



Does the Bible Support Racism? (Part I)

Genