

Mankind and Melchizedek

FROM ADAM TO NOAH humanity remained a unit, without divisions or partings. The record concerns Adam's generatings. Though Noah is the tenth from Adam, yet it seems that humanity is still viewed as a unit. Mankind has multiplied. The evil of mankind has also multiplied as shown in the sixth chapter. In that eon God's ways did not divide mankind.

The absence of divisions within mankind intensified the effects of the evil tendency of humanity. The unity of mankind gave strength, but it was in an evil direction. That Noah and his sons rose above the character and deeds of their contemporaries is a most remarkable matter, and of much consequence. Some mortals of that day are spoken of as distinguished ones, or "giants" (AV Gen.6:4), yet they are not distinguished for good. The most that can be said of them is that they were a section of mankind who, despite their one time distinction, became merged into the general evil of the era and later were all destroyed by God in the deluge which He brought upon the earth.

THE EARTH RE-PEOPLED FROM THREE SONS

Noah was the link between humanity before and after the deluge. The continuance of humanity from the *three* sons of Noah has much significance. We should not, however, construe the number of these sons as a prime factor in promoting the division of mankind. Government was committed to human hands, but, due to its simple and uniform character, even this did not promote the rise of nations amidst the increase of population. Partition into nations required the positive activity of God. He determined the elements of demarcation.

Among the descendants of each of Noah's sons, the family remained the unit of society. Prior to the deluge, the family is not specifically mentioned in the record. Later, the family was the unit which controlled the future. The family was the initial distinguishing feature. One major motive decides its outlook upon the world. The interests of the families tended to promote plans which prevented their being dispersed over the earth's surface. This intention to establish themselves crystallized in the scheme to build the tower and the city on the plains of Shinar. It was not built that they might reach heaven, as the A.V. suggests, but to keep them together on the earth.

In the brief record given in the first eleven chapters of Genesis it is intimated that the concentration of human capacity and energy nearly always tends toward evil and against God. Unrestrained, the concentration produced a condition and situation calling for the destruction which came in the deluge at the hands of God. But in the post-diluvian era God interfered to retard and direct this tendency, so to prevent the full development of its evil possibilities. God disintegrated the one language which prevailed amongst the families and so destroyed their unity. By this interference God developed His ways within humanity. He introduced all the factors by which He made the nations. These actions by God were not merely to exploit the linguistic possibilities which were within humanity, but also to give impetus to the latent potential for physiological variation. Thus were constituted the definite and permanent partings within mankind. The family units come to be separated according to their tongues, into their lands, and eventually their nations. At first they are discriminated as coastlanders, a term intimating settlement in a particular region.

Since then any completely concerted plan has not been possible for mankind. The comparatively brief periods of universal rule which have been since that time, have also been promoted by God. They have been feeble, due to God's original partings. On the other hand, humanity has failed to learn the lesson and still seeks to consolidate itself. But there can be no "one world" without God.

NATIONS

God made the nations with a view to the good of mankind. But the nations left God, and later were themselves given up to follow their own ways. They become mere political units which increasingly corrupted the knowledge of God, and engaged in the veneration of the creature.

Mankind now shows factors which make for national and racial divisions, but we ought not to conclude that they were created so. Just as God first created the sexes as one, and later parted them, so would it appear to be as regards the race. It seems clear, then, that God's action in Genesis eleven was of a most radical character. The sons of Adam, through Noah's sons, are parted by the Supreme into nations. The families receive the distinguishing marks of tongues and lands, and they are constituted governmental units. The boundaries of the peoples are determined by the Supreme. He distributes the earth and allots its lands to the various nations.

PHYSIOLOGY

The divisions of mankind which we term "race" are variations, bred from God's original creation. God, however, has ordered and controlled the biological development of mankind. The possibility for variation placed within Adam at creation was, under God's hand, used as a partitioning factor in the course of mankind's genetic descent. The folkstem factors remained latent until the time for division.

