

“LIVING GODLY LIVES IN AN UNGODLY WORLD”
JULY 08, 2020
DURING THE GREAT TIME OUT
“REVOLUTION OR TRANSFORMATION?”
PART 4: JESUS AND RACISM
THE GOSPELS AND THE REST OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

A. JESUS IS JEWISH

A. *He is born to a Jewish mother under the law (the covenant God made with Israel at Mount Sinai)*

1. *He is the most unique human being on His Father’s side*
2. *But He was born to a Jewish woman*
3. *He was born for His people to redeem His people Gal 4:4-5*

B. *The Messiah was coming to complete the Mosaic Covenant*

1. *His people had already broken this marriage covenant through adulterous actions with other gods and covenant infidelity*
2. *Messiah came to complete that covenant from the “God-side” that a new covenant could be established with Israel - Romans 7:1-6*
3. *Therefore, it is expedient that He come to offer Himself to His own disobedient people first. He was their Messiah and their covenant-maker*

C. *But there was also a pre-nation promise and covenant given that promised a Messiah for all nations Gen 3:15; Gen 22:18*

D. *He came to His own but His own did not receive Him John 1:11*

E. *After He began His ministry, He returned to His home in Nazareth where He was rejected He gave a reply that angered them*

1. *Even though He spoke with power and had done miraculous works, they questioned His ministry as simply a fluke from a hometown boy.*
2. *Jesus’ replies were eye-opening*
 - a. *Prophets are without honor in their own country*
 - b. *Though there were many widows in Israel, Elijah was sent to a widow in Zarephath, a non-Jewish widow*
 - c. *Elisha ministered not to an Israeli leper but to a Syrian one*
 - d. *Neither of these prophets were appreciated by the people to whom they were sent to minister*
 - e. *Jesus is demonstrating that as Israel rejected Messiah, He would turn to non-Jewish people*
 - f. *This teaching is not racial as identified by the term today (focused on phenotypic markers). It was national and ethnic*

in keeping with the rest of the Bible. Just as with the rest of humanity, among the Jewish people may be many shades of melanin due to genetic makeup of their parents. Those are NOT identifiers and are not used that way biblically. He came to redeem those that had a covenant relationship to God no matter what the phenotype. Jesus is NOT practicing racism by making these statements.

II. JESUS MINISTRY AND ETHNIC ENCOUNTERS

A. He encounters a centurion whose servant was sick Luk 7:1-10

- 1. The centurion is assumed to be Roman but the text does not say so. But he was not Jewish.*
- 2. The centurion never personally encounters the Lord Jesus; he sends Jewish elders for whom he had built a synagogue and they testify of his love for Israel as well. They beg Jesus to come with them to heal him*
- 3. In the interim, on the trip to the centurion's home, the centurion sends a message to Jesus by way of his friends: "I am not worthy for you to come into my home. Just say the word and my servant will be healed!" He believed in Jesus authority over all!*
- 4. Jesus is amazed at the faith of the centurion and comments on it to the whole crowd gathered around Him. He is saying this to the shame of Israel with whom He had not found such faith. A non-Jewish person is expressing greater faith in Jesus as the Messiah than His own people who knew to expect one. This is what Jesus is seeking. At that moment the servant is healed.*

B. A demon possessed Gentile named Legion Luk 8:26-39

- 1. Lived in the Decapolis, a Gentile region. He was supernaturally strong and frightening. Lived in a burial cave, was naked and was often driven into the wilderness by the demons. No one could bind him and keep him captured.*
- 2. In a mind-boggling miracle He delivers this man from his demon possession and the man is in his right mind. Of course, this has cultural significance for Jesus had done something no other human had done in bringing the man into his right mind. But Jesus had also caused the death of a full herd of swine, destroying the business opportunity of these pig-herders. The community pleaded for Jesus to leave them for He was someone with whom they did not want to have to deal. They had been terrified by the demon-controlled man and Jesus was obviously stronger and*

