

caliphate which was announced to the world on July 29, 2014 by their leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

Sharia Law

A caliphate is an Islamic government, led by a caliph with absolute power and authority who is seen as a successor to the Islamic prophet Muhammad. A caliphate must control territory and be governed entirely by Muslim law otherwise known as Sharia law. All Muslims, whether or not residing in the territory, are required to give their allegiance to the caliphate, for which the explicit intention is to rule the world. **Indeed according to Sharia law, a Muslim's failure to declare allegiance to a caliphate is apostasy, for which the penalty is death.**

But there is no consensus within the Muslim world over the legitimacy of the present caliphate of ISIS. In fact, the vast majority of Muslims worldwide have rejected ISIS. Historically, many others caliphates have been rejected, since the very first caliphates under Muhammad. Whether legitimate or not the world has to contend with the activities of ISIS, which rigorously follows Sharia Law. **This demands that Muslims purge the world of dissidents or enemies by crucifixion or beheading.** However, subjugation by enslavement or concubinage is also permitted. For example, the Koran states that Christians and Jews may be exempted from automatic execution, IF they do not resist the Islamic government.

Massive Recruitment by ISIS

ISIS has been successfully recruiting adherents worldwide via diverse means including social media. In May 2015 ISIS leader, Al Baghdadi, issued this statement:

"There is no excuse for any Muslim not to migrate to the Islamic State... We are calling on you either to join or carry weapons wherever you are... It is the war of all Muslims, ... It is the war of Muslims against infidels."

However, ISIS seeks no country allies. Negotiating with non-Muslim Governments is considered apostasy. Other Muslim groups like Hamas, the Muslim Brotherhood and even the Taliban who have done this, are regarded by ISIS to be guilty of apostasy.

Fulfilling prophecy

ISIS sees itself as ushering in the **end-time apocalypse**, thereby fulfilling Islamic prophecy. According to this prophecy, the town of Dabiq in Syria will be the site of the last immense war on earth in which Muslims will defeat the "armies of Rome". As ISIS prepares for this war, they have already captured Dabiq, and they now anticipate the confrontation with the so-called 'armies of Rome'.

Next Issue: Who are the "armies of Rome"? Does Bible Prophecy say anything about the war in Dabiq?

Contributors to this edition: S. Dennis, P. Knight, K. Morris, A. Rhoden

June 2015 Edition | Page 4



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The Summer edition of the newsletter turns the spotlight on some of the **HOTTEST** topics around: **Gay Rights vs Human Rights** ■ **ISIS' reign of terror** ■ **Women's Ordination in the SDA Church** Find a **COOL** spot to read and ponder on these things.



LEGAL RIGHT, MORAL WRONG

Human Rights pre-dates the 20th Century and has manifested itself in several different movements to include, the Anti-Slavery, Anti-Colonialism, and Anti-apartheid movements. These movements repeatedly emphasised the need for a body of law that protects the basic fundamental rights and freedoms essential to all human beings. The Universal Declaration on Human Rights ("UDHR") adopted by the United Nations (UN) in 1948 sets the benchmark

standards for human rights globally.

In the UDHR, human rights are defined in 30 Articles, which include: the right to privacy; the right to marry and to found a family; and the right to protection of the family unit by society and the State. The 1st Article of the UDHR states that, "**all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights... and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood**", while Article 2 guarantees the rights to all "without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion ...".

States that give their assent to the UDHR are required to uphold the specified human rights through legislation. Laws are expressed in various ways reflecting different cultural norms and practices, and they also vary over time. **For example when European colonialists framed the Jamaican Offences Against the Person Act in the 1900's, the offence of**

June 2015 Edition | Page 1

buggery was described as “abominable”. However, in the 21st Century, Jamaica is being castigated by Europeans for upholding this very law.

Whereas man’s interpretation of human rights may change with time, God’s law is immutable and unchangeable and the fact is that homosexuality is condemned in the Bible. Being gay is contrary to God’s plan for mankind, and is regarded by the vast majority of Christians worldwide as morally wrong. God protects human rights through principles of equity, justice and benevolence.

As homosexuality becomes increasingly widespread, the practice conflicts head-on with Christian principles. Governments have also been pressured into accepting same-sex unions, as gays seek to exercise their human rights. **By making gay marriage permissible in the US, the implication is that the practice has become morally acceptable.** But for those who regard the Bible as their moral authority, it remains a sin and must be condemned. At the same time, based on the Biblical principles of benevolence Christians are called upon to show love to homosexuals even while speaking out against being gay as a violation of God’s law.

SDA GENERAL CONFERENCE 2015

The 60th Conference Session of the Seventh-day Adventist family is now on

in San Antonio, Texas (July 2 – 11). The most prominent item on the agenda is undoubtedly the question of whether women should be ordained as pastors in the church. After years of study and debate this issue remains a divisive one, with some clinging to Biblical precepts against ordination while others opt for conforming to modern trends. Many regional bodies are already ordaining women, but the upcoming Session is obliged to take a final decisive vote.

THE POPE AMASSES FOLLOWERS

The current head of the Catholic Church, Pope Francis has distinguished himself in many ways from his predecessors. He has made some shockingly inclusive religious statements (e.g. that being an atheist is fine as long as you do good) which seem counter to the Christian message.

In Politics

Media reports describe Pope Francis as the “Unexpected Hero of US-Cuba relations”. Doing what none before him had done, in 2014 **Pope Francis used his political influence to put an end to the half-a-century long feud between Cuba and the United States (US)**. It is reported that the Pope sent letters to the two leaders and hosted negotiations between the countries. Both countries exchanged released prisoners. As news of the reconciliation between the two countries broke on the Pope’s Birthday,

December 17, 2014, some felt that his Latin American roots caused him to have a personal interest in the situation. Whatever the reason for the Pope’s intervention, it has been acclaimed as “truly the biggest success for the Vatican’s ultra-discreet diplomacy for at least 30 years”.

In Environmental Protection

On June 18, 2015 the Pope issued an encyclical – an open letter to Bishops – concerning the need for better environmental practices worldwide. The 184-page encyclical was timed for release a few months before the next round of United Nations (UN) Climate Change Conference 2015, and is expected to impact future environmental policies on a global scale.

There has already been unprecedented world-wide interest in this papal document, which is sweeping in both ambition and scope. In the opinion of one senior lecturer at Yale University in the areas of Environmental Studies and Divinity it is “one of the most important documents on the moral implications of the damage we are doing to our planet”.

Historical visit to the US

In September 2015 Pope Francis will be paying a visit to the United States. There he will address the US Senate and House of Representatives in

Washington, D.C., the United Nations General Assembly in New York and the World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia. His pronouncements at these gatherings are anxiously awaited by millions.

As we assess the activities of the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church let us not be naïve about the significance of these developments. Prophecy is being fulfilled as the Vatican amasses and wields great power and influence. It is not hard to see today that the whole world marvels over Pope Francis, who is now establishing himself as the friend of all.

ISIS THE THIRD WOE

The previous edition introduced the 3 woes of the Book of Revelation (Rev 9 – 16) and related these to stages in the development and expansion of Islam. This article outlines features of ISIS – the most radical arm of 21st century Islam.

Most radical

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) emerged on the global scene since 2011 immediately after widespread anti-Government uprisings in the Middle East. Muslim extremists in Iraq and Syria, capitalized on the weakening of state control to seize large amounts of territory. They then took over from Al Qaeda as the most extreme arm of the Muslim faith, and established a