Seeking Peace In An Insecure World

"They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace."
—Jeremiah 6:14

NEARLY TWENTY-SIX CEN-turies ago Jeremiah wrote this prophecy which has become a modern day slogan that well describes the frantic, but futile, efforts of the world's leading statesmen to bring about conditions of peace on the earth. Although there is at the present time nearly continuous negotiation taking place among international diplomats concerning peace, in reality there is no peace or any lasting security for the more than six billion people who now inhabit our chaotic, violent, and insecure world.

JESUS' TESTIMONY

During his first advent Jesus explained that he had not come to establish peace. "I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be

already kindled? But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened [*Marginal Translation*, pained] till it be accomplished! Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division." (Luke 12:49-51) During his earthly ministry, Jesus made it clear that he would come again to set up his kingdom of Truth and righteousness, and establish lasting peace upon the earth. God's eternal purpose for the human family will surely be manifested to all during that time, and it will not come about as a result of man's efforts.

WORLD LEADERS SEEK PEACE

Since this month is the fourth anniversary of the tragic events that occurred on September 11, 2001, statesmen and world leaders continue ever more diligently to bring terrorism under control and establish peace in the world. But obstacles to peace, such as selfishness and pride, continue to stand in the way of implementing any worthwhile plan for lasting peace. With the second term of the Bush administration's agenda now well under way, some strategic thinkers are questioning the ability of the United States government and its policies to control the increasing tide of international terrorism, and its threat to peace. There is growing concern among many as to whether Bush's political agenda and foreign policy will ever be able to solve the world's problems, and establish lasting peace and security in an increasingly violent and very insecure world.

DEFINING THE PROBLEM

Aside from the events of 9/11, leading analysts are still unable to agree over the nature of the increasing level of lawlessness that is finding its way into nearly every segment of society in our dangerous world. They struggle to find answers to its origins, objectives, and even the definition of the enemy to peace. Their debates are important and of great consequence because the growing crisis is as much a war of cultural ideology as well as a vicious war that involves the most highly sophisticated military machine ever assembled by man.

Most share the view that the present violent scenes that are displayed on television, in news magazines and newspapers by international media nearly every day, show that the greatest threat to peace at the present time was triggered by the events of 9/11. Since that time, only four years ago, the world has been propelled into an ever-increasing level of violence. We are now witnesses to threats to peace on a much larger and more dramatic scale than ever before in the history of the world.

AN AGGRESSIVE AGENDA

Most acknowledge that terrorism is not simply a phenomenon that will disappear with the spread of democracy, but the Bush administration is proceeding with an aggressive agenda which they believe will ultimately spread peace and freedom worldwide. The government's prosecution of the present wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, with possible other targets in the middle east, embraces both the concepts of preemptive military action, as well as the spreading of freedom and peace as the only logical

means to confront the present threat to international peace. Time will tell whether or not the administration's policies will have any positive effect on establishing peace.

CULTURE OF VIOLENCE

Insecurity has led to increased levels of stress, even among the young people. A news item from the *Los Angeles Daily News* (April 15, 2005), under the caption "Culture of Violence," reports the senseless slaying of a 15-year-old boy who was killed during a violent outburst by a 13-year-old boy who struck him on the head with an aluminum baseball bat. There appears to be no way to know what was going on in the assailant's mind at the time of the event, whether this was a typical or an unusual behavior pattern.

The article continues, "What we do know is this incident is but one of many in a grim trend. Harry Edwards, a consultant to the San Francisco 49ers for the past twenty years and a sociology professor at the University of California at Berkley, says that the killing is one more instance of American's becoming desensitized to violence and other behavior that was once considered unacceptable.

"'We are developing an insensitivity to incivility that increasingly recognizes no bounds as to what we feel we can do if provoked. You see it in road rage. You see it happening in schools. You most certainly see it in athletics, both in the stands, and on the field. Take pro sports: If you feel you are sufficiently provoked and you're a basketball player, you go up into the stands. If you are a baseball player you throw a chair into the stands.'"

