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**North Road Chapel (Evangelical)  
BIDEFORD**

# FORTY MOMENTOUS DAYS

“*After that, He was seen of James*” (1 Corinthians 15:7)

All the detail of Christ’s ninth appearance is comprehended in the few words from the Corinthian epistle quoted above. Yet the brevity of this account does not minimise the importance of the event described. For if the Lord deigned to appear personally and privately to this man, as this verse states, then He had a very definite purpose in doing so.

The interviews recorded elsewhere in the New Testament were designed to give instruction and commandment in “*things pertaining to the Kingdom of God*”. Some of the appearances were to individuals – Simon, Thomas, and the two on the Emmaus Road; whilst others were to groups and assembled companies. The ninth appearance was to an individual once again. What then was the purpose of this meeting? In the case of Peter, it had been with a view to his restoration and commission; for Thomas it was to give assurance, and banish doubts from his mind. What motive prompted the appearance of the Risen Christ to James?

First, the identity of this man must be established. Several New Testament characters bear the name of ‘James’, the most prominent being James the son of Zebedee, and brother of John (cf Matthew 4:21). He is believed to be the first Apostle who suffered martyrdom. There is also James the son of Alphaeus (cf Mathew 10:3), sometimes referred to as ‘James the Less’ (cf Mark 15:40). Some suggest he earned this epithet on account of smallness of stature, but it was more probably a simple means of distinguishing between these two disciples, the son of Alphaeus being a man of younger age, or ‘less’ years.

In addition to these men there was another James, who was a younger son of the Lord's earthly parents; as testified by a hostile Galilean crowd, *“Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not His sisters here with us? And they were offended at Him”* (Mark 6:3). From this and similar verses (e.g. Matthew 13:55) it is evident that on a human level Christ was regarded as a humble carpenter's son, having natural siblings, one of whom was called James. Concerning them, it is recorded: *“For neither did **His brethren** believe in Him”* (John 7:5). *“And **they** were offended in Him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house. And He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief ”* (Matthew 13:57-58). The Lord did not have honour in His earthly homestead, or amongst family, for they themselves did not believe Him.

However, an interesting sequel is afforded by Paul's letter to the Galatian Churches some twenty-five years later. He relates an important journey which he took: *“I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save **James the Lord's brother**”* (Galatians 1:18-19). This verse is sufficient to reveal that a radical change had occurred in the life of James. A work of grace had been wrought in his heart, such that by this point in history, he was a central Christian worker. This does not mean that he was an apostle – he is not listed among the twelve, nor was he chosen to replace Judas Iscariot, neither did he occupy an apostolic office in the manner of Paul – but like such characters as Barnabas and John Mark, this James held a pivotal role in the spiritual affairs of the early Church.

There can be little doubt but that the James to whom Christ appeared, as recorded in 1 Corinthians 15:7, was the man regarded as His own earthly 'brother'. From the many traditions and fables which surround this period of time a few reliable historians may be

discerned who, although not inspired, shed some light upon the people, customs and events of the first century. Among these latter sources there is information given that this James was commonly referred to as ‘James the Just’, on account of his upright and morally strict manner of life. It is reputed that James was dedicated to the Levitical Law from his earliest days – and that same rigid adherence to Judaism made the teachings of Christ distasteful to him. Like others of his day, James could not understand how a man who ate with publicans and discoursed with sinners could possibly be the Holy One of God. He could not comprehend how the individual whom he had known in childhood, and lived with in the home at Nazareth, and observed at the humble work of carpentry, was also the promised Son of David – the coming Messiah! That his brother after the flesh should claim to be the Sent One from God was too much for James, and he could not accept it.

Yet from this position of denial, a change of heart was brought about. Exactly how and when this happened, the Scripture does not relate. It may have been that as the Lord’s public ministry developed, and His true nature more clearly manifested that brother James was gradually affected and influenced. Then came the crucifixion with its apparent finality – followed by unprecedented news of ‘resurrection’. What was needed to confirm and seal James’ developing faith? What would ultimately correct his faulty Jewish outlook, and turn him from nationalistic aspirations to the truth pertaining to the Kingdom of God? What but a revelation of the risen Lord? “*He was seen of James*” – precious words indeed in this context. The Lord’s brother, who at one time would not believe, was afforded a private meeting with the resurrected Christ, before His return to Glory.

