

## **The Whole World Is Writhing**

**John W. Ritenbaugh**

**Given 22-Apr-17; Sermon #1375c**

Much of the news from outside the United States of America recently has been regarding this nation's relations with North Korea. However, I believe that in the big picture, North Korea is in reality nothing more than a ripple compared to what is and has been underway for a long period of time elsewhere.

Until this past week I, for some reason, did not grasp that the United States of America is caught up in virtually the identical turmoil as every nation, regardless of where those nations are located, and these nations have been involved in this nation for decades in some cases. We too have been involved in it for decades, but what I overlooked is that it is the same struggle as the other nations are engaged in. How dumb I was to think we are above this sort of the same turmoil other nations are going through. We aren't, though. We have the same human nature. As a nation, we are every bit as filled with carnal nature as others, as deceived as others, and as a nation being led about by the ways of this world by its leader, Satan, as others.

What opened my eyes to my failure was a news article sent to me by David Grabbe, but written by George Friedman. Mr. Friedman is an exceptionally fine writer, analyzing what is happening internationally and making suggestions as to how this may affect Americans, or at the least what the effects might be on American perceptions.

What he said did change my perception on an activity. Mr. Friedman titled his article, "Turkey, Secularism and Religion." A subtitle on the article read this way: "A struggle between two segments of Turkish society is emerging." After reading the article, I said to myself, "It's about time."

What caught my immediate attention was the mention of Turkey. This is because the violent rise of fundamentalist Islam over the past 50 or so years has caused a shift in some biblical prophecy researchers to look far more

closely at Islam as being the major enemy of Christ and the church just before His return. Look where Islam is located. In other words, these researchers have shifted much of their Euro-centric focus for the fulfilling of biblical prophecy from Europe to the Middle East, and that Turkey may very well play a major role as to what might happen.

Maybe you don't know a great deal about Turkey. Except for Israel, Turkey is easily the most stable and the most formidable nation in that part of the world. Biblically, in terms of prophecy, Turkey has a very large number of places, cities, and areas, directly named in end-time prophecies. That does not mean that these places are said in the Bible, "These places are in Western Turkey at this time." No, but the name and the place is still there nonetheless, and Turkey still governs the area. So the question is this: Is Turkey too going to fall into the hands of the Islamic fundamentalists? That would add considerable strength to an Islamic army.

But an Islamic army was not on George Friedman's mind in this article. What was on his mind was the cause of why Turkey's President (Erdogan) chose to campaign in this referendum as he did. What motivated him? Mr. Friedman clearly said that the recent referendum in Turkey was about increasing the power of the presidency. Erdogan is president. The referendum was telling Mr. Friedman much about the relationship between the secular and religious elements of society in Turkey. Hang on to that—the secular and religious elements.

This thought was because when modern Turkey was organized, their founder's guide was European culture. Therefore, unlike most Middle Eastern nations this required a secular political order similar to all Israelitish nations. That is largely where Israel is located in modern times—in Europe. They were really copying Israelitish approaches to government. That means they approach government very much like the United States does.

It was this secular political order that brought Turkey into the modern world and produced the wealth and stability the Turks now possess. Modern Turkey is only about one hundred years old.

We are getting to the key part of this now: In order to create the stability we see in Turkey, the founders had to give the military considerable policing

powers. Why? Because the overwhelming majority of people are Muslims, and you know how rabid they are about their religion. Something had to hold check on these rabid fervors about religion.

What is happening is that, as in all the other Muslim nations, the Islamic religious element which has been held in check by the military in Turkey is becoming inflamed and resisting the secularism, and the military and Turkey are moving toward an internal explosion. Thus, the grab for more power.

It was right here I learned what I had not previously understood about the United States. Our government here is secular, as is Turkey's. Friedman commented that secularism's way of accommodating religion is to create a radical distinction between public and private. Hang onto that thought. They insist that religion is to be part of private life. I want you to think about the United States now. They insist that religion is to be part of private life, while the public sphere should stay neutral on religious matters. To put it differently, public life would be secular and people would be free to choose how they want to live in their private lives. This is beautiful! This is the way Americans want it! Not every American, though.

Here comes the problem. This is a human nature thing. The problem is that secularism is not neutral. It has its prejudices. It has its vision of a just world, which is built on an extraordinary assumption: that people can make a radical distinction between public and private life and keep them separated. Brethren, that is impossible! This is why Turkey is moving into trouble. They are trying to govern through an impossibility—trying to keep private life separated from the public sphere.

If you, as a religious person believe that the universe has a divine purpose—do Christians believe that, that the universe has a divine purpose?—and that your life is part of that purpose, how can you confine that belief to the hidden realm of only your home? Religious people rightly want to spread the word—spread the gospel. Secularists don't want to hear the gospel because they have their own prejudices.

Secularism asserts that it is neutral because it does not incorporate any of the traditional religions. But the problem is, secularism is not neutral. Have you ever heard of political correctness? Who is trying to shove those things into

the religious people's minds? It is secularism. While it is not traditional in terms of practicing a formal religion, it has its own values and asserts them publicly, forcing conformity on the religious they rule over. What do you think we are going through here between the evangelicals and the government? The evangelicals feel they are being forced into a corner by secularists' morals, which to them are immoral.

We have the same thing going on in the United States of America that is being fought over in Syria; Turkey is moving toward it; other nations over there have crumbled before it; and I will say to you right now, this has been going on for millennia between those who are religious and those who are secular. This is what I meant by this opened up my eyes to see that this has been going on...do you think there wasn't any fight between Moses and the people in the congregation? Religion and secularism. And in almost every case, the secularists win.

What is on the very rim of Turkey's society is almost exactly what has been simmering away in the good old USA now for decades. With the election of Trump, the American religious have reasserted themselves but we are witnessing the secular progressives fighting back hard with a blizzard of nothing more than assertions to once again take over.