

“Melchizedek and Abraham Factors: My Understanding”

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In “Eternity in Their Hearts”, Don Richardson discusses the idea of God preparing all mankind to receive the gospel of Jesus Christ. He shares many examples of various tribes and cultures who have folk religions that acknowledge a supreme God. He also shares testimonies of missionaries who uncovered cultures that acknowledge a redeemer that will one day be revealed. Richardson illustrates in his book that these instances occurred because of two phenomena – the Melchizedek Factor and the Abraham Factor.

The Melchizedek Factor is God’s general revelation to mankind of Himself, God Almighty. The name Melchizedek Factor is derived from King Melchizedek of Salem that was introduced in Genesis chapter 14. Genesis 14:18 and 19 says that Melchizedek was a priest of the most High God and he blessed Abram. Melchizedek’s kingly and priestly reign predates God’s covenant with Abram. Hebrews 7:17 describes his priesthood as eternal (p. 28) and Hebrews 7:6 implies it was not confined to Levy’s lineage (p. 26). Considering these factors, God’s general revelation, the Melchizedek Factor, is older and universal. It is a universal, foundational knowledge of God.

Two examples of the universal knowledge of God that extends beyond the Levitical lineage are the Santal and Gedeo peoples. In Santal folk culture, they originally believed in one genuine God they called Thakur Jiu (p. 36). Ultimately, they began worshipping spirits as appeasement. But they did believe in one genuine God. Not only did they believe, but they also shared a story of creation and the fall of man extraordinarily similar to that of Adam and Eve in Genesis. Like the Santal, the Gedeo of south central Ethiopia had prior knowledge of a genuine God or an omnipotent Creator, Magano. The Gedeo did not feel they had an acceptable connection with Magano so, they sacrificed to an evil being instead. Despite being in remote locations and isolated from teachings of Judaism or Christianity, both these cultures had a general revelation about God. It was limited and very basic, but it does appear to be authentic and an example of the Melchizedek Factor.

The Abraham Factor is God's special revelation of Jesus Christ, the Messiah. It is very specific in nature. God's special revelation is connected to canonical records compiled by Moses (p. 140). It originated from the Abrahamic covenant which is found in Genesis 12:2-3. The Abrahamic Covenant makes clear that God's blessing would be upon Abram and his lineage. They were chosen by God. The Covenant also reveals that God's blessings would flow from Abram and his lineage. So, not only would they be blessed, but they would be a blessing. The recipients of the blessings would be all peoples of the world. This blessing to all the world would come through the person of Jesus Christ.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ officially began its journey to all peoples on The Day of Pentecost which is recorded in Acts 2. Abram's descendants, the Apostles of Jesus, started spreading the Good News to both Jews and Gentiles. Richardson shares historical evidence of God's special revelation being present in remote areas of the world that were cut off from any Jewish or Christian influences. One example is the Mbaka of the Central African Republic. When Ferdinand Rosenau presented the Gospel to the Mbaka in the 1920's, they were immediately receptive. The Mbaka folk culture said that God, whom they called the Creator or Koro, had sent His Son into the world to do great things for mankind (p. 50). Rosenau also found certain men of the village who oversaw ensuring that the teaching of their ancestors about the Son of Koro remained alive. The Mbaka and tribes like them illustrate the impact of special revelation.

The Melchizedek and Abraham Factors are not independent of one another. They both originated from God Almighty Himself. The basic, foundational knowledge of God that is present with general revelation is the building block for special revelation. When there is even limited knowledge of God Almighty, there is also the ability to make the connection to His Son, Jesus Christ. General revelation can be a sturdy foundation to build upon for a long-lasting relationship with the one true and living God and His Son, Jesus Christ.

I believe that the Melchizedek and Abraham Factors that Richardson presents are legitimate theories. The Bible allows us to see God's true love for mankind. Despite the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, God had a plan of restoration and redemption. It would stand to reason that Jehovah Jireh would provide all that is necessary for restoration and redemption to occur. Part of that provision was first a general knowledge of Him. The world would go through many eras of religious beliefs including polytheism. But despite these eras, Richardson discusses seeds of God's truth being planted among even those peoples who did not have direct contact with Scripture. I believe this is consistent with the character of a loving God. I agree with the general idea that God prepared the Gospel for all mankind and He prepared mankind to receive it.

I agree that in addition to seeds of God's truth, that God also commissioned believers of Christ to share their faith in Jesus to those with incomplete understanding. I believe that this commission began with Jesus' Apostles and continues today. Richardson discusses the use of the gift of speaking in tongues on the Day of Pentecost as a sign that special revelation was to be shared with non-Jews. While this may have been one purpose of speaking in tongues, I do not believe it was the only purpose. If it were the only purpose, there would be no reason for speaking in tongues to have continued after that event. Yet, in Acts 10, it is recorded that Gentiles spoke with tongues after receiving the Holy Spirit. Acts 19 and other incidents in the New Testament record individuals speaking in tongues. And today, believers continue to enjoy the gift of divers kinds of tongues and interpretation of tongues.

In Genesis chapter 1, the Bible says that God created humankind just like Him. In John chapter 3, the Bible says that God loved the people of the world so much that He sacrificed His Son. Clearly God had great plans and aspirations for mankind. He planted seeds of His existence among remote cultures. He established a covenant with the descendants of Abraham. He sent His Spirit to dwell in man after Jesus left the earth. The Melchizedek and Abraham

Factors that Richardson explains in “Eternity in Their Hearts” shows God’s great desire for all mankind to know their Creator that loved them so much, to be redeemed by His Son, to allow His Spirit to live inside of them, and to ultimately spend eternity with Him.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

**Richardson, D. (2014). *Eternity in their hearts*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House.**