



# THE BIBLE ON RACE

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## A COMPILATION OF RESEARCH

This document has been prepared to represent the Mannahouse Eldership's agreed upon understanding of what the Bible clearly teaches regarding topics related to race, racism, ethnicity, diversity and reconciliation. It is meant to lay the doctrinal foundation for the more pastoral application of promoting understanding, healing and harmony.

The Bible addresses the concept of racism by condemning people's mistreatment of others based on prejudice. It gives us clear guidance regarding how we are meant to view, value and treat every person God has created to bear His image. Scripture also clearly condemns wrong ways of viewing, devaluing and mistreating people God has created. These provide clear parameters that were certainly meant to be applied universally to human relations including racism.

Refusing, failing or neglecting to view, define or value any person consistent with how God views, defines or values them is sinful. The range of interpersonal sin extends from overt thoughts and actions like hatred, rejection and violence all the way to more subtle things like disinterest, disregard and lack of empathy. The Bible does not merely command us not to hate, it commands us to intentionally and sacrificially love all people.

The flow of the points below is meant to follow the general order of how these topics unfold in Scripture, rather than listing them in a hierarchy of importance. We believe that the starting point of addressing issues is the revelation of God's thoughts on the matter as revealed in Scripture. Our thinking must be based in His revealed truth while our approach to others must be an expression of His amazing love.

Following are some key summary points that arise from the Biblical research (the Scripture references included are not exhaustive but merely a sampling):

1. The Bible declares that all people of all races are organically united because they were created by God and descended from one original man and woman (Genesis 1:27; 5:1.2; Acts 17:26).
2. Every person from every race is united by common heritage in the fall of mankind with all of its consequences (Romans 3:10-18,23; 5:12; Ephesians 2:1-3).
3. God determined the boundaries of the nations and is sovereign over their histories and destinies (Acts 17:26; Deuteronomy 32:8; Job 12:23; Daniel 2:21; 4:17,34,35; Joel 3:2).

4. God loves every race and through Christ's redemptive work salvation is available to everyone equally. God's master plan of redemption involves every race, culminating in every nation, tribe and tongue being represented before His throne. Racial identity has no bearing on status before God. Christ's universal church includes believers from every race (John. 3:16, 36; Romans 1:1-6; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 2; Revelation 5:9; 7:9; 14:6).
5. Every person from every race shares one unified origin and one means of redemption. Therefore, God relates to every nation in a just way, and any choice to bless or use a particular nation is eventually for the sake of all nations and the fulfillment of His eternal plan (Genesis 12:2-3; 22:18; Isaiah 2:2-3; Amos 9:12; Deuteronomy 10:17; Acts 10:34; Romans 2:11).
6. The Biblical principle of unity does not always mandate uniformity (1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4). Humanity as a whole bears God's image and is united in creation, fall and redemption. Every person is equally worthy of love, respect and unbiased treatment (Deuteronomy 1:15-18; 10:18-19; 16:19; 24:17; 27:19). Racial prejudice, conflict, and injustice are expressions of mankind's fallen sin nature (Colossians 3:8-16), whether manifesting as sins of commission or omission, and are an attack on our shared Creator and His creation (Genesis 9:5,6; James 3:9; 4:17 1 John 3:17,18).
7. Though it may have profound social impact, racism at its root, is primarily a spiritual, heart and sin issue (Isaiah 48:22; 57:21; Galatians 5:16-; James 3:16). The Bible's solution to racism starts with individuals being reconciled to God through Christ, experiencing supernatural internal transformation, and then manifesting in interpersonal reconciliation. Peace among mankind is ultimately only possible through the redeemed community having been reconciled to God through Christ and then each other. Though a measure of peace may be temporarily experienced based on social efforts, the means of true peace is essentially spiritual (Romans 5:10-11; Ephesians 2:14-18; 2 Corinthians 5:16-21; Colossians 1:20-22).
8. Sins such as racism start in the hearts of individuals but can also corrupt the customs, policies and laws of a society (e.g., Exodus 1; Esther 3). Though Scripture emphasizes individual accountability for specific sins, God warns against active participation in the sinful deeds of any given society (2 Corinthians 6:14-18; Revelation 18:4-5). God might judge or bless an entire society based on its collective morality (Jeremiah 18:7-10), yet this does not represent His opinion of every individual in that society (Jeremiah 45:1; Hebrews 11:31), regardless of the benefits they may attain from it (Jeremiah 29:4-7; Acts 16:37-40; 25:11). God often pronounces judgment on individuals who misuse their

