

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)*

January 18, 2009

A people dwelling alone

by David King

"For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him; There! A people dwelling alone, not reckoning itself among the nations" (Num. 23:9).

When King Balak of Moab hired the prophet Balaam to curse Israel, the Lord took over Balaam's tongue so that only blessings came out. These words were a portion of one of those blessings. They describe Israel's role as a people set apart, a nation unlike any other nation. Their destiny was to be "a people dwelling alone," always different, unique, and misunderstood.

Israel's distinctiveness was a product of her relationship with God. Unlike the other nations, who worshiped a pantheon of deities that were figments of human imagination, Israel recognized only the one true God, the Spirit Being who created and sustains everything. Their covenant with this God led them to live by a strict moral code, creating a lifestyle and a society that elevated them above the other nations.

Israel's relationship with this God gave them a sense of purpose that other nations did not possess. They had a destiny, a future role in a grand plan that would someday impact the entire world. This messianic hope inspired the nation through all its travails, and helped to preserve its identity despite numerous attempts to destroy it.

Israel's distinctiveness was not aloofness. Her moral code called for kindness to be shown to strangers in her midst (Ex. 23:9; Lev. 19:33-34; Deut. 10:18-19; 23:7-8). In later

generations some of her citizens lost sight of that obligation and turned their religion into an arrogant display of snobbishness. But that was a distortion of the nation's mission, not a result of it.

Israel was a beacon of light in a world of darkness. The principles for which she stood attracted Gentiles who were longing for something better. People like Ruth the Moabitess and the Roman centurion Cornelius saw in Israel a positive alternative to the crude and empty religions of their own people. By the time the New Testament was written, the world was sprinkled with a significant number of Gentiles who feared God (Ac. 13:16, 26) — ironically due largely to the influence of this people that did not reckon itself among the nations.

Israel's ultimate role in history, of course, was to give the world the Messiah, a Savior who would provide a blessing to all nations. Jesus Christ fulfilled that promise, and His disciples are the spiritual heirs of Israel's noble calling as "the people of God." Unlike ancient Israel, these people have no political identity. Their kingdom is entirely spiritual, open to people from every nation, tribe, and ethnic group.

Despite the universal nature of this spiritual kingdom, the same principle still applies. We are to be "a people dwelling alone," representatives of the true God, living by a law that sets us apart from other religious bodies. If we lose sight of that distinctive position and reckon ourselves as just one among many faiths, we will lose our reason for being, and disappear in a sea of false religions.