NEW LEVELS OF PROVOCATION

The incivility trickles down from our professional stars to all elements of modern society. How many stories have we heard about parents getting violent at children's sporting events? This violent mentality even makes its way to our kids. How many times have we heard similar stories about teenagers who shoot up their schools? Perhaps it was just some sort of teasing that provoked the violent behavior. But should this be enough to provoke morally unconscionable violence?

Whatever provoked such a violent incident between these two boys may never be known. But it surely points to the depth of the growing problem. Perhaps it may be traced to violence on film or television, or graphic video games that are readily available to our young people everywhere. It also may be due to declining standards in our homes and schools. Whatever the cause, the problem is growing ever more severe, and the horror of such explosive acts of rage are becoming even more common in our society. The sad result of such a level of violence is that we are growing more indifferent to such episodes because they are happening all too often. In their own perverse way they are becoming the new standard of society's normal behavior.

GAMES OF VIOLENCE

Satan's evil influence as the god of this world (II Cor. 4:4) is noted in the type of entertainment that is now available for the young people. Harrison Sheppard, writing for the *Los Angeles Daily News* (April 20, 2005), in "Violent Video Games Targeted In New Bill," wrote, "A bill to ban the sale of violent

video games to minors passed a key committee where a similar effort was defeated last year. The bill would impose a $1,000.00 fine on retailers who sell violent games to anyone 16 years or younger.

"It presents an interesting perspective to note that those testifying against the bill included representatives from the Motion Picture Association of America, the American Civil Liberties Union, the Recording Industry Association of America, the California Chamber of commerce, and the game retailers and manufacturers. On the other hand, those who testified in favor of the bill were health-care professionals, academics, various women's rights groups, and a large group of girl scouts from all over the state of California. One of the young scouts, a girl of 13 years, said that violent video games create a harmful atmosphere for young children. They are not age-appropriate and they can scar the minds of these young children forever.

FREE SPEECH ADVOCATES

"Industry representatives and free-speech advocates argued the bill was a violation of First Amendment rights and would be difficult to implement. They also said the industry's current system of self-rating and voluntary compliance by retailers is sufficient. They believe the legislation is unnecessary because the industry already recognizes the importance of enforcing the voluntary ratings.

"During the hearings, legislators were shown video clips of some violent games such as Grand Theft Auto, Duke Nukem, and Postal 2, in which the player shoots down random people on the street or in a church, sets them on fire and decapitates

them. Research found that there is a link between repeated use of violent video games and violent behavior in children. These video games teach our children how to kill, how to maim, how to hurt people—women, minorities, poor people. These are not lessons that we should be teaching our children."

INCREASING TERRORISM

It is reported by the *Daily News* (April 27, 2005), that worldwide terror attacks are increasing. In a news item, "Terrorist Attacks Up Threefold," it is reported that much of this increase may be attributed to increasing violence in Iraq. Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Los Angeles) instructed his staff to circulate to the media a letter which was written to Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice, in which the figure of 650 significant terrorist attacks during the past year were probably significantly underestimated. Waxman explained that many incidents that most Americans would regard as significant had been excluded from data circulated by the State Department because they did not meet the department's definition of a terrorist attack. Waxman has been critical of the State Department's report and has accused Secretary of State Rice of denying Congress, as well as the general public, of information that is relevant in today's escalating level of violence.

PLANE STRAYS OVER WASHINGTON

Since 9/11, and the crashing of one of the hijacked planes into the Pentagon building, the nation's capital has been under high alert, and strict regulations pertaining to flight patterns. Recently two men in a small plane had lost their way and

accidentally strayed into restricted airspace. As a result, the level of concern was increased to proportions not seen since 9/11. Thousands of office workers were evacuated from federal buildings in readiness for an expected terror threat. *The Baltimore Sun's* staff writer, Stephanie Desmon, (May 13, 2005) reported the incident in her news column, "Pilots Often Struggle With D.C. Area Rules: 700 Citations Issued in '04 for Violations of Air Space." In her report she pointed out, "The pilots who strayed into restricted airspace not far from the White House, sending Washington into a panic, were not the first. The region's quirky airspace restrictions generated 700 citations last year for violations by wayward pilots—two thirds of the violations written in the country.

