

The New China

A Sleeping Giant Awakens

“I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted. Behold, these shall come from far: and, lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim.”
—Isaiah 49:11,12

THE PROPHET ISAIAH

wrote the words of this text over seven hundred years before our Lord left his heavenly home, and was born into the world to become the Redeemer of the fallen human race. Although Isaiah specifically mentions the directions ‘north’ and ‘west’ in his prophecy, he brings special attention to the east by referring to it as the ‘land of Sinim.’ The world was much less populated at that time and there was little communication with the land of Sinim which was most likely seen as the virtual end of the earth.

ISAIAH’S PROPHECY

Looking down the stream of time, the prophet draws our attention (vss. 8-12), to an “acceptable time”—“the day of salvation”—that will usher in a new social order that will be established over the affairs of mankind. This promised kingdom, under the administration of our glorified Lord, together

with his faithful bride class, will be manifest over the whole world, to bring blessings to all under the terms of a new and better covenant between God and mankind. This kingdom will include the calling forth of the countless numbers of humanity who yet remain as prisoners of death. There will no longer be any “hunger nor thirst” among earth’s inhabitants, and nothing will “hurt nor destroy” under the administration of Christ’s kingdom of blessings for all. (Isa. 49:10; 11:9) The powerful symbol of water is used by the prophet to illustrate the gift of life and blessings that will become available to all, including those living in the furthest outreaches of the earth, even to the inhabitants of the land of Sinim.

BIBLE STUDENTS’ HELPS

Students of the Bible living in these closing years of the present Gospel Age have come to value the outstanding helps that have been made available to them for serious study, including J. B. Rothham’s translation of the Bible. They acknowledge his meticulous scholarship that was designed to set forth the exact meaning of each word in the original Hebrew and Greek texts, of which he was most proficient. They also have appreciated the close attention that he paid to proper terminology as noted in his translation of the Hebrew word [*Strong’s Bible Concordance*, #5515, ‘a distant oriental region] which has thus been rendered Sinim in our common English Bibles. Quoting our featured text from his version, we read, “Then will I make all my mountains a road, and my highways shall be upraised. Lo! These from afar shall come in, And lo!

These from the North and from the West, and these from the land of Sinim [footnote: China].”

Gesenius, in his well-known Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures, provides us with interesting and important information concerning the land of Sinim. He emphasizes that the context of Isaiah 49:12 suggests a very remote region of the world—the land of the Seres or Chinese—from which the name Sineses has been derived. He also points out that this was a very ancient and celebrated nation which was probably known by the Arabians and Syrians, and perhaps some in Babylon, but acknowledges that its origin is not entirely clear.

As we noted, Rotherham includes the reference to China in a footnote to the text, and the message of Isaiah’s prophecy clearly points to the far-reaching effects of Christ’s kingdom that will ultimately be made available even unto the most remote and distant places in the world.

THE REMOTE EAST

It wasn’t until many centuries after the words of our featured text were written, that traveling merchants from the Mediterranean region of Western Europe, one of the most notable being Marco Polo [1254-1324], began to arouse interest in this far-off mysterious land of China. In the 13th century, he related to Westerners that the Chinese were already using paper currency and that they had an efficient postal service.

Until modern times Westerners continued to consider China as a remote, strange, and distant place. With increasing interest in trade, however,

merchants from the Eastern Empire began to be confronted with growing challenges from seafaring western nations that were determined to open trade with Chinese merchants. This created internal economic pressures within the country, and numerous problems arose as a result.

The Portuguese were the earliest pioneers in establishing trade with China, and they managed to establish a foothold on the mainland from which they were then able to monopolize foreign trade entering the country. Soon afterward, Spanish merchant vessels arrived, followed by the British and the French. After 1760, all foreign trade was confined to a few officially licensed Chinese merchant firms.

China's first bilateral agreement with a European power was made with Russia in 1689 with the Treaty of Nerchinsk, which established their north-east boundary between Siberia and Manchuria. With the Treaty of Kiakhta in 1727, the remainder of the eastern portion of the Sino-Russian border was agreed upon.

Trade was not the sole basis of contact with the West, however, as for centuries Roman Catholic missionaries had attempted to establish their religion in China. Although there had been little success in conversion to Christianity, most of these Jesuit missionaries contributed greatly in bringing to the Chinese people a new perspective of knowledge in many fields of western learning.

THE OPIUM WAR

By the 1830's, England had become the major drug trafficking nation in the orient. Opium, which was grown in India, was then shipped via the East

India Company to Canton. From there it was traded with the Chinese for manufactured goods and tea. This huge import of opium into the country led to devastating human misery and suffering of utmost proportions as 'opium parlors' began to appear throughout the country. When the Chinese government tried to bring an end to the tragedy that had been imposed upon their people, and when Chinese junks attempted to turn back British merchant vessels, they were met by powerful British warships. After what is known as the Opium War [1839-1842], China was forced to agree to the terms of a humiliating peace treaty in which British interests were maintained.

THE NEW CHINA

China may still remain largely a mystery to many Americans today, but a nation of 9.6 million square km., with a population of over 1.3 billion people, and a rapidly expanding high-technology military power, cannot help but attract our attention. Furthermore, with the tremendous importation of 'Made in China' products that are found on shopping shelves all over the United States, our citizens are becoming constantly aware of the close trading links that exist between the two nations.

This huge oriental country, with its expanding economic power, presently holds billions of dollars of United States' debt, and its numerous companies are increasingly competing with those in the United States for a broadening market for their products. There is also a threat to certain vital resources, including oil. At this same time, some analysts are predicting that China's geopolitical

behavior may have a negative impact on key and important issues to United States policy makers.