positions of power (Micah 3:9-11; Jeremiah 32:31-33; Ezekiel 28; Micah 3:9-11), but He also calls upon believers to respect systems of government (Romans 13:1-7. 1 Peter 2:13-17, Titus 3:1), even when they are acting corruptly.

9. When believers experience the new birth in Christ, they take on a new nature and identity, becoming part of the new race of those who have been born again (1 Peter 2:9; 1 Corinthians 10:32). Also, they become citizens of the heavenly kingdom which becomes their first loyalty. They are to pray for the peace and prosperity of their nation for the sake of the Gospel (2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:19; Philippians 3:20; Hebrews 13:14; Jeremiah 29:7; 1 Timothy 2:1,2).
10. The Bible prohibits believers from showing favoritism, bias or prejudice based on ethnicity or social status (Acts 10:28; 1 Timothy 5:21; James 2:1,4,8,9; Leviticus 19:33,34). They are to make every effort possible to live out God's vision for unity and "to be at peace with all people" as an expression of Christ having unified all things in Himself (Philippians 2:3,4; Ephesians 2; Romans 12:18; 14:19).
11. Every believer shares responsibility in resolving interpersonal offenses. Both the offended and the offender are responsible to pursue reconciliation (Matthew 5:23-26; 18:15; Leviticus 17:3; 19:17; Romans 12:17-19). It should be noted that forgiveness is unilateral regardless of another's response or actions, but reconciliation is dependent on the responses of all involved. A believer is accountable to have forgiven but may not be able to control whether reconciliation transpires; they simply must be ready and willing when it becomes possible. Forgiveness is a choice, but reconciliation may be a process that requires ongoing commitment (Mark 9:50; Romans 12:18).
12. Anytime racism appears in the heart or deeds of a person, repentance is necessary (Colossians 3:8-15). Though the emphasis of Scripture is on individual repentance for personal sin, there are a few times when God's people publicly denounced a particular sin prevalent among them, and in such cases specific sinful actions were tangibly rectified by those who were guilty (Ezra 9-10; Jeremiah 34:8-10). On one occasion, the gathered people of God were convicted by Scripture and moved to denounce the sins of their ancestors while individually confessing their own personal sins (Nehemiah 9). An individual may intercede for others declaring their sins and pleading for their redemption (Nehemiah 1; Daniel 9). In all of the above passages, no one was guilty of another's sin (see Deuteronomy 24:16; Ezekiel 18), nor could anyone repent for another, even though they declared and decried the sin in their society. And in all of these contexts, God's people were renewing their covenant commitment to Him (Ezra

10:3; Nehemiah 9:38; Jeremiah 10:10). In the New Testament, communion is the regular event in which Christians gather to search their own hearts, repent of any sin and be reconciled with fellow believers in the context of covenant renewal (1 Corinthians 11:23-34). Prejudice and segregation cannot remain alongside genuine communion (Galatians 2:11-21).

