

EL ELYON, THEN AND NOW OUR CONCEPT OF GOD CHANGES

Much attention is given in our present day to our "roots," our beginnings, our heritage, and the part it played in making us what we are presently. Let's travel in time to the "roots" of our Judeo-Christian religion and notice three things:

1. When El Elyon was manifested
2. What ways this concept of God affected the people
3. Why they were unable to remain for any length of time in the concept of El Elyon.

As we do, we will have a better understanding of the character of Christendom as a whole today. Today many Christians who used to defend their position of theology by attacking other Christians with the laws of Yahweh are now beginning to abandon the law and offer grace and mercy of El Elyon as God is saying in this present hour, "Choose you this day whom you will serve. We will attempt to show why we prefer the concept of El Elyon.

Abraham, called of God out from his country and kindred, is generally accepted as the Father of our Judeo-Christian heritage. We've already verified from Exodus 6:2-3 that God dealt with Abraham through the name-nature of El Shaddai, the Provider-God, the large breasted nourisher and supplier of his needs. As God revealed Himself through the feminine name-nature, Abraham was responsive and moved forward with that concept of God. That was around 2000 BC and that concept of God was passed on from father to son for about 500 years. From Abraham to Moses God's name was El Shaddai. Isaac, the promised son of Abraham, fathered Jacob from whom came the twelve sons that were the fountainhead of the Israel na-

tion. A younger son, Joseph, sold by his jealous brothers into slavery and taken into Egypt became the savior not only of his family but the surrounding countries when famine came upon the known world.

Joseph provided food to others because of the wisdom and knowledge he gained through his concept of the God he knew, El Shaddai the Provider-Nourisher God. In other words, Joseph's concept of God as a nourisher-provider caused him to follow the pattern and provide for and nourish the whole world the same way.

The small Hebrew family remained in Egypt multiplying and developing over successive generations into a strong people numbering about a million nourished and provided for by their concept of God, El Shaddai. At no point during this time were any laws given, but only God's instructions, directions, and promises to individuals through whom He was bringing His purposes to pass for this budding nation. This is similar to the way a loving mother cares for her infant child.

It wasn't until approximately 1500 BC (500 years later) that God spoke to Moses as recorded in Exodus 6 and then it was time for God to come forth in concept as Yahweh, a masculine, warring lawgiver God. It was Yahweh who would lead the people into a new land, overcoming all foes, and establishing an orderly nation. Israel had been brought into a completely new stage of development, moving from the care of a mothering God to the tutorship of the Father. At this stage of development Israel was like a teenager after his "bar mitzva."

God revealed Himself as Yahweh for another 500 year period to around 1000 BC when King David brought the concept of El Elyon before the people by setting up

the Tabernacle of David. As we can establish from many of David's Psalms (Psalms 7, 9, 91, 92, etc.), the development of his concept of God was brought from Yahweh to that of El Elyon, the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth. Very often King David appealed to the mercy of El Elyon, not the law of Yahweh. In David's time Israel developed to the stage of being like a young swain ready for love and marriage.

Before we proceed any further, the question arises: "Is this the first time the concept of El Elyon was brought on the scene?" The answer is "No." El Elyon has always been here; but as the Most High God, He presents Himself according to our needs.

When a mother is needed, El Shaddai is there. When a father is needed for development, Yahweh is there. There are several other stages and finally when full development approaches, there comes the understanding and implementation of the complete, multi-faceted manifestation of EL ELYON.

For example, El Elyon was introduced to Abraham (Genesis 14) in the very mature story of his victory in battle and consequential reward from Melchisedec. Abraham was returning from the battle of the kings where he had been victorious. In verses 18-20 we see Melchisedec introduced as priest of the Most High God (EL ELYON). However, according to the purposes and plans of God, Abraham's personal concept of God continued to be that of El Shaddai. We know that Melchisedec and El Elyon are symbols of complete maturity because Hebrews 5 tells us that as a son, Jesus Christ learned to become the author of eternal salvation as the high priest after the order of Melchisedec. The concept of God as El Elyon predates all others. The Bible stories relate how God El Elyon revealed Himself to us in His various natures and names as we matured and could embrace the concept.

