

Pleasant Valley
Church of Christ

3317 Amidon
Wichita KS 67204
(316) 838-4195
www.letjesusleadus.org

Schedule of Services

Sunday

Classes 9:30 am
Worship 10:30 am
Evening 6:00 pm

Wednesday

Classes 7:30 pm

The Pleasant Valley Church of Christ is a non-denominational group of believers who are committed to following Jesus in our attitudes, our relationships, and our worship. If you want the same thing in your life, please contact us. We'd like to help.

Unless otherwise noted, all scripture quotations are from the New King James Version Bible, Thomas Nelson Publishers.

Wings



*"But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles" (Isaiah 40:31)*

February 11, 2007

A religion devised in his own heart

by David King

"So he made offerings on the altar which he had made at Bethel on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, in the month which he had devised in his own heart. And he ordained a feast for the children of Israel, and offered sacrifices on the altar and burned incense" (1 Kgs. 12:33).

This verse concludes a lengthy description of the religion that Jeroboam created when he became king of the break-away ten tribes of Israel. The religion had its own holy places of worship, at Dan and Bethel (v. 28-29), its own priesthood, populated by non-Levites (v. 31), and its own holy days (v. 32-33). The most significant feature of Jeroboam's new religion was that everything was "devised in his own heart"; that is, it did not come from God.

A study of Jeroboam's new religion provides some important insights into the current state of Christianity today.

First, consider Jeroboam's motivation for creating this new religion. The ten tribes had just declared their independence from the house of David (King Rehoboam), and made Jeroboam their new king. However, the Law of Moses required that every male Israelite make a pilgrimage to the temple of God in Jerusalem on the three major feast days of the year. "Jeroboam said in his heart, 'Now the kingdom may return to the house of David: If these people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn back to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and go back to Rehoboam king of Judah'" (v. 26-27).

So how did he deal with this threat? Simple! He created a new religion that did not require frequent trips to Jerusalem. All the elements of the old religion were still there: a priesthood, sacrifices, holy days, holy places of worship, etc. They were just modified slightly to minimize any political threat. But let's not lose sight of the real motivation at work here: Jeroboam's new religion was created to protect his own selfish interests. The goal was not to honor God, but to promote himself.

Second, look at the practical outcome of Jeroboam's new religion. This new arrangement institutionalized division among the people of God. For the next three centuries, Israel was a divided people, and the gap only grew wider over time. Without exception, every king that followed Jeroboam clung to his fake religion, and the people gradually lost all respect for God. Cast free from any allegiance to God's law, the northern tribes went deeper into sin and degradation, finally losing their identity in an Assyrian invasion. The hope of a united Israel, glorious among the nations, that was so prevalent in the reigns of David and Solomon, was forever destroyed by the curse of division among God's people.

The current state of Christianity is mirrored in the story of Jeroboam's religion. Professed followers of Christ today devise religious customs "in their own heart" for much the same reason that Jeroboam did: to promote their own selfish ambitions. And the result is permanent division among those who should be showing the world a better way.