The next glimpse of the man shows him, after Pentecost, vitally involved in the early Church, and holding prominent office in the congregation at Jerusalem (cf Acts 12:17, 15:13) where he is

described as a ‘pillar’ among the people (cf Galatians 2:9). It seems that he did not itinerate in the fashion of the other apostles, but remained resident in the metropolis throughout his life. James, with his strict Jewish background was eminently suited to the Church in that place, which consisted predominantly of former Jews. Ministering in a city of that nature and to people of such persuasions was no easy task, and it is clear that an ‘extreme’ Judaizing element remained, whose traditions and past allegiances were slow to depart (cf Galatians 2:12). Nevertheless, this faithful man, known to all as ‘James the Just’ on account of his exemplary character and unimpeachable background, commanded the respect and confidence of even the most bigoted Jews. He was amply qualified to act as a mediator between them and the early Christians, and his great work, under God, was the bringing in of the elect remnant of the Jewish people into the Church. This is evidenced in Scripture (cf Galatians 2:9), not least in the inspired epistle that he was caused to write, and which bears his name. It was particularly addressed to the Jewish people: “*James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting*” (James 1:1).

Further information concerning this remarkable character comes in Acts 21. The Apostle Paul and certain others from Caesarea journeyed to Jerusalem, and the very next day after their arrival were diligent to visit James, who ministered in the Church there. The other elders also being present, Paul recounted the wonderful things that God had wrought among the Gentiles to whom the Gospel had been preached. The unequivocal response of those who heard the report was: “*they glorified the Lord*” (Acts 21:20). So great was the change wrought in James, that he could rejoice heartily in the salvation of the Gentiles, and glorify the Lord whom He had once disbelieved.

These details help to show the significance of, and reason for, the Lord's appearance to James. His early life had been clouded by Jewish prejudices, and he could not perceive the spiritual truth of the Old Testament – it was therefore highly needful that the Lord should reveal Himself unto him. James' faith needed confirmation, and his understanding of truth wanted clarification; for he was destined to a specialised and sensitive work in the Jerusalem Church, requiring much wisdom and discernment. In order that he should be fitted for the office that lay before him, he was granted this special interview.

This personal visitation presents the Saviour's wonderful condescension to human infirmities, and infinite kindness to men's imperfections. The result produced in James was akin to those in Peter, Thomas, and the Emmaus-bound travellers, for he was both convinced and assured. This once rigid and high-handed child of Abraham from then onwards never faltered in his confession of Christ; until he sealed that testimony with his own blood. According to secular records, he was martyred in the year AD69, being thrown from a pinnacle of the temple, and stoned to death by those below.

Thus the teaching contained in this ninth appearance is substantially the same as on previous occasions: the preparation of an individual or company of persons for a future, God-ordained work. It also demonstrates that if a person is **called** of God to a task, they will always first be **fitted** for it. Contrariwise, if a person is evidently unfitted for a spiritual work which they have presumed to do, it is clear that they were never called of God in the first place. Acts 1:2-4 plainly states that it was to those whom Christ had **chosen** that He **gave commandment** concerning the Kingdom of God. Such a man was James – whose timeless example remains to this day.

W. H. Molland  
(*transcribed by R. J. Steward*)

# Christ made like unto us in all things

Christ not only became man, but it behoved Him to be made like us in all things. He suffered, being tempted... There was no part of our condition that He did not humble Himself unto.

(1.) He passed through all the terms of our life from childhood to manhood. First, He was an infant of days, exposed to all the pains and dangers of infancy. *“Ye shall find the babe, wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.”* Second, He bore the trials and pains of boyhood. Many a one, no doubt, would wonder at the holy boy in the carpenter’s shop at Nazareth. He grew in wisdom, and in stature, and in favour with God and man. Third, He bore the afflictions and anxieties of manhood, when He began to be about thirty years of age.

(2.) He tasted the difficulties of many situations in life. The first thirty years, it is probable, He shared the human occupation of Joseph the carpenter. He tasted the trials of working for His daily bread. Then, He subsisted on the kindness of others. Certain women, which followed Him, ministered unto Him of their substance. He had not where to lay His head. Many a night He spent on the Mount of Olives, or on the hills of Galilee. Then, He bore the trials of a Gospel minister. He preached from morning till night, but with how small success! So that He could say, *“I have laboured in vain, I have spent My strength for nought and in vain.”* How often He was grieved by their unbelief; He marvelled at their unbelief! *“O faithless generation! How long shall I be with you, how long shall I suffer you?”* How often He offended many by His preaching, *“Many ...said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it?”* *“From that time, many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him”* (John 6:60, 66). How often they hated Him for His love! *“For My love they are My adversaries: but I give Myself unto*

*prayer*” (Psalm 109:4). How His own disciples grieved Him by their want of faith. “*O ye of little faith, have I been so long time with you*” – the unbelief of Thomas – their sleeping in the garden – forsaking Him and fleeing – Peter denying – Judas betraying Him!

