

The Peopling of the Americas: A Scientific, Historical and Scriptural Investigation

In 1492, Christopher Columbus set sail from Spain in search of a western route across the Atlantic Ocean to Asia. He landed somewhere in the Bahamas and mistakenly believed that he had landed near the Asian mainland. In reality, Columbus was nowhere near Asia but rather had accidentally stumbled upon a new world so to speak. Successive waves of European exploration solidified the existence of an entire hemisphere, which was populated by native people. These people possessed their own land, language, and culture. Naturally this sent shock waves throughout the European world. How were they to explain not only the existence of an entire hemisphere, but also these native people and the means by which they had arrived?

These are still questions that modern scientist, archeologists, geologists, and historians have endeavored to answer. For years historians have explained the pre-European presence in the Americas by postulating a migration of early human groups from Siberia to Alaska via a land bridge through the Bering Strait (Rothman). Such hypothesizing is based almost exclusively on evolutionist ideologies of continental drift and a series of catastrophic ice ages. The evolutionist teachings of Charles Darwin are naturally in direct contradiction with the Bible on the origin of man as well as many other factors. However, the current historical teaching pertaining to land bridge migration appears to be somewhat suspect in the light of Biblical teaching. It is the opinion of this writer that the traditional explanation for how the America's were populated is grossly in error. Therefore, let the reader consider not only what the migration theory teaches but also its possible Scriptural answer.

Let us first briefly consider the existence of the landmass itself that Columbus supposedly discovered. Most of us at one time or another have noted on a globe or map of the world that South America and Africa look as if they would fit together. "In fact, if a globe were made into a spherical jigsaw puzzle, several of the widely separated large landmasses could be made to fit without large gaps or overlaps" (Gabler 386). In the early twentieth century, a German meteorologist named Alfred Wegener coined the theory of continental drift (Gabler 386). Wegener said,

that all the continents had once been connected in one, or possibly two, large landmasses. Then these supercontinents broke apart, and their fragments moved to their existing positions. Evidence for Wegener's belief included early plant fossils found on the different continents that were related in ways that could not be due to chance. The continents must once have been joined so as to allow the spread of those early plants. Furthermore, evidence of climatic changes (for instance, glacial evidence in the Sahara Desert and tropical fossils in Antarctica) could be explained best by the movement of large landmasses from one climatic zone to another (Gabler 386).

For years, Wegener's theory received little attention from the scientific community (Gabler 387).

However, after World War II with the help of new technologies such as sonar the continental drift theory was reopened. Scientists began to study the earth's magnetic fields. It was concluded that ancient magnetism indicated an almost perfect fit in the continental jigsaw puzzle some 200 million years ago (Gabler 387). This information, combined with the discovery of midocean ranges on the ocean floor that matched the pattern of the earth's original formation based on the ancient magnetism, resulted in the modern version of continental drift known as plate tectonics (Gabler 387). Plate tectonics teaches that earth was originally one land mass but was spit apart by the process of convection along the midocean ranges which took place over several hundred million years (Gabler 388).

The theory of plate tectonics explains the geographical position of the continents at the time of

Columbus. However, we still have to deal with the question of how the Americas were populated. As previously stated, historians have explained the pre-European presence in the Americas by postulating a migration of early human groups from Siberia to Alaska via a land bridge through the Bering Strait (Rothman). Such a desire to explain where the America's population came from can be seen within a hundred years of the discovery of the new world. In 1590, a Spaniard named Joseph de Acosta reasoned that because Old World animals were present in the Americas, they must have crossed over by a land bridge, which could have been used by humans as well (Armitage 3). A few years later, another Spaniard named Enrico Martin added further information to Acosta's ideas. "Martin speculated that because no such land passage had been found between America and Europe, it must exist in the unexplored far Northwest of the continent, and the people using it must thus have been Asian" (Armitage 3). Thus from its early genesis, hundreds of years ago, the migration hypothesis said that Indian people were descended from a common stock of Asian migrants, who arrived by way of a northwestern land passage, and had experienced a long and independent history in the Americas (Armitage 3).

