

Wings

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



June 25, 2017

Notes from a Pastor-Eating Crocodile

Sensational stories we read on the internet may catch our attention, but they aren't worth much if they aren't true—and may even be damaging to our faith.

“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits” (Matt. 7:15-16).



No doubt you've seen the news item recently about the Zimbabwe pastor who was eaten by three crocodiles while attempting to walk on water in front of his congregation. The horrified parishioners could only look on as the poor man of God was devoured by the hungry crocs. All they found afterward was his underwear and sandals. One of his deacons wept, “We still don't understand how this happened because he fasted and prayed the whole week.”

Now at this point, you probably expect me to launch into a lecture about the deadly consequences of false religion. How *really* believing in something doesn't make it true; how we should never follow a “man of God” just because he claims to be one; how the Bible is our only source of divine guidance, not latter-day carnival stunts; and so on and so on.

But I'm not going to do that here, for one simple reason: *This incident never happened.*

Do a little investigation online, and you'll find that the breathless reports about this tragedy all originated from a shadowy news source in Zimbabwe. Researchers have been unable to find anyone by the name of the deceased pastor, or the church he supposedly led. And the most telling evidence of all: there is *no* photographic record of the event (do you really think a pastor would stage a spectacle like this without a lot of cameras rolling?). In other words, it's just another piece of phoney click bait.

But this story does open up another line of study for our consideration. In our internet-saturated world, a lie will spread just as quickly—in fact, *more* quickly—than the truth. It's sad that it must be this way, but we should remain skeptical of much that we read on the internet. We should check and double-check our sources before forwarding shocking stories like this to others. Otherwise, we are contributing to the

spread of such junk. Whether intentional or not, we are peddling falsehood.

The same caution should be exercised when reading online commentary on the Bible or theology. The internet is a great tool for spreading the gospel, but it is equally effective at spreading falsehood. Religious hucksters have learned how to exploit cyberspace for their own nefarious purposes, and they're quite good at it. We must use caution when swimming in those waters (so to speak).

What is true of the internet is equally true of every other form of mass media to which we are exposed: newspapers, magazines, television, radio, billboards, movies, etc. This world is awash in misleading and destructive messages, all designed by Satan to bury the truth in a blizzard of counterfeits. Sadly, most people don't bother to look for the truth in this ocean of error.

When Jesus warned His disciples to “beware of false prophets,” He wasn't talking about demons wearing horns and carrying pitchforks. Pious pastors and “trusted” news sources can just as dangerous.

– David King