13. Repentance in the Bible sometimes included restitution. This was only between individuals directly involved with each other and concerning their measurable material property (Exodus 21:33-34; 22:1 Leviticus 6:1-5; 24:18). Scripture does not prescribe a system in which a people group must make reparations to another people group for the sins of prior generations, but God will mete out justice (Joel 3:2; Obadiah 15; 1 Peter 2:23; 4:19). Even so, the Bible excels the world's approach by providing a way for heart transformation and then requiring believers to be generous to those who are disadvantaged (Deuteronomy 15:10,11; Isaiah 58:10; Matthew 25:35; Acts 20:35; James 1:27).
14. The New Testament church equipped and encouraged its members to minister to the needs of humanity around them by being and doing good (Matthew 5:16; Romans 15:9; 1 Peter 2:12, 13-15; 3:15-16; 4:11). As an institution, it did not focus on societal change as much as individual change, using loving service as the means of attracting the lost to the light of their Savior (Matthew 5:16; 1 Peter 2:12). Their focus was on change from the inside out rather than the outside in. Any believer's efforts to address the wrongs of society must therefore serve the greater purpose of bringing people to Christ and His kingdom. Our call is to share the Gospel with everyone without prejudice, but who responds is more in God's hands than ours (Acts 16:14; 1 Corinthians 3:7-8; 12:18).
15. To promote racial harmony within society the church, as the beginning of God's new creation, must demonstrate to the world, by its own communal life, that people of every race have become equal members of His body (John 17:23; Galatians 6:15; Ephesians 2:11-22; 3:6-12; Colossians 3:10-11). Through its example of racial harmony, compassionate service, seeking the peace of society, prayer and prioritizing the Gospel, the church should be an agent of change (Jeremiah 29:7; Matthew 28:19-20; 1 Corinthians. 9:22-23; 1 Timothy 2:1-8; 1 Peter 2:13-17). In doing so it should follow the example of Jesus who skillfully evaded the political factions of His day.<sup>1</sup> He was not an

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<sup>1</sup> Jesus' statement regarding paying taxes "render unto Caesar" may provide a philosophical basis for Christian's involvement in influencing government where there is a participatory form of government. (Luke 20:26; Romans 13). (i.e., as Caesar required taxes, a government may request or require voting, etc.)

Essene, separating from the world; not a Pharisee, committed to mere moralism; not a Zealot, attempting to overthrow the oppressors; not a Sadducee, attempting to cozy up to the powerful and use the current structures to enact His plan. He said His kingdom is “not of this world” (John 18:36).

16. God is just, the source of true justice, and has more passion for justice than any person (Psalms 33:5; 9:8). Human attempts to ensure justice, even if they are noble and necessary, cannot achieve the ultimate justice that will come from God (Romans 12:19-21; 2 Peter 3:13). He is the ultimate judge having the highest authority and right to deal with all injustice whether individual or corporate (Matthew 16:17; 25:32). Though He may mete out justice in measure in this age, all injustice will be dealt with in His final judgement at the end of this age (Psalm 62:12; Proverbs 24:12; Matthew 16:27; Romans 2:6; 14:12; 1 Corinthians 3:3; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 20:12; Exodus 22:21; 2 Chronicles 19:7).
17. The ultimate solution to racism and social injustice will be realized when the redemptive work of Christ is completed. The kingdom reign of God has already arrived in the work of Christ (Matthew 11:12; 4:17) but will not be consummated until his return (1 Corinthians 15:23-28; Revelation 11:15). It is presently established and experienced in His church (Matthew 16:19; John 3:3; Revelation 1:5-8); and it is primarily spiritual, effecting salvation, rather than being political or worldly (Luke 17:21; John 18:36; Romans 14:17). With Christ’s future return, the ultimate peace and justice of His kingdom will pervade all of God’s creation (Micah 4:3-5; Acts 17:31; Revelation 19); but this reality can already be experienced in the community of believers (John 14:27; 1 Corinthians 6:1-11; Colossians 4:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:13). At His return, every nation, tribe and tongue will be unified in Christ and submitted to Him (Revelation 7:9; 21:24-26); but a measure of this should already be the experience of the church (Ephesians 2:11-22; Col. 3:11). Our desire is to invite everyone into His kingdom through the gospel as He perfects His reign in our midst until the day of His return (Matthew 24:15; Ephesians 4:11-16; Philippians 1:5-6).