

Is Gorbachev Engaged To Christ?

A sermon preached by Ted Atkinson, Minister, Oxford Presbyterian Church, Oxford, PA on September 3, 1989 (two visiting Soviet Baptist Christians presented our church with a gift). Scripture Lessons: Isaiah 44:24-28; 1 Timothy 2:1-7; Luke 6:27-36.

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

Was Gorbachev baptized? ... *Yes wife Mikhail*

Gorbachev brings to mind another leader of super-power - Cyrus of Persia, who lived over 500 years before Christ or about 2500 years ago.

- not a Jew
- not a believer that we know of
- the ruler of a nation that didn't recognize the Lord
- the leader of one of the greatest super-powers of the day

When he came to power

- he was different from all the rulers that preceded him
- he allowed more autonomy to the many ethnic groups that comprised his empire
- he allowed the Jews, who had been exiled by the Babylonian Empire for 70 years, to return to Palestine
- he allowed them to worship the Lord
- he allowed them to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem

This was an unheard of policy.

- Isaiah saw in him one on whom the Spirit of the Lord had fallen
- The Lord called Cyrus - "my shepherd" - even though Cyrus didn't recognize the Lord as far as we know

It must have been exciting for Isaiah to hear what Cyrus, this foreign ruler of a super-power, was doing - - as exciting as it is for us to hear of what's going on today in the Soviet ~~Empire~~ ^{Union}. And our hopes and prayers are for your nation as well as our own nation, Galena and Luba.

Never in my life time have hopes been so high.

- Look at what's happening in the Soviet Union
- We hear about the loosening of the Soviet Union
- We hear about the impending emigration of a great many
Jews, baptists, pentecostals
- The Soviet government is allowing in 1 million Bibles

I wish all of you could meet and talk with Galena and Luba

- Russian Baptist Christians
- they live in Moscow
- Luba is a nurse
- Galena is a teacher

When Luba was a little girl her grandmother, in the country, took her to
a church...

Today -

- Sunday School is permitted now
- hundreds of churches are being returned
- the church can't train enough priests and ministers
- The story of the Soviet Army officer...
- Recently 48 people were publicly baptized in Moscow

I'm not naive -

- Psalm 146:3 - "put not your trust in princes"
- Our trust is in the Lord - the Father of the Risen Christ -
"the Lord who made all things, who stretched out the
heavens alone, who spread out the earth..."

How foolish it is to put our ultimate hopes and faith in world leaders

- whether our President, George Bush
- or your President, Michael Gorbachev

How foolish it is to put our ultimate hopes and faith in a nation

- I love our great nation - I believe I'd give my life in defense of our nation- our values- our visions- our culture
- I know, Luba and Galena, that you love your great nation
 - it's culture
 - it's heritage
 - it's accomplishments

But I can't help but see things in historical perspective

- 2500 years ago - Babylon ruled the civilized world until Babylon fell to the Medes and Persians
- 2000 years ago - Rome ruled the civilized world
- 100 years ago - the sun never set upon the British Empire
- 50 years ago - Nazi Germany dreamed of the third reich lasting for a thousand years

Today the Soviet Union and the United States are the two most powerful nations in the world... ^{...today...} but who, in the light of the march of history, can ever place ultimate hope... ultimate faith... in a nation, however great and powerful and rich.

If our ultimate hope and faith is in a nation there'll never be lasting peace on earth... there can only be conflict and division, war and waste. Only as we place our hope in the Holy One who transcends history... who lives in eternity... Only as we place our faith in the Risen Lord who is the same yesterday, today and forever... *will there be hope of peace... Swazis, plangusikana.*

There's a hymn that's often sung in the worship services of the cathedrals of the old British Empire, the historian, James Morris writes. Whether in Lahore, Pakistan or Singapore, Auckland or Kingston, Morris *Calcutta, India Uganda*

writes, "it always seems to end with the same last hymn."

*So be it, LORD, Thy Throne shall never,
Like earth's proud empires, pass away;
Thy Kingdom stands, and grows for ever,
Till all Thy creatures own Thy sway.*

Luba and Galena, we will pray for your nation and leaders and we ask your prayers for us. The Apostle Paul instructs us to pray for all people everywhere- especially for those in high positions, that we may lead a quiet, peaceable, and godly lives, respectful to all. It's God's will for all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. It's God's will that the people and the leaders of the Soviet Union ~~to~~ be saved. *That all they need to be saved for* It's God's will that the people and the leaders of the United States be saved *from all we need to be saved from... our materialism, our idolatry, our immorality... our* Christ died and rose again, not in order to make either the Soviet Union or the United States the fulfilment of God's gracious vision and plan for the world, but to save us all. Our ultimate hope and faith is in the promised Kingdom of God made known to us through Jesus Christ.

Let us pray: O god, you have made of one blood all nations to live on the face of the earth, and have revealed your will for all people by your son, the Prince of Peace: Give us love and mercy to look upon all people as our brothers and sisters, and to share with them the heritage that we have received from you. Deliver us from pride, prejudice, and arrogance. Put far from us all selfishness and malice, suspicion, envy, and anger which make people to be enemies of one another. Turn all peoples unto you, so that, following your example and united in your service, they may become one holy people in you, and that your peace may possess every heart and rule in all the nations of the world; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord. Amen.