(3.) What trials He had from His own family! Even His own brothers did not believe on Him, but mocked. The people of His town tried to throw Him over the rocks. What pain He suffered from His mother, when He saw the sword piercing her fond heart! How He said to John, “*Behold thy mother*”, and to His mother “*Behold thy son*”, even in the midst of His dying agonies.

(4.) What trials from Satan! Believers complain of Satan, but they never felt his power as Christ did. What an awful conflict was that during forty days in the wilderness? How fearfully did Satan urge on the Pharisees, and Herod, and Judas, to torment Him! What a [terrible] hour was that when He said, “*This is your hour, and the power of darkness*”, what [a fearful] cry was that, “*Save Me from the lion’s mouth*” (Psalm 22:20), when He felt His soul in the very jaws of Satan!

(5.) What trials from God! Believers often groan under the hidings of God’s countenance; but ah! They seldom taste even a drop of what Christ drank. What dreadful agony was that in Gethsemane, when the blood gushed through the pores! How dreadful was that [silence] of God on the cross, when He cried, “*My God, My God!*” In all these things, and a thousand more, He was made like unto His brethren. He came in our place. Through eternity we shall study these sufferings.

Learn the amazing love of Christ, that He should leave glory for such a condition.

Robert Murray M’Cheyne (1813 – 1843)

# KINSHIP WITH CHRIST

## *Part 1*

### *Christ's Likeness to the Believer*

It is an astonishing truth that, when upon earth, the Lord Jesus Christ had those who were regarded as his natural brothers and sisters. Such was the opinion of the local people who observed his early life and childhood in Nazareth. Later, during his ministry, they recognised Him and were quick to remark: “*Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not His sisters here with us? And they were offended at Him*” (Mark 6:3). From this it is evident that the Incarnate Lord was brought up in a household of four brothers and a number of sisters; and that this family relationship was long remembered. All three synoptic Gospels record occasions when His mother and brethren were on the fringes of the crowd, desiring to see and speak with Him (cf Luke 8:20), their presence being advertised by the throng. Nor are these the only evidences of natural human relationship, for the Apostle Paul describes a man in Jerusalem who was “*James, the Lord's brother*” (Galatians 1:19). This title cannot be taken in a metaphorical or spiritual sense, because it was clearly intended to identify one man in particular – one who, through family ties, was reckoned to be brother to Jesus Christ.

To some, this practical detail is offensive or unacceptable – that the Saviour should have lived in so humble and ordinary a way, among the natural children of His earthly parents; having those whom He learned to call ‘brother’ or ‘sister’; regarded by outside observers to be but the eldest son in a Nazarene family. Yet this was all part of that immeasurably great humiliation which the Son of God endured,

in being ‘made flesh and dwelling among us’. It was another aspect of the degradation and suffering which the Incarnation brought upon His Divine person. He, who was the Son of the Most High, was derided by Galilean villagers as ‘son of Mary’, ‘son of the carpenter’, nothing and nobody more than the brother of a poor local family. He condescended to that low estate, and patiently bore it throughout His earthly life; even acknowledging Mary from upon the cross itself, and graciously revisiting James before ascending to Glory. He, *“being in the form of God... made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross”* (Philippians 2:6-8).

There can be no doubt but that James, Jude and their siblings were in a unique and privileged position, to have been so intimately associated with the Lord in a fraternal union. However, their experience serves to illustrate the state of **every** true Christian. Speaking of Christ and His believing people it is written, *“Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be **made like unto His brethren**”* (Hebrews 2:17). The doctrine is not simply that Christ was identified with a particular family in Israel and shared certain experiences with them, but more wonderfully, that He identified with mankind, and has endured what is the common lot of all His people – the human experience. It can be the boast of every saint that the Lord has been ‘touched with the feeling of **their** infirmities’.

“Our Fellow-sufferer yet retains  
A fellow-feeling of our pains;  
And still remembers in the skies,  
His tears and agonies and cries.

