

THE
CHRIST
OF THE
40 DAYS

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A. B. SIMPSON



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HOUSE

Publisher's note: This new edition from Whitaker House has been updated for the modern reader. Some words, expressions, and sentence structure have been revised for clarity and readability. Although the more modern Bible translations quoted in this edition were not available to the author, the Bible versions used were carefully selected in order to make the language of the entire text readily understandable while maintaining the author's original premises and message.

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Note: The bold emphasis in the Scripture quotations is the author's.

THE CHRIST OF THE 40 DAYS: **Experiencing the Risen, Triumphant Lord**

ISBN: 978-1-62911-018-9
eBook ISBN: 978-1-62911-042-4
Printed in the United States of America
© 2014 by Whitaker House

Whitaker House
1030 Hunt Valley Circle
New Kensington, PA 15068
www.whitakerhouse.com

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data (Pending)

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CONTENTS

1. Overview	7
2. The First Week: Three Meetings	21
3. The Second Week: The Unbelieving Disciple	37
4. The Lord's Message to the Unbelieving Church	53
5. The Third Week: The Scene on the Shores of Tiberias	67
6. The Great Commission	79
7. The Last Meeting	103
8. The Ascension	121
About the Author	139

I

OVERVIEW

“He showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.”

—Acts 1:3

Easter morning is the beginning of a unique and most tenderly interesting portion of our blessed Savior’s life. It is the transition period between His earthly ministry and His heavenly exaltation. Like the Indian summer of the year, there is a tender veil of loveliness and mystery about it that links it with both worlds and makes it an especially appropriate pattern for life “*hid with Christ in God*” (Colossians 3:3), in which we may walk with Him all our days, with our heads in heaven while our feet still tread the earth below. May the Holy Spirit vividly reveal to us such glimpses of this blessed life as will enable us to reproduce it in

our own experience and walk with Him with a new sense of His abiding presence and glorious reality!

1. The Christ of the Forty Days Is a Living Christ

This glad resurrection morning dispels from the religion of Jesus all the shadows of the sepulcher and all the morbid atmosphere of sorrow, depression, and death. The Christ of true Christianity is not a bleeding, thorn-crowned “*Ecce Homo*”¹ but a glad and radiant face, bright as the springtide morning and radiant with immortal life. His message is: “*I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore*” (Revelation 1:18).

Oh, may this day impress upon our hearts the reality of a risen and living Christ, until He is more actual to us than any other personality, and we know what it means not only to be “*reconciled to God by the death of his Son*” but “*much more [to be] saved by his life*” (Romans 5:10)!

2. The Christ of the Forty Days Is a Victorious Christ

What a picture of easy and uttermost triumph is that resurrection scene! Satan had done his worst, and men had done their best, to hold the Captive in the tomb. But without an effort, the Mighty Sleeper calmly rose before the Easter dawn, deliberately laying off the grave clothes, folding the napkin, and putting all in place as naturally as any of us got dressed this morning. Then, He passed through that colossal stone that closed His tomb without even rolling it aside or breaking the seal. And, before the guards could know that He had risen, He was standing calmly in the garden, talking with Mary as

1. Latin for “Behold the man.” (See John 19:5.)

though nothing had happened. Perhaps the most overwhelming impression we have received from all the incidents of His resurrection is the infinite facility with which He put His feet on every foe and rose above every obstacle.

We see the same victorious power expressed in the attitude of the angel who followed Him and who, with a single touch, rolled away the stone from the sepulcher, coolly sat down upon it, and then looked into the faces of the keepers till they grew pale with terror and fled in horror and dismay, without a struggle.

Our risen Christ is still the Mighty Victor over all His foes and ours. If we could see Him now, we would behold Him sitting on His Father's throne, undismayed by all the powers of darkness and "*from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool*" (Hebrews 10:13). Oh, how it cheers our timid hearts to behold our glorious and victorious Captain and to hear Him say of every adversary and over every difficulty, "I have overcome for you." May God help us to see the Captain as Joshua beheld Him, and before Him the walls of every Jericho will fall and the legions of every opposing force will melt away!

3. The Christ of the Forty Days Is a Simple Christ

How natural, how easy, how simple His manifestations were through those blessed forty days! How quietly He dropped down among the disciples, unheralded, unassuming, unattended by angelic guards, and sometimes undistinguished from them in His simple presence! Look at Him as He meets with Mary in that first morning interview, standing like an ordinary stranger in the garden and speaking to her in easy conversation, "*Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?*" (John 20:15). And then, when the moment for recognition comes, speaking to her heart

in the one simple word of personal and unutterable love that disarmed all her amazement and fear and brought back all the old recollections and affections of her throbbing heart!