"The area around Frederick, MD is further complicated by the nearby presence of Camp David, the presidential retreat. Planes are prohibited within a 3-5 mile radius of the refuge near Thurmont. But, when President Bush is there, and is scheduled to be for the next few days, that zone is expanded to about 11 miles. Wherever the president is going the airspace there is restricted."

THE COMING STORMS

Jay Tolson, *U. S. News & World Report* (March 14, 2005), in his article "The Coming Storms," writes that Eliot Cohen, professor at Johns Hopkin's Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, says that "the war against terrorism is too nebulous a term. He compared the current struggle to the Cold War—because of its global and protracted character, its mix of violent and nonviolent means,

its mobilization of human resources (not all military), and its roots in an ideological conflict."

Tolson further reports that Norman Podhoretz, Editor-at-large of *Commentary Magazine*, and author of numerous books and articles, has been one of the most steadfast supporters of the Bush administration's agenda for the spread of peace. In one of his most recent collection of writings he highly praised and supported the Bush doctrine. He asks whether President Bush, in his second term, will abandon his aggressive agenda, but then argues that he believes the president will proceed with his previously outlined agenda for peace and freedom. He points out that the only thing that stands in the way of America's success in this agenda is a defeatist outlook that harps on the setbacks or possible dangers, whether in the Middle East or in America.

NUCLEAR THREAT TO PEACE

In recent years, a very serious obstacle to peace has arisen that involves the nations of Iran and North Korea, and their programs to develop nuclear weapons. In a United Nations report, Maggie Farley, Staff Writer for the *Los Angeles Times* (April 2, 2005) under the caption "Nuclear Terror Pact Advances," said, "After seven years of negotiations, the U. N. finalized a convention to prevent nuclear terrorism, paving the way for a broader international agreement to fight terrorist groups.

"The Convention on the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism is meant to stop rogue groups from using nuclear weapons. It criminalizes

individual's possession of radioactive material or devices, requires nations to prosecute or extradite those who threaten others while possessing such materials, and calls for exchanges of information and assistance among governments. The treaty does not, however, prohibit a nation from using nuclear weapons militarily.

U.N. SECRETARY-GENERAL COMMENTS

"Nuclear terrorism is one of the most urgent threats of our times, said Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who had made the completion of the treaty one of the goals of his U.N. reform program, which he introduced last month. Even one such attack could inflict mass casualties and change our world forever. That prospect should compel all of us to do our part to strengthen our common defenses. The General Assembly is expected to endorse the convention and open it for signature in September during a summit of world leaders.

"'Nuclear terrorism is no longer science fiction,' Annan said, 'I wish it were but, unfortunately, we live in a world of excess hazardous materials and abundant technological know-how, in which some terrorists clearly state their intentions to inflict catastrophic casualties.'" These warnings are an indication of the severity of the obstacles to establish peace in the world.

GOD TO ESTABLISH PEACE

During the six-thousand years since Adam and Eve introduced sin into the world, God has allowed mankind to experience a wide range of self-governing schemes. All of these institutions and efforts to govern failed to bring peace because of

sin. The relationship between God and his earthly creatures had been severed. Throughout this dark night of sin and death there have been few short periods of peace among peoples and nations of the world.

During this long period of time, God has been carrying out his ultimate design for the reconciliation of his human family and their eternal peace as expressed in his promise to Abraham, "By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice."—Gen. 22:16-18

The provision of the Abrahamic Covenant to develop a 'seed' that would bless all the families of the earth, is the only means by which mankind may have any hope of lasting peace in the world. The Gospel Age calling of the spiritual seed of promise, as represented in the 'stars,' will be the means by which the world of mankind, as represented by the 'sand,' will be blessed. Jesus was the promised seed through which provision was made for the recovery of the human family from alienation from God. He, together with his faithful bride class as members of the seed, will have the power and authority to carry out the wonderful plan of God for the blessing of all the families of the earth, and the establishment of everlasting peace.

PROMISES OF EVERLASTING PEACE

May we be inspired to greater levels of trust in God's long-range plans for the future blessing and peace of the world. Malachi, Micah, Isaiah, and other prophets of old were moved by the Holy Spirit of God to provide us with a vision of this wonderful time. "Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall." "They shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it." "The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever."—Mal. 4:2; Mic. 4:4; Isa. 32:17 ■