The so-called racial characteristics are only arbitrary divisions, to enable a classification of types. But we should note that, within such a division, we may have almost any feature, though of course there will be many persons who exhibit the dominant trait. If, for example, in a type which has the everted lip turning outward, we also find some with the thin lip, or the prominent high-bridged nose, where we should expect the flat, broad nose, as well as much variation of skin color, or of hair, what can we conclude? Surely, a common origin. Our conclusion is confirmed by the fact that all classes of humans are inter-fertile. They produce offspring of considerable variety, yet can always mate. Mankind is one species.

The Ethiopian is the Cushite (see Gen.10:7,8 and Jer.13:23). He is as much descended from the first pair in Eden as was the Greek. The skin color was not originally apparent in humanity, yet the possibility for pigmentation was there beneath the skin in the malpighian layer, below the outer skin. The pigmentation of the skin is not an acquired character, but its activity has been promoted under the ordering of God. There is much in the question about the Ethiopian: "Does the Ethiopian turn his skin?" Does not the force of the question turn upon the implication that his skin is neither under his control nor of his choice? Isaac and Rebecca's twin children afford a most interesting and arresting case of differing folkstems from the same parents. These children, as twins, must have been from differing ova disrupted from the same ovary.

Nations, races and languages are no longer a unit. This is the result of history. The impulse of partition came when God disintegrated the one language, spoken by the families descended from the three sons of Noah. Comparative study reveals the fact that all languages are reducible to three branches of a common stock. That original language supplied the *material*. This God disintegrated. Phonetic decay has forwarded God's disintegration, for with this and the changed usage of words, the nature of the language became destroyed. This is further complicated by those factors which give *form* to a language, namely, the grammar, the syntax, the simplifying of etymology.

By the time of the fifth generation (compare Genesis eleven with Luke three, and the Septuagint) of those descended from Shem, events and circumstances in the world reached a stage when God intervened. This seems to correspond to the days of Peleg. By the chronology of the Hebrew text, his birth would be 101 years after the deluge, but by the Septuagint it would be 531 years. This latter would seem to compare favorably with the period of 800 years which elapsed before the population coming from Adam was said to have multiplied. That was from a single pair, whereas the post-diluvian appears to admit a more suitable period in

which the population of the earth could become commensurate with the idea of division into nations. It also allows for the formulation of policy amongst the people.

Even at this juncture, the people plan upon a basis which does not have God in recognition. To a great extent they have lost the sense of His imperceptible power and divinity. We should note that the scriptural record starts mankind with a knowledge of God. Men were monotheists, yet, by the time of Terah, nine generations from the deluge, they served other gods. The call of Abram indicates the degree to which truth has become corrupted, and also that God is preparing to turn from the nations, and to leave them to their own ways. Even at this point they are not retaining Him in their knowledge.

Since neither conscience, nor yet the privilege of authority to govern among themselves, had led the people to know God as God, the making of the nations by God really became an adjudication. God's action also had in view the unfolding of His ways with mankind, that they might learn to have Him in recognition. The nations did not eliminate the family, but placed a king as head of the policy of each nation. God was above all. He is the Deity Supreme, and nations should so recognize Him, even as individuals. Here also the nations fail. We now touch the point when God calls Abram, to whom He gives the promises. From this one, God will make His own nation, and through them He will bless all the families of the earth.

MELCHIZEDEK

THE CHIEF QUERY regarding this dignified person ought surely to be concerning his relation to the affairs of the world at that time. How came he to be in such an office? The answer to this seems to be that, in order to promote an understanding of the Deity in the minds of the kings who arose with the nations, and also to regulate a righteous relationship amongst these kings. God called this one to be His priest of the Deity Supreme. We should contrast this divine title with that of king. Whatever authority may reside with the king, yet the Deity is Supreme. This view of Melchizedek seems fully confirmed by Abram's ready submission to him as he returned from the combat with the kings. Abram renders due subservience to this priest. It cannot be doubted that Abram was fully conversant with the office of this person, and that he knew he was the inferior of Melchizedek, for by his actions he recognized the eminence of the one before whom he stood.

IDENTITY NOT TO BE SOUGHT

The desire to identify Melchizedek may seem normal, and in some respects logical, yet a little reflection ought to indicate the impropriety of such an idea, not to speak of the impossibility of doing so. The statements in the Hebrew epistle are such that they warn us against it. If we were able to identify the one who filled this office, then the type would fail, and Scripture would be discredited.

