

The Next Chapter After the...

by A.W. Tozer

A.W. Tozer's sermon explores the transformative power of the resurrection and its implications for believers' lives beyond death.

Duration: 37:46

Scripture: Matthew 1:1-17, Matthew 3:16 - 4:11, Matthew 14:13-21, Acts 9:1-19

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the 28th chapter of the book of Matthew in the Bible. He explains that the book of Matthew is a biography of Jesus, detailing his birth, life, and death. The preacher emphasizes that biographies are popular because humans are naturally interested in other human beings. He goes on to discuss the various chapters in Matthew, including Jesus' baptism, miracles, conflicts with religious leaders, and his ultimate resurrection. The preacher concludes by highlighting the hope and assurance of immortality that believers have in Christ.

Transcript

I want to talk to you about this last chapter, this next chapter, after the last chapter. Let's think about that twenty-eighth chapter of Matthew which was read a little while ago in your hearing. Now the book of Matthew is biography.

It tells the story of the birth and life and death of a man. Biography is, and all those will always continue to be, one of the most popular forms of literature. The reason is that human beings are more interested in human beings than in any other.

Therefore, wherever there is a human being, there is interest for some other human being. The life of a human being, a man or a woman, must always be of interest to the widest possible extent. It was Alexander Pope who said the proper study of mankind is man.

And we might add that the most study of mankind is also man. So biography is always interesting because it is the life of a man. You know it comes from bio, having to do with life, and comes from graphite, which we get our word graphite in a lead pencil to write with, to Greek words, and they mean to write a life, the writing of a life.

Matthew is the writing of a life. Matthew follows the ordinary procedure of writing. I have written two biographies in my time, that of Dr. A. B. Simpson and that of Dr. R. A. Jeffrey.

Without thinking very much, I followed the pattern. Biography usually runs like this. It begins with the ancestry.

That's not really the man, but it's the background for his life. Then it goes on to his birth, and there's where the life really begins, on to his boyhood or girlhood, whichever it be, woman or man, and the struggle and the work, and in life and in their decline and death, and by common consent we include the burial. For when we take the body, we take the last tattered remnants of what had been life, and though the life ends with the last breath, by common consent we include I shall also.

Now, if there is any other chapter following in common biography, following the burial, true biography, biography ends where the life ends, because biography is the writing of a life. To the end of the man, and when we say he passed quietly away, surrounded by his friends, and was buried in a place, that's the end. Finest is written there, and if anything follows, it may be editorial comment, it may be the man's teaching, it may be anything, but it isn't biography, because biography ends where the life ends.

The writing of the life ends where the last, and there can be no other way about it. And this is so by the logic of sad necessity, and all people and every religion, always we have to take this into account. The dead and buried, he talks no more, he writes no more, he paints no more, he travels no more, he responds no more to his friends, he is gone.

No matter how beloved he has been, he is gone now, end. And so we write a respectful Finest, after the word, the last word of the book, and it is over, it's gone. Now we come to the biography of Jesus.

It's a short sketch of a biography, but it is a biography nevertheless. And he followed the common pattern of all biography. He began with the ancestors of Jesus, went clear back to Abraham, down to Mary, and then followed the ordinary procedure.

He identified the mother, and then he told us about the birth, and the wise men coming from the east to see him. And then he had now grown to manhood, and he comes to the waters of baptism, and is baptized, and the Spirit descends like a dove. Then his fourth chapter takes up the temptation, when he was led into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

And after he had successfully come through the temptation, now he begins his public ministry. Five, six, and seven of Matthew's book, we have the story, or rather we have a sermon, called ordinarily the Sermon on the Mount, and begins with the word, blessed. Then come the chapters that follow his miracles, his wonders, his feeding of the five thousand, his raising of the dead, his stilling of the waves, and quieting of the wind.

And he tells about his conflict with the religious hypocritical leaders of his day, and the slow sun, though he was only thirty-three years of age. When his popularity began to decline, and the pressure of the world moved in, closed in, like the falling of the darkness. And then came the time when he was caught by his, and turned over to the Romans to be crucified.

