

“The Myth of Racial Reconciliation”

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[“Red and yellow, black and white,
All are precious in His sight;
Jesus loves the little children of the world.”
Child Evangelism Fellowship]

Introduction

Those old enough to remember the turbulent 1960s will recall the conflicts and violence of the time over racism and civil rights, the freedom marches and the freedom bus riders, and the general social and cultural upheaval that rocked the nation. A young man from my high school (white) was one of those freedom riders and came home with two broken arms and a bashed in face as a result of being beaten with a baseball bat by several white citizens of Selma, Alabama. That was my introduction to the reality of racism as a resident of east central Wisconsin and a town that only encountered “darkies” in the summer baseball season or when the local canning factory brought in summer workers.

One of my favorite television programs in the sixties was “Star Trek” (original series). I remember one episode about Captain Kirk and the crew encountering a new civilization which also was experiencing racial conflict. But in this case the sentient beings were both black and white, not one or the other. However, some were black on the right side of the body and white on the left side. Others were black on the left side of the body and white on the right side. Each one

thought they were superior to the other. There was constant conflict between the two. A different kind of racism needing ‘racial reconciliation’.

What is “racial reconciliation?” Obviously, one could say it is the reconciliation of two or more races and assumes there are differences that need to be reconciled. In order to thoroughly answer this question, however, one must correctly define the words “race” (or “racial”) and “reconciliation.” A review of popular dictionary and encyclopedia articles reveals that it is far easier to define the word “reconciliation” than it is to define “race.” Generally, reconciliation is understood as the restoration of friendly relations between people, such as siblings or other relatives. Alternatively, it is the action of making one view or belief compatible with another, such as a reconciliation of worldviews. Biblically, of course, the most important reconciliation is between God and human beings. Second Corinthians 5:18-20 states:

Now all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.¹

Clearly, human beings are the ones needing reconciliation with God, since we are part of Adam’s posterity and stand in a fallen condition like him. But which ‘race’ needs reconciliation?

Reconciliation should make it possible for people to just get along with one another.

When it comes to a clean definition of “race,” on the other hand, it seems that we have opened a can of worms. This paper will examine the issue of race from both a biblical perspective and a secular perspective, after which suggestions will be offered as to how a dispensational worldview affects social justice and racial reconciliation.

¹ Unless otherwise noted, Scripture references are taken from the NASB, copyright 1995 by the Lockman Foundation, La Habra, California.

Biblical Perspective of Race

A simple search of the word “race” in the Bible reveals that people are not referred to as belonging to a particular race or biological grouping. Rather, they are referred to as families, clans, tribes, peoples, tongues (languages), or nations. For example, Revelation 5:9 states, “And they sang a new song, saying, ‘Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood *men* from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.’” But where did these people come from? Biblically, using a literal, grammatical, historical, normal, contextual, objective, plain approach to hermeneutics (did I leave anything out), interpreting the inspired and totally inerrant Word of God leads one to the following understanding.

First, Adam was the first man, supernaturally created by God. “God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”² Further, we are told, “Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.”³ If words mean anything, these passages tell us that man was directly created by God from the dust of the ground, they were created male and female (two sexes/genders), and it took the breath of life from God to make them living beings. It also tells us that humans did not come from previously existing living beings (hominids). Humans came from dirt. Man (Adam) became a living being (*nephesh*); not, a previously existing living being became a man! Interestingly, when Paul refers to Genesis 2:7 in 1 Corinthians 15:45, “So also it is written, “The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING

² Gen 1:27.

³ Gen 2:7.

SOUL,”” he deliberately inserts the adjective ‘protos’ and the proper name ‘Adam’ to emphasize that the text is referring to a specific person, Adam, as the first human being on planet Earth.

Second, Eve was the first woman, supernaturally created by God.

So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. The man said, “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”⁴

We are further told, “Now the man called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all *the living*.”⁵ And, “For it was Adam who was first created, *and* then Eve.”⁶

Third, with the supernatural creation of the first man, Adam, and the first woman, Eve, who was the mother of all living, and the command of God for them to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth, the conclusion is obvious that, biblically, all human beings are descendants of Adam and Eve. Thus, the information given to us in Genesis 4 and 5 comes into play. Chapter 5 is a multi-purpose vertical genealogy with critical chronological information included in it for determining the number of years between Creation and the Flood of Noah’s time. This genealogy moves us ten generations from Adam and Eve to Noah and his three sons; Shem, Ham, and Japheth. After the account of the Flood, God blesses Noah and his sons and instructs them to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.⁷

Fourth, after the Flood the Earth was populated by Shem, Ham, and Japheth (and their wives, of course). “Now the sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem and Ham and Japheth; and Ham was the father of Canaan. These three *were* the sons of Noah, and from these

⁴ Gen 2:21-23.

⁵ Gen 3:20.

⁶ 1 Tim 2:13.

