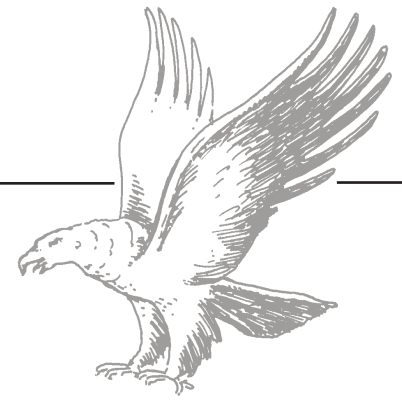


Wings

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



July 30, 2017

Rebuilding the Old Ruins

The Bible tells of several reconstruction projects, but the greatest is the one that is still underway, as God is patiently building a dwelling for Himself using reclaimed sinners as material.

"And they shall rebuild the old ruins, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the ruined cities, the desolations of many generations" (Isa. 61:4).

"You also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit" (Eph. 2:22; cp. 1 Pet. 2:5).

"Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing" (1 Thess. 5:11).



"Rebuilding" is a common theme in the Bible. The Jews returning from Babylon faced the task of rebuilding Solomon's temple. A generation later Nehemiah led the Jews in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. The greatest rebuilding project of all fell to the family of Noah, who had to rebuild human civilization after the flood.

By definition, rebuilding involves the restoration of a structure that was previously damaged or destroyed. It almost always requires more work than a clean building project because of all the rubbish and debris that must be removed before construction can begin.

This is significant when reading Isaiah's prophecy of "rebuilding the old ruins." The context shows this clearly to be a Messianic message (see v. 1-2, which Jesus applied to Himself, Lk. 4:18-19). Isaiah is describing a time of rejuvenation for God's people, the reconstruction of an old order that was long broken by the influence of sin. In Jesus Christ, God takes lives that have been crushed under Satan's heel and reshapes them into something beautiful.

The reclamation of individual lives is a marvel to behold by itself, but Isaiah's prophecy points to something beyond personal salvation. Note Paul's description that we "are being *built together* for a dwelling place of God." Similar language is used by Peter, who describes us as "living stones . . . being *built up* a spiritual house" (1 Pet. 2:5). This is a *communal* experience, the coming together of people who formerly were alienated from each other, but now live in harmony through their allegiance to a Master builder. Bitter enemies become brethren as the rubbish of past conflicts gets cleared away and all find

common ground on a single foundation. One stone at a time, God is "rebuilding the old ruins," and the result is a glorious, unified body of humanity, reflecting the wisdom of their Maker.

But take a closer look at Isaiah's prophecy. He states that "*they* shall rebuild the old ruins, *they* shall raise up the former desolations." God is the chief architect and master craftsman, no doubt, but He is not alone in this enterprise. The New Testament frequently uses the word "edify" to describe our obligation to each other. That word choice is deliberate. It's the ordinary Greek word that refers to building a structure. As sinners saved by grace, all of God's people have a duty to "build up" one another. In God's grand reconstruction project, fellow believers are often the tools that He uses to shape and improve our lives—if we have the humility to accept their help.

Rebuilding temples and city walls were great accomplishments in ancient times, but they pale in comparison to the rebuilding that God is accomplishing among us through His Son.

– David King



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