

Reflections

It can be very relaxing to sit and look at the reflections in a lake or river. We can see ourselves or our surroundings as in a mirror, but upside down. Sometimes the image is a perfect copy of the original, more often it is flawed by ripples or movement in the water. Maybe the definition is less clear or we cannot see the whole image, but there is a definite resemblance. We can recognise the picture and its characteristics.



This is an idea used in the Bible to explain what God is looking for in men and women. He wants to look at people and see in them a reflection of Himself, that is, His character. Speaking about the future role of Jesus in getting people ready to live in God's kingdom, one prophet used this description:

He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; he will purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the LORD an offering in righteousness (Malachi 3:3).

In the times of the Bible, a silver refiner had a very specific way of purifying the precious metal. The unrefined silver was melted down to liquid form, when all the impurities (or dross) would float to the top. The refiner would then scrape off the waste and continue to do this until the silver was pure. How could he know that it was pure? Because at that point he could see his reflection clearly in the molten silver.

The Closest Replica

The Lord Jesus Christ is the most perfect reflection of God's character there has ever been. He never sinned (disobeyed God), even though he could have done, and he always thought and did as God asked. The writer to the Hebrews described Jesus in these magnificent terms:

The brightness of His [God's] glory and the express image of His person (Hebrews 1:3).

This is why God could say:

You are My beloved Son; in you I am well pleased (Luke 3:22).

Imperfect, but Pleasing

Sadly, no one measures up to this perfect standard. The good news is that God knows that the image will not be perfect, because people are not perfect; they get things wrong and don't always match up to His standards, or even the standards they set for themselves.

One of the Bible characters who pleased God the most was King David. He lived during Old Testament times, and is described by God like this:

The LORD has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be commander over His people (1 Samuel 13:14).

David pleased God because his heart was like a copy of God's own. His thoughts, desires and plans were in tune with those of the Lord God. God made promises to David and assured him that he would be raised from the dead to be part of the future Kingdom.

Was David sinless? In a word, no. He was faithless on a few occasions. He committed adultery and murder. Yet God loved him because his intent was right, and he tried with all his heart and strength to do the right things. When he did sin, he admitted it and asked God to forgive him.

The same was true of other great men and women who pleased God, such as Abraham, Sarah and Moses. You can read more about them and many more in Hebrews chapter 11.

Becoming a Reflection

What was true for them is true for us. We need to try to reflect God's character in our own lives. This may seem daunting; after all He is the Almighty Creator of heaven and earth, whilst we are imperfect mortals.

But He has given us something to aim for, an image to copy. His character is described in these terms:

The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth (Exodus 34:6).

That may still seem too challenging for us; after all, He is God. However, in Jesus we have the example of a person who lived as we do, who could also fail, but did not. And he is there as an example for us.

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth... For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared Him (John 1:14, 17-18).

Jesus is not God, but he is the closest image we have of his Father. The more we learn about Jesus, the better we get to know God. The better we follow his example, the better reflection our lives will be of God's character.

If we do so, then we can have a special relationship with God and share the promise to be in His Kingdom. Then our understanding of Him will be complete, and our reflection perfect.

For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known (1 Corinthians 13:12).

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