And the story in the twenty-seventh of Matthew, out on the hill, and there still wet with the bloody sweat of the night before, they nailed him on the cross. Some detail the story of the three, the six sad hours, the three hours till noon, and three hours that followed. And then he said, and said, it is finished, and gave up

the ghost, and was dead.

Matthew up to there had followed straight along. Come his friends, and beg the body, and take it out, and put it in a grave. And the Roman were there to seal the grave, in order that it might properly be done according to Roman law, and there ended the biography.

That was the end of it now. This man who had been proved to be of the seed of the flesh, this man who had been declared to be the Son of God, and proved so to be by his wonders and miracles and words, and who had struggled and fought his way with kindness and gentleness and love, through the ranks of those who hated him for wonderful, terrible years, who had in love gone out to die for his enemies, and had died for his enemies. It was not finished.

The biography had ended. You could go on the next hundred years, but you couldn't write biography. He's dead.

By old life, and roughing to write, you have the two put together. He's dead now, and there's no biography after that. There might have been annotation, editorial comment, but they're good, because he died in the 27th chapter.

But I find another chapter here. What's this other chapter doing here? Why is this 28th chapter? Ah, my friend, the 28th chapter is there because for the first time in history, the river ran uphill. In history, the iron did swim.

For the first time in history, it was necessary to get out that pen again and add another chapter. Authentic biography. For the 28th chapter of Matthew is not annotation.

It is not composed of footnotes. It's not an editorial comment. The 28th chapter of Matthew is an authentic chapter in the biography of a man, chapter before.

What are they doing now, writing again? Why is it that we find this man? Men die. Why are we finding this man talking now, and eating, and walking, and making a journey, and walking with his friends? Why do we have this man talking about the kingdom of God and his own coming, and telling men to go into all the world and preach? What has happened here? This is not right. Biography ends with the death of the man.

And Matthew is a book of biography of a man. And the 27th chapter was the end, and we should have written, find us there, and put a period. No more.

Why was there any more? Something strange happened here, my friends. It never had history of the world, and it's never happened after that. Since that time, down to this time, there isn't a spot that I know anywhere in all the world where anyone can come forth and say, after the last chapter, there was added another.

It's upset all the patterns of life, because Jesus Christ took life into the grave and brought life out of the grave again, and he was again. And it's necessary for the evangelist to add the chapter that has no ending. When manuscripts come in, they either have the end, or else they have more.

Those are the common words by writers. More, if it says more, you know that's an add-on, a read-on, or expect more to follow. But if it says the end, you know there's no more to follow.

And all that's been written, when they came to the funeral, they said, the end, and that was the last of that. But when the biography of Jesus was written, they came to the funeral, and God wrote more at the end of it, not the end, but more. It had to be added because he was alive again.

This man was alive again. Not simply memories, not simply beautiful memories of things that he had said, not quotations from his lovely teaching, not recommendations of commendations sent in by friends, but authentic biography. He got up and stood, and solemn, and called his friend by name, and looked at Peter, and cooked fish on the sandy shore.

Children, have you any meat? I have some breakfast for you. And walked on Emmaus Road. They saw him, they heard him, they felt him, they knew he was there.

So he confused all the logic of old death, death that had taken every man, and traced him with a lipless, toothy grin. Watched him as he went down from the cradle to the grave, and then written the end. Now he's put into confusion, and hell rings with the sobs and sorrows of the death that is now coming.

Jesus Christ made a fool of him, and that toothy grin is a skull itself now, for there's another chapter. A man's alive again, for he is not here. Now, my brethren, what does this mean to you and me? Well, it means that for Christ's people, the iron reign of death is ended.

It means that for Christ's people, the logic of death no longer applies. It means that for Christ's people, there will be something to follow. Let's look for instance, let's take the man Paul.

Here was a man who was born as other men. He grew up through the processes of life until he became a full-grown man. He was educated at the feet of Gamaliel, what fine biographical material.

