

Ethnicity, Race, and the Bible

Part III

Agenda

- ✓ Black presence in the Bible
- ✓ Doctrine of Election in OT
- ✓ Depictions of Africa in the Bible
 - ✓ Problem with Paul
- ✓ Passages typically assumed to deal with race

Slave Owners & The Bible

- Passages in favor of slaveholders
- Taught that Blacks had no heritage in the Word
- Blacks were not human and were inherently inferior
 - God foreordained Blacks to servitude
 - Slavery was not a violation of God's law

The Bible and Race

1. There are profound differences in the concept and attitude of race in the Bible versus Eurocentric interpretation
2. Biblical authors were color conscious but not as a basis of enslavement, oppression, or demeaning identity

De-Africanization of the Bible

De-Africanization of the Bible

- Denial of the presence of African nations and peoples in scripture
- Removal of Egypt from Africa and placement in the Western world

Prominent African Nations

Egypt

Cush / Ethiopia

Sheba

Ophir

Israel always held African nations and people in
the highest regard

Tonight:
Africans in the Bible

Challenges with African Presence in the Bible

- Traditional view v. Textual evidence
 - What constitutes/defines black in antiquity?
- Significance of color v. nationality in the Bible

The Curse of Ham

✓ Genesis 9:18-29 – the curse

Babylonian Talmud – 500AD

“Our Rabbis taught: Three copulated in the ark, and they were all punished – the dog, the raven, and Ham. The dog was doomed to be tied, the raven expectorates his seed into his mate’s mouth, and Ham was smitten in his skin.”

Rabbinic Interpretation - 1938

“Moreover because you twisted your head around to see my nakedness, your grandchildren’s hair shall be twisted into kinks, and their eyes red; again, because your lips jested at my misfortune, their shall swell; and because you neglected my nakedness, they shall go naked, and their male members shall be shamefully elongated. Men of this race are called Negroes.”

The Curse of Ham

- ✓ Genesis 9:18-29 – the curse
- ✓ Genesis 10:6-20; I Chronicles 1:8-16 – the lineage
- ✓ 1865 Florida Law 1/8; Homer Plessey 1892; One drop law

The Curse of Cain

✓ Genesis 4:1-16

“The smoke from his sacrifice blew back upon his face, blackening him.”

“The Lord beat Cain’s face with hail, which blackened like coal, and thus he remained with a black face.”

The Curse of Cain

- Cain's "blackness" is interpreted as either a mark or a curse placed upon him
 - Cain's wife was believed to be from a people not descendant of Adam – Negroes
- Ham was said to marry a daughter of Cain so Negro blood survived the flood
 - Prominent in Euro-American theology but became doctrine in Mormonism

Wherever you see “Ham/Canaan/Cain” or their
descendants there the black presence in the
Bible is to be found

Terms indicative of “color” in the Bible (Hebrew)

- ✓ *Sahor* (Song of Solomon 1:5,6) - black, swarthy, tawny, very dark
- ✓ *Ham* ~ *hum*: darkened, dark brown, black (only used for the color of sheep)
 - ✓ *Qedar* – dark skinned, Gen 25:13 = Son of Ishmael
- ✓ *Pinehas* ~ Pa-Nehsi = Nubian: Son of Eli and grandson of Aaron which ties him to Moses

Prominent People of Color in the OT

Nimrod (Gen. 10:8-12), son of Cush, founder of civilization in Mesopotamia

Abram was from Ur which included the Sumerians “black headed ones” – black blood flowed in Abram

Hagar was Egyptian – why did Sarah choose Hagar?

Prominent People of Color in the OT

- Kedar and the Kedarites, powerful tribe (Isaiah 21:16, 42:11, 60:7; Jer 2:10, 49:28; Ezekiel 27:12; Neh 2:19, 6:6)

Joseph's Egyptian wife, Asenath (Gen 41:45,50; 46:20), who was the mother of Ephraim and Manasseh, ancestors of the two largest tribes in Northern Israel

Hebrews ≠ Israelites, mixed social class and blood that comes out of 400yrs in Egypt

Prominent People of Color in the OT

Pharaoh's daughter, *Bithiah* (Exodus 2:5ff; I Chron 4:17ff), who pulls Moses out the water and marries Mered, an Israelite

Exodus 2:15-19

Zipporah (Num 12:1)

Prominent People of Color in the OT

Cushan-rishathaim (Judges 3:7-10)

Phineas, Eli's wicked son (I Sam 4:11)

The Cushite who tells David of Absalom's death (2 Sam
18:19-32)

Solomon's love (Song of Solomon 1:5ff, 6:13)*

Prominent People of Color in the OT

Queen of Sheba (I Kings 10:1-13)

Abishag (I Kings 1:2-4; 2:13-25)

Amos 9:1-10

Zephaniah (Zep 1:1)

Jeremiah

62 references to Egypt, Cush (Ethiopia), and other African countries

Jehudi, a court official (36:14, 23)

Ebed-Melech, saves Jeremiah's life (38, 39)

From slaves to rulers, from court officials to authors who wrote parts of the OT itself, from lawgivers to prophets, black people and their lands and individual black persons appear numerous times. In the veins of Hebrew-Israelite-Judahite-Jewish peoples flowed black blood

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