

Wings

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



November 4, 2012

Rebuking Jesus

The story of Simon Peter's rebuke of Jesus makes the apostle look pretty foolish. But we are no less foolish when we try to pick and choose which words of Jesus we want to honor.

“From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, ‘Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!’ But He turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men’” (Matt. 16:21-23).

This revelation of Jesus to His apostles regarding His coming death marked a turning point in His ministry. Prior to this time, His work involved big crowds and popular excitement, but from this point forward, the crowds were thinner and the opposition stronger. Jesus knew that He was turning a corner, with a dark and foreboding future before Him.

Simon Peter, in typical fashion, reacted to the announcement with arrogant disdain. He took Jesus aside (to avoid embarrassing the Master in front of the others—a noble gesture, no doubt), then proceeded to set Jesus

straight. He was the Son of God (see v. 16); this travesty would *never* happen to Him! What was He thinking by uttering such a pessimistic prediction?

Peter's rebuke of Jesus was totally out of place, of course, and Jesus quickly shut him down, charging him with being more concerned with the things of men than the things of God. Peter's intentions were pure, but his perspective on God's plan was pitifully small. He had not the slightest clue what God had set out to accomplish, nor of Jesus' role in that plan. His rebuke of Jesus, based largely on ignorance, was not a favor to Jesus, but a tool of Satan, and he deserved the smackdown he got.

The very idea of rebuking Jesus sounds so preposterous to us. After all, He is the Son of God, and we are His subjects. It is Jesus who issues the orders and rebukes us for our missteps, not the other way around. Who are we to try to set Jesus straight?

Yet that is exactly what many people today try to do. They claim to honor Jesus as their King, yet they dismiss His word with the same know-it-all cocki-

ness that Peter displayed. For example, Jesus' view of marriage as one man and one woman for life (Matt. 19:4-6) is clear and unambiguous. But many believers today seek to defend promiscuous divorce, polygamy, and even gay marriage as perfectly legitimate alternatives. They brush aside the words of Jesus as ill-informed and backward.

Or consider Jesus' command, “do not worry” about the material things of this life: food, clothing, etc. (Matt. 6:24-34). Despite that warning, many worry themselves sick over their material possessions. Jesus apparently didn't know what He was talking about.

They will never admit it, but these people are rebuking Jesus as surely as Peter did that day long ago. Like Peter, they have their own petty view of how the world ought to work, and will not hesitate to jettison anything in Jesus' teaching that does not conform to that perspective. They may think themselves religious, but their dismissive treatment of Jesus' words exposes the same attitude as Peter's: they are more concerned with the things of men than of God.

— David King