

Pleasant Valley  
Church of Christ

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## 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)*

April 25, 2010

## The skeptic's mistake

by David King

"Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. . . . Therefore the sisters sent to Him, saying, 'Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.' When Jesus heard that, He said, 'This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it'" (Jn. 11:1, 3,4).

The resurrection of Lazarus later in this chapter indeed glorified Jesus. In fact, it was such an astounding miracle that it sealed His fate. From this point forward, Jesus' enemies were determined to kill Him (v. 47-53).

But there is one aspect of this story that deserves closer attention. Jesus responded to the sisters' request by delaying for two days (v. 6). When He came to Bethany, Lazarus had already been dead for four days. So when Jesus arrived, both Martha and Mary met Him—separately—with the same greeting: "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died" (v. 21, 32). Later, some of the mourners who had gathered to support the sisters had a similar reaction: "Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?" (v. 37).

There is a common thread that runs through all three of these responses. Each displays a sense of resignation or failure. Jesus could have healed Lazarus had He arrived in time, but He was too late, so the opportunity for performing a miracle had passed. Lazarus was dead, and his body had already begun to decay (v. 39), so there would be no miracle. Even Jesus could not overcome this loss.

It occurs to me that these comments bear an uncanny resemblance to the argument of the atheist who rejects the existence of God: "If God really existed, He would not allow all the evil and suffering that afflicts the world." The atheist has his own idea of how God ought to operate ("if this, then that"). Since God does not meet that pre-determined condition, then God obviously does not exist.

The reasoning of the sisters and the Jewish mourners followed much the same line: "If You had been here, this would not have happened." They had a pre-determined idea of the scope and limits of Jesus' power, and since reality did not fit their idea, their minds were completely closed to the possibility of a positive outcome.

So the atheist denies the existence of God, and the sisters denied the possibility of Lazarus' return, for the same reason: a faulty mental model of how God works.

Jesus confounded the friends of Lazarus by raising him from the dead in dramatic fashion (v. 38-44). That had been His intention all along, of course, "that the Son of God may be glorified" (v. 4). In like manner, the atheist will some day witness the power of God to make all things new again. On that day, the atheist will realize the smallness of his thinking.

This story teaches us that we need not be atheists to be skeptics. Martha and Mary were loyal friends of Jesus, yet they could not grasp the possibilities available to them through Him. Sometimes we make the same mistake, trying to confine God to a small box, failing to realize the extent of His power.