

5 Unbiblical Lies That Advance Systemic Racism

Throughout the years, Christians have unfortunately used the Bible to justify racist practices and attitudes. However, any person who understands the biblical narrative can easily debunk these lies.

The following five points are major untruths perpetrated through the misuse of Scripture.

1. **The lie that the Bible is pro-slavery.** In Ephesians 6:5, we are taught by Paul the apostle that slaves ought to be subject to their masters. Southern slave owners would read that particular passage to their African slaves to help keep them in bondage. However, one of the primary reasons why many slaves were forbidden from learning how to read and write was because their owners understood that reading the entirety of God's Word would point to the fact that these slaves were created in God's image and that freedom from slavery was God's plan. These biblical truths eventually became the impetus for the abolitionist movement in England and the USA.

The most popular narrative in Scripture that motivated abolitionist sentiment was the Exodus story in which God heard the cries of the Jewish people and delivered them from the bondage of slavery. This enslavement was done at the hands of the Egyptians who dwelt in North Africa (which shows that slave owners weren't just white).

While the apostle Paul taught that slaves should obey their masters, his reason had nothing to do with the condoning of slavery. Two-thirds of the Roman Empire's population during Paul's time were slaves. This is because many prisoners and criminals were put into systemic bondage, and their children were born into slavery. The church was a newly formed Jesus

movement and did not yet have the power to eradicate slavery. Thus, for the baby church to effectually advance, it had to focus first on making disciples and church planting before it had enough of a groundswell of support to overthrow that wicked systemic institution.

Paul used anti-slavery language in other places in Scripture that pointed metaphorically back to the freedom theme in the Exodus narrative. For example, in Galatians 5:1, Paul said, "For freedom Christ freed us. Stand fast therefore and do not be entangled again with the yoke of bondage." Furthermore, Paul wrote on behalf of a runaway slave, Onesimus, to his owner Philemon and appealed to him to receive him back "no longer as a slave but ... a beloved brother" (Philemon 16a). In John 8:31-36, Jesus metaphorically connected sin with slavery, saying that He came to "free" people.

History shows that as early as the second century after the church had gained more adherents, Christians fought against slavery. They would release slaves during church services in the presence of bishops. Such a practice was due to the understanding that at the cross, there was no distinction between slave and free people. Jesus' death made all men equal before the eyes of God (Gal. 3:28). Hence, the teaching of the Bible produced a countercultural revolutionary impetus that, among many other things, resulted in abolitionist movements across the ages.

2. **The lie that black people are cursed.** Unfortunately, many white supremacists perpetuate the lie that all black people were cursed because of a misreading of Genesis 9:24-27. In this story, Noah cursed Canaan, the descendants of his son Ham. Ham was a black man. However, the Bible says that Canaan, Ham's son, was cursed, not Ham himself. Thus, only one of Ham's four sons, not all four, were cursed. How then could all black people everywhere be cursed? Scripture places limitations on curses, stating that only three or four

generations, at most, could be affected by this curse (Ex. 20:5). The curse on Canaan and his descendants states, "Now therefore, you are cursed, and none of you shall be freed from being slaves" (Josh. 9:23, NKJV). This curse finds its likely fulfillment in Canaan's subjugation by Israel (Josh. 9:23; 1 Kings 9:20-21). Furthermore, the descendants of Ham's other sons were not cursed but blessed to this day (Gen. 10:6). Cush, Mizraim and Put have continued to this day as national peoples in Ethiopia (Cush), Egypt (Mizraim) and Libya (Put).

3. The lie that ethnic people should not mingle.

Unfortunately, some notes in popular Bibles, such as the *Dake's Study Bible*, have been used to perpetuate the lie that people of various skin tones and ethnicities should practice separation and not intermarry. However, Scripture teaches that every tribe, nation and tongue worship together before the throne of God (Rev. 7:9-10). Since Jesus taught us to pray for His kingdom to come and His will to be done upon earth as it is in heaven, the biblical caricature of the church is for ethnic peoples to be in unison in their praise and service to God (Matt. 6:6-9).

