

# Hartford Bible Students Newsletter

## March 2011

### THE IRON RULE OF DICTATORS

#### Uprising in the Middle East

After decades of living under oppressive dictatorships, the people of the Arab world are rising up to stake their claim to freedom. The historic upheaval began in Tunisia and has spread to Egypt and across the vital region. There have been uprisings in Bahrain, Libya, Iran, Yemen, Algeria, and Jordan. No one knows where it will end.

It is not an organized army that is doing the protesting with weapons, but it is the masses of discontented people. The overthrow of the dictators in Tunisia and Egypt happened with blinding speed, in a matter of weeks compared to years of some drawn-out wars.

The uprisings we have witnessed have been very unique from the past due in part to our modern-age advancements. Today, what happens on a street in Tunisia can be flashed in seconds around the world via cell phones to millions of outraged on-lookers.

A prophecy in the book of Daniel speaks about the time when knowledge shall be increased and it would bring on a great time of trouble (Dan. 12:1). One item that the increase of knowledge brought into the world is instant communication. That is what appears to be the people's weapon against those entrenched in power for years. The recent protests were made possible by Facebook, Twitter, cell phones, the Internet, etc. These technologies made the people aware of what was going on, and they in turn came out en masse to support the cause.

#### The Iron Rule of Dictators

The dictators in the Middle East have ruled with an iron fist over the people. In Tunisia, high unemployment and rising food prices fueled anger against President Zine al Abidine and his family who lived in gross excess. During his 23-year rule, the Tunisian people lived under a police state with no freedom of press.

In Egypt, half of the population has lived on \$2 a day or less, while the president, Hosni Mubarak, is claimed to have amassed \$70 billion over his 30-year autocracy. It is only now coming to light how corrupt his government truly was. When Mubarak began his reign after Anwar Sadat's assassination, he put emergency law in place to allow his government to fight the extremists who killed Sadat. However, he kept that emergency law in place ever since, allowing

him to arrest and detain people without charge and to limit public gatherings.

And in Libya, Muammar Gaddafi has been one of the longest serving rulers in all history, beginning in 1969. Along with supporting international terrorism, he has held extremely tight control over the Libyan people. Libya is the most censored country in the Middle East, according to the *Freedom of the Press Index*. In the recent uprising in Libya, the world has watched as Gaddafi has ordered the murder of his own people. In his speech in February, he threatened the protestors, stating, "They will beg for mercy and we will not be merciful."

The demonstrations against these authoritarian regimes have stemmed from a desire for open, honest government with free and fair elections, economic opportunity for all, and social freedom. The people are fighting against a monopoly of corrupt power. They, understandably, want their human dignity back, although we don't know what other factions could intervene to prevent this.

### **Christ's Iron Rod on the Nations**

After looking at the ugliness the iron rule of dictatorship has brought upon mankind in our day, it may seem strange to state that the scriptures tell us that Christ will use an iron rod in his kingdom rule. Rev. 2:27 and Psalm 2:9 say, He shall rule or break them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to pieces. Christ's iron rod will be used in smiting the nations into submission and removing the evil institutions and false religious systems presently in place. During a time of great trouble, with irresistible power, he will establish his kingdom "on earth as it is in heaven."

Christ's kingdom will crush out evil with a perfect power that none will be able to overcome. The rule of law will be laid down, and it will be strictly and rigidly enforced. All of earth's affairs will be squared. There will be no blurring of lines and no loopholes. Christ and his Church will be the most powerful and strict government the world has ever known. It might be asked: Will Christ be any different from the other rulers of today? Yes! Christ's purpose is to bring mankind into submission in order to bless them so that they may live forever in a glorious earthly kingdom. His goal is to bless, not to wield selfish power.

### **Christ's Iron Rule for Individuals**

After the nations have been brought into submission, the time will come to deal with individuals during the earthly kingdom. But when the rod will be used on individuals, it will not be used to physically beat people into submission. The rod will be used to shepherd the poor lost sheep of the human race. That doesn't mean it won't be used with enough force to get their attention, but it will be for their ultimate blessing, and all who choose life must come into strict conformity with those rules.

The work of the kingdom will be a gradual work; it will begin with those who live through the great time of trouble at the end of the age, and it will in time progress to those who sleep in death. Speaking of that time, the Apostle John says in John 5:29 that those that have done evil, in the sense that they have not met the divine standard of worthiness to a spiritual resurrection, will at that time be raised from the grave and gradually brought to perfection by a "resurrection of

judgment.” This will not be a judgment or trial for past sins, but it will be an individual trial for life. Acts 3:23 tells us that those who obey will live, but those who will not render obedience will be cut off amongst the people in the second death. And then the iron rule will give way to the law of liberty to those who obey.

As to exactly how any and all violations of the rules of righteousness will be enforced by Christ during his earthly kingdom, we cannot know for sure. We know not for sure how He will enforce compliance, only that He will.

But this enforced submission in which every knee must bow to Christ does not mean that all mankind will submit. Because God has made people with free wills, He will not overrule or force heart obedience. But eternal life will only be awarded to those who submit to the just and righteous influence of Christ and who render willing obedience from the heart. So while the power of force will be used to make men obey the laws of the kingdom, force will never interfere with man’s God-like quality of free will.

But Christ’s reign will not be one of power and forced submission only, but side by side with the force will be love. Unlike the dictators in today’s world, the methods used by the absolute rule of Christ and his Church will be coupled with mercy and peace for all the inhabitants of the world who will learn righteousness when the judgments of the Lord are abroad in the earth. And even though all evil will be dealt with in a swift and sure manner, it will also be done with loving compassion.

Psalm 23:4, *“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; **thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.**”*

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