

Nuclear Ambitions: In Perilous Times

*“This know also,
that in the last
days perilous
times shall come.”*

—II Timothy 3:1

THE WORDS OF THIS PROPHECY

were written by the Apostle Paul to Timothy, a brother that he loved dearly even as his own son. The ‘last days’ of which he spoke pointed to the level of violence that would occur at the end of the present Gospel Age, the very time in which we are now living. It marks the prophetic time during our Lord Jesus’ Second Presence, and the closing features of this age. We are all witnesses of the growing momentum of death and destruction in a world that has lost its way.

FEAR OF PROLIFERATION

One of the signs of the present chaos among the peoples of the world is the response to the latest nuclear and long-range rocket tests that have taken place in North Korea. One of the major fears of concern is Pyongyang’s continuing defiance in

spite of the international community's efforts to halt the country's nuclear program and bring the situation under control. There is also widespread concern over the possibility that Iran might try to find ways to sidestep diplomatic efforts by the United Nations to acquire nuclear weapons. This would fuel new and even more violent conditions in the Middle East regional arms race. It is feared that if North Korea is able to get away with becoming a nuclear nation with little or no direct punishment, the future may become even more desperate.

Gerald Steinberg, a political science professor at Bar Ilan University in Israel, says the Americans must show credibility on the North Korean nuclear issue because it serves as a barometer of the rising worldwide tensions. The United States has been threatening to take action against North Korea ever since the 1990s, and this has enabled North Korea to buy valuable time. The Israeli concern is that this is exactly what will happen with Iran if the situation cannot be controlled.

Israeli analysts believe that it should have been easier to apply a proper mix of diplomatic and military pressure on North Korea than it would be on Iran. They point out that this is possible because of its comparative geographic, economic, and political isolation. Uzi Rubin, a former Israeli military intelligence officer who served as head of Israel's Missile Defense Organization from 1991-99, says that this situation will create an open season for the obtaining of nuclear weapons by others. The recent North Korea test was a watershed event, and it means that if you have even minimal technology

and are isolated, it is still possible to obtain nuclear technology if you try hard enough.

DIVISION OF KOREA

At the end of World War II, the people of Korea were liberated from Japanese domination, and the Korean peninsula was broken up into two parts. This took place in 1945 at the 38th parallel when the divisions became known as North Korea, which came under the influence of the Soviet Union, and South Korea, under that of the United States. Russia and the United States were unable to agree on a joint trusteeship, and in 1948 the two divisions were formed into two separate states dominated by communist ideology in the north, and capitalism in the south.

Major differences in the economies, politics, and ideologies have grown between the two divisions since that time. In June, 1950, the North Korean People's Army attacked the south in an attempt to reunify the two Koreas under communist control. The war lasted until July, 1953 when the United States involved the two parties in an armistice agreement. There was no peace treaty, and technically the northern and southern divisions of Korea are still at war.

North Korea began to pursue nuclear technology in the late 1950s and by the early 1960s there were already concerns about their development of weapons of mass destruction. North Korea was a member of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, but withdrew in 2003. In 2006, they announced that they had successfully conducted a nuclear test for the first time. In April, 2009, it was known that North

Korea had become a full fledged nuclear power. In May, they conducted another nuclear test.

THE SECOND NUCLEAR TEST

North Korea's second underground nuclear test in May, 2009 has shown the world that it is only a matter of time before they have the ability to develop and mount an atomic weapon on a missile. Their latest bomb is considerably larger than the first one which was tested in 2006. This indicates their determination to continue to develop nuclear weapons, and to raise their stature among the nations of the world, especially against their main target the United States. North Korea is believed to have processed enough plutonium over the past few years to have built several nuclear bombs. Their nuclear tests are now raising fears of increased nuclear proliferation.

North Korea has been making measurable progress in its nuclear program and is showing its determination to possess a credible threat to its neighbors as well as the international community. It appears unlikely to back down, and is now more of a threat because they are gaining important experience all the time, including data and information about their bomb design and capabilities.

United States' President Barack Obama said the country's latest nuclear bomb test and missile firings pose a grave threat to the peace and security of the world. In response to the President's comments, North Korea has launched even more missiles. They also warned their closest neighbor, South Korea, that if it decided to participate in a United States led program to intercept any of their

shipping vessels for carrying suspected weapons of mass destruction, they would consider it to be equal to a declaration of war.

Yoon Deok-min, a professor at South Korea's state-run Institute of Foreign Affairs and National Security, said North Korea appears to still be in the process of mastering the miniaturization technology required to place a warhead on a missile, though he called its ultimate success just a matter of time. He said its development of a nuclear-tipped missile is the worst case security scenario, and noted that the country has already deployed intermediate-range ballistic missiles that can travel nearly 2,000 miles. That easily puts South Korea and Japan into immediate range, and they can almost reach the United States island of Guam.

