body, it is the head that sends signals to all parts of the body—cut off the head, and the body ceases to function. It is the same way in the body of Christ. The early ecclesia was so connected to their Head that they only moved out as He directed through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit turned hearts to the Lord, and then under the leading of the spirit, they were led and guided to serve and to live a victorious life in Christ.

The early ecclesia had no model to follow; they were absolutely dependent on the Head for all things, but their dependence led to such a spontaneous life. In fact, they tasted the powers of the age to come (Hebrews 6:5).

A victorious life.

The book of Acts starts with the Lord Jesus sharing with His disciples the things concerning the kingdom. Then we find that Acts ends with Paul in jail preaching the kingdom of God. The whole book of Acts is a testimony of the power of the kingdom (Acts 1:3, 28:30-31).

The early ecclesia served their Lord who is among the celestials, and they were persecuted because they declared that He is King. He is the coming King, the One who will return to this earth and establish His kingdom until the whole earth is full of the glory of the Lord.

We find a clear example of this persecution in Paul's visit to Thessalonica (Acts 17:6-7). Paul began preaching Jesus as the Christ and King, and it caused a great stir in the city. **"There is another king, Jesus."** They were accused of upsetting the whole world.

Actually, this is a true indictment. When the full gospel of Jesus is preached unhindered, it does upset the world because it challenges all that the world is. But it challenges more than the world. When the true gospel is preached to the religious, it also will bring great challenge and even controversy. The controversy that Paul experienced was fueled by the jealousy and blindness of the religious leaders of his day. The times have not changed. The religion of man often takes its stand against the kingdom of God.

The early ecclesia declared that there was one, true King who was going to rule over all things. The rightful King of this earth went away to receive His kingdom from His Father. He has not returned yet. But this did not matter to the early ecclesia. It was not Caesar that they served; it was the risen and exalted Lord. He was their Lord and coming King.

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It is vital for us to come into an understanding of this matter of who Jesus was to the early ecclesia and who He is to us today. He is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. He has not changed His position. God has His King. The Father is waiting for the completion of the appointed time, and then He will send forth His Son to manifest His kingdom over the nations of this earth. God's King is firmly seated upon the Father's throne, but one day soon He will be seated upon His own throne for a thousand years (Revelation 3:21).

In Luke 1:33, we are told that His kingdom shall have no end, or as one translation puts it, no frontier; that is, His kingdom is not limited by time, space, or place. There is no frontier that He has not conquered through His death on the cross. He has done it all! On the day of Pentecost, this fact was proven when all that were baptized in the Holy Spirit began to speak in foreign tongues; that is, they spoke in all the known languages that existed on the earth, even to the remotest parts (Acts 2:8-11). These were not unknown spiritual tongues but actual earthly languages. What was God revealing? He was revealing that this kingdom would extend to all the known areas of the world.

The life of the early ecclesia manifested the powers of the eon (age) to come. They reigned in life and turned the world upside down under the leadership of the spirit of the Lord.

And after they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and {saying,} “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.” (Acts 14:21-22 NASB)

Oh, what a victorious life we see. They continued in *the* faith, which speaks of the kingdom.

See article #20, April 2009, *The Faith*.

However, it was not too long before great opposition came against this life in the faith. We read that there was great persecution, yet they were not defeated. They were spoken against in all places, yet they touched hearts everywhere they traveled. They were martyred, yet they forgave their enemies. They were scattered, yet they were one in Christ. They were arrested and jailed, but the kingdom of God was proclaimed unhindered. Throughout it all, their numbers grew daily; they were built up, going on in the Lord, being comforted by the Holy Spirit; and the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.

Why such victory? Because the early ecclesia knew their risen, exalted, and glorified Christ. He was their Lord. It was the Lord, not their ability, stamina, temperament, or any natural traits. It was all of Christ. He was preeminent, first place in all things. They saw Him, they knew Him, they lived by faith in His name, and they longed for His return. They had first love for His return.

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This Jesus God raised up.

This Jesus is coming again!

Scripture Abbreviations:

ALT	Analytical Literal Translation
CV	Concordant Version
NASB	New American Standard Bible

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