See Him again on the way to Emmaus. How naturally He drops in upon the little company as they walk. How unaffectedly He talks with them. How easily He turns the conversation to heavenly themes, and how free from strain His every attitude and word! All they are conscious of is a strange burning in their hearts and a kindling warmth of love. At length they constrain Him, and He allows Himself to be pressed to enter in. He sits down at their table and eats bread as if He had been another disciple like themselves. And only when He vanishes quietly from their sight do they realize, "It is the Lord!"

And yet again on the shores of Tiberias,² how exquisite is His approach! How natural His greeting; how easy the mighty miracle of the catch of fish; how calm and unaffected the meeting as they reach the shore; how simple the breakfast in which He Himself takes part. And, how exquisite the interview with Simon Peter, concerning which no words can ever express His delicacy of discrimination and tenderness!

Oh, what a picture of that Blessed One who still lives to be our constant Visitor, our ceaseless Companion and Friend—to meet us like Mary in our hours of sorrow; and to walk with us, as with His disciples, often unrecognized at first; or to greet us in the cold, sad morning, after our long hours of waiting and toil and failure, with His marvelous deliverance and still more gracious words of love and instruction. He is so near that not even our nearest friends can come so close! He is so simple that His messages come as the intuition of our own hearts. And yet He is the Wonderful Counselor and the Mighty God for all our perplexities and all our hard places. Oh, blessed Christ of the Forty

2. The Sea of Galilee.

Days, help us to walk with You with a faith more simple and a love more childlike!

4. The Christ of the Forty Days Is a Mighty Christ

It is hard for us to realize the Presence that comes with such gentle footsteps and undemonstrative simplicity. Yet behind that gentle form and those noiseless steps is the Omnipotence who could say, *“All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth”* (Matthew 28:18).

All power is His in heaven. He is the Lamb in the midst of the throne who holds in His hand the seven seals and unrolls the scroll of destiny and providence for all worlds, beings, and events. All the mighty acts of God recorded in the Old Testament were but manifestations of His power. All the mighty movements that began with His ascension are the workings of His hands. All the movements of divine providence are subject to His command. All the mighty angels of heaven’s myriad hosts are subject to His bidding. All the powers of hell tremble at His name! All the promises of God are fulfilled with His endorsement. All the laws of nature are subject to His mandates.

And all power on earth is subordinate to His power. No wind can blow without His permission, no disease can strike except as He allows. No human hand can hurt us while He shields us with His presence. The circumstances of our lives, the enemies of our souls, and the infirmities of our bodies are subject to His word. Moreover, the very thrones of earth are subordinate to His authority. He can make a Cyrus send back the tribes of Israel by a national decree. He can make a Constantine behold the flaming cross upon the sky and become a follower of the heavenly standard. He can open nations and kingdoms to the gospel, and

so He bids us to go forth and disciple all the nations because of His almighty power on our behalf!

All power on earth is subordinate to Jesus' power.

How mighty the power of the resurrection! It surmounted the power of death and the grave; it passed through the solid stone; it defied the stamp of the Roman government and the sentinels of the Roman army. It could pass through the closed doors without rending them asunder. It could bring the miraculous catch of fish to the apostle's net with a single word of command. It could rise without an effort in the chariot of His ascension. It could anoint those weak and timid men with the power that shook the world and laid the foundations of the church.

Oh, that our eyes were but opened so that we might behold the riches of the glory of our inheritance and the exceeding greatness of His power that was worked in Christ when God raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church, which is His body. (See Ephesians 1:18–23.) Why is it that we do not receive and realize more of this almighty Christ? Alas, it is because we cannot understand or stand the fullness of His power! God is ready to work through us the triumphs of His omnipotence, but we must be fit vessels, open to His touch and able to stand His power. The ordinance that has to bear a mighty charge of powder must be heavy enough to stand the charge without explosion. And so, the heart that is to know the power of Him who “*is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think*” (Ephesians 3:20), must be “*strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner*

man" (Ephesians 3:16), so that Christ may dwell in that heart by faith. (See Ephesians 3:17.) To think of what Christ is ready and willing to do in us and for us would frighten some of us into apoplexy, and actually to realize it would snap the frail thread of life itself. Christ's heart is bursting with resources that the world needs, and that He is ready to use, if only He could find vessels ready and willing to use them.

Oh, for the courage to see the power that He is waiting to place at the service of all who are consecrated enough to use it for His glory and close enough to receive the heavenly baptism! He has for us the power of the Holy Spirit, the power of prayer, the power that will conquer circumstances and control all events for His will, and the power that will make us the trophies of His grace and the monuments of His indwelling presence and victory.