The particulars revealed concerning this person are mainly typical. There must, however, be a factual basis for the truth which they picture, and so we have to insist that the father and mother of Melchizedek are not apparent. We must also take the same view as regards any ending to his life by death. Such an outlook ought to be readily conceded, for it is the view which lends the emphasis required by the Hebrew epistle, and so gives much point to the priesthood of the Lord Jesus. *That* is a priesthood able to reach *finality*, because it is in the hands of One Who has an indissoluble life.

A MINISTER OVER THE NATIONS

Whoever the person entitled Melchizedek may have been, it does not seem to be the correct view to regard him as one merely *acquainted* with the Creator in that era. Rather is it that he was *appointed* by the Deity to an office which was intended to regulate righteousness and peace amongst the differing nations when such units had arisen.

Since the deluge, the Deity definitely placed rule and government in the hands of humans. His estimate of life was then made known in terms distinct and of ready apprehension, and these were to be the basis. It was not left to humans to define life's value, and no longer was conscience to be the only control. The authority to rule now given becomes inculcated as a definite duty. This later got to be the duty of the king, and he was to control the individuals within his domain. The king's prerogative was to carry out God's instructions. This position gave rise to the need for the controlling of the kings amongst themselves, and in this we perceive the function of the priest-king.

THE HONOR NOT ASSUMED

It seems evident that Melchizedek's priesthood was not based on his descent. His ministry cannot be said to arise because of a fleshly precept. Nor did he assume the office. It must be that he was called of God, even as the One Who later fulfilled the type. The service of this priesthood was not related to sacrifice, for in that period this was the privilege of the family head, and passed to the firstborn. This priesthood had to do with the ministering of blessing, of succour and of sustenance, and so with the promoting of righteousness and peace amongst the various nations through their kings.

From the characteristics of the office it is obvious that only one person could be king-priest. It did not descend to a succeeding generation, yet it has virtue in that it continues until its objective is achieved. Moreover, the priesthood has a universal scope. It is not limited to one nation, as was the Aaronic priesthood. Hence it could claim authority over all the nations. Melchizedek was, in claim and exercise, a priest of a higher order and function than any patriarch, and even that priesthood to which Aaron was later called and constituted. This person was priest of the Deity Supreme, and his kingship does not seem to be confined to his particular region, but extends over other kings.

In God's economy for the descendants of Noah, whether they sprang from Shem, Ham or Japheth, one person is brought forward as the first and only one to exercise the office of priest-king. He was such by divine appointment, and did not take the honor to himself. Thus, even at this early date, we have a priesthood functioning with reference to humans of differing nations. It was a priesthood common to all humanity. God did not leave mankind to itself, but introduced that which should control and edify.

THE OFFICE NOT INEFFECTIVE

From the picture drawn from the features around the Melchizedek priesthood in the Hebrew epistle, we perceive that the institution did not pass away. Somehow, and in some sense, in the divine counsels, it could not pass by until its objective was reached. It could not be ineffective, nor could it continue permanently. A comparison of Genesis fourteen and Psalm 110 reveals that there is a sense in which this office was not withdrawn or superseded, but that it remained. It is because of this that the Lord Jesus could be so appointed by God. Agreeable to this, the Hebrew epistle requires that there be a successful completion in the next eon. Then will be seen its blessed achievements despite the fact that it is in abeyance at present.

Where Genesis fourteen leaves matters as regards the kings, there God resumes. At the coming of the Lord Jesus to exercise this office, God will actually stab through kings (Psa.110:5) and so assert His office to promote righteousness and peace amongst the nations.

GOVERNMENT AMONGST THE NATIONS

Government in the hands of humans ought to promote righteousness and peace. If this is not the outcome, then government is without value, being overcome by that which it seeks to direct. Every form of government should find its authority in God and be subject to Him. It is not so much the form of government as its relationship to God that makes it good or bad. The first function of government ought to be to promote the knowledge of the Deity Supreme.

Government came immediately after the deluge, yet, in the nature of things, nations did not arise so soon. Some time elapsed before the nations came into being. God made the nations. He parted the families and the tongues. He distributed the land and set the boundaries.

