

Monday, March 29, 2021 - Devotional

FLGA District – Racism Task Force

I. Foundation from CTCR

This quote is from *Racism and the Church: Report of the CTCR*, Feb. 1994, Introduction page 8:

“That to which your heart clings and entrusts itself,” Dr. Martin Luther wrote in the Large Catechism, is “really your God.” “If any one boasts,” he continued, “of great learning, wisdom, power, prestige, family, and honor, and trusts in them, he also has a god, but not the one, true God.” (*LC I, 3, 10*) If anyone should claim superiority over others and treat them as inferior because of racial origin or characteristics, we may add, that person, too, has a god, but not the one true God. Racism is at its core idolatry—even though, to be sure, it also violates any number of other specific commandments. Racism grounds the identity and security of human life not in the God who alone is our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, but in self. It is a sin against the First Commandment because it fails to receive other human beings as gifts from God. It is to this malady of the human heart and life that we address ourselves in this report.

[President Walton in response shared the idea that the basis of racism is fear of self and failure to experience success at the level the individual believes is deserved. People will put the other down to build their own sense of self. Satan preys on fear and this fear could be as causative of racist behavior as idolatry. James Baldwin, “My equality does not diminish your humanity.”]

II. Image of God – Imago Dei

All people are equal before God and one another. People may be different as men and women have different attributes but are nonetheless equal in the eyes of God because all humankind bears his image. Imago Dei. See the proof texts below:

Genesis 1:26-28

Then 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 birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” (27) So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (28) And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

Act 17:26-28

And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, (27) that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, (28) for “‘In him we live and move and have our being’; as even some of your own poets have said, “‘For we are indeed his offspring.’

III. Distortions

a. Mark of Cain

Genesis 4:15

Then the LORD said to him, “Not so! If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.” And the LORD put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him.

Let’s use some reason here. The first family is not recorded to have moved out of the general region of the Garden. This narrative would have occurred in the region of the Tigris-Euphrates valley where the Garden of Eden is recorded to have been located. (Genesis 2:10-14)

We can assume that then as now, people in that region have melanin and are already brown from the effect of the sun. If God is going to put a mark on Cain’s body to distinguish him from others around him, it stands that the Father would not make him dark but would remove his color making him white. That’s simply called leprosy. Hence, the idea of dark skin being the ‘mark of Cain’ is senseless.

b. Curse of Ham

Genesis 9:22-29

And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers outside. (23) Then Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father.

Their faces were turned backward, and they did not see their father's nakedness. (24) When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him, (25) he said, "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be to his brothers." (26) He also said, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant. (27) May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem, and let Canaan be his servant." (28) After the flood Noah lived 350 years. (29) All the days of Noah were 950 years, and he died.

Ham, the son who uncovered Noah's nakedness, is the father of the people who moved south in the diaspora into Africa and some of what is now known as the Middle East. (Genesis 10:6-20) It would be a great exercise to review these texts to see the dynasties founded by the sons of Ham which included Nineveh, Babel, Egypt, and Cush.

Noah did not curse Ham. He could not because the Father had already blessed Shem, Ham, and Japheth and the gifts of God are irrevocable. Ham could not be cursed but his son, Canaan could and was cursed by Noah. We know this curse abides because the land and people of Canaan have always, always, been at war and unrest as it is today. Ham and all his sons were not cursed but only the son Canaan. It is a distortion to say that all people of color were cursed in this text.

IV. God Shows No Partiality

Luke 20:21-25

So, they asked him, "Teacher, we know that you speak and teach rightly, and show no partiality, but truly teach the way of God. (22) Is it lawful for us to give

tribute to Caesar, or not?” (23) But he perceived their craftiness, and said to them, (24) “Show me a denarius. Whose likeness and inscription does it have?” They said, “Caesar's.” (25) He said to them, “Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.”

The exact same point is made numerous times in scriptures in Job 34:19, Acts 10:34, Romans 2:11, Galatians 2:6, Ephesians 6:9, Colossians 3:25, and James 2:1.

V. The End of the Matter: Prophetic Revelation

Revelation 7:4

And I **heard** the number of the sealed, 144,000, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel:

Note that this is the number heard. It numbers the tribes of Israel.

Revelation 7:9-12

After this I **looked**, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, (10) and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” (11) And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, (12) saying, “Amen!

Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.”

Notice that this is the same group represented by the number heard being seen, experienced with the eyes. These people before the throne are from every tribe, nation, and tongue. The land before the throne of the Lamb is all level ground. God shows no partiality. Jesus shows no partiality. Neither should we as we are baptized into the body of Christ that is represented by those before the throne.