



Coffee & Conversations | January 16, 2018 | Racism and the Bible

Questions for Discussion:

- When did you first become aware of racism? How? Where?
- How do you define the word racism, and the idea of race?
- What have you heard taught, justified, or preached about race in Church?;
- What does the Bible say?
- How does God call us through the Word, and the moving of the Spirit to respond to racism?

Genesis 9:18-27

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

18 The sons of Noah who went out of the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Ham was the father of Canaan. 19 These three were the sons of Noah; and from these the whole earth was peopled.

20 Noah, a man of the soil, was the first to plant a vineyard. 21 He drank some of the wine and became drunk, and he lay uncovered in his tent. 22 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 away, 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;
lowest of slaves shall he be to his brothers."

26 He also said,

"Blessed by the Lord my God be Shem;
and let Canaan be his slave.

27 May God make space for Japheth,
and let him live in the tents of Shem;
and let Canaan be his slave."

Philemon 15-16

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

15 Perhaps this is the reason he was separated from you for a while, so that you might have him back forever, 16 no longer as a slave but more than a slave, a beloved brother—especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

Isaiah 2:1-5 (compare to Isaiah 25:6-10 & Micah 4:1-5)

1 The word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

2 In days to come

the mountain of the Lord's house
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and shall be raised above the hills;
all the nations shall stream to it.

3 Many peoples shall come and say,
"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
to the house of the God of Jacob;
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths."

For out of Zion shall go forth instruction,
and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

4 He shall judge between the nations,
and shall arbitrate for many peoples;
they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more.

5 O house of Jacob,
come, let us walk
in the light of the Lord!

Galatians 3:23-28

23 Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith would be revealed. 24 Therefore the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith. 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian, 26 for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. 27 As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring,[k] heirs according to the promise.

The Curse of Ham

The Curse of Ham is a misnomer for the supposed curse upon Canaan, Ham's son, that was imposed by the biblical patriarch Noah. The curse occurs in the Book of Genesis and concerns Noah's drunkenness and the accompanying shameful act perpetrated by his son Ham, the father of Canaan (Gen. 9:20–27). The controversies raised by this story regarding the nature of Ham's transgression, and the question of why Noah cursed Canaan when Ham had sinned, have been debated for over two thousand years. The story's original purpose was to justify the subjection of the Canaanite people to the Israelites, but in later centuries, the narrative was interpreted by some Christians, Muslims and Jews as an explanation for black skin, as well as slavery, particularly the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Nevertheless, most Christians, Muslims and Jews now disagree with such interpretations, because in the biblical text, Ham himself is not cursed, and race or skin color is never mentioned.

The majority of commentators, both ancient and modern, have felt that Ham's seeing his father naked was not a sufficiently serious crime to explain the punishment that follows. Nevertheless, Genesis 9:23, in which Shem and Japheth cover Noah with a cloak while averting their eyes, suggests that the words are to be taken literally, and it has recently been pointed out that, in 1st millennium Babylonia, looking at another person's genitals was indeed regarded as a serious matter.

Other ancient commentators suggested that Ham was guilty of more than what the Bible says. The Targum Onkelos has Ham gossiping about his father's drunken disgrace "in the street", public mocking his father. Other ancient commentaries have also debated whether "seeing" someone's nakedness meant to have sex with that person (e.g. Leviticus 20:17). The same idea was raised by 3rd-century rabbis, in the Babylonian Talmud (c. 500 AD), who argue that Ham either castrated his father, or sodomised him.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Curse_of_Ham