He became a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin, which was equivalent to being a Supreme Court of the United States. He stood high in his day as being one of the Orthodox Pharisees, respected of his people. And then on Damascus Road he was suddenly and miraculously converted to believe in the one whom he had hated, filled with the Holy Spirit, commissioned and sent out to preach the gospel everywhere, and he did.

And he went from place to place teaching the Word, establishing churches, writing encouraging letters to the new churches that were formed by his preaching. Tried one day, and the day set loose. Tried the third day and condemned, and then he wrote a letter.

He wrote a letter to his young friend Timothy, and he said, The day of my time of my departure has come, and I am now ready to be offered. That was death. He said, I have fought a good fight in the past perfect tense.

I have finished my course in the past perfect tense. It's all over. It's finished.

It's a long run. My battle has been fought. My testimony has been given.

I am a witness. And then he added a word. Have you ever noticed the word that he added? It was the testimony of a man who was not sick, but who within a very few days knelt in a stones of a Roman prison and had his head taken off of the sword.

But it was his last testimony, and he said, I am done. Before that hour came, he had said, I am not satisfied. I am pressing on.

But now God said, all right, Paul, stop. It's over. And Paul wrote, I am finished.

I am done. I have completed. I have fought my fight.

I take off my uniform. The war is over. I have run my course.

I lay off my racing shoes. The truth is a martyr. And now I die.

There it should have ended. There it should have been the end. But you know, he put a word in there, one of those conjunctive words that connect.

To take a yes to a tomorrow, he put the word in there, henceforth. What do you mean there, Paul, henceforth? You're in no position to talk about henceforth. You remind me of the man who was about to die, and he asked him if he had anything to say, and he said, yes, that was going to teach him a lesson.

Smile at that. But what good is a lesson to a man who will die in five minutes? What good is it, Paul? That's your last shot after that great period. You're finished.

But you couldn't get Paul down. He said, give me that pen. And as he wrote one more word, he wrote the word, henceforth.

Now, henceforth means from here on in, from now on, after now. Why did a man who said the game was over, the war was finished, the head was off, the dead had been died? Why did he say, henceforth? He did. He said, henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness that this judge will give me in that day.

Now, my brethren, if the word henceforth had not been there, I say that St. Paul would have been one of the biggest fools the world ever knew. For a man who stood high in the esteem of his countrymen, educated, great-brained that he was, this man who had some riches, the historians say, behind him, for he had been counted but refuse, for him to turn on his own people, be stoned of one another day, thrown into jail another day, and bound in the stocks, for him to dash about between dangers, out on the sea among false brethren, men trying to kill him, always having only the garment he had, having given everything else up for Jesus' sake. And when the time came that that old man lost his name, if the word henceforth had not been there, he'd have been one of the greatest fools the world ever knew.

It wouldn't have been worth the trouble to go out and suffer three times in the sea. No, it wouldn't have been worth the thirty-nine stripes he received three times, the stocks and the starvation and the cold of the damn prison. It wouldn't have been worth the ostracism and the persecution.

Nothing would have been worth it if he had only said, this is it, I'm done, goodbye, farewell. But he wrote, which was another chapter, after the last chapter. The last chapter ended when Paul said, the war is over and I'm out.

But he added another, he said, henceforth there's laid up for me a crown. He began to talk about his days to be, and confused his biographers. He said, don't write the end after my life, write more to follow.

Because this man knew what he was doing. He said that if we do not rise men to the dead, then we are of all men most miserable, and we are. What are you doing here this morning if men rise not from the dead? Why did you give five, six thousand dollars to the Lord's work last year if men rise not from the dead? Why not eat, drink, and be merry, because tomorrow we die.

It's because the word henceforth is there. It's because there's another chapter. It's because nobody had truly been written.

Because we end with the grave, we end with the death in the grave, I say. But there's a tomorrow, and that tomorrow makes a henceforth necessary. Look at our martyrs.

Study Boxer's Book of Martyrs, what happened to them there. They were thrown into wild beasts and torn limb from limb. They were impaled on stake, allowed to die in slow agony under the sun and the stars at night.

They were sewed into sacks and thrown over the clittering water of the ocean beneath. They were starved to death in prisons. They were driven into wilderness to die slowly of exposure and starvation.