We will find this power as we go forth to use it according to His own commission, "*Go ye therefore, and teach [disciple] all nations*" (Matthew 28:19). Nothing but a work as wide as the world can ever make room for the power that Christ is waiting to bestow.

5. The Christ of the Forty Days Is a Loving Christ

How unavailing all His power would be if we were not sure that it is available for us, and that His heart loves us as tenderly as His mighty hand can help us. How tender and loving is the Christ of the Forty Days! See Him in the garden as He speaks to Mary with tender sympathy, "*Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?*" (John 20:15), and then calls her by her name in tones that must have expressed more than words can tell. What mourner can doubt henceforth His sympathy and love? What heart can hesitate to accept His friendship, which still speaks to

each of us with as direct and personal a call, and gives to each a name of special and affectionate regard?

Or look at him again as He meets with Thomas, the doubting one, the willful disciple who petulantly demanded that the Lord should give him evidence that He had given to none other, and that no human heart had a right imperiously to claim. But how tenderly the Lord concedes even his demand, until Thomas is ashamed to accept it. More amazed at his Lord's magnanimity and omniscience than at the evidence of His wounds, he cries, "*My Lord and my God*" (John 20:28). One who is harassed by doubts and difficulties does not need to fear again to bring them to the presence of Him who, with such condescending love, is ready to meet them all and to make our hearts know, by the deeper evidence of His own great love and the revealing of Himself, that He is indeed the Son of God.

And look at His conversation with Simon Peter! No backslider ever needs to doubt again the Savior's forgiving love, or fear to come and know that he will be welcomed to a nearer place in His heart and a higher service in His kingdom if only he can say, as Simon said, "*Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee*" (John 21:17).

So tender, so forgiving, so full of love He comes to us to dry our tears, to satisfy our doubts, to forgive our failures, to restore our souls, and then to use us for a higher service, because we have learned through our own infirmities the depths of His great love. The secret to walking closely with Christ and working successfully for Him is to fully realize that we are His beloved.

Let us but feel that He has set His heart upon us; that He is watching us from those heavens with the same tender interest that He felt for Simon and Mary; that He is working out the

mystery of our lives with the same solicitude and fondness; that He is following us day by day like a mother follows her baby in his first attempt to walk alone; that He has set His love upon us; and, in spite of ourselves, is working out for us His highest will and blessing, as far as we will let Him. Then, nothing can discourage us. Our hearts will glow with responsive love. Our faith will spring to meet His mighty promises. And our sacrifices will become the very luxuries of love for One so dear. This was the secret of John's spirit. "*We have known and believed the love that God hath to us*" (1 John 4:16). And the heart that has fully learned this has found the secret of unbounded faith and enthusiastic service.

6. The Christ of the Forty Days Is a Physical Christ

He who came forth alive from Joseph of Arimethea's tomb came forth in the flesh, with a material body and the same form that He had laid down in death and the grave. Jesus made this point most emphatic in His meeting with His disciples after His resurrection. He wanted them to be thoroughly assured that there was no illusion about His body. "*Handle me, and see*" were His emphatic words, "*for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have*" (Luke 24:39).

Indeed, His spiritual consciousness had not died; it was His body alone that tasted death, and it was His body therefore that was raised from death. The resurrection of Christ, then, is a physical fact, and the physical meaning of the resurrection must be of surpassing importance. It means no less than this: that He has come forth to be the physical life of His people now, and, in a little while, the Fountain of their immortality and the Head of their resurrection bodies.

What a source of strength and inspiration it is for us to know that our blessed Lord still has the same physical organization that we possess and is willing and able to share with these mortal frames His infinite and quickening life! He is our living Bread, and, as He lived by the Father, so we may live by Him. Not only is He the source of health and strength to our material life, but He cares for the needs of the body.

His disciples were hungry and cold with their fruitless fishing that Galilean morning, and He saw their need and tenderly asked them, “*Children, have ye any meat?*” (John 21:5). And then, filling their empty nets and spreading the table on the shore, He said, “*Come and dine*” (John 21:12). Thus, He still thinks of the poor and the struggling, the hungry and the helpless. He stands beside us in our need, ready and able by a word to provide immediate and abundant supply.

*Jesus is our living Bread. As He lived by the Father,
so we may live by Him.*

Are we today in any place of need? The Christ of the Forty Days is nearer than we think, able to be “*touched with the feeling of our infirmities*” (Hebrews 4:15) and ready to give us the greatest help in time of need. Like the fishers of yonder sea, our empty nets can be filled at His bidding. The perplexed workman can be directed to the very thing to do; the wretched failure can be altogether corrected.

There is no need that He cannot supply, no counsel that He is not able to give, no regions where His power does not penetrate, no disciple that He does not love to help in every time of need. Oh, let us trust Him more with all our circumstances and

sorrows, and our utmost need will only prove even more the infinite resources of His love and grace.

