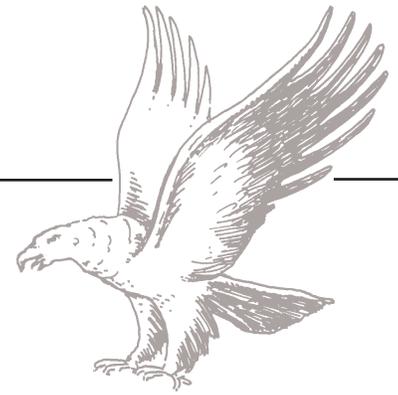


# Wings

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



January 18, 2015

## The Kingdom Within

A major stumbling block to many of Jesus' contemporaries was His view of the kingdom of God. That same stumbling block keeps many today from realizing God's vision.

*“Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, ‘The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, ‘See here!’ or ‘See there!’ For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.’” (Lk. 17:20-21).*



Belief in a coming Kingdom ran deep in the Jewish psyche in Jesus' day. Through all their hardships, the Jews clung tightly to their hope of a day when God would pierce the roof of the world and directly intervene in the affairs of men. They believed that when that day came, God's Messiah would conquer their enemies and establish peace and justice over the earth, ruling from His throne in Jerusalem.

So when John the Baptist and Jesus began proclaiming that the kingdom of God was at hand, it didn't take long for the excitement to reach fever pitch. This question posed to Jesus regarding the timing of the kingdom reflected that excitement. *The kingdom is coming! When?! Where?!*

But Jesus' response poured cold water on these expectations. “The kingdom of God is within you” reframed the subject in a manner that took the Jews by surprise. Other translations read: “is among you” or “is in your midst.” In other words, the kingdom of God was available right in front of them, if they would open their eyes to see it. But blinded by their preconceived ideas, it was difficult for these people to recognize it for what it really was.

In correcting the popular misconception of His day, Jesus also gave us an important lesson concerning the nature of the kingdom.

Unlike the kingdoms of men, the kingdom of God is not a political institution or a geographical area. It knows no borders, cannot be defended by armies or natural barriers, and cannot be evaluated by any of the usual criteria (GDP, per capita wealth, military strength, etc.). Rather, the kingdom of God is the rule of God in the heart of each individual. It is a *mindset*, a heart so captive to the love of God that it compels every detail of how we live our lives.

The kingdom of heaven belongs to the poor in spirit (Matt. 5:3), not to those who can wield the power to seize and hold it. Citizenship in this kingdom supersedes every distinction known to mankind. Race, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, intelligence, academic credentials — none of these serve as a barrier to the kingdom within. Whoever is willing to humble his heart before God is a fit subject for God's rule.

Those today who obsess over obscure prophecies to determine when and where Jesus will come the second time make the same mistake as the Pharisees of old: they are conflating God's kingdom with an earthly institution. Likewise, those who use political tactics to manipulate and coerce people into conformity (always in the name of “truth,” naturally) are missing the spiritual nature of the kingdom.

God's kingdom consists of all people everywhere whose hearts are wholly devoted to serving Him. Once we grasp that fundamental fact, it will alter how we live, and how we teach the gospel to others.

— David King