Their tongues were cut out, their arms and hands were cut off. They were fastened to carts and dragged to death through the streets while the crowds screamed with their applause. Was it worth that? If these martyrs had no tomorrow, if there was no henceforth, no chapter to follow, then those torn, charred bodies of martyrs would have screamed to high heaven above and hell.

Christianity was a fraud, that it was a cruel, treacherous belief. But there's another chapter. Timothy was dragged through the streets at the tail of a cart, and if that had been all for Timothy, then everyone could have said, poor Timothy, it's too bad he didn't have brains enough to let Christianity alone.

But God, whoever writes the lives of martyrs, he said, Mark, more to follow. Let the divine editor yonder in the skies know of Timothy. There'll be a long gap and there'll be nothing more written about him for a long time.

But this is only an episode. He's dead, but it's only an episode. Another chapter follows, and that chapter will have no end to it.

Every other chapter ends. But when the bird of immortality takes to the wing, she sails on and on over the horizon and out into the everlasting. She never comes down and never dies.

God Almighty puts eternity in men's breasts, and tomorrow in their hearts is people's immortality. So what you see down here really isn't much. You only see a few chapters of what men call Christianity, but there's more to follow.

We know it because more followed when Jesus was put in the grave. We wouldn't know it otherwise. Let Socrates talk about a hope of tomorrow.

Let the moral philosophers and the religious dreamers think about it. Them all they will, but they can't prove a thing because nobody's ever come back to write another chapter. Only that one man, that one lone man, who had another chapter.

It was he that came back. Ah, my brother, old brother Fox will have to get out his pen again. He told about Paul being killed in a prison, but brother Fox will have to get his old quill pen and go to work again when the resurrection comes.

That was not the end of the life of Paul. That was only an episode in that life. It was the end of the earthly life, but not the end.

And so all down the years under the Romans who slew the people of God with delight and spilled, spattered their blood all over the arenas, every one of those martyrs will have another chapter added. It will be the chapter of immortality. It will be God's tomorrows.

It will be the henceforths that belong to the children of God. Old brother Van Stryke, that sweet, kindly old hollander, said, I'll go to Chicago and see my grandson once more. But he didn't get to see.

His grandson will see him, but he won't see his grandson. Don't you write the end after that life. Don't you dare.

God will say to the recording angel, get out your pen again there. Dick Van Stryke has lived his life, and if his people write his obituary, as we call it, they will say the end. He died Tuesday or whatever it was, Thursday.

And they'll put the date down, and God says, put it behind your ear. Keep it handy because there's a tomorrow. There's a henceforth.

There's another day. There's a resurrection. How do you know there was once a man, a lone man, an only man? And they'll put him in a grave and seal him in again from the dead according to the scriptures.

And he ascended to the right hand of God the Father Almighty. And all the books in the world, if they were written in by a multitude of angels until they were filled, wouldn't contain all the glory that has followed that last chapter, that other chapter after the last, that new resurrection chapter. It'll never end, never end.

Never lay down his pen. They say about the love of God, could we with ink the ocean fill? And were every scribe have a quill on earth, a scribe or a quill, that there wouldn't be a room enough in the heavens above to contain the love of God. And I repeat, there wouldn't be a room in the sky above were stretched like a parchment to contain all the deeds and words of Jesus Christ since the day they thought dead forever.

And they wrote, it's finished, and sealed it with a Roman seal. And death sat grinning beside the Roman, I've got another one. And the life that could not stay dead broke that seal as easily as a seal on a letter.

And he walked forth alive. I believe that, brethren. I believe that so completely that I believe it more than once a year.

I believe it all the time. I believe it every morning and every day. And I'll say this to no one in his right mind who has a modicum of sanity and a little bit of information to happen unless he's convinced that's true and he's convinced that it means and applies to him.

Now I've talked about martyrs. I want to say a word about missionaries. Not so long ago, a missionary asked to come to see me.

And I said, certainly I'll be glad to talk with you. He said that I had had some part in his salvation, consecration, and his and I was glad to add in a little thing I could now. And now he's a middle-aged man.