Observers point out that it is very disturbing that the country is conducting missile and nuclear tests in close proximity. Their latest test came less than two months after they fired an intermediate-range rocket over Japan and into the Pacific Ocean. Although North Korea claims that it had only launched a satellite, it is very apparent that they meant to test ballistic missile technology instead.

IRAN'S NUCLEAR PLANS

Halfway around the world from Korea, it is reported that Iran's nuclear program has become one of the most difficult issues in one of the world's most violent regions. The country's leadership says that its goal in developing a nuclear program is the ability to generate electricity without relying on their oil supplies that they need to sell to other

countries. The American government believes, however, that their nuclear program was meant to give Iran powerful weapons which they may use to intimidate their neighbors. They have threatened the very existence of the nation of Israel. President Obama has also declared his opposition to the program, but has indicated that he would like to approach talks with them on the subject with more flexibility.

The first nuclear program began in Iran in the 1960s under the Shah. It made little progress, and was abandoned after the 1979 revolution, which brought to power the hard-line Islamic regime. In the mid-1990s a new effort began, and they said they were living up to their obligations under the Non-Proliferation Treaty. In 2002, an exile group obtained documents revealing a clandestine program. Faced with the likelihood of international sanctions, the government of Mohammad Khatami agreed to suspend work on uranium enrichment and would allow a stepped-up level of inspections by the International Atomic Energy Association.

In 2005, Khatami, a relative moderate, was succeeded as president by Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who was a hard-line conservative. Shortly thereafter, Iran announced that it was resuming work on turning uranium into a gaseous form, the first step in the so-called fuel cycle. The following year they announced that they would resume their enrichment work. Under the Non-Proliferation Treaty, Iran has the right to enrich uranium, but the atomic energy association halted their program until questions concerning a secret program were resolved.

In 2006, the United States, unable to win agreement at the United Nations for sanctions, said it would join the European negotiations with Iran over its nuclear program if Iran suspended their uranium program. After lengthy negotiations, the United Nations voted to impose sanctions on Iran for failing to heed calls for a suspension. Ahmadinejad and the country's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, vowed defiance, and Iranian scientists continued the work of building a series of centrifuges that concentrate uranium by spinning the gas at very high speeds.

Iran is anxious to obtain nuclear weapons to gain the reputation and prestige of being a major power in the Middle East. President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's recent re-election dispute, however, has cast doubt on any hope of arranging meetings aimed at curbing their uranium enrichment program, which they claim is only for the purpose of generating electric power. The enrichment process may be configured to produce fuel for either nuclear power plants or weapons. It is believed that Iran is very near, or already in possession of, sufficiently low-enriched uranium to produce a nuclear weapon. They argue that with the United States at war in Iraq and Afghanistan, both of which border on their country, and also with Israel's aggressive behavior in the Middle East, it seems but reasonable for them to pursue a weapons program to defend themselves. However, they continue sending rockets to the Hamas rebels in Palestine and Hezbollah rebels in Lebanon that creates a dangerous situation for Israel. In addition Iran has not proved that they can be trusted, or have peaceful intentions.

NUCLEAR-POWERED PAKISTAN

In 1972, Pakistan undertook a nuclear program which was established by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. He founded the program while he was Minister for Fuel, Power, and Natural Resources. He later became president and prime minister. When India tested a nuclear device in 1974, Pakistan's nuclear program gained increased interest, and began to acquire new uranium enrichment technology and expertise. Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan had acquired valuable knowledge with gas centrifuge technology while at the URENCO uranium plant in the Netherlands, and he advanced these efforts considerably.

Khan was put in charge of building, equipping, and operating Pakistan's Kahuta facility, which was established in 1976. Under his direction, Pakistan employed an extensive clandestine network in order to obtain the necessary materials and technology for its developing uranium enrichment capabilities. In 1985, they crossed the threshold of weapons-grade uranium production, and by 1986 were able to produce enough material to build a nuclear weapon.

TERRORISTS' CHALLENGES

As nuclear ambitions become more widespread throughout the world, terrorist groups are seeking new ways and devices to obtain weapons of mass destruction, including chemical, biological, and nuclear devices. The problem grows more serious with the passage of time, and world leaders and statespersons try to find ways to deal with the increasingly dangerous situation. This somber fact gained international attention in July, 2009, when

a suicide attack occurred on a bus in Rawalpindi, Pakistan. It drew special interest because it was the first bombing of its kind that had targeted workers who were employed at one of Pakistan's nuclear laboratories.

Military analysts warned that this attack raised new questions about the government's ability to withstand increasingly bold assaults by the Taliban, and especially against the country's military complex. The bombing occurred at the same time as Pakistan's army was fighting Taliban forces on several fronts, and they are preparing to begin an even more ambitious campaign in the insurgents' heartland in Waziristan.

