

Attributes Of The Eagle

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What is the largest bird that you have seen flying in the sky? For some of us, it is probably a buzzard or a vulture of some sort. Maybe it is a bird of prey such as a hawk or a falcon. In the last few years, residents of Rock Hill, South Carolina have probably started seeing bald eagles flying above.

See, this animal was on the endangered animals list not too long ago, but the reduction in certain herbicides and pesticides has helped its population to grow again. In the past year, our family has seen a bald eagle flying above several times. But one of the more astounding occurrences was when one flew straight over our house! At this lower elevation, this bird soaring past was a sight to behold. The sheer size and speed of this creature as it zoomed past left a buzz of excitement among our family.

Thinking of the eagle from a biblical perspective, it is a creature that in the words of Leviticus 11:13, God considers an abomination or a detestable thing, as some other translations put it. This is not the final thought on the eagle, however, because today we will investigate some of the other occurrences on what the Bible has to say about this particular bird of prey. See, God teaches mankind through His creation and the attributes of it. And today, we are going to look into the lessons of what God teaches us from the attributes of the eagle.

Our first lesson comes to us from the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32. So if you guys could please turn there with me, we are going to read Deuteronomy 32, starting in verse 9 and read down through verse 12.

Deuteronomy 32:9-12 For the Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the place of His inheritance. He found him in a desert land and in the wasteland, a howling wilderness; He encircled him, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye. As an eagle stirs up its nest, hovers over its young, spreading out its wings,

taking them up, carrying them on its wings, so the Lord alone led him, and there was no foreign God with him.

Moses is recounting God's removal and workings with Israel from Egypt and through the wilderness into the Promised Land in these verses. The imagery of the actions of the adult eagle to that of its eaglets is what we are going to focus on. By stirring the nest, the eagle is potentially waking up the eaglets. The hovering is done in a protective manner, almost as if the eagle is watching over the young and caring for them. And also the hovering could be a way for the eagle to keep the focus of the eaglets upon it by hovering close.

Then you have the action of the eagle taking the eaglets upon its back to remove them from the nest. This last action, it does not seem like a common occurrence for the eagle, as most research does not back it. So why then is it recorded here in Moses' song? Maybe it is a particular type of eagle from that time which did perform this action. Or maybe it does occur and man just has not yet recorded it or seen it. Or maybe it was a mythical attribute attributed to the eagle by the people of that time.

But what if it was stated purposely to show the miraculous actions of God when calling His people, a supernatural act, as we have heard before. If we view ourselves as the eaglets, we see the symbolism as the miraculous work of God in our calling through the opening of our minds. The eaglets, they were sleeping, and thus they had to be woken up by the stirring. Their focus had to be drawn to the eagle that was presenting itself by hovering close.

And then it took a miraculous event such as the eagle carrying them upon its back to bring them out of the nest as God brings us into His Family. See, that is why it is miraculous because no human can get to that point without God gifting it to them. Verse 12 points us to this conclusion as it states, "so the Lord alone led him," and this is not the only reference to this imagery in the Bible. God tells the Israelites:

Exodus 19:4 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagle's wings and brought you to Myself.'

God alone carried them out of Egypt. He alone cared for them, and He alone calls us to Himself. The eaglets, they did not have to do much in this occurrence, but they had to make a choice to climb upon the outspread wings and leave the comforts of the nest.

Our next lesson comes to us from a very popular scripture. Please turn me to Isaiah 40, and we are going to read verse 31. You're in Isaiah 40:31.

Isaiah 40:31 But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

A popular take on this verse is related to trials. An eagle can reach great heights. Most of the experts agree that they can reach altitudes in excess of 10,000 ft. And eagles are not at the bottom of the food chain either. They are not messed with by much in their adult form, but they do get attacked in flight sometimes by a bird much smaller than themselves, the crow.

The experts claim that the eagle will not fight back when the crow attacks it, but will instead go up to higher altitudes, altitudes that the crow cannot get to because of a lack of oxygen or ability. Thus, the crow falls off. The scenario brings the idea of overcoming and focusing the mind on God, rather than the trials that one is currently facing. Think of the "above the sun" perspective that we have heard in the teachings of Solomon from Ecclesiastes. Think of resisting the Devil, and he will flee from you from James 4:7.

Or even when God says, "My thoughts are higher than your thoughts, My ways than your ways" in Isaiah 55:9. The scenario fits very well with these ideas, and it is a good lesson for us. But the context here in this scripture of Isaiah 40:31, especially verses 28 through 31, seems to provide a different lesson from the attribute of an eagle. See, the key stems from part of the verse before the mention of the eagle, verse 28. "But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength." The word used for renew here is *chalaph*, and it appears in a variety of ways throughout its 28 uses in the Old Testament.