He came and he told me this. He said, I don't know what I can do. I don't know what to do.

I want to go back to the field. My wife wants to go. But he said, here's the circumstance.

Said 17th field. We were looking forward to our first little baby. And there was a dock either one of the coast sides, I don't know which.

And he said a dock strike tied up shipping to the country where I was. And we could get food. During the long dragged out months, my wife had to live on native food.

Said the result, she became anemic, undernourished, and the babies were born pale, small, undernourished, anemic. Two little girls. One died almost immediately.

The other one lived and developed physically, but she didn't develop mentally. And he said, now brother told us she's 17. Some things she's all right.

But he said she's two years behind in school and she's a frightened girl. Now here's the point. My wife and I have to go back to the field and we can't take and we can't leave her.

If we take her, she's weak, mentally easily influenced. And he said the wickedness and immorality and terror of the darkness of the days are so great he's afraid it will engulf her. But he said we can't leave her here because she's frightened.

She says, don't leave me, I'm frightened. He said, what do you recommend? What would you say? I didn't know what to say. I didn't know, but I know what he'll do.

I know him. I know what he'll do. I know her behind a bush and squeeze his eyes tight shut to keep the tears from streaming out and he'll pray his way through to a place high and comes, he'll kiss his subnormal daughter, put her in a good school, five years.

And his wife will do the same. That's the stuff, alliance mission. That's what'll happen.

I know what'll happen. It's happened so many times, not with feeble-mindedness, but leaving at our posts here, hairy posts. That big, handsome, gorgeous fellow that could have had his own way here in the home land if he'd stayed, who would have stepped into a selling job, an executive job anywhere and made good, could have been making twenty-five.

The hairy post went to Borneo. They had three or four children, came back here, never hit before, never saw him hurt, never saw him wounded, until he came to my office and said, Pastor, this is I ever could bear. We haven't seen them.

Brethren, it's all there is to it, and Christ did not rise, and there's no chain will last. This whole thing is a gigantic hoax. The hairy posts will get old.

We have them that way all the time, old, tired missionaries walking around, looking down at the ground. They look up and smile, utter a Christian word of greeting and go on, old and tired, live on poor rations. I talked to a man, all of all got worms.

He said, It's in everybody. I picked them out of my children's eyelids. He said, We've all got old and weary, undernourished and tired and old before their time.

They go one after the other. I say that that's the end of it. When we put a spit in the alliance weekly to the affected, Mr. So-and-so, Reverend So-and-so, thirty-one years, forty-one years a missionary, died in Glen Dale or Beulah Beach or New York, and such and such a date.

If that's all there is to it, beware. Why are the steeples pointing to the sky? Why are there Bibles and hymn books? What's it all about? I say it's a hoax and a ride. It's an opiate of the people.

But, oh, my brother, there's another chapter. Your old Dr. John, a poor little cot, over a few miles north of Macassar, during the World War, after having his pig pen for a while, and the man who had the next birth to him, the next bed to him, said, I never saw such godliness, never saw such godliness in all my life. This man who had gone all over the world like streaks, he had made all over the earth.

There wasn't a sea where he hadn't gone, scarcely a continent where he had not stood, nor a tribe anywhere within the field of his interest where that he had not seen. Now he curls up and dies, a forsaken man, thousands of miles away from his nearest friends. And if that's all there is to it, and if when I finished it up and said he had died, and in my biography of that end of it, I say it's all too bad.

But there will be a tomorrow. Another chapter will be added. A henceforth is there.

And all that he earned for his God in the past will be his in the tomorrows. And the life of Geoffrey has not yet been written. No, we plain Christians, we're not martyrs, we're not reformers, we're not missionaries, we're not apostles, we're plain Christians.

One by one we break and go. One by one we slip away. It's never heroic, never heroic, death is never kind.

We swell up or we bloat or we dry up or we turn yellow or we lose our minds and don't know our friends. Our bodies are eaten away or they wear away. Death is never kind, never artistic, always crude and messy and humiliating.

