

Wings

*“Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles.”
Isaiah 40:31*



July 21, 2013

Oh, What God Has Done!

The creation of Israel from an obscure family was an act of divine grace. But that pales in comparison to what God has done since in creating an entirely new and different nation.

“God brings them out of Egypt; He has strength like a wild ox. For there is no sorcery against Jacob, nor any divination against Israel. It now must be said of Jacob and of Israel, 'Oh, what God has done!'" (Num. 23:22-23).

These words were part of the second blessing that Balaam pronounced upon Israel, after being hired by King Balak to curse them. God controlled the prophet's tongue so that nothing but blessing came from his mouth. Balak was miffed, of course, but that's tough; Balaam had no choice what to speak.

We are less concerned with the circumstances surrounding this blessing than with the blessing itself. In these few words, Balaam provided an excellent summary of Israel's history to that point, specifically, their escape from Egypt and God's divine protection over them. Like a wild ox, Israel was now poised to rampage through Canaan, and nothing could stop them—including all of Balak's money and military power. A short time later, Rahab of Jericho told the Hebrew spies that “the terror of you has fallen on us, and all the inhabitants of the land are

fainthearted because of you” (Josh. 2:9). As they watched the Israelites coming, the Canaanites had every reason to cry out in fear, “Oh, what God has done!”

Indeed, Israel's rise from obscurity was the handiwork of God. He had patiently groomed this people during the preceding centuries in Egypt, as they grew from a large family to a collection of powerful tribes. When the time came for their departure, He gave them Moses as a leader. He struck Egypt with the terrible plagues, and parted the Red Sea to facilitate their escape. He gave them manna from heaven, water from a rock, and victory over all who dared oppose them. More importantly, by giving them His law at Mt. Sinai, God molded them into a civilized nation with a purpose and a mission in this world. Even when they lost their faith in God and He had to punish them, He never gave up on them or His plan. As Balaam witnessed, they were destined to accomplish great things; and that time had finally arrived.

But as amazing as God's creation of this great nation was, His greatest accomplishment was yet to come. Over

the next dozen or so centuries, as the fortunes of Israel repeatedly rose and fell, God carefully guided multiple strands of history to a grand climax, when His own Son came this earth, lived a perfect life, sacrificed that life for the sins of all mankind, then arose from the dead to administer a great defeat over Satan. Beginning with that one remarkable life, God created a new nation not defined by national, ethnic, racial, social, or economic barriers. Even today, two thousand years later, millions of people still flock to His banner, and pledge allegiance to a cause that transcends any national identity.

The vast scope of this project, and its success despite all the efforts of tyrants and demons to destroy it, takes our breath away. Without political power, military might, or economic muscle, God created “His own special people” (1 Pet. 2:9), through which He is still accomplishing great things in this world.

As we stand back and admire His handiwork, we can only declare with Balaam, “Oh, what God has done!”

– David King