

Wings

*“Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles.”
Isaiah 40:31*



March 13, 2011

The Misunderstood Christ

The search for the real Jesus is obscured by a flood of misinformation. We can find out the truth about Jesus — if we really want to know it.

“When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, ‘Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?’ So they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’ He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter answered and said, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’” (Matt. 16:13-16).

Long before George Gallup or George Barna began polling Americans about their religious preferences, Jesus conducted His own little survey to determine what people thought about Him. The sampling base was not scientifically chosen, and the margin of error was undoubtedly quite large. But the responses He got reflected the wide diversity of opinion that existed among the populace: John the Baptist . . . Elijah . . . Jeremiah . . . one of the prophets . . . The speculations were all over the map. Actually, the disciples had skewed the data, because these answers covered only the favorable opinions. We know that others believed Jesus to be a con-

artist (Jn. 7:12), a demonic idiot (Jn. 10:20), or a servant of Satan (Matt. 9:34). His own family believed Him to be delusional (Mk. 3:21). Finally, of course, there were those who chose the “no opinion” option (Jn. 9:25).

How did the people of Jesus’ day arrive at such wildly varying opinions of who He was? As in every culture, there was a lot of apocryphal wishful thinking that projected onto Jesus vain hopes for national glory. People were desperate for heroes, and Jesus qualified. On the negative side, blind prejudice kept many people from seeing Jesus as anything other than a simple carpenter of humble background. He did not fit their pre-conceived notions of what the Messiah should be, so they had to find something wrong with Him—even if they had to invent it.

Whatever their opinion of Jesus, virtually everyone based their view of Jesus on superficial evidence. The brief glimpses that most people saw of His actual work and character were overwhelmed by the volume of rumors and tall tales that grew up around Him. For

the vast majority of people, the real Jesus was obscured by a blizzard of misinformation. It’s no wonder that so many of His contemporaries misunderstood who He was.

Today, the situation hasn’t changed much. A wide variety of opinion exists about who the historical Jesus was. Some think Him to be just one in a long series of prophets sent to different cultures at different times. Others see Jesus as nothing more than a moral reformer who never intended to start a new religion. A few will deny that He even existed. Two thousand years later, the speculations are still all over the map.

But in the midst of all the confusion surrounding Jesus’ identity, a few people have the courage to look past the noise surrounding the man and study the evidence for themselves. Like Simon Peter, these people will discover in Jesus a man unlike any other, a unique character who was, in every sense of the word, the Son of God. These people will find in Jesus a solid foundation they can build their lives upon. They understand Christ perfectly.

— David King