- mightier than the man had been. They wanted Him out of their community.*
- 3. The demon-controlled man, now in his right mind, wanted to become one of Jesus disciples and follow Him. But Jesus would not permit it. He was NOT practicing racism by denying this Gentile to not join His Jewish band but was seeking to have a witness to His deity and power in the Decapolis.*
- C. A woman of Canaan with a demon-controlled daughter
Matt 15:21-28*
- 1. Jesus is in the region of Tyre and Sidon and is approached by a woman of Canaan pleading for mercy for her severely demon-controlled daughter*
 - 2. Jesus won't even answer her! Finally, after being urged by His disciples to send her away, He says he was only sent for the lost sheep of Israel. He even goes so far as to compare her with a little dog. Matt. 15:21-26*
 - 3. She wisely responds with great humility and faith. She accepts the analogy (humility) and pleads that even the little dogs eat the scraps from the children's table (faith). Jesus heals her daughter!*
 - 4. This is NOT Jesus practicing racism. Her family or ethnic heritage is mentioned but not her phenotype. Jesus is testing her faith and the faith and cultural ethnic prejudice of the disciples as well. By dealing with her using the analogy of the day with regard to the cultural prejudice of the disciples, He taught them to show deference in recognizing people for their faith, their need and their humanity not their ethnic background. This would be used by them for many years after Jesus had ascended out of their presence and left them to do His work.*
- D. The Samaritan woman at the well John 4:1-42*
- 1. Jesus intentionally goes through a culturally unacceptable region of the country. Prejudice and resentment existed between the Samaritans and the Jews and it was long-standing. It was not phenotypical racism but a faithfulness dislike, a religious one. They had intermarried with those of pagan and idolatrous ways. They could not prove they were genetically Jewish and therefore not part of the covenant with God.*
 - 2. He encounters her intentionally and strikes up a conversation with her. He opens the conversation with a zinger by asking for a drink and then announcing if she knew her stuff she would be asking Him for a drink! In the conversation, Jesus probes her*

personal life ultimately proving to her He knows more about her than she is comfortable with. She changes the subject to a “religious” discussion. He stumps her there, too!

- 3. She then makes reference to the coming Messiah. He reveals to her that He is that Messiah! She goes and gets the men of the city and they have a conversation with Jesus. That conversation births in them faith in Jesus as the Messiah and a revival breaks out.*
- 4. Through this Jesus taught His disciples about ending prejudice toward the Samaritans, ending prejudice toward women, understanding that forgiveness comes to those who humbly believe regardless of their sinfulness and the immense scope of their ministry!*

E. Jesus first encounter was quite young! Matt 2:1-12

- 1. Gentiles from the east visited Jesus sometime after His birth and sometime before His family’s exile to Egypt*
- 2. They knew of Him and recognized Him as the king of the Jews. They brought Him expensive gifts fit for a king.*
- 3. Naturally, at His age, if He responded nothing is recorded about it. But it is significant that they had been given information from somewhere that the king of the Jews had been born. We are not told a great deal about their honor of Him especially after their initial encounter but they had worshiped Him when they first saw Him.*
- 4. Once again, they were recognized for who they were and where they were from NOT from their phenotypical traits.*

III. JESUS’ TEACHING AND COMMISSIONING

A. “The Good Samaritan” parable

- 1. He used a Samaritan, one of the “half-breed” peoples left from the remnant of the exiles, as the good neighbor in this parable.*
- 2. Jesus point was that being a good neighbor and pleasing God was not a matter of covenantal privilege but of faith and responsible character. It had nothing to do with racial phenotype. It is most likely that the Samaritans were not much different phenotype than the Jews were. It was not brought up because it is not even relevant. Faith and character, not ethnic background is what God looks upon.*

B. Jesus taught them that He had come to gather the non-Jew as well. John 10:16 They had been prepared to see others in this flock.