In every pang that rends the heart  
The Man of Sorrows had a part;  
He sympathizes in our grief,  
And to the sufferer sends relief.”

The degree to which the Saviour’s earthly life corresponds and compares with the lives of His people, cannot be overstated. For

Scripture says it was “*in all things*” – that is, His pathway was such that it embraced all the vicissitudes of existence that the saints have ever known, in all preceding and succeeding generations. Let none imagine that their case is so unique or extreme that it is beyond the scope of the Lord’s sympathy and knowledge. His course through this world, from the ignominy of His nativity, to the agony of His expiry, with every stage between, was so appointed that it included every kind of emotion that the heart may feel, and every temptation with which the soul may be assailed. He was “*in all things... made like unto His brethren*” (Hebrews 2:17) and “*in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin*” (Hebrews 4:15). Let faith accept these statements! Jesus Christ, the Captain of Salvation was ‘made perfect’ – He attained a fullness and completion – in all the things which He suffered (cf Hebrews 2:10, 5:7-9).

“*Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren.*” Consider the force of the word ‘behoved’. In the original language it implies a great obligation or bounden duty. It is elsewhere translated as “*must needs...*” This gives an insight into the true nature of the Incarnation, and the reason why the Eternal Son came “*in the likeness of sinful flesh*”.

Firstly, it was the **appointed** way. The Incarnation, though unprecedented, was not unplanned. As the epistle makes clear: “*When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons*” (Galatians 4:4-5). It was an event long expected and awaited by a faithful remnant (cf Luke 2:25), foretold by Prophets (cf Malachi 3:1, Isaiah 7:14), and indeed, declared by God at the first in Eden (cf Genesis 3:15). Nor was the promise of a Messiah coming of the woman’s seed merely a contingency to address man’s sin. No, such a plan had ever been in the mind of God, and written in His Divine counsels, eternal as Himself. To this the Psalmist and the Apostle

both attest, speaking of Christ, “*when He cometh into the world, He saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a **body hast thou prepared Me**... Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me,) to do Thy will, O God*” (Hebrews 10:5, 7). Long before angels published the tidings over Bethlehem’s fields, the Incarnation had been scheduled by sovereign decree. To this the Saviour was utterly complicit and committed, and delighted to fulfil the appointed plan. Thus it behoved Him, and was incumbent upon Him, to be made like unto His brethren.

Secondly, it was the **only** way. In the process of redeeming His elect people, it was needful that God maintain absolute righteousness, and remain just, whilst justifying them which believe (cf. Romans 3:26). How could such a purpose be accomplished? What was required in mankind’s desperate plight? A Federal Head who could stand, where Adam the First had fallen (cf 1Corinthians 15:22); a Daysman who could bridge the great divide between God and man, and ‘lay His hand upon both’ (cf Job 9:33); a Surety who could act on man’s behalf in the Better Covenant (cf Hebrews 7:22). All these offices were fulfilled by Jesus Christ, God in flesh, the Great High Priest who, in every sense of the word, “*became us*” (Hebrews 7:26).

He did not descend to earth in a glorious, supernatural form in fashion as an angel, retaining His immortality. Such a manifestation would never have accomplished the Divine purposes for which He was sent. An Advent of this nature could not have addressed the great problem of death – the curse of which lay heavy upon His chosen people, “*who, through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage*” (Hebrews 2:15). It was necessary that He be rendered capable of death, and subject to mortality. To this ultimate length He humbled Himself. “*Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that*

*had the power of death, that is, the devil; For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham* (Hebrews 2:14,16). Even in this most dreadful aspect of mortality it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren. And for their sakes He bore it.

Thirdly, it was a **fitting** way, and one worthy of God. In no way was the Incarnation detrimental to His glory, nor did it impair His Divine perfections, but rather magnified them. He took on the similitude and likeness of His brethren, and yet remained “*holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners*”. Having accomplished the great work which was given Him to do, He returned in human form to Heaven itself, and forever keeps a glorified body there. “*He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things*” (Ephesians 4:10), “*...we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour*” (Hebrews 2:9). In the Last Day of resurrection, the saints will arise in glorified bodies and come into the presence of the Living God, and an innumerable company of angels; but will not be ashamed amidst that great concourse of sinless spirit beings. For there upon the throne will be ‘one like unto the Son of Man’, the Lord Himself, whom it behoved to be “*made like unto His brethren*”.