As is to be expected, modern science has added new information to the theory of migration. New genetic and linguistic evidence indicates that the migration took place between 25,000 to 30,000 years ago (Armitage 3). Scientists say that during these migrations the western hemisphere was going through its final ice age (Armitage 3). As a result, huge glaciers locked up massive amounts of water like dams thus exposing a bridge of land between Asia and North America (Armitage 3). It is on this 750 mile wide piece of ice-free, treeless grassland named Beringia that the first Americans supposedly entered the Americas.

"As of yet, there are no other credible theories explaining the movement of humans into North America" (Rothman). However, even the credibility of this hypothesis ought to be seriously considered in light of its supporting evidence. One should consider closely the following statements. Susan Armitage says, "...definitive archaeological evidence of migration from Asia may be difficult to find. No specimens of human fossils have yet been uncovered there" (4). One would think that if such migrations took place there would be more substantial archeological proof. National Geographic Magazine concurs with Armitage by stating, "Of course this is all speculation. There's absolutely no solid evidence that the first human beings to come to the America passed anywhere near this coastline" (Parfit 44). Even archaeologist Michael Kunz is quoted in National Geographic as saying, "We are a discipline, not an exact science," she said. "We shouldn't pretend we are. Everything is subject to interpretation" (Parfit 53).

This uncertainty can even be seen by the current debate over whether or not the long accepted migration theory is even valid. There are now archeologists that are saying that North America's first inhabitants may have crossed the Atlantic Ocean 18,000 years ago from Europe's Iberian Peninsula (Verrengia). All this basically proves is that archeology is not an exact science and that no one really knows how the Native Americans got here. So then is it not possible that the explanation could lie outside of the realm of scientific inquiry.

Christians are instructed by God to accept the authority of the Bible in all matters of faith and practice. Thus it stands to reason that the Bible would contain information that would explain how the earth is organized geographically as well as how the Americas were inhabited. Therein lies the fundamental difference between science and the Scripture. Science seeks to prove all things through empirical data while the Bible requires someone to have faith in what it says.

The first problem with both plate tectonics and the migration theory is their close relation with evolution. For example, plate tectonics teaches that the earth was one landmass 200 million years ago and that over a process of millions of years drifted into its current position. Also, land bridge theorists

believe that the first migrations across the land bridge were by under developed cavemen who had not yet finished with the process of evolution. Once again, there is also a problem with time elements because these migrations are said to have taken place between 30,000 and 13,000 years ago. Such so called scientific data regarding the origin of man and the age of the earth does not comply with Scripture.

So then, what does the Bible teach on these matters? Let us now begin our inquiry with the Word of God. It should be noted that, in Scripture, the issues of the earth's current geographical organization and how were the Americas populated are not separate issues. However, for logics' sake we will begin with a discussion of the earth geographically. The first passage of scripture the reader should consider in Genesis 1:9-10 it says,

And God said, Let the water under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear; and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas; and God saw that it was good.

This verse seems to be teaching that, when God originally created the earth, He did so as one landmass. It appears that there was water *in one place* and Earth or land in another. The Hebrew word used to describe this one place is 'maqom' it means one bed (Ruckman 14). As a result, there seems to be a very strong indication from Scripture that the earth indeed was originally one land mass.

Further on in Genesis chapter one God says that He created man and placed mankind on the earth. The passage reads,

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him: male and female created he them (Genesis 1:26-27).

God created Adam and set him on the earth and told him to rule over everything that moves upon the face of the earth. Now it is important to remember that God set Adam on an earth that was formed of only one land mass. It would certainly appear hard for Adam to adequately rule over God's entire creation if Adam could not physically get his intended destination on the earth. Once again, this seems to further Biblical support for one created land mass.