⁷ Gen 9:1.

the whole earth was populated.”⁸ “Now these are *the records of* the generations of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah; and sons were born to them after the flood.”⁹ “These are the families of the sons of Noah, according to their genealogies, by their nations; and out of these the nations were separated on the earth after the flood.”¹⁰

The Flood greatly reduced the size of the human gene pool, an implication of the destruction of all humans except the eight individuals who survived on the ark. After the Flood only three families were available to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. The reduction in the size of the gene pool limited the variations that were possible in the human race from that point forward.

The Tower of Babel incident narrated in Genesis 11:1-9 is the divine revelation that accounts for the origin of the different languages in the world today. It also accounts for the formation of different people groups, as the different language groups separated from one another and filled the earth.

So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city. Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of the whole earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth.¹¹

The Babel incident also severely reduced the size of the human gene pools available to each language group. This resulted in language/people groups with different physical characteristics, another crucial implication of the text. “A plain reading of Scripture indicates that the major ethnic groups present today likely originated simultaneously when languages were

⁸ Gen 9:18-19.

⁹ Gen 10:1.

¹⁰ Gen 10:32.

¹¹ Gen 11:8-9.

confused at the Tower of Babel event (Genesis 11:1-9).”¹² These physical characteristics manifested themselves as skin color, eye shape, hair color and texture, and other visible differences between people groups. Nevertheless, every member of every people group is descended from either Shem, Ham, or Japheth; who in turn are sons of Noah; who is the tenth generation descended from Adam.

Biblically, then, every human being on planet Earth is related to everyone else. There is only one race...the human race. There are not multiple races, each evolving separately at different rates in different places on the planet. There is no ‘superior race’ nor is there an ‘inferior race’ based on more rapid or complete evolutionary development. We are all members of the same race. We are all genetically related. Like it or not, we are all cousins (many generations removed), descended from one of three brothers. However, we are not all members of the same ‘people group’. So...where did the concept of race (or racism) originate, since it is not a biblical concept?

Secular Perspective of Race

I would contend that slavery is not the result of racism. Slavery was present very early on in the history of humanity. The enslavement of the Israelites by the Egyptians is not attributed to the color of their skin, but to the increasing number of the sons of Israel/Jacob. “But the sons of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly, and multiplied, and became exceedingly mighty, so that the land was filled with them.”¹³

Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. He said to his people, Behold, the people of the sons of Israel are more and mightier than we. Come, let us deal wisely with them, or else they will multiply and in the event of war, they will also join

¹² Nathaniel T. Jeanson, *Answers Research Journal* 9 (2016), 123.

¹³ Ex 1:7.

themselves to those who hate us, and fight against us and depart from the land. So they appointed taskmasters over them to afflict them with hard labor.¹⁴

In a lengthy encyclopedic article on race we are told that the concept of race is

...the idea that the human species is divided into distinct groups [some would call them subspecies] on the basis of inherited physical and behavioral differences. Genetic studies in the late 20th century refuted the existence of biogenetically distinct races, and scholars now argue that “races” are cultural interventions [or inventions] reflecting specific attitudes and beliefs that were imposed on different populations in the wake of western European conquests beginning in the 15th century.¹⁵

The meanings of ‘race’ are varied and many over the past four or five centuries. All attempts at defining the term usually categorize peoples by their physical differences. In the United States ‘race’ generally refers to skin color (particularly white vs. black), hair texture, and facial features. People will often speak of the African race, the European race, the Hispanic race, or the Asian race. Race has also been used to describe language groups (Arab race, Latin race), religious groups (Jewish race, Muslim race), and even ethnic groups (Irish race, French race) regardless of the fact that there are little to no physical differences between them.

With the acceptance of the myth of Darwinian evolution in the nineteenth century, the concept of race carried with it an inherent categorization of superiority and inferiority. Different ‘races’ were thought to have evolved separately and at different rates over their respective histories. This led to the subjugation of some peoples on the basis of their physical differences. Never has there been any agreement on the number of ‘races’ of humankind, much less the exact meaning of ‘race’ itself. *Red and yellow, black and white, all are precious in His sight*, makes for a nice CEF song, but perpetuates the division of the human race nonetheless.

Smedley observes that

¹⁴ Ex 1:8-11.

¹⁵ Audrey Smedley, “Race,” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, January 21, 2019.

