

FROM OUR PASTOR

August 20, 2016

Warm Sabbath Greetings to Everyone!

When Russian President Vladimir Putin ratified the annexation of Crimea during 2014 ceremony in Moscow he actually meant what he said. "The Crimea belongs to Russia." The Crimea has not been stable since, partly due to the vacillating and on-again-off-again policies of the USA, NATO, and Germany since then. The NATO nations have been taking a firm position of words, statements, and military exercises in the region while Putin has simply moved in the tanks and soldiers and taken territory.

This past week things are heating up, and some authorities are warning of a serious war erupting. AFP news reported, "Russian President Vladimir Putin was seen on Friday visiting annexed Crimea to boost security measures there, just days after accusing Kiev of attempting an armed incursion into the peninsula."

Putin chaired a meeting of his powerful security council in Crimea as he made his fifth visit to the strategic Black Sea peninsula since annexing it from Ukraine in March 2014.

Mr. Putin stated during the meeting: "We have gathered because of the well-known incident, after stopping an attempt by Ukrainian army during the meeting sabotage groups to stage an incursion into Crimean territory."

It is good to be Vladimir Putin these days. His traditional rivals, with the possible exception of Red China, are obvious "peace at any price" advocates embroiled in problems at home that prevent them from acting to defend Kiev. Putin simply bullies and acts, then ignores the reaction of the feckless crowd. It seems that he has almost no opposition anywhere so can simply do as he pleases. What apparently pleases him is rebuilding the old Soviet empire.

But things might be getting out of hand. Ukraine's President Petro Poroshenko on Thursday said he considered the likelihood of an escalation "high" and could not rule out a "full-scale Russian invasion along all fronts." Western leaders also have expressed alarm over the possibility of an escalation. Syria is dangerously on the edge of major war. Iran and China are now sending military help and taking sides in the Syrian war, making this conflict one massive chess game with most of the world's major militaries taking part.

Recently it was admitted that the US paid \$400 million in ransom money to Iran in exchange for four hostages. Somehow we recall statements from politicians about not dealing with terrorists or paying ransoms, but they must have been forgotten. What did we get in return for the "treaty" with Iran and the ransom money? Russian military planes now have full use of a number of bases in Iran, giving them far reach across the region.

Score one more for Vladimir.

As we watch a dangerous world and the current election process here at home certain scriptures about the modern nations descended from Jacob come to mind. One is Hosea 7:11 "Ephraim also is like a dilly dove, without sense."

A second is Isaiah 3:12 "As for My people, children are their oppressors, And women rule over them. O My people! Those who lead you cause you to err, And destroy the way of your paths."

Come to think of it, could Isaiah possibly have been predicting the outcome of this election?

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