

In His Likeness

“And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly”

1 Corinthians 15:49

One of the amazing things to me when perusing family portraits is the clear resemblance that children have to their parents. In many cases, it can be clearly seen that “the apple has not fallen far from the tree.” It is even more amazing when this resemblance skips over a generation and is apparent between grandparents and grandchildren. It truly is remarkable! Once, when looking at an early picture of my grandmother (circa 1920), I actually thought I was looking at a photo of my younger sister when she was a young girl wearing an out-of-fashion dress. I was so convinced it was her that I had to ask other family members for clarification! With our finite knowledge of the intricacies of the human body, it underscores the truth of God’s Word and the accuracy of David’s testimony: *“For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother’s womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.” (Psa. 139:13-14 – NKJV).*

Bearing His Image

In writing to the church at Corinth, Paul takes up a detailed explanation of the resurrection of the believer. In chapter 15, he outlines through the Spirit the certainty, significance, manner, meaning, and mystery of the resurrection. As the portion crescendos, he makes this incredible statement: *“And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly” (1 Cor. 14:49).* Incredible indeed to think that one day we shall be like Him. Paul said the same thing to the Roman Christians when he declared: *“For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.”* The Word of God declares without question that we shall bear His likeness. The difference however between our earthly father and our heavenly Father is that in the spiritual realm it is progressive and takes time – a long time – and it will not be fully complete until we reach glory and receive our resurrection bodies. Paul was confident about it (Phil. 1:6), told the Philippians that they should be eagerly anticipating it (Phil. 3:20-21), and travailed over it when the process had been short-circuited in the lives of the Galatians (Gal. 4:19).

What is this future resemblance supposed to look like, anyway? Nothing in the Bible tells us exactly what it will be like. John gives us only a hint when he says that it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, only that when we shall see Him, *“we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is” (1 Jn. 3:2-3).* Whether that resembles His post resurrection body as He appeared to His disciples is hard to say, but a lot has been written by those guessing with sanctified imagination. It will be one of those “things” that we will understand “farther along” in the by and by.

Walking as He Walked

Until then however, we are to strive with His help to be like Him while we are walking in this world. We are to “walk as He walked” (1 Jn. 2:6) and demonstrate the same love and grace He exhibited. Disciples were first called Christians in Antioch (Acts 11:26), literally “Christ ones”, smaller living stones that come from the larger Living Stone, who are to resemble the One they came from, 1 Peter 2:4-5. We are also to bear fruit to the glory of the Father just as He bore fruit and did those things that were pleasing in His sight.

Buds, Blossoms and Bearing Fruit

In Number 17, we have a tremendous picture of this truth of the importance of “family” resemblance, after the rebellion of Korah and the concerted effort on his part and others to demean and undermine the authority of properly-appointed leadership (elders take note!). Moses was instructed by the Lord to take the rod or staff for each of the tribes of Israel and put them into the tabernacle of meeting. Interestingly, Aaron’s name was to be put in place of Levi’s name, (Num. 17:1-4). On the next day, when Moses went into the tabernacle, there was Aaron’s rod which was the only one which had sprouted, put forth buds, produced blossoms, and yielded ripe almonds. It was validation and the divine seal of approval that he was God’s choice for high priest and meant to silence the critics and anyone who feigned to think that they were the voice of authority and His mouthpiece. It is also a wonderful OT picture of our Lord Jesus who was in a sense like that rod, a dead branch that came back to life and bore fruit, a picture of first fruits and His glorious resurrection. In this, we too, are to be like our Lord Jesus, who are planted in the likeness of His resurrection in order to bear fruit - much fruit (Jn. 15:8) to the glory of the Father. For us, it is progressive, a process, (for some, a *real* long process) in which we first sprout, then bud, blossom, and bear fruit to varying degrees until at last we reach the finish line and are fully complete, our journey leading to full conformity to our Saviour (1 Cor. 1:30). It is at that time that it can be truly said: “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27). The work that His goodness began, the arm of His strength will complete and what He started, will be finished and we shall be with Him and like Him for all eternity.

In this issue, PT Tan reminds us of our Saviour’s glorious resurrection as witnessed by Mary Magdalene, the first person to whom He appeared, and often called the “apostle to the apostles.” Brother Keyser highlights the “Dangers of Disobedience” in his study of two OT kings, Rehoboam and Jereboam, while Paul Young helps us to ponder the “Greatness of Our God.” In our new column, “Foundations of the Faith”, Mark Swaim lays out for us the first of two parts of an orderly presentation on the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit, while Bob Brown explains the fruit of one man’s passionate service to establish a NT church in the heart of the Deep South. Tim McNeal rounds things out for us with His fine piece that describes the rejoicing that comes when a person is reconciled to the Lord. Enjoy and be encouraged – we serve a Risen Saviour!

Mark Kolchin

(Back Page Piece)

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

O Jesus Lord, who loved us like to Thee? Fruit of Thy work, with Thee, too, there to see
Thy glory, Lord, while endless ages roll, Thy saints the prize and travail of Thy soul.

Yet it must be, Thy love had not its rest Were Thy redeemed not with Thee fully blest;
That love that gives not as the world, but shares All it possesses with its loved co-heirs.

Nor we alone, Thy loved ones all, complete In glory round Thee there with joy shall meet,
All like Thee, for Thy glory like Thee, Lord, Object supreme of all, by all adored.