Now we ought not to assume that God left the peoples without instructions and knowledge of Himself. Ere the Supreme left the nations to their own ways, He manifested truth to them. And without doubt the king of righteousness and of peace who met Abram was one of the means used of God to teach and regulate the nations. Monotheism was the original religion of mankind.

THE CONTROL OF KINGS

Since nations were made by God, we should view the kings who come to reign over them as instituted by God, His ministers in fact (Rom.13:1-5). As such they should first promote righteousness. Peace would ensue, not only within the national unit, but also amongst the nations. Surely the original reason for nations rests upon God's economy whereby, as units, they might judge and keep right life's affairs. To do this, the kings should promote the knowledge of God amongst their peoples.

The merit and excellence of the sacred duties of Melchizedek are hidden when we see him merely as a king related to a territory. He may have been located at Salem (meaning Peace), but does not the Hebrew epistle indicate that king of *righteousness* as well as king of peace name the functions invested in this man? If we admit a connection between Salem as the name of a place, and as part of the title of this one, surely it is not an extravagant suggestion to say that the place became so named because of the eminence, dignity and characteristics of the one who resided there as the promoter of peace.

The duties of Melchizedek were not merely related to one of the national units. He exercised authority as the Priest-king of the Deity Supreme over and amongst *all* of the nations. He taught and promoted righteousness and peace *amongst* the nations and not simply within one nation. The readiness with which Abram acknowledged him is most notable in this regard, and especially so when we reflect that when he contacted this king of peace, Abram was returning from war. And was not the action of Melchizedek his approval of the righteousness of Abraham's cause?

This episode, detailed in Genesis fourteen, affords evidence, not merely of belligerency, but of the unrighteousness which was beneath it, and hence peace did not ensue. Despite God's teachings through Melchizedek, power arose to assert the will of one nation or group over others. Four kings rose against five. Nations as promoters of righteousness and peace failed. God chooses Abram as the channel through whom His blessings shall flow to all the families of the earth. This shall ensue despite blessing being denied to them by the kings of the nations.

CHRIST KING-PRIEST FOR THE EON

When our Lord returns to Israel He will, for one single eon, fill the dual office of King-Priest, and thus fulfill the type presented by Melchizedek. The Hebrew epistle is written to those who had heard Him and believed His word, yet had not received the promises because the nation, as such, rejected Him. They were acquainted with the Aaronic priesthood, and needed instruction as to the differences between it and the new Melchizedek order. Aaron's sons were largely confined to one nation, He will be the Mediator for all nations. Death prevented the Aaronic priests from completing their work, but Christ, with His indissoluble life will complete the task of priesthood and bring it to a finality.

Christ will reign for the eons (Luke 1:33). But His Melchizedek ministry, as joint Priest and King, will not be necessary so long, hence it is always said to be for one eon, the day of Jehovah. In the day of God, the new creation, the tabernacle of God is with mankind (Rev.21:3). They will be His peoples, and God Himself will be

with them. There will be *no temple* with its priesthood (Rev.21:22). This corresponds to the conciliation which the nations enjoy today, for we are also a new creation, in spirit (2 Cor.5:17). But Christ will continue as King. The *throne* of God and the Lambkin will be in the new Jerusalem (Rev.22:23). He does not hand over the kingdom to God until much later, at the consummation, when all *sovereignty* and *authority* and *power*, not *priesthood*, are nullified (1 Cor.15:24). Priesthood finishes its functions long before kingship. This is the great difference between the day of Jehovah and the day of God.

The present administration, with its celestial, spiritual blessings, knows neither king, nor priest. Paul did, indeed, act as a priest, corresponding to Christ in the day of Jehovah, at the beginning of His ministry, but, like priesthood in that day, he *completed* this evangel (Rom.15:19). Now, we ourselves plead with God for others (1 Tim.2:1; 4:5), and God's *spirit* is pleading for the saints in connection with our daily doings. In the courtroom, however, where our justification is at stake, Christ Jesus pleads as our advocate, so that we cannot be condemned (Rom.8:26,27,34). By His spirit we are able to enter into the very presence of God and plead directly with Him, not through a priest. This spirit is in us and one with our spirits in our intercourse with the Deity. This is the time of His *rejection*, both as King and Priest.

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