The Taliban and Al Qaeda's goal is to topple the Pakistani government and gain control of its nuclear arsenal. They singled out nuclear workers, even though they were miles outside the weapons lab, but military analysts said this carries a high level of symbolism because Pakistan believes its ultimate strength lies in its nuclear capability. It also suggested a very threatening degree of sophistication. Talat Masood, who is a retired general and a military analyst said that the attack showed that their intelligence is current, and that it was a deliberate strike against those who work in nuclear facilities.

The attacker was killed and 30 workers were wounded when the suicide bomber rammed the bus with his motorcycle. The workers were from the Kahuta Research Laboratories, where weapons-grade uranium is produced. No high-level official or scientist was on board the bus. The United States has spent \$100 million in training Pakistani

security forces in an effort to make the nation's nuclear arsenal safe. American officials are greatly concerned about Pakistan's nuclear facilities.

EFFECTS OF A NUCLEAR ATTACK

The effects of a nuclear attack are both immediate and delayed. The destructive power includes the initial blast, thermal radiation, and ionizing radiation resulting in significant destruction. The delayed effects, such as radioactive fallout and other environmental effects, inflict damage over an extended period of time ranging from a few hours to years.

One of the main differences between a nuclear and a conventional bomb is that nuclear weapons can be thousands of times more powerful than the largest conventional weapons. Both types of weapons rely on the destructive force of a blast and the following shock wave, but the temperatures reached in a nuclear explosion are much higher than in a conventional explosion. A large part of a nuclear explosion's energy is emitted in the form of light and heat, and is generally referred to as thermal energy. This energy is capable of causing skin to burn and can start fires at considerable distances away. Nuclear explosions are also accompanied by various forms of radiation that may last for a short period of time, but may remain dangerous over a considerable period of time.

The power that may be produced by a nuclear weapon is the measure of the amount of explosive energy it can produce. This is given in terms of the quantity of TNT required to generate the same amount of energy when it explodes. Thus,

a 1 kiloton nuclear weapon is one which produces the same amount of energy in an explosion as does 1,000 tons of TNT. A 1 megaton weapon would have the energy equivalent of 1 million tons of TNT.

HIROSHIMA AND NAGASAKI

On August 6, 1945, United States military forces dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan. It was the first time in the history of warfare that there was devastation to such a degree. The bomb was a fifteen kiloton device that completely demolished the city, instantly killed more than 100,000 people and injuring countless others. Three days later a second atomic bomb destroyed the city of Nagasaki killing an additional 70,000 people.

Not only did the two atomic bombs dropped by the United States kill thousands of people and demolish two major cities, but they also put in motion serious medical conditions that affected both the survivors and future generations for many years to come. For months after the explosions, in addition to the severe burns covering most of the victims' bodies, survivors developed symptoms that doctors had no knowledge of and were unable to cope with. Radiation sickness and Acute Radiation Syndrome were terms used by doctors to describe the various symptoms that turned up in survivors a few months later.

HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

It is difficult to accept the fact that man has fallen to such a degree as to develop such terrible weapons of mass destruction to inflict upon one other. At the time Jesus' earthly ministry was coming to a

close, he spoke to his disciples outside of the temple, and said to them, “Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened.”—Matt. 24:21,22

The Prophet Joel well described the present scene when men would be preparing themselves for war. He wrote, “Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong.” (Joel 3:10) In each of the cases now dominating the news, whether it be North Korea, Iran, or Pakistan, it is the rogue nations and terrorist groups that are challenging the great powers and the long held establishment. With great pride, they are saying, “We are strong.” The spirit of pride and selfishness prevails among fallen men whose ambition it is to harm and destroy their neighbors and their goods.

However, the time is now drawing near at hand for the present social order of Satan’s corrupt world (II Cor. 4:4) to meet its final judgment, and to be replaced by the glorious kingdom of our Lord Jesus and his faithful bride that will rule in the affairs of men.

CHRIST’S GLORIOUS KINGDOM

A new order of righteousness and truth will be established under Christ’s kingdom. “Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king’s son. He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment. The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little

hills, by righteousness. He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor.”—Ps. 72:1-4

From the wonderful words of the Prophet Isaiah, we read, “Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the LORD have created it.”—Isa. 45:8

WARS TO CEASE

When the final number of our Lord Jesus’ bride will have made herself ready, Christ’s kingdom will be set up over all the earth. The psalmist wrote, “The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah. Come, behold the works of the LORD, what desolations he hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.”—Ps. 46:7-9

Again, we read, “Evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.”—Ps. 37:9-11

Those who do not obey the laws of the kingdom will be brought down. “The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth. The Lord shall laugh at him: for he seeth that his day is coming. The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay such as be of upright conversation.

Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and
their bows shall be broken.”—vss. 12-15 ■