“Where high the heavenly temple stands,  
The House of God, not made with hands;  
A great High Priest our nature wears,  
The Guardian of mankind appears.”

In that Day He will be seen to be like His people in shape and form; and they will appear like Him, made perfect in righteousness, holiness and sanctity. Then will their fraternal union with Christ be fully attested and proved: “*For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren*” (Hebrews 2:11).

## *Part 2*

# *The Believer's Likeness to Christ*

The wonderful doctrine of Christ becoming like those whom He came to save, is accompanied by another teaching, of equal importance. Namely, that His people are made **like Him**. This is expressed in the Roman epistle: “*For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren*” (Romans 8:29). The title and condition of ‘brotherhood’ described in Hebrews 2:11 is founded upon these two principles: firstly, that Christ was “*made in the likeness of men*”, and secondly that the elect are conformed to the likeness of Christ. How is this similarity to exist in practice, and what is the Christian’s conscious experience of it?

By nature, all humanity is as far removed from God and godliness as it is possible to be. The difference is too vast for language or thought to rightly comprehend. There is a great gulf fixed between the two extremes which man can never overcome by his own efforts or devices; and such was the original state of every believer, in an earlier time. “...*We all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others*” (Ephesians 2:3). How could the ‘children of wrath’ and disobedience ever hope to resemble the Son of God? The lineage and pedigree is wrong! How could those who are ‘of that Wicked One’ and belong to the ‘seed of the serpent’ (cf 1 John 3:12, John 8:44) ever contrive to emulate a Heavenly Father? It is a physical impossibility. There is only one conceivable way – a **second birth** is required, to break the former ties, and establish a new family relationship: “*ye must be born again*” (John 3:7).

This is the beginning of that process which transforms saved sinners into the likeness of their Lord. They are thus translated from the kingdom of darkness, into the marvellous light of the family of God. They cease to be the progeny of destruction, and are instead invested as heirs of promise. In this respect, they resemble Christ: “*if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ*” (Romans 8:17); in this sense, it may truly be said: “*now are we the sons of God*” (1 John 3:2); for this reason, the Lord Jesus teaches His people in every age to pray, like Him, “*Our Father, which art in heaven*”.

With privilege comes responsibility; and the great benefit of membership in the family of God has many practical implications. Christ says of His people: “*the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world*” (John 17:16). The believer, conscious of his heavenly citizenship, should cultivate the same spirit of unworldliness and separation that characterised the Lord; boldly declaring by word and deed “*My kingdom is not of this world*” (John 18:36). This stand will inevitably incur the enmity of the masses, ostracism and isolation in due measure, but let the saints go on, undaunted, for this is **likeness to Christ**: “*Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach*” (Hebrews 13:13). To endure such trials is to experience a little of what the Scripture calls, “*the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death*” (Philippians 3:10).

The Gospel record affords an insight into the life of the Lord Jesus, to which His people do well to take heed, “*because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps*” (1 Peter 2:21). Many details of His earthly existence are included in Holy Writ as a pattern to be followed. As He Himself declared: “*I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you*” (John 13:15). This pertains to personal sanctification – the continual work and aim of every believer. This aspect of

resembling Christ is not an instantaneous transformation, but a lifelong labour, pursuing after Him, and striving for ever greater similarity. And as more knowledge of Christ is obtained, so likeness to Him should increase: “*ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him*” (Colossians 3:9-10). The hymnwriter prays:

“Give us Thy meek, Thy lowly mind,  
We fain would like Thee be;  
And all our rest and pleasure find  
In learning, Lord, of Thee.”

The life of the Saviour culminated in His death; a death unique in its spiritual significance and magnitude of suffering; a death which He alone could accomplish. Can there possibly be any element of ‘example’ contained here? The Scriptures answer ‘yes’: “*Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him*” (Romans 6:6-8). The saints are not called to die in the manner in which their Lord died – indeed, it could not be done – but they are called to **mortification**.

The old nature, with its lusts, uncleanness and iniquity, is to be slain, whenever it seeks to assert itself. The former, sinful way of living is to be remorselessly ‘put to death’, without mercy. This is the painful and ongoing warfare between the ‘flesh’ and the ‘spirit’, which persists throughout the Christian’s natural life (cf Romans 7:18-24). Hereby is further likeness to Christ attained, as Paul could testify: “*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me*” (Galatians 2:20).