Although most people continue to think of races as physically distinct populations, scientific advances in the 20th century demonstrated that human physical variations do not fit a “racial” model. Instead, human physical variations tend to overlap. There are no genes that can identify distinct groups that accord with the conventional race categories. In fact, DNA analyses have proved that all humans have much more in common, genetically, than they have differences. The genetic difference between any two humans is less than 1 percent. Moreover, geographically widely separated populations vary from one another in only about 6 to 8 percent of their genes. Because of the overlapping of traits that bear no relationship to one another (such as skin colour and hair texture) and the inability of scientists to cluster peoples into discrete racial packages, modern researchers have concluded that the concept of race has no biological validity. [Emphasis mine]¹⁶

Race is a mechanism of social division; it has happened in the United States; it has happened in South Africa. It has happened in other places as well. It is due to the acceptance of the myth of black inferiority. Although the general theory of evolution is not the cause of racism, it surely has exacerbated racism by giving a pseudo-scientific paradigm for prejudice to follow. “Biological arguments for racism may have been common before 1859, but they increased by orders of magnitude following the acceptance of evolutionary theory.”¹⁷

But if there is no biological validity to the concept of race, why are there still questions on demographic surveys about identifying your race (white or Caucasian; black or African; Hispanic or non-Hispanic, etc.)? Old habits die slowly. Prejudice dies even slower.

What is the Answer to Racism?

Why can't we all just get along? Let's all hold hands and sing kum-bay-ah. Simple, simplistic, and simple-minded. The Bible tells us that we are all family. The human race is all descended from Adam and Eve. The present population of planet Earth all descended from three couples (Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and their wives) after the Flood. That means that ‘racial

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Stephen Jay Gould, a leading evolutionist (deceased), *Ontogeny and Phylogeny*, 1977.

reconciliation' is a family matter. The human race/family may not be uniform, but it is clearly a unity. A unity of sinners.

In recent years Dr. Nathaniel Jeanson, a research scientist for Answers in Genesis, has been conducting research into human genetics, looking for evidence to confirm the biblical account of history as revealed in the early chapters of Genesis. As we have already seen, these chapters, interpreted normally, indicate that all humans today are descended from Noah's three sons, and that biblically the history of the Earth and humanity covers only about 6,000 years.

Jeanson states in a research proposal,

In our culture, few things provoke more ridicule than the idea that the earth is just 6,000 years old...[But] within each of our bodies, we have genetic "clocks" that have marked the passage of time since the dawn of humanity. If anyone wants to explain the origin of mankind, they must deal with these genetic clocks. My published research has found evidence that these clocks have ticked for only 6,000 years. [Emphasis his]¹⁸

Other genetic research of his has shown that by analyzing the transmission of mitochondrial DNA, only transmitted by the mother/female, but transmitted to every child born, all human mtDNA can be traced back to one of three starting points in the DNA charts.¹⁹ One of three. Could this be Mrs. Shem, Mrs. Ham, and Mrs. Japheth?

So, what do we know for sure that secular and nonbiblical efforts have not been able to contradict? (1) All humans are physically/biologically descended from Noah's three sons, who are descended from Adam and Eve, who were supernaturally created by God in the beginning. (2) All humans are in the image of God. (3) All humans belong to the same family, the human race; we are all related as "cousins." (4) All humans are sinners and in need of reconciliation to

¹⁸ Ken Ham, Communication from Answers in Genesis, July 29, 2019.

¹⁹ Nathaniel T. Jeanson, "On the Origin of Human Mitochondrial DNA Differences, New Generation Time Data Both Suggest a Unified Young-Earth Creation Model and Challenge the Evolutionary Out-of-Africa Model," *Answers Research Journal* 9 (2016):123-130.

God (Romans 3:23). (5) All humans are loved by God (John 3:16), who does not desire for any to perish (2 Peter 3:9). This is one of the great continuities of dispensationalism. It should guide the church's actions toward racial reconciliation in this present dispensation. [Oops, how do we reconcile one race?] We must treat this as a family matter; not as a 'we/they' adversarial matter.

“While Darwinian evolution has often been used to justify genocide and racism, God's Word clearly condemns the abuse of others.”²⁰ There are far too many examples from recent history of the failure of the church to love your neighbor as yourself. That is one reason for Christians to contend for the faith and especially the truth of the early chapters of Genesis. Too many evangelicals are giving up on Genesis 1-11 and a literal interpretation of ancient Earth history. Evangelicalism is fracturing over this issue. As soon as one caves in on Creation and attempts to 'harmonize' Genesis with evolution, it is an easy step to conclude that some people groups (races) are more evolved than others, that one group is superior to another, and that it is permissible to subjugate the 'inferior' group.

How is the Church to approach 'racial reconciliation'? One of several viewpoints has been offered by Charles Ware. He says, “I define racial reconciliation in the Church as *groups of different cultural, ethnic, economic, etc. backgrounds bonded together by redemption in Christ and growing together according to biblical principles for mutual edification, evangelism, and the glory of God* (John 13:34-35; Rom. 15:1-13; Gal. 2:1-14, 3:26-29; Eph. 2:11-22).”²¹

We all belong to one biological race, regardless the shade of our skin or the shape of our face. Actually, we are all the same 'color'. It is not red or yellow, black or white...it is the shade or amount of melanin in our skin. But that is another story.

²⁰ Ken Ham and A. Charles Ware, *One Race One Blood*, rev. & updated, Master Books, 2017, p. 23.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 51-52.

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