

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 3-14-10 AM  
 “A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW OF RACE”  
 EPHESIANS 2:11-22  
 #9 in Series, “A Biblical Worldview”

Your worldview must stand on some type of foundation. The most common foundation is the views of the culture in which one lives. Here are some problems with a cultural based worldview. It keeps changing! The views of culture swing with trends, with the views of powerful groups within the culture, and with circumstances. Also, the views of culture are always man-centered instead of God-centered. To use what is accepted and valued in the culture as the basis of one’s worldview is like building your life on a foundation of Jello. A Biblical worldview on the other hand never changes. It is always God-centered and not man-centered and it is focused on eternity and not the comfort and pleasure of the moment. Building your life on a Biblical worldview is like building on a solid rock. As we look at a Biblical worldview of race, allow me a few random personal remembrances. I can remember one of my uncles telling me in the 1950’s when I was 8 or 10 years old that all black babies were born with tails and had them amputated in the hospital. His point was that they hadn’t come far from the monkeys they descended from. One of my sons was surprised when I told him that in my freshman class at the University of Tennessee in 1967 was the first black scholarship football player ever allowed to play for the UT football team (Lester McClain). I can remember as an older teenager that on a Sunday morning in the church I was a member of, the Pastor announced on a Sunday morning that the High School Chorus was going to sing in the evening service and there was a black student who was a member of it and he just wanted to let people know in advance. I still remember my mother’s anger at that announcement since the young man mentioned was one of my younger brother’s best friends. I don’t have stories about my being denied service in a restaurant, denied treatment in a hospital, made to sit on the back of the bus if I got on at all, having to drink out of a separate water fountain, being denied access to the nicest and best funded public schools in my community, or being ridiculed and rejected for the color of my skin. My skin color was that of the controlling majority. Does the Bible have anything to say about race and racism? It certainly does!

[Text]

Racism – The deeply held belief that one’s ethnicity or cultural heritage justifies a sense of superiority over those of other backgrounds, resulting in discrimination, segregation, or unjust treatment toward them.”

- Mark Tatlock

Racism is unrighteous whether it involves whites, blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans, Asians, or whoever. Let’s look at the passage we opened with. The specific groups in this passage were Jews and Gentiles, but the principles apply to all ethnic or people groups where there is separation and alienation. When we read Ephesians 2:11-12 we see a horrible separation between Jews and Gentiles (read verses 11-12). Some key words and phrases are “aliens”, “strangers”, and “no hope”, and “without God”. This divide was racial, social, and cultural. Now read verses 19-22. What a transformation! What happened between Ephesians 2:11-12 and Verses 19-22? [Read verse 13] The blood of Christ was shed! There was a cross; there was a substitutionary death! Now verse 14 says there is peace, there is unity because the walls of separation have been torn down in Christ. In verse 16 we read that the two groups are reconciled to God and now are in one body – the Body of Christ. **Ephesians 2:16 (ESV)** “and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby **killing the hostility.**” Verse 18 tells us that both groups now have the same Holy Spirit indwelling them and both have access to the same Heavenly Father. The cross not only dealt with the barrier between the Jew and God and the Gentile and God; the cross dealt with the barrier between Jew and Gentile. By implication, this passage applies to every people group and every ethnic group where there is separation. Christ reconciles us to God and also to one another. Sometimes pastors are criticized for preaching on subjects like this because we are told it is a social issue and has no place in the pulpit. Verse 13 tells me that it isn’t primarily a social issue; it is a blood of Christ issue! The results of the blood of Christ applied to a life belongs in every pulpit!

Let me share something that I don't want to make too big of a deal about, but I do believe that it is important. There is a very unbiblical concept that most in our culture have of "races" today, and they don't realize that the concept of races today is grounded in Darwinian evolution. There is only one race – the human race! The only races in the Bible are the spiritual ones we run (1 Corinthians 9:24). God created only one race – the human race, and He imbedded in the human race alone His image. That image as we saw in # 3 in this series was twisted and distorted by sin coming into the world, but it is still there. The cross alone can set right what the fall messed up! Because of the image of God in all human beings, there is an inherent dignity and worth in all mankind. Where the problem lies today and where it has always lain is not between "races", but it is between ethnic or people groups within the one human race.

### I. The Origin of People Groups

If the various people groups didn't evolve as Darwin taught, then how do we have all the people groups we have today with all their diversity in skin color, cultures, languages, and facial features? First of all let's settle the fact that there aren't really any major *physical* differences between the world's people groups. The obvious ones such as skin color and eye shape are really minor when compared to the areas the people groups are alike. Scientists have found that if you take any 2 people from anywhere in the world, the genetic differences in them are about 0.2% even if they are from the same people group. The so-called racial differences (skin color, eye shape, etc) account for only 6% of this 0.2% variation. That means that the so called racial characteristics amount to just 0.012% difference genetically [Ken Ham, Page 54]. The so called racial differences in physical appearance are trivial. "Race" is not an issue when it comes to a tissue match for a transplant or what blood a person can receive in a transfusion. Minor as they are, what is the origin of the people groups with distinctions in skin color and physical features? Let's examine Scripture.