There have been indications that many Americans, including some high United States officials, find China's rapid rise to economic power as a source of much anxiety. Some are warning that China is manipulating its currency to keep its multiple production of goods cheaper when compared to the North American market. They point out that this practice has a negative impact on the American economy and its jobs. Others are saying that China is stealing intellectual property from United States firms, although this may be more difficult to prove.

An interesting item appeared in the *Los Angeles Times* (June 29, 2005) that provides an important perspective on the growing Chinese economy. Under the title "The Great Malls of China," the author William Kowinski writes, "The news that China is now more popular around the world than the United States, according to a Pew Research Center survey, is just the latest Chinese challenge to the American ego. The Chinese are also buying United States businesses with hallowed American brand names, such as IBM (its PC unit), and they're bidding for Maytag and Unocal. They hold a substantial interest in the future of the United States by financing much of the national debt. And they've even surpassed us in the most characteristic icon of American life, the shopping mall.

"The Mall of America in Minnesota has been the biggest in the United States for more than a decade, and the North American title goes to the mall in west Edmonton, Canada. But, this year, the largest mall in the world is the Golden Resources Mall in

Beijing, and it will soon be eclipsed by the South China Mall. There are now four malls in China that are bigger than the Mall of America. South China Mall will be three times its size. By the end of the decade, China is expected to have at least seven of the world's ten largest malls.

“But this trend does suggest a few things. China has become one of the world's primary producers of retail goods, based partly on its ability to undercut prices with cheaper labor. Chinese producers are supplying cheap consumer goods sold in the United States, mostly at Walmart and other low-price retailers, resulting in a huge trade imbalance. Much of the \$3 billion in United States exports to China consists of cotton, scrap metal, and waste paper used to make \$36 billion worth of mostly manufactured goods (and the boxes they arrive in) coming from China.”

CHINA'S QUEST FOR OIL

With the growing demand for energy resources, China has become eager to tap foreign supplies to help satisfy their growing appetite for oil. Jeff Erikson, in his column in *Green Biz News Center* under the caption “Energy; A Red-Hot Issue” writes, “The bid by the China National Offshore Oil Company (CNOOC) to purchase Unocal generated a flurry of activity in Washington. Some members of Congress expressed serious concern about the deal, and bills have been proposed alternatively to require a national security review, or impose an outright ban on the deal.”

It seems that the China oil company's (CNOOC) failed bid to take over the Unocal Corporation has been a severe and disappointing lesson for Chinese

officials who were eager to quickly close the deal. China's huge population, and tremendous economic growth, impel them to seek energy and other natural resources whenever and wherever they can. They are being driven by political and commercial interests to seek out new sources, and China is unlikely to give up on its quest for oil, including United States markets.

MILITARY CONCERNS

Another growing concern points to the fact that China seems to be engaged in a crash program to modernize its armed forces, a growing fear among Americans that must be recognized. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, speaking in Singapore in June 2005, asserted that China's defense expenditures are much higher than their government has acknowledged. Furthermore he asked, if no country is presently threatening China why do they continue to increase their purchases of large numbers of modern military weapons?

These are high-technology weapons, such as warships, submarines, missiles, and a maneuverable warhead designed to defeat United States missile defenses. Recent intelligence reports also show that China has stepped up military exercises involving amphibious assaults, viewed as another sign that it is preparing for an attack on Taiwan.

In response to these concerns, a news report appearing in the *Los Angeles Times* (July 20, 2005) submitted by Mark Mazzetti under the caption "Pentagon Says China Seeks to Extend Military Reach," says, "China has long-term ambitions to extend its power across the Asian continent, and

its leaders in the future may be tempted to resort to force or coercion more quickly to press diplomatic advantage, advance security interests, or resolve disputes, the Pentagon told Congress.

“In a report that could stoke growing anti-Beijing sentiment in Congress, the Pentagon declared that China was looking beyond its long-standing confrontation with Taiwan and that its rapid arms buildup was increasingly aimed at expanding its military power in the region. The Pentagon assessment of China’s military, required annually by Congress, goes far beyond previous reports in its attempts to discern the strategy behind China’s arms buildup.”

THE CHINESE PERSPECTIVE

From the viewpoint of the average Chinese man or woman, the situation takes on a different perspective in which they see the world finally being put back into proper balance once again. Reflecting on their long history, it is known that for many centuries, during an earlier period of their history, China was the most advanced nation in the world. Hundreds of years prior to western civilization’s advances they far outpaced the rest of the world in many pursuits such as the arts, sciences, and medicine, including acupuncture. Ancient Chinese inventors were the first to discover the art of making paper, books, ink, and printing. They were responsible for giving us silk. Other inventions included the compass, clock, umbrella, wheelbarrow, chain pump, gunpowder, fireworks and matches. They developed the process to make iron and steel.

Today, however, after five hundred years during which time they ‘fell asleep,’ many believe that it is

once again time to resume their rightful place of honor and dignity among the great powers of the modern industrialized world. The outside world needs to reflect on this period in China's history with the understanding that the Chinese people have endured long years of humiliation and chaos as a result of having their doors forcibly opened to foreign commerce.

THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS

Throughout the long and bitter history of the world, there has been injustice and cruelty of all kinds perpetrated against the human family in all parts of the earth. This condition has come about because of sin, and the alienation it has caused between God and man. Under the administration of Christ's future kingdom of truth and righteousness, this condition among mankind will be made right, and humanity will learn the futility of their own endeavors and look to the Lord for the desired peace. The Prophet Haggai, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote concerning that blessed time saying, "The desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts."—Hag. 2:7

During that promised time of blessings, all peoples of the earth, including even those in far-off Sinim, will then come to love and appreciate our great God and his wonderful plan for the recovery of mankind from the penalty of sin and death. "The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God."—Isa. 52:10 ■