C. Jesus' parable of the wheat and the weeds is not racial but relationship and source Matt 13:24-30, 36-44

D. Jesus commissions the disciples Matt 10:1-7; Matt 28:18-20

- 1. In the first commission found in Matt 10 the disciples were prohibited from going to the Gentiles or to the Samaritans. This was not a racist prohibition but one that carried out the thought that the gospel must go to Israel first since they are His chosen people. The offer of the kingdom of God was to go to Israel first.*
- 2. The commission in Matt 28 is to take the gospel to all the nations (ethne) of all the world. Obviously sending the gospel to all the nations followed His death and resurrection. His crucifixion was the result of the Jews rejection of His kingship and Messiahship. That freed the gospel to go to all nations. Nations is not a phenotypical racial designation but one of heritage and covenantal relationships with various gods of those nations. The nations were under the authority of the rebellious gods that were in conflict with God the Father and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The gospel of the kingdom preached under the authority of Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit would liberate those who belonged to Christ but under the authority of the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience. This is beyond race; it is about supernatural authority and order.*
- 3. Acts 1:8 reiterates this liberating power of the Spirit in preaching the gospel to all nations until the end of the earth or age.*

E. The disciples continued the work of Jesus Christ

- 1. After the disciples had continued in prayer with the other disciples of Jesus for 10 days after Jesus had ascended, the Holy Spirit fell on them in mighty power and they witnessed in all the languages of the Jewish people gathered in Jerusalem for Pentecost. Speaking in the languages of those from the Diaspora, they shared with them Jesus, crucified and risen again, and the Kingdom of God. Though they were speaking to Jewish people, they spoke to them in languages unfamiliar to the disciples but native to the Jewish people on aliya to Jerusalem. This was the reversal of the Tower of Babel confusion.*
- 2. Over the next few years, these prejudiced and proud Jewish men would be humbled by God as they spoke to people with whom only a few months earlier they would not have given the time of day! They would convert Samaritans and plant a church with*

them. They would convert Roman citizens and plant churches with them also. They would speak to Ethiopians without hesitation as God commanded them to. Peter balking at speaking to a Roman Gentile melted into seeing that same Roman group humble themselves to receive the gospel. The church began to be populated with Greeks, Africans, Europeans, Syrians, Samaritans, Babylonians, Persians, Cretans, Arabs, Medes, Latinos, as prejudice and bigotry gave way to love in the gospel of Jesus Christ. They were being transformed!

- 3. The doctrine of Jesus as the Messiah and Reconciler for all peoples was communicated by Paul in Ephesians 2:11-22. It had to be hammered out in a church council as they tried to figure out what were the terms of the New Covenant that included Jews (Mosaic Covenant people) and Gentiles (no covenant people). This new relationship ended the Jew/Gentile, slave/free, male/female dichotomies but how does it work?*
- 4. Additionally Paul developed the doctrine of body and soul, the coming resurrection, the coming judgment of believers and the intermediate state as much as God allowed us to know. 2 Corinthians 5:1-21 goes into some heavy stuff as we learn about our bodies, our future state and our present work. Next week we will examine that passage as we consider how we are to make application of it to our walk in this broken, damaged world of created "racial tension" with wisdom.*

CONCLUSION: Racism as we hear it expressed today is NOT found in the life of Jesus. Being God incarnate, He saw all men as human beings; prisoners of sin and slavery to the prince of the power of the air. He was looking for the lost sheep of Israel first but did not neglect others when faith and humility were present. His mission was to save men from their sin and rebellion to God; to establish the kingdom of God. His chosen disciples were normal human beings with pride and prejudice. His presence in their lives both before and after His ascension would gradually change them into the same kind of lovers of mankind as He is. He would teach them to see people as either slaves of sin or slaves of righteousness; as children of wrath or children of God. Nationality would no longer matter. Skin color wasn't even on the radar. His church would be made up of every nationality, tribe, family and language.

NEXT WEEK: CONQUERING RACISM