When God created the human race, He didn't make a batch of people; He made two people – Adam from the dirt and Eve from Adam (but with different genes). The entire human race came from these two. **Genesis 3:20 (NKJV)** "And Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living." With all we have learned about genetics in this generation, we now know that God could have put within their gene pool the capacity to have descendents of different skin colors and physical characteristics. After several generations of their descendents intermarrying with one another, there is the possibility for all the variations we see today. Let's fast forward to the time of Noah. All people groups today came from the three sons of Noah. We get a hint about their physical characteristics from their names. *Ham* means dark or burnt. *Shem* means brownish or dusky. *Japheth* means fair or light. All of this diversity was pleasing to God because He put the capacity for this in Adam and Eve when He created them. After the Tower of Babel incident recorded in Genesis 11 where God confused the languages (which gives us the basis for the basic languages today), the descendents of Ham settled in Africa. The descendents of Shem settled in the Middle East and Asia, and the descendents of Japheth settled in Europe. Through the intermarriage of the descendents of Noah's sons, we have the unique physical characteristics, traits, cultures, and identities of people groups today. The more we learn about genetics, the more we understand the scientific possibility of everything happening just like the Bible said it did. The question as to how the people groups ("races") that we have today developed, there is a one word answer – "God". The diversity of the different people groups was planned by God in His perfect will.

### II. The Equality of People Groups

A key verse relating to the abolishing of racism is **Acts 17:26 (NKJV)** "And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings". Most translations instead of "one blood" say "one man" meaning Adam. The point is that we all have a common origin in one man, one blood. Therefore no people group is superior or more highly developed than any other people group. When God instructed the apostle Peter to go with the gospel to the Roman gentile Cornelius, we read in **Acts 10:34-35 (NKJV)** "<sup>34</sup> Then Peter opened *his* mouth and said: 'In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. <sup>35</sup> But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.'"

Someone who doesn't carefully divide the Word of Truth might see a contradiction of the equality of all people groups in all the Old Testament prohibitions about the Jews being separate from the Gentiles and not inter-marrying with Gentiles. Many of the Jews did wrongly interpret these commands as evidence that they were superior to the Gentiles. In reality, Israel's separation was to maintain their distinctives so that they could be a light to the Gentiles. The separation was from the false gods of the Gentiles. Any Gentile could become a follower of the one true God whatever their ethnic background was. Examples are Rahab, Ruth, Namaan, and probably Nebuchadnezzar. In other words, the separation was for spiritual purity, not racial purity. In the Old Testament, interracial marriage was forbidden not on the basis of ethnicity but on the basis of idolatry. God knew that if they married foreign wives, they would adopt their gods. Exhibit A is King Solomon. The Israelites were not to marry an unbeliever and that same prohibition is still in place for believers in Christ today. Marriage is not forbidden on the basis of people group or ethnicity, but on the basis of relationship with Christ. **2 Corinthians 6:14 (NKJV)** "Do not be unequally yoked together with **unbelievers**. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?"

While all people groups are equal, one doesn't have to leave behind his cultural and ethnic identity when he or she believes the gospel. When we come to Christ, however, we have a higher identity – our identity in Christ. That identity is the same for every person cleansed by the blood of Christ whatever their ethnic group, culture, or people group.

### III. The Excuses for Racism

Let's be clear that all racism is sin. The root of racism is in sinful pride which manifests itself by elevating self over others. Racism has always been around because the sin of pride is universal. However, in recent history there have been primarily two ways people have rationalized blatant racism that at times in many countries resulted even in slavery.

#### A. Evolution

I mentioned this earlier but I want to go a little more in depth with it here. Darwinian evolution taught that the different people groups (races) evolved separately and at different rates, and therefore some were more highly developed than others. In other words, some "races" are more fully human than others. This was the thinking of Hitler that led him to seek to destroy the Jews and establish a "master race". A prominent evolutionist was Ernst Haeckel (1834-1919). He is the one who originated the phony diagrams that showed a baby going through the stages of evolution in its development in the womb. Here is what he wrote in "The History of Creation" that was studied in universities in the late 1800's and early 1900's. Haeckel said: "... some of the wildest tribes in southern Asia and eastern Africa have no trace whatsoever of the first foundations of all human civilization, of family life, and marriage. They live together in herds, like apes, generally climbing on trees and eating fruits; they do not know of fire, and use stones and clubs as weapons, just like the higher apes... At the lowest stage of human mental development are the Australians, some tribes of the Polynesians, and the Bushmen, Hottentots, and some of the Negro tribes" [Quoted in Ken Ham, "One Blood", Pages 79-80]. Even into the 1900's Australian Aborigines were considered the "missing link" and not fully human. Aborigines were hunted like animals, shot and stuffed like a lion or tiger for museums so that those more highly developed "races" could view and study them. In the early 1900's an African Pygmy was put on display in an American zoo as an example of "an inferior race" [Ham, page 125 and following]. As a side note, today some medical professionals who in many areas are dedicated to the saving of life will kill unborn human beings who like the Aborigines of a century ago are considered "not yet fully human".