And the preacher that once stood clear and bright and keen to preach the living word of God, now we find him in his bed, his legs as thin as broomsticks, his cheeks fallen in and his eyes staring. Death has slammed over that tabernacle. It's the way it always is.

The singer that sang like an angel of the glory of God and the beauty of heaven above, now a horse can drive it, whispers a half-spoken word as death comes. I say, my brethren, if that's all, we are of all men most miserable, but I thank God. My whole everlasting little all that I have, all that treasure I have, all my personality, all has been cast on this, that it's not all.

That God's people, the temple they live in, can dry up and die. They can stare unseeing at the faces of their loved friends and not know them before the end comes. And they can change things at the last.

One dear boy even took his own life. We sent him to the mission field, sweet, happy face, gave him everything he had to God. Took his little wife and in a year or so, or less than that, he had a terrible fever.

Went into some state that we never knew what was wrong, but in a state of delirium, he thrashed himself around until he actually killed himself and died. This dear, happy Christian boy that would no more have committed suicide than you or I would, that cruel, heartless, vicious, old, grinning scowl that spares nobody the kindly grace, the soft, pink beauty of babyhood, or the joyful hopes of the young missionary on the field. Collapsed his dirty hand over them and they go.

One after the other they go. Down the aisles of the churches they parade, and there's music they don't hear, and they're taken back and out to their last resting place, as we say. And if that's all I say then,

certainly is a disappointment.

But after every obituary of his children goes forth, and after every biography God adds the word, henceforth there'll be a tomorrow, cheer up, you haven't seen the last of that man. Thought they'd seen the last of Paul, but they hadn't. The Jews thought they'd seen the last of Jesus, but they hadn't.

The Japanese thought they'd seen the last of the world-singer, but they hadn't seen it. Oh no, we Christians will be around again. The world gets rich, takes us down in a hole, and charges us for the trouble.

They think they're rid of us, but they're not. The neighbor that hated you because you loved him, when you die he'll say, that fellow's out of my hair. He's always giving me a track, suggesting I go to church, and he's boring me stiff.

He's out, no he's not. He'll be around again. God's people will be around again.

Mr. Deitch will be back, Brother Gillespie will be back, Lance Wright will be back, Miss Stevenson will be back, Dr. Simpson will be back, Wesley will be back again. Not that gray-haired, he's a-blooming with his youth, he'll be back. Paul will be back, and Steven, and Timothy that was dragged at the tail.

Haven't seen the last of the Christians, Brother, no, no. There was a good man of God by the name of Samuel Rutherford. He shone like a star in dark England in days gone by.

And he was a poet and a writer, and a great preacher, and a man who loved Jesus probably better than any man of his times. Well, he got in trouble because he was preaching and wouldn't surrender to the state church. And when he was an old man, they decided to try him as a Christian, because he didn't submit to the rules of the state church.

So they sent for him and set his trial at a certain time. When he got the letter from Parliament to come and appear before them, for trial, he wrote him a letter back. He was on his deathbed, and he said, Gentlemen, I've received your summons, but before I got yours, I got one from a higher source.

And before that comes, I'll be over there where very few kings and great men ever come. Farewell. That was Martin, that was Samuel Rutherford.

They've summoned me before them, he said, but there I may not come. For my Lord says, come up hither. My Lord says, welcome home.

King, to his white throne my presence doth command. Word, glory, glory, dwelleth in Emmanuel's land. It's another chapter, friends.

There's tomorrow for the people of God, because there was a tomorrow for Jesus Christ, our Lord. And if this died and rose again, them also that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, and the trump of God.

Then they that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, and they shall be changed, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Then he added, rather anticlimactically, comfort one another with these words. What a comfort it is to know it.

So you Christians that have bidden goodbye to loved ones over the last week or year, don't see them again. They'll be around. There's another chapter, and it'll have no end, the bird of immortality's on.

Thank God for a faith that begins with our sins and intention, and that stands with us all the way through. In the name of God and of Jesus Christ, our Lord, let's make this year a great year in the kingdom. Let's stop our carelessness.

Let's tune up the violin of our own souls, and let's begin to serve God and make melody in our hearts.

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