

# Wings

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



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## Broken Cisterns

The ongoing conflict between God's word and alternative philosophies can be summarized in a simple illustration involving the most basic human need: water.

“For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water” (Jer. 2:13).

In ancient Middle Eastern societies, water was an especially valuable commodity. The ideal water supply was a spring producing a continuous flow of fresh, clean, cool water (such as God provided the Israelites at Meribah, Ex. 17:1-7). If a spring was not available, the next best option was a hand-dug well (Isaac and his Philistine neighbors disputed over a series of these wells, Gen. 26). If neither option was available, the only remaining alternative was a network of cisterns to capture water during the rainy season.

Jeremiah used this common knowledge of water sources to illustrate the foolishness of his contemporaries. God had given the Jews a Law to guide their decision-making in life. They were not left to stumble around in the dark, trying to figure out things on their own. Instead, God's law was like a fountain of living water; all they had to do was show

up and drink. The principles they would learn in that simple exercise would lift them above the pagans around them, enriching their lives and their society.

But the Jews ignored God and His law, choosing instead to seek guidance from a variety of other sources: the idolatrous religions around them (v. 5, 28), false prophets (v. 8), or political alliances with their neighbors (v. 18). Serving God was too restrictive, too old-fashioned. They preferred to find their own way, without God's help. So instead of drinking from the fountain God provided, they turned their backs on it and set about to chisel their own cisterns.

But these alternate sources of wisdom proved to be of poor quality, cracked and broken, holding no water. The result: the Jews were spiritually dying of thirst, within plain sight of a fountain that could provide all their needs. “Idiocy” is too mild a word for what they were doing.

The folly of Jeremiah's countrymen is reflected in our own culture today. People in increasing numbers are rejecting God and His word, choosing instead

to put their trust in human philosophies or false religions. These substitute systems of thought are propped up by elaborate intellectual arguments that sound sophisticated, but they are untested and unproven. Our society is paying a steep price for this arrogance. Families are falling apart; integrity in politics and commerce is in short supply; industry and thrift are replaced by whining and indulgence. Our alternatives to God's word are proving to be embarrassing failures, yielding disastrous results. Yet any effort to introduce the Bible back into the conversation is met with derision. We have forsaken God for broken cisterns that hold no water.

Jeremiah's generation eventually learned the folly of their ways, but it took a military invasion and seventy years of exile to learn it. I fear that our society will have to experience a similar upheaval before we will learn the same lesson. In the meantime, all we can do is, like Jeremiah, keep on pleading with people to turn back to God, who patiently continues to offer living water to all who will drink it.

— David King