It is used as to change, to grow, to pass, to sprout, to abolish. The word has the idea of going from one state to another. The renewing occurs for the strength of those waiting on the Lord, those putting their faith and trust in Him. The context becomes clear if we think of the action of an eagle as an example of this renewed strength.

But how does an eagle mounting up or even soaring, as some other translations put it, fit with the next two examples? That of running, but not getting weary and walking but not fainting. Both these examples show endurance beyond the normal consequence of prolonged involvement in those actions. So how does mounting up compare that? Perhaps the understanding could be seen more clearly if we link it with another reference or occurrence of renewals and eagles.

So please turn with me to Psalm 103, and we are going to read the first five verses here.

Psalm 103:1-5 Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from destruction, who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies, who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

Renew in verse 5 is *chadash* in this occurrence. The word is more about repairing what has become worn down, repairing back to a state that once was. That is why the word youth is used. See, the idea is of an eagle molting and growing new feathers. Through the molting process, the old and damaged feathers fall away and new ones take their place. Have you ever seen a chicken molt? I know Brother Josh and the Mimms family have. See, chickens during the molting process tend to lose a lot of their feathers. They can look pretty bare and funny as the process goes on.

Well, an eagle does not molt like a chicken. According to the online article, "Life History or Annual Cycle" written by a gentleman with the screen name Elf Ruler, and I know that is funny, eagles cannot hide or feed themselves if they were to lose all their feathers at once, losing their ability to fly. See, Elf

Ruler states that their molt is a partial molt happening over the course of three to four years, only losing a few feathers at a time during that process. This allows them to keep flying. With this in mind, we can better understand the idea of an eagle mounting up and soaring in Isaiah 40. Much like the sandals of the Israelites not wearing out on them in the wilderness, the wings of the eagle are being replenished in such a way that they are able to keep soaring.

This is how it fits the examples after it. They can keep flying without falling. The idea fits even more when you consider these three examples of renewed strength as a type of merism to the statement in verse 30 about the youthful. In that verse you have a structural reverse in that the youth faint, become weary, and utterly fall. If you look at it plainly, you have the youth fainting, becoming weary, and falling, but in the reverse, you have those who wait on the Lord who do not fall, do not get weary, and do not faint.

Now here is the question. How does this apply to us at this time? Remember, from the occurrence in Deuteronomy, God carried and is carrying us to Himself from Egypt upon eagle's wings. He enables us to soar as eagles, and He is also the reason that we can endure and keep soaring. See the key in these set of scriptures is on the renewing. And renewing has a link, a direct link, a direct tie to the Lord. In Isaiah 40, renewing is taking on the same attributes of God. He is where our strength lay.

Verse 28 says that "the Creator of the ends of the earth neither faints nor is weary." This is a link to the creation event. The resting, the renewal here is the Sabbath day. Because the Lord rested on the Sabbath day, the day was created for renewing work. Here is an excerpt from John Ritenbaugh's sermon "Sabbathkeeping, Part One."

Brethren, do you understand this is where the rest comes from? This is where the strength comes from. This is where the power comes from. This is where the refreshing comes from. It comes from the relationship with God within the proper keeping of the Sabbath day. He gives it to us. It is a gift of His grace.

Psalm 103 clearly shows these gifts of His grace, these gifts from God, from the relationship with Him and with Christ. Much like the molting of an eagle

occurring and being partial, our renewal is an ongoing process through the course of many years of our lives, through the entire duration of our calling. It is a continual process.

These breaks from the world to obtain a better relationship with our Creator are systematically renewing our strength, enabling us to keep soaring, to keep moving forward, much like walking and running. The Feast is no different. The Sabbath symbolizes the millennium, and the themes are very much the same. The Sabbath is essentially a sign of the future Millennium. Hebrews 4 clearly points to this future rest, as it states in verse 9.

Hebrews 4:9 There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.

So a proper keeping of the Feast of Tabernacles or any of the holy days renews our relationship with our Creator, thus renewing the strength and youthful zeal fitting with the word *chadash* in Psalm 103. The repetitiveness of these appointed times helps to promote a change in us, fitting with the word *chalaph* in Isaiah 40.

So how do we properly keep this time? Well, the answer lies in the swiftness of the eagle to work that Richard mentioned in his sermon before the Feast, "God's Throne," is the idea that we want to become like God. Thus, we are using this time to work to get to know Him better and build our relationship with Him. We still have a majority of this Feast to go. What will you do to work on your relationship with God?

May this Feast of Tabernacles renew your relationship with Him in Christ. May you receive forgiveness, healing, redemption, crowning with lovingkindness, a multitude of mercy, and may your mouth be satisfied with good things.

May God continue to carry you. May you all soar like eagles.