

What in North Korea is going on?

Those who have been following recently know that I have been on a re-entry mission to North Korea. From late 2009 until just recently I kept that nation out of my mind as much as possible, except when the media intervened and forced images of it upon my eyes. I had felt this practice was good for the health that I temporarily lost by a little too much of the evil of that place. But I can no longer stay away.

One project I wanted to accomplish was the gathering of news headlines for those five black-out years. Here is what has been going on in *Chosun* . Note that this is in no way a complete report, but rather a general idea of NK history from late 2009 until now. You will note, as I have reported already, that not much is changed.

In 2009, NK's ballistic missiles launch seized the airwaves . In the spring, one was fired from North Korea toward the United States, over Japan. On our Memorial Day, only a few weeks later, a second test went off, this time only 44 miles from the Chinese border. In spite of this, newly elected President Obama held out the possibility of dialogue with Kim in a letter of friendship sent by an NK envoy. The letter was never allowed to be delivered.

Also in 2009, a misdirected move toward currency reform created an even greater inflationary problem in Korea's already fragile economy. And the year ended with Thailand seizing 35 tons of weapons from a North Korean plane headed to the Middle East. Thank you, Thailand.

Kim Jong Il and company started 2010 by calling an end, said he, to hostile Western relations. Instead his hostility was sent out to the waters bordering his neighbor South Korea. There the SK submarine *Cheonan* was sunk, 46 dead. The world reacted, the US in particular imposing strict sanctions on North Korea and holding joint military exercises with South Korea in the Sea of Japan. Did the student learn the lesson? Not really. In November, artillery rounds were fired from the North upon a South Korean island, Yeonpyeong. Several were killed, scores injured. This they also seemed to have gotten away with unscathed.

But, sanctions, you say? Sanctions cannot cripple an already crippled nation. And the relieving of sanctions is usually only a benefit to the prospering people of the nation. Sanctions benefit the Western leader by making him look decisive and caring.

Early in 2011, the Dear Leader, unknowingly in his last year on the planet, expressed a desire to return to the six-party talks regarding nuclear matters. Not strangely, his request was turned down. But later in the year he was invited to some lesser-level talks on the condition of NK giving up its nuclear aspirations. This time *he* did the rejecting. Condition too severe.

Finally in October the US and the DPRK talked. The prerequisite of the talk was a promise by NK to put a moratorium on its nuclear activities. Now, I suppose that while they were *talking* there were no missiles fired. But everyone surely knew that the promise would not last.

Kim Jong-il breathed his last on December 17, and was succeeded by his 3rd son Kim Jong Un on December 29.

So, 2012 begins with the reign of King Kim Jong Un. The new regime seems to have introduced much that is new, in a manner of speaking, and exacerbated much that is old. On Leap Day there was agreed to a plan whereby 240,000 tons of food would be delivered to North Korea if she would refrain from testing nuclear devices. The agreement was broken on April 13. Forty-four days later. A missile launch was attempted, but was a failure. This time the North admitted it was a failure, unlike at other times. Was this in hopes that a failure would not be considered an actual launch, and therefore a breach of promise? There is much childlike reasoning in the DPRK. Perhaps?

In July, possibly a breakthrough? A kinder gentler regime? Kim Jong Un is actually in attendance at a concert featuring Mickey Mouse, Winnie the Pooh, and Sinatra music! By his side is a woman. We later find this was indeed his wife. But such a public display of a female is unheard of in the dynasty. Good things coming? Breaking the old mold?

Nope. In December, another missile. This time it is a success.

2013. In January, 6 weeks after the launch, the UN Security Council finally says, "Bad boy," slaps Kim's wrist, and moves on to the next item on the agenda. This does not deter the bad boy from launching yet another nuclear test on February 12.

Then, the erratic dictator, perhaps needing to lighten up after all this heaviness of threatening a world, allows for comic basketball player Dennis Rodman to invade his space. This bizarre relationship will continue over a 12 month period until Rodman has to be locked up for alcohol problems. In the United States. Self-imposed. Who can deal with a Kim and a nation like his and remain sane? Rodman claimed to be diplomatic in his mission but not a diplomat. In other words, give me a pass here but don't expect anything. Truly the world is not safer for democracy because of the "worm" and his visits.

In July, a NK ship is found carrying weapons from Cuba. In August, a nuclear reactor that had been shut down in 2007 is restarted. Then there are the hostages of 2013: Kenneth Bae, and the 85-year-old Korean War veteran who had a slip of the tongue and was kept from returning home after his visit to NK.

This Kim is just erratic, unpredictable, scary. Not going the right direction here at all. He ends the year by executing his own uncle, a too-powerful voice in his government. Nero Caesar lives. Mad as ever. How long, O Lord?

2014. This year so far, more missile launches, Kim calls movies we make about him an act of war, more tourists are threatened with execution, drones spotted, and on and on it goes. I think we have all seen enough of the ways of this land to have a more educated plan of prayer for it. Never, I believe, has such evil been concentrated in one small area of the world. It's as though demons have been cast out of so many places of earth that they all needed a place on the planet to congregate. In North Korea, it seems there is a safe haven. Only God's people can deal with the demonic. Let's get our armor on and fight in this battle.

If you want to keep up with this nation yourself, consider the following North Korea news sites online:

1. The Daily NK, dailynk.com/English , published in South Korea.
2. The Korean Central News Agency of DPRK, KCNA.co.jp, published in Pyongyang North Korea
3. NK news, nknews.org, published in Washington.

Also online you can visit the major news sources and simply do a search for North Korea.

Soon we will turn to the church's reserves, its own sources of information about the people of God in North Korea. That is when the joy will begin in this series of articles.

Just before that, we will next take a quick look at the new leader, aka "The Great Successor." A quick look is all we can take, since information about him is very, very scant. But it is good to know the players in this drama as much as possible.