As we return our thinking to approximately 1000 BC and the time of King David, in what ways was the concept of El Elyon introduced to the people? We can conclude from observing history that as God chooses to bring a further revelation of Himself to the people, He changes His methods of dealing with them, changes His laws, and even changes His temple. May we say He changes the "religion"? Let's recall the occasion of King David bringing the ark, the very center of their religious observ-

ance, back to Jerusalem with great joy and dancing. In I Chronicles we read the ark of the covenant was placed in a rectangular tent with one side fully opened and the people were bid go come, view and worship. If we look back some 500 years to the laws of Yahweh, we were told that if anyone did back then what David told the people to do, later they would be killed. Only the high priest could enter, and then only once in a cycle of time and with great preparation when Yahweh gave the laws to Moses. Now David told the people to look and live, not die as before. David ordered the women to be included also and this equality of women in relation to worship was totally revolutionary in that day. Much singing of praise and thanksgiving and use of musical instruments were brought into the worship of God as David appointed some 288 singers to praise the Lord. Even the Gentiles were commanded to participate with the Israelites because El Elyon is the God of all nations, whereas Yahweh is the God of Israel. All these changes were brought to the people and it seems all enjoyed and benefited from them. But remember, 500 years before, all those things were against the law that God gave to Moses. In other words, as their concept of God changed, God changed His rules.

However, some 40 years later, King Solomon, son of David, returned Israel back to the concept of Yahweh. In II Chronicles 5:5 he brought the Levites back to Jerusalem; the ark was placed in the temple constructed by Solomon; and the laws, precepts, and order of religious worship were reinstituted under the Yahwehistic concept of God. Israel left the mercy David taught them with his concept of El Elyon.

Our present day churches seem to follow the pattern of David and Solomon - Yahweh replaces El Shaddai. There is probably a reason why.

When our goal is to build a structured religious society, then we must have rules. And it seems that all groups write their rule book by going back to the concept of Yahweh, where His rules were the outstanding characteristic. These external rules then are used to maintain unity and conformity within the structure. However, under El Elyon His rules originate within the heart of the individual as God said He would write His laws in our hearts and in our minds. If responded to, this will cause the mature individual to walk and

live in the spirit of the law resulting in a life of agape love bringing true harmony with God and the people. However, trying to live by externally imposed law or the letter of the law as given by Yahweh has not and will not bring people to the goal of genuine unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. It will only maintain the structure. The summary of the matter is given by Paul in Romans 7:10 when he stated, "The commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death." Also, "If the first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second" (Hebrew 8:7). Also, "In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away" (Heb. 8:13). And finally, "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (Heb. 7:12).

Following Solomon's death, the nation divided into two kingdoms. In II Chronicles 10:16 Rehoboam, son of Solomon became king over the two southern tribes of Judah and Benjamin. He brought the Levites from the north back to Jerusalem to continue the concepts of the Yahwehistic religion. At the same time Jereboam, son of Ephraim became king over the ten northern tribes. He led the people into idolatry and they were later taken into captivity by King Senacharib of Syria. Because we are studying the Names of God, not idolatry, we will not bring these northern tribes into our consideration any further. About 5 centuries later the two southern tribes that remained in Jerusalem under the Yahwehistic concept were captured by Nebuchadnezzar and taken to Babylon as recorded in Daniel 1.

El Elyon was once again brought to the mental concept of the people by Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego while in Babylonian captivity. Upon the occasion of refusing to worship Nebuchadnezzar's golden images, the three were thrown into the fiery furnace and found to be walking alive and untouched among the flames. The king, astonished by the sight, called Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God (El Elyon), to come forth. This Gentile king continued to have the concept of the Most High God (El Elyon) revealed to him. His testimony was clearly stated several times in the book of Daniel - that he knew and declared to the world that there is a God named El Elyon who rules in

the kingdom of men and gives dominion to whomsoever He will and there is none like unto Him. Nebuchadnezzar did not have a Yahwehistic concept of God because Yahweh is the God of Israel and El Elyon is the God concept of the nations. But Daniel had a concept of God as El Elyon, The Most High God, as is stated repeatedly in the book of Daniel.

While in Babylonian captivity the Jews could not keep the laws of Yahweh because they related to the land and the temple. In that state, the religious Jews changed their concept of God from Yahweh to El Elyon

However, some fifty years later many of the people returned to Jerusalem and rebuilt the temple. Then Ezra opened and read the book of the law of Moses before the people. Consequently, Israel again left the concept of El Elyon and returned to the Yahwehistic concept of God.

As we continue to view history, we now come to the time when God no longer spoke to His people by the prophets, but He then revealed Himself by His son (Hebrews 1:1-2). We are told that Jesus Christ is the exact expression of God that is to be seen and the expression to which we are to be conformed (Hebrews 1:3; Romans 8:29). God did show Himself in the way He now desires for us to see Him. There can never again be any doubts as to the nature of God by which we are to know Him and reflect that image to others. Jesus is the One! Luke 1:32 states Jesus is to be called the Son of the Highest (El Elyon). Hebrews 7 tells us Jesus was priest after the order of Melchisedec who was a priest of the highest order, El Elyon. Genesis 14 clearly told us that El Elyon is the concept of God known by the Melchisedec priesthood. After the resurrection of Jesus, we are told in several passages of Scripture that He ascended to none other than the right hand of El Elyon (The Highest - Hebrews 1:3).

A new "religion" was again brought on the scene. The concept of God was El Elyon, this time clothed in flesh for all the world to see. The new temple was not of brick and mortar but the bodies of God's people. The new law was written by the Spirit of God upon the hearts and minds of the believers. Jesus brought mercy not sacrifice. There was equality of women and inclusion of the Gentiles:

"There is neither Jew nor Greek (Gentile), there is neither bond nor free, there is

neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" Galatians 3:28.

Music, singing, thanksgiving all become part of the vital expression of this concept of God.

....."be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and apiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always".... Ephesians 5:18-20

Will the people of God now presently receive this concept of God and live in that Light? The structured religious hierarchy of Jesus' day could not. In John 11 it is recorded that they feared if Jesus continued they would lose their place! He was a threat to their structure. But yet, many did receive the new concept. On the day of Pentecost the power of El Elyon came upon 120 people who were gathered in an upper room (Luke 24:49). Then within days the number had grown into the thousands.

In 41 AD moving in the concept of El Elyon, Peter went down to the house of Cornelius where Gentiles were gathered wanting to hear the Way of God. This association, which was prohibited under the concept of Israel's God Yahweh, resulted in the acceptance of the Gentiles, because they too at that time received the Holy Spirit as did the Jews on the day of Pentecost (Acts 10-11). Peter realized that God was doing a new thing in the earth! The old Yahwehistic concepts would not allow Jews to keep company with Gentiles. A new concept of the nature-name of God El Elyon was necessary.

A few years later in 52 AD there were certain men from Judea who began to teach the Gentiles that they too must live under the Yahwehistic law of Moses and be circumcised in order to have favor with God. Therefore, Paul went before the council in Jerusalem to dispute this matter. In Acts 15 Peter and then Paul began to relate all that God was doing in relation to the Gentiles. They told how the Spirit was being poured out upon all, Jew and Gentile, men and women. Then James stood up and declared that what was happening was nothing but the restoration of the tabernacle of David as prophesied in Amos 9:11. Thus, the concept of El Elyon which was evidenced with the original tabernacle of David was once again in operation and El Elyon was being manifested in the time of the apostles.

But in 58 AD Peter returned to a concept of Yahweh. Paul stated in Galatians 2:12 that out of fear, Peter withdrew himself from eating with the Gentiles when certain men of the Yahwehistic circumcision came. Because of Peter's influence, Barnabas and others were also led back to many of the laws of Yahweh, thus mixing law and grace, referred to as the gospel of the circumcision. The other gospel of the uncircumcision was given to Paul while his concept of God was El Elyon (Gal. 2:7).

However, only two years later Paul also returned to the concept of Yahweh. In Acts 21 upon his return to Jerusalem, James and the elders stated how many thousands of Jews believed and were all zealous of the law of Yahweh. In succumbing to their influence, the very next day along with four other men who had taken vows, Paul entered the temple and signified the accomplishment of the days of purification by offering a blood sacrifice (Acts 21:26). Right there it looks like Paul may have made an irreversible mistake. Let's pray that we do not do it.

We are all products of the actions and concepts of our "roots," those who have gone before us. The structures of present day Protestantism, Catholicism and Judaism have all been built and framed upon by the concepts embraced and personified by the religious pillars of the first century AD. The people of that day could not remain in the light, life, love and mercy of El Elyon. They were too heavily influenced by their past religious structure which once again returned them to the laws of Yahweh. The result was a mixture of law and grace in their lives. Over the centuries, the church has maintained that same "mind set" for the most part and continued with a Yahwehistic concept of God. Judaism, Roman Catholicism and Protestantism have embraced the Yahwehistic concept of God, with precious few exceptions.

However, the day has dawned when God El Elyon is once again inviting us to be participants in the restoration of the tabernacle of David as He is reestablishing Himself in the concept of many of His people as the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth. We are being given the opportunity to come to the same concept, knoweldge and awareness of God that Jesus had, so that following in His footsteps we may also become priests after the order of Melchisedec, priests of the Most High God El Elyon. By David Ebaugh and Suzanne Fraley.