

# Wings

*"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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## Grieving for Joseph

When a whole nation is going down the tubes, there are usually those who are in a position to reverse the damage, if they would recognize the threat and act quickly. Could that be us?

*"Woe to you who are at ease in Zion . . . Woe to you who put far off the day of doom, who cause the seat of violence to come near; who lie on beds of ivory, [and] stretch out on your couches . . . but are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph" (Amos 6:1, 3, 4, 6).*



"Joseph" here is a literary moniker for the northern kingdom of Israel, the tribes whose isolation from Jerusalem led to a rapid decline in their spiritual and moral character. Their "affliction" was the widespread social breakdown that grew out of their lawlessness—lying, violent crime, poverty, family disintegration, and so forth. The full effect of this disaster fell upon the lower classes, who were too poor and uneducated to recognize the underlying cause of their misery. Without an intervention, the nation was headed for destruction.

The wealthy upper class, on the other hand, never had it so good. Theirs was a life of luxury, reclining on beds of ivory, listening to pleasant music (v. 5), and eating delicacies that the poor could only dream of (v. 4). Their wealth insu-

lated them from the effects of the collapse that had overtaken their destitute neighbors, so they paid little heed to the disease that was eating away at the heart of the nation. In the words of the prophet, they "did not grieve for the affliction" of their nation, because that affliction did not concern them. The aristocracy had the power and resources to initiate reforms and avert the catastrophe that was approaching, but secure in their own comforts, they believed they could ignore the sufferings of their fellow citizens without consequence.

The whole nation, including the elite at the top, were living on borrowed time. The wealthy had "put far off the day of doom" (v. 3), unable to see the disaster that was looming over the horizon. Amos's job was to shake these people from their slumber and sound the alarm. Of course, that awakening never came, and Israel was soon overrun by an Assyrian army that spared no one—especially the bluebloods at the top.

Before we get all righteous about these blind snobs, we should examine our own circumstances. There is a grow-

ing body of evidence indicating that our nation is descending into the same kind of self-destructive decline, with the same kind of sharp class divide that afflicted ancient Israel (see Charles Murray, *Coming Apart: The State of White America*, 2012). This state of affairs cannot be sustained, and all of us face dire consequences if the trend is not reversed. What can we do?

First, *we can aggressively share the gospel with the people who need it.* That means going into the ghettos, barrios, and slums with God's message of an abundant life, a message that the lower classes desperately need. If we do not take that message to them, who will? The government?

Second, we can use our time and resources to get involved *personally* in the lives of those who are struggling. We cannot claim to grieve for the hardships of others and not act with compassion to mitigate their suffering in some way (see: The Good Samaritan).

A nation is crying out in pain. We are God's instruments for applying the antidote. What are we doing?

— David King



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