Some people have used Revelation 7:9-10 to teach that "races" of humans should remain separate. They say that because, in heaven, ethnic peoples and nations still have their distinctions. This is erroneous since most of the countries in history are made up of various ethnic peoples who married and produced ethnically mixed offspring. Thus, nations do not necessarily imply a so-called biologically pure ethnic breed but a common culture, language and allegiance to a set of values in a particular geographic region of the earth. Although God is not colorblind and created different ethnic expressions of humanity, we are all children of God when we receive Christ. The dividing wall between ethnic groups has

been torn down, and we are all one new man, regardless of skin color, gender and culture (Gal. 3:28, Eph. 2:11-19, 2 Cor. 5:17). Consequently, Christ-followers are to derive their primary identity in Christ, not in their ethnicity.

4. **The lie that God is white.** Since Scripture teaches that there is only one human race and that we are all made from one blood, it doesn't matter what "color" Jesus had in His incarnation (Acts 19:26). I have no issue with each ethnic group depicting Jesus in their image, with their skin tone. Doing so may help people relate to God within their particular culture and context in a more effective way. However, in America, we have historically depicted Jesus as a European Caucasian. It has been used by white supremacists to say that "God is white," implying they are the superior race. Furthermore, the ignorant may say that blacks are inferior because Satan is known by many as the "dark lord." This leads to the misinterpretation of passages that state that Christians are translated from the kingdom of "darkness" into the kingdom of His Son (Colossians 1:13).

The fact is that Jesus lived in the Middle East. His skin tone was likely not lily-white but of an olive complexion. The only description we have that possibly depicts the color of Jesus's skin is the post-Resurrection appearance of Jesus. There, Scripture describes Jesus' feet as "burnished bronze" (which some have used to claim that Jesus was brown or black). His hair is described as "wool" in texture, similar to that of Africans (Rev. 1:14-15). Such descriptions certainly do not help the cause of the "white Jesus" proponents.

However, since that section of Revelation was mostly metaphorical, it is hard to make a case that it accurately describes Jesus' skin tone during His earthly incarnation.

Passages that state there is no darkness in God has nothing to do with His supposed pigmentation or that the color dark is

evil. God made all humans in His image (Gen. 1:27). He determined the different pigmentation of people groups. Those with a dark complexion are just as much a reflection of God as those with lighter skin tones. Darkness, when it comes to Satan and the absence of darkness when it describes God, has to do with the nature of evil; evil is always hidden, it always seeks to protect its real agenda and motives.

5. The lie that sin only resides in individuals. Caucasian evangelicals came up with a missional framework called the "Great Commission," which focuses only on individual salvation. There was no focus on holistic ministry that dealt with systemic issues such as racism, poverty and oppression, even though the Scriptures admonish the people of God to advocate for biblical justice (Isa. 58, 61:1-4; Ezek. 6:48-50; Amos 5:15; Mic. 6:8; Matt. 3:16, 5:6; Luke 10:30-37). Consequently, this truncated view of the gospel got millions of sincere believers off the hook as it related to their duty to impact at-risk communities. Many Christians turn a blind eye to the amelioration of generational devastation that perpetuates cycles of poverty, poor education, crime, incarceration and abortion. In the past, such an individualistic view served to insulate many Christians from fighting against Jim Crow and from participating in the Civil Rights movement. Unfortunately, this has continued to influence a vast majority of Bible-believing Christians negatively. They continue to go on their merry way while their black brothers and sisters die in the streets.

The solution is for the body of Christ to connect the gospel to the kingdom, the way Jesus did (Mark 1:15). When the Good News is connected to the reign of God on earth, it obligates the church to deal with systems, not merely individual sin.

Furthermore, even if some churches confront racism within the individual human heart, but ignore discrimination within the

law, millions saved in evangelistic crusades, revivals and huge church attendance do little to move the needle towards seeing the flourishing of human beings in society.

May the true knowledge of God arise in these days so that the church may be an instrument of reconciliation and not division. {eoa}