From the cross, the Lord's body was conveyed to the tomb, where He lay buried three days. Even in this solemn event, parallels are found for the believer; the process being symbolically undertaken in the ordinance of Believer's Baptism: "*Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death*" (Romans 6:3-4). The act of immersion in the waters of baptism is Divinely given that the obedient Christian may thereby be more closely united and identified with their Lord's death and burial.

The theme of Romans 6 continues: "*For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection*" (v.5). It is in the aspect of Resurrection that likeness to Christ becomes especially precious. Those who have been saved by grace thereafter walk in newness of life, and are new creatures; as distinct from their former selves as "*those that are alive from the dead*" (v.13). But the doctrine has further and deeper implications. Just as Christ experienced a bodily resurrection from the grave, so His people too will be physically raised in the Last Day. The wonder and power which attended that first Resurrection morning will be the collective experience of every believer, when, like Christ, and in Christ they are made alive, and their bodies ultimately raised in incorruption and immortality.

From the empty tomb, the Lord at length ascended to the inexpressible glories of Heaven, there to be received as the victorious Lamb, and King of Glory; to be forever honoured and praised for salvation's finished work. The wonders of that realm, and the holiest place of God's abode defy description, and of these things 'we cannot now speak particularly'. Yet a question remains. In every previous aspect of Christ's life and work, some point of connection has been found in which the saints can share. In this final stage of 'glorification', is it possible that the Lord's people might achieve a 'likeness to Him'? Would it be presumption to

suggest it? No – for the Word of God declares, “*as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly*” (1 Corinthians 15:49), and in another place, “*For if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him*” (2 Timothy 2:12).

In the final analysis, the similarity between the Lord and His people will be entire. This is the great consummation and completion to which all former semblances merely point. In this life, to give a feeble pale reflection; in the life to come, to be a true likeness. In this world, a faint setting-forth of the Saviour; in the next world, to bear His form expressly. Now, a “*beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord*”; then, being “*changed into the same image, from glory to glory*” (2 Corinthians 3:18). “*Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is*” (1 John 3:2). Reflecting upon this phenomenal doctrine, the hymnwriter asks, almost incredulously:

And is it so? I shall be like Thy Son?  
Is this the grace which He for me has won?  
Father of glory, thought beyond all thought,  
In glory, to His own blest likeness brought.

Scripture answers in the affirmative. Nor is this the end. Upon arrival in Glory, the benefits and blessing of kinship with Christ have only just begun – and have an eternity still to be enjoyed. The saints, inseparably united to their Lord, will share with Him forever all the fullness of Heaven’s joy. For God, the Divine instigator of this union, brings it to perfection. He “*hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus*” (Ephesians 2:6-7).

R. J. Steward

## NOW ARE WE THE SONS OF GOD

When may it be said, “*Now are we the Sons of God*”? At all times and under all circumstances; in trials, in difficulties, in disappointments, in losses, in crosses, in adversities, in temptations, in persecutions, “*now are we the Sons of God*”...Nothing can alter this love. “*Though we believe not, He abideth faithful.*” “*He cannot deny Himself*”; but were He to deny the objects of His love, He would deny Himself; for they are one with Him, ‘Bone of His bone, and flesh of His flesh’. “*Now are we the Sons of God*”: it was **now** when the apostle wrote his epistle, it was **now** in eternity past, and it will be **now** in eternity to come. “*For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*”

“*It doth not yet appear what we shall be.*” Not even in our greatest manifestations; they are far short of what we shall be. Even the three on the Mount of Transfiguration must have owned it did not then appear what they shall be. Nor Paul, when caught up to the third heavens, though he heard things he could not utter, and he knew not whether in the body or not; it did not then appear what he shall be. But we **shall** know, for body and soul will be filled with immortal glory. “*We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is*”; and not one more happy than another... When Christ shall appear, the whole Church will be like Him; and how can they be like Him if they differ in glory? All shall come to the full stature of a man in Christ; one Bridegroom and one bride; one Lamb, and one Lamb’s wife. And not only shall all who are there be like their Head, but **all** the members shall be there; for as the poet says,

“He’ll not live in glory, and leave her behind”

“*Because I live*”, says He, “ye **shall** live also”. O what a blessed ‘**shall**’! “*Father, I will that they also whom Thou gavest Me be with Me where I am*”; and will the Father frustrate His Son’s will? O no!

“Whom once He loves He never leaves, But loves them to the end.”

Now, these are great truths; but what good can they do us if we have them only in our heads? We must have the Spirit to bear witness to our spirits that we are interested in them, before they can bring any consolation to us; and when this is the case, Satan himself cannot argue us out of them.