7. The Christ of the Forty Days Is Ever Present

The Christ of the Forty Days is not a transient vision that has passed away forever but rather the Christ of all the ages. Standing at the close of those blessed days midway between earth and heaven, we hear Him say, “Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20 NKJV). That blessed present tense has bridged the past and the present and has prolonged those heavenly days after the resurrection through all the days since then. It is not “I will be,” as one who has to go away and come back again but “I am,” as a presence that is never to be withdrawn.

Jesus says, in effect, “It is true that I am unseen, but I am to remain among you as real in My absence as I am now in My presence.” For, in the spiritual world, distance and time are eliminated. And, just as the telescope can bring the distant object near to the eye, and the telephone can present the voice hundreds of miles away to the listening and attentive ear, so there is a spiritual mechanism that can make Christ as immediate to our hearts as if He were visibly by our side. If we had but another sense, all heavenly beings and realities would be directly present to our perception.

The promise of this beautiful passage is not fulfilled only in the presence of Christ in the heart of the believer, which is a literal and glorious truth, but it is a presence *with us*. It is more than the spiritual consciousness of the Lord’s indwelling. It is His direct personality and constant companionship with our entire life, and His omnipotent cooperation in all our needs. It is the

presence of One who has all power in heaven and in earth and whose presence means the defeat of every adversary, the solution of every difficulty, the supply of every need.

In these days, it does seem as though we could almost see Him moving in the midst of His people, here and there, in His mighty working—on the mission field with the lone worker; in the midst of dangers and foes; in the busy streets of the crowded city; in the mingled incidents of business life; in the whirl and confusion of our intense life today; in every department of human society—touching with His hands all the chords of influence and power, moving the wheels of providence, and working out His purpose for His people and the redemption of the world.

Oh, once more, that we might see Him as Joshua saw the Captain when he entered Canaan and camped around Jericho; as Stephen saw Him when he faced the crowd of wolfish foes that thirsted for His blood; as Paul saw Him amid the tempests of the Adriatic and the lions of the Colosseum; as John saw Him walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, holding in His hand the seven stars, standing in the midst of God's throne, and then standing before the throne with all the seals of human destiny in His own right hand! Then, indeed, no trial could discourage us, no foe intimidate us, no fear dismay us, no work overwhelm us; for above every voice of peril or of hostile power, we would hear His gentle whisper, "*Lo, I am with you always* [*all the days* AMP], *even to the end of the age*" (Matthew 28:20 NKJV).

It is correctly translated "*all the days*," not "*always*." He comes to us each day with a new blessing. Every morning, day by day, He walks with us, with a love that never tires and a blessing that never grows old. He is with us "*all the days*"; it is a ceaseless abiding. There is no day so dark, so commonplace, so uninteresting, that you will not find Him there. Often, no doubt, He is

unrecognized, as He was on the way to Emmaus, until you realize how your heart has been warmed, your love stirred, and your Bible so strangely vivified that every promise seems to speak to you with heavenly reality and power. It was the Lord!

May God grant that His living presence may henceforth be made more real to us all. And whether we have the consciousness and evidence, as Jesus' disciples had a few glorious times in those forty days, or whether we go forth into the coming days as they did most of the time, to walk by simple faith and in simple duty, let us know, at least, that the fact is true forevermore that *He is with us*, a Presence unseen but real, and ready at any moment if we should need Him to manifest Himself for our relief.

There is a beautiful story about the mother of an English schoolboy. When he was a lad, she sent him to a boarding school some distance from her home, where the rules of the school permitted her to visit him only once a fortnight. But it was more than this mother's heart could stand, and so, completely unknown to her boy or his teachers, she rented a little attic overlooking the school. She would often sit in that upper room with her eyes on her darling boy as he played in the yard below or studied in the schoolroom. He could not see her, nor did he dream that she was there, but if he had cried or called her name, or needed her for a moment, he was within her reach.

This is a little parable of the sleepless love and ceaseless oversight that our Savior exercises toward His beloved ones. For He has His eye upon us by day and by night; and, although we do not see His face and hands and form as He moves through our pathway, dissipating our foes and clearing our way, yet He is there, always there “[*all the days*” AMP], *even unto the end*” (Matthew 28:20). Let us believe His promise, let us assume the reality of His presence, let us recognize Him as always near, let us speak to Him as One always by our side, and He will always answer

us, either by the whispers of His love or by the workings of His hand.

Thus we will never be alone; thus we will never be defenseless; thus we will never be defeated; thus we never need to fear. And even if the lonely vale itself opens to us, it will be but the opening vista of a larger vision and a closer and nearer Presence, as we find 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*” (Romans 8:38–39).