

RAISING THE “BAR” by Andrew Roberts

Matthew records for us a dynamic exchange between Jesus and His disciples in the sixteenth chapter. Jesus asks the group who the multitudes said that He was. Some were thinking Jesus was John the Baptist, others thought He might be Elijah or Jeremiah or some other prophet. Then Jesus puts the question to the disciples, “But who do you say that I am?”

Peter answered, “Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God.” And Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-jona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.”

Christ called Peter, Simon Bar-Jona. “Bar” simply meant “son of” or “son.” The Jewish culture did not identify families as we do in our culture, by a last name. Peter was not Peter Smith or Peter Jones. The Jews identified families through the lineage of the males. Peter was Peter, son-of-Jona.

Would we like to have our father’s name associated with everything we do, like Peter? Consider, in every action of your life, whether you earned acclaim or suffered disgrace, your father’s name would be linked to it. Whenever there was a contract to sign or a census for the government, your father’s name would be there. Whether people looked at you with respect or as a fool, your father’s name and reputation would be linked to you!

Yet Jesus grew up in this culture as well. Can you imagine, the Rabbi at Synagogue calling on Jesus Bar-Joseph to read from scripture? Would Jesus bother to correct him? Did Joseph blush a little when he heard others call his son after such a fashion?

Jesus raised the “Bar.” He had no earthly father. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin. Jesus was the son of the living God. He was Jesus Bar-Jehovah. He was Jesus Bar-Yahweh. He was Jesus Bar-God.

Like Peter, everything Jesus did carried with it the name of His Father. What Jesus taught reflected on His Father. How Jesus lived reflected on His Father. Whether or not Jesus would sin reflected on His Father. When Jesus went to the cross, it reflected on His Father.

As Christians, have we set the “Bar” high enough for ourselves? Through the blood of Christ, we have been born into the household or family of God. We are the joint-heirs of eternal bliss. We are the sons and daughters of God.

Do our words reflect favorably on the Father, since our names are linked? Do our actions reflect favorably on the Father? Does our love reflect favorably on the Father? Does our reputation reflect favorably on the Father?

We may often make the mistake of determining our actions by the standards or expectations of others around us. But the “Bar” is higher for Christians because we have a Holy Father. The truth is we have a name we need to bring honor and glory to by our conduct. It is the name of God. And we have a pattern to follow, Jesus Bar-God.