#### B. The "Curse on Ham"

I put quotations around "Curse on Ham" because in the Bible there was no curse put on Ham. It was on his son Canaan. This butchering of Biblical interpretation was used as an excuse for slavery in early America and horribly is still being taught in some circles to justify racism against black people. This false view goes back to Genesis 9:20-25. After the flood, Noah grew a vineyard, harvested the grapes and made wine and drank too much. He went to sleep and left his body uncovered. His son Ham came in and saw

his father and the text implies spoke disrespectfully of his Father to his two brothers. His brothers, Shem and Japheth covered their Father's body in a respectful way. When Noah found out about it he pronounced a curse on Ham's son Canaan. I don't have time to go into this whole incident except to say that disrespect for parents was treated very seriously in the Old Testament. As to why a curse was put on Ham's son instead of Ham himself we cannot ascertain with certainty. Perhaps it was because God was punishing Ham for dishonoring his father by having a son who would dishonor him. Here is how this whole incident has been and still is being used to justify racism and the most heinous form of racism which is slavery. The false logic goes something like this: Since Ham is the father of the entire black "race" and God cursed him (**Genesis 9:25 (NKJV)** "Cursed *be* Canaan; a servant of servants He shall be to his brethren"), then slavery is justified. Slave owners are just carrying out God's curse. I am embarrassed to even have to deal with such horrible interpretation of a text! First, Ham had four sons and only Canaan was cursed. There is no "curse of Ham". The descendants of Canaan were the Canaanites. They became an unspeakably evil people and God commanded the Israelites under the leadership of Joshua when they went into the land of Canaan to destroy them. You would be hard pressed to even find a genuine Canaanite today.

The bottom line on the reason for Racism is human pride which manifests itself in one group of human beings in God's image thinking they are superior to another group of human beings in God's image. Racism is sin.

#### IV. The Road to Reconciliation

Since racism is not a skin problem but is a sin problem, there is a solution. Jesus died that we might be saved from our sins including the sin of racism. As long as we classify it as a social problem, it won't be fixed. The government can pass laws forbidding discrimination (and they should), but that doesn't cure racism; it just drives it underground to be expressed in more subtle ways. The solution lies within the church in the proclamation of the gospel that delivers sinners from their sin. It is as the church disciplines people with a Biblical worldview that racism begins to fall one person at a time. John Piper asks a probing question of the church: "Are our churches thermometers registering the racial attitudes and actions of the world; or are they thermostats raising the warmth of commitment to racial understanding and love and demonstrable harmony?" [John Piper, "Brothers, We Are Not Professionals", Page 197].

Let me close out this message with some practical application.

##### A. Repent of Racism

If racism is a sin and we are guilty of it, then our first response is to repent of this sin. It may have been "mild" racism, but there is no mild sin! Was it telling derogatory racial jokes or using a racial slur? Repent!

##### B. For Those Who Have Been the Recipient of Racism, Forgive

A bitter and angry spirit robs you of the joy of the Lord. Bitterness (unforgiveness) is the only sin that puts the person who has been harmed in jail and lets the offender go free. As an act of the will enabled by God's grace, forgive.

##### C. Confront Racism among Believers

There is a Biblical precedence here. We have recorded in God's Word a case where Paul confronted Peter over his sin in this area. In Galatians 2, Peter came to Antioch to spend some time with the Gentile believers. He hung out with them perhaps eating ham sandwiches until some Jews came from Jerusalem. When the Jews from James in Jerusalem came, Peter separated himself from the Gentiles. His example led others Jewish believers like Barnabas to do the same thing. **Galatians 2:13-14 (NKJV)** <sup>13</sup> And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. <sup>14</sup> But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before *them* all, 'If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?'" Peter was rejecting and excluding some because of their race. What would happen in the church if every time another professing believer told a racial joke, made a slur, or rejected another person because of their people group, another brother or sister confronted them in love?

D. Don't Confuse the Attempts of Secularists to Elevate Faith Systems or Sins to the Same Status as Racial Issues

Today we hear see secularists equating the loving confrontation of a false religion with the truth of the gospel to putting down a person of another people group. The ultimate perversion is to elevate a sin such as homosexuality to the same level as a person of a minority people group. You are not being bigoted when you confront a Muslim with the truth of the gospel. You are not being bigoted when you plead with a homosexual to repent of his or her sin. Racism is very different from confronting error and confronting sin.

E. Pray That People from Minority Ethnic Groups would Feel Welcome in Our church

CONCLUSION

Diversity in people groups seem to be permanent. Even in heaven we see people and John in His vision of Heaven could tell that they were from every different people group. **Revelation 5:9-10 (NKJV)** “<sup>9</sup> And they sang a new song, saying: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, <sup>10</sup> And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth.’” I believe that what it looks like before the throne of God above is what it should look like in the church here below. The blood of Christ has not only cleansed us; it has reconciled us to every other people group. (3469)