

Wings

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



February 18, 2018

Unpersuaded

In the majority of cases, people fail to accept God's truth not because the evidence is so thin, but because their own hearts are so thick.

"Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.' Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead'" (Lk. 16:27-31).



The rich man in this story finally realized how he had squandered his life, but too late to do him any good. If he could get a message to his brothers back on earth, at least he could spare them from sharing his fate. Or so he thought.

His plea to Abraham was earnest and sincere: Send Lazarus back to warn them of this terrible place, and to encourage them to change their selfish ways! But Abraham's response was brusque: Why bother? They have access to Moses and the prophets. Those sources of instruction should be suffi-

cient to provide all the warning and encouragement they need.

But the rich man knew that was not enough. During his time on earth, he had access to that revelation, too, but was too busy or disinterested to pay it any attention. Surely if someone came back from the dead, *that* would awaken his brothers from their spiritual stupor!

But human hearts don't work that way. "If they do not hear Moses and the prophets"—messages from God confirmed by extraordinary miracles—"neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead." One more miracle will not change people whose hearts are hardened by sin and worldly desires.

This parable, of course, was a precursor to what happened later. Jesus was raised from the dead, and the majority of the Jewish people *still* refused to accept Him as their Messiah. Human free will can be astoundingly irrational when corrupted by stubbornness.

This story explains so much about why people fail to understand the Bible as they should, or why there is so much disagreement about what the Bible

teaches on a variety of topics. Some subjects are hard to understand, that's true; but many are less difficult than *uncomfortable*. The Bible insists on changes in beliefs, attitudes, or behaviors that people are not willing to accept. So rather than change their lives, they simply ignore the evidence, and no amount of pleading or special effects will shake them from their position.

That's why the first and most important criteria for understanding the Bible is a good heart. "On this one I will look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word" (Isa. 66:2). Until we see ourselves as weak and lost, and God as infinitely greater and wiser than ourselves, we will never be disposed to take His word seriously. Oh, we might accept the pieces and parts that are convenient, but deep inside, it's still all about what *I* want, not what God wants. That's what got the rich man and his brothers in trouble. Someday we'll join him in his regrets.

Or we can humble our pride, open our hearts to God's wisdom, and make the changes we know we should make.

— David King



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