William Gadsby (1827)

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## WE SHALL BE LIKE HIM

“*We shall be like Him*”! With all the affections of children, and all their hopes, with all the schooling of God, with all the judgment of self, with all the true-hearted prayer that a saint pours out for himself, and for God’s dear people – how will the groans, nevertheless, still come from the heart – ‘So little attained, so little of power!’ Never mind; go on climbing up the hill. We **shall be** like Him. We shall yet have no taste for anything that He has no taste for, no mind for that save which He has a mind. Like Christ! Clothed with immortality, incorruptibility and glory! And not only like Him outside, even in a scene where all can shine without disturbance, but like Him all within, from the quickened soul, upwards and outwards. All in harmony with Christ! What a word to have in one’s heart, **I shall be** like Him! His name written on my forehead; I clothed upon with His likeness, for I shall see Him as He is.

Now we see through a glass darkly, and yet, if in any measure we see, we are moulded into the same image; but then face to face. Go onward. Onward in darkness? No, still in light, because it is onward to Christ. While the heart is occupied with Him, each step leads it nearer. Every spot that is unlike Christ becomes odious. We purify ourselves, even as He is pure.

Anon. *The Bible Herald* 1878

# Editorial

There are numerous verses of Scripture which exhort Christians to “*love one another*” (cf John 15:12,17; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; 1 Peter 1:22). Nowhere is this doctrine more pronounced than in John’s First Epistle, where this affection is described as both evidential of salvation, “*We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren*” (1 John 3:14), and a measure of love towards God: “*this commandment have we from Him, That he who loveth God love his brother also*” (1 John 4:21). It is clear that a genuine heartfelt concern for one’s fellow saints is a vital expression of Christian Faith. Truly is it said: “*Let brotherly love continue*” (Hebrews 13:1).

The modern-day Church is keen to lay the emphasis on ‘love’, and seeks to fulfil this Biblical instruction with all manner of ecumenical enterprises. Local congregations are encouraged to cooperate and organise joint events; Christians of various types and persuasions are told to lay aside their differences and get along together; conferences, seminaries and associations of many kinds are established upon very broad terms, to attract audiences from across disparate denominations. Some of these meetings even aspire to the name of ‘Fraternal’, imagining that they represent a true ‘brotherhood’, and thus fulfil the injunction to ‘brotherly love’.

The adjective ‘brotherly’ demands closer examination. What defines a ‘brother’ (or indeed, a ‘sister’) spiritually speaking? Is it merely someone else who professes faith? Can every other claimant to Christianity be called by this endearing epithet? Evidently not – there is more to a ‘brother’ than the name alone – for Paul warns against “*false brethren*” who creep in undetected (Galatians 2:4); of so-called ‘brothers’ who walk disorderly (cf 2 Thessalonians 3:6), and whose behaviour is totally at variance with

their alleged faith (cf 1 Corinthians 5:11). The company of such individuals is to be eschewed – they are pretenders to the title.

The primary feature whereby a genuine ‘brother’ may be identified is **family resemblance**. Those who are natural brothers may have much in common: similarities of appearance, voice and manner; shared memories, experiences and background; their affinity is due to years of growth and development together. Let the spiritual parallels be drawn. A real ‘brother in the Lord’ is one who shows the same unmistakeable marks of grace and godliness; one who is united in faith and doctrine; one who walks in the same strait and narrow way, and speaks in the same spiritual language of its joys and sorrows. True brethren will give evidence to the same spiritual lineage and new birth, and ultimately show that same **likeness to Christ** which is ever the token of family membership.

There can be no ‘brotherly love’ in the absence of ‘family resemblance’. It is futile to attempt fellowship with those whose faith is spurious, whose doctrine is aberrant, or whose desire for Christlikeness is lacking – because they cannot be ‘brethren’ in the Biblical sense of the word. The current multitude of inter-Church activities are, in the main, an exercise in convenience and compromise, totally devoid of the Biblical fraternity to which they vainly aspire.

Communion with fellow Christians is a delightful experience, and much to be desired. How is it to be properly achieved? Closer fellowship with other believers is only accomplished by closer conformity to Christ Jesus. For if the saints collectively became more like their Lord, then would they grow more like one another, and thus enjoy that kinship of which the New Testament speaks! Let this be the aim and objective, until “*we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*” (Ephesians 4:13).