

# Trust in the Lord, Not in Mortal Man

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According to the American Society of Civil Engineers, the Panama Canal is one of the greatest civil engineering achievements of the 20th century and is included on its list of Seven Wonders of the Modern World. Handling about 40% of the world's cargo ship traffic, it has played a central role in the history of Panama, making this small Central American nation of great importance.

In 2025, the United States openly contemplated reasserting control of the Panama Canal over alleged security concerns regarding the strategic influence of communist China. This has led to speculation by some that the real agenda for this involves setting the stage for a regional government, like a North American Union, which would eventually become one of ten regions forming a world government. Globalist organizations like the Council on Foreign Relations, Club of Rome, and Technocracy Inc. have depicted such a region in various maps, including one where it stretches from Panama to Greenland.

What would become the Republic of Panama was once a northwestern region of the Republic of Colombia. In exchange for support from the United States in seceding from Colombia and achieving independence in 1903, Panama agreed to allow the U.S. to assume construction of the Panama Canal the following year. The canal was completed and opened in 1914. The U.S. maintained sovereignty over it and the surrounding Canal Zone

until December 31, 1999, when this was transferred to Panama by treaties signed by President Jimmy Carter (1924-2024) and Panamanian leader General Omar Torrijos (1929-1981) on September 7, 1977.

Torrijos became the strongman of Panama through a military coup d'état in 1968, assuming the title "Maximum Leader of the Panamanian Revolution." He began to rule by decree, taking control of the press, dissolving the legislature, exiling political rivals, and banning all opposition political activity.

*Torrijismo* was the name of the populist movement Torrijos started, focused on socioeconomic reforms involving the redistribution of land for poor farmers and opening up educational and employment opportunities for the less fortunate. This endeared him to the majority of the poor and middle class of the country, many of whom developed a cult of personality around him.

According to some reports, Torrijos, during weekends, would give a thousand dollars to random people and charities. It was not uncommon for some to say, when faced with a social or economic problem, "Ask Omar ..." or "Omar will fix it." They adored Torrijos and saw him as the fulfiller of their dreams for a better life and the solution to all their troubles.

Aware of the resentment many Panamanians felt regarding U.S. control over the Canal and the land immediately surrounding it, Torrijos made it a key priority to improve the living standards of the poor and promote national unity so that he could be in a stronger position to negotiate a treaty with the U.S. to cede control of it to Panama. His success in this task bolstered his power and prestige and made him a national hero.

Unlike previous rulers, Torrijos' power base did not directly depend on the wealthy elite families that dominated the commercial and political life of the country. But the favor he

showed to political allies helped them to amass their own fortunes at the expense of the national treasury. Though corruption and drug trafficking increased considerably under Torrijos' rule, his supporters tended to overlook or excuse this and any other faults he had. They adored him for his social and economic policies for the poor and bolstering national pride by gaining sovereignty of the Canal for Panama.

Torrijos' rule came to an end when he was killed with six others in a plane crash in central Panama. Though adverse weather was reported as contributing to the crash, there have been persistent speculations that the plane had been sabotaged either by a CIA operative or by Torrijos' eventual successor, General Manuel Noriega (1934-2017), who had his own connections to U.S. intelligence agencies.

Noriega's dictatorship was very repressive, brutal, and corrupt, bringing significant hardship to Panamanians who were not his political allies. His rule ended with the December 20, 1989, U.S. invasion of the country, but at a terrible cost. More than 500 Panamanians were killed, and thousands of homes and businesses were destroyed.

The people of Panama for many years turned away from constitutional and democratic principles, putting their trust and adoration in a strong leader who ruled by decree because he did some things that they favored. But that trust was misplaced, for when that leader was removed from power, things became worse than before by another who ruled by decree in ways they did not like.

The Bible reminds us:

"Do not trust in princes, in mortal man, in whom there is no salvation. His spirit departs, he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish." (Psalm 146:3-4)

"Thus says the LORD, 'Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind and makes flesh his strength, and whose heart turns away from

the LORD.' ... Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD and whose trust is the LORD." (Jeremiah 17:5-8)

We may be tempted out of fear, hardship, or convenience to turn away from God and the principles of liberty He has graciously given to us and embrace poor substitutes for peace, prosperity, and security. An example of this was when Israel, experiencing hardship from the judicial corruption of Samuel's sons, asked for a king like the other nations around them. Their request turned out to be a rejection of God's kingship over them in favor of a greater focus on a human ruler, and it led to less freedom and burdensome taxation (1 Samuel 8).

Job, on the other hand, is an example of a man who faced intense loss, hardship, and suffering, for Satan was granted permission to test him to see if he would abandon his faithfulness to God and His principles. But he held fast to his integrity before God and in the end was blessed with a greater appreciation for God's wisdom over man's and a twofold restoration of what he had lost (Job 1-2:1-10, 42:1-17).

Succumbing to the idolization of any religious or political leader is a trap that leads to deception, disappointment, and disaster. Seeking consistently to follow godly principles as presented in the word of God, the Bible, is a shield against the snare of the cult of personality. This works for government, and more importantly, for eternity.

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, who died on the cross for sinners and rose again from the dead, and who is coming back to establish His everlasting kingdom. Trust and adoration are due only to Him, and it is only from Him that true forgiveness, reconciliation with God, and eternal salvation come. Jesus will never forsake, disappoint, or lead you astray to disaster (Romans 10:9-11).

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