Things continue to get more interesting as the Biblical account unfolds. It is in Genesis 10 that the most compelling verses reside. First notice Genesis 10:5. It reads, "By these were the isles of the Gentiles divided in their land; every one after his tongue, after their families, in their nations". There was a time when these gentile nations got divided according to their land, tongue, families, and nations. Notice that some division of land occurred when these nations were divided. Secondly examine Genesis 10:25. It says, "And unto Eber was born two sons: the name of one was Peleg; for in his day was the earth divided; and his brother name was Joktan". This verse clearly says that there was a day when the physical earth was divided. The Hebrew word for earth in this verse means ground or land. Remember that in Genesis chapter one God called the dry land earth.

The Bible seems to teach that not only was the earth created as one land mass but also there was a time when that land mass was divided. The question that now remains is when specifically did it take place. Once again we turn our attention to Genesis chapter 10. Genesis 10:5 reads, "By these were the isles of the Gentiles divided in their land; every one after his tongue, after their families, in their nations".

Notice that one of the criteria for division was according to tongues. This helps when considering when such divisions took place. Genesis 11:1 reads, "And the whole earth was of one language, and one speech". If in chapter 11 the whole world is of one language and one speech, then a division according to tongues in Genesis 10:5 has to take place after there was more than one tongue. In Genesis 11:7-8 we read, "Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city". Through a comparison of these verses it becomes apparent that the division spoken of in Genesis 10:5 happened after the events of the Tower of Babel in Genesis chapter 11. Dr. Peter S. Ruckman agrees with this analysis by saying, "the chances are the reference is to Deuteronomy 32:7-9, which takes place at Genesis 11:7-8; if this is so, 2244-2006 B.C. would date the Tower of Babel within 200 years" (Ruckman 286).

It is the opinion of the writer that when God confused the languages of the people and divided them according to the requirements of Genesis 10:5 that He also divided the physical earth to ensure that the rebellion demonstrated at Babel in Genesis chapter 11 could not repeat itself. This would explain not only the geographical position of the continents but also how the Native Americans got here. The Americas was the land the Native Americans received when God divided the earth. Acts 17:26 says, "And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the time before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation". This verse clearly states that God himself set the bounds or limits of their habitation. God himself divided off the Americas with their native inhabitants already in them as part of His judgment related to the Tower of Babel.

It is extremely interesting to note that these native groups were functioning in exactly the same national structures that God instituted. Genesis 10:31-32 says, "These are the sons of Shem after their families, after their tongues, in their lands, after their nations. These are the families of the sons of Noah, after their generations, in their nations, and by these were the nations divided in the earth after the flood". When European explorers discovered the Americas, they found people organized according to these factors within specifically defined territories. Susan Armitage says, "At the time of the first European contacts at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the native inhabitants of the Western Hemisphere represented over 2,000 cultures, spoke hundreds of different languages, and made their living in scores of fundamentally different environments" (3).

Once again historical and scientific inquiry has dominated the subject of the peopling of the Americas. The theories of plate tectonics and land bridge migration stand on the scientific shoulders of Charles Darwin. Neither plate tectonics nor land bridge migration, by the admission of their own supporters, has ever been proven to be correct. Please recall the words of archeologist Michael Kunz on these matters. Ms. Kunz said, "We are a discipline, not an exact science. We shouldn't pretend we are. Everything is subject to interpretation" (Parfit 53). These theories are nothing more than the postulation of men based on a few archeological finds. It is the opinion of the writer, understanding fully that submission to the authority of Bible rather than science nullifies in many circles any conclusion that might be drawn, that God himself is responsible not only for geographical positioning of the continents but the populating of the Americas as well. God originally created the earth as one landmass (Gen. 1:9-10) and subsequently divided the physical earth (Genesis 10:5, 25) as part of his judgment for the rebellion at the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11. The Native Americans already inhabited the land when God divided it and set the bounds of their habitation (Acts 17:26). It is the desire of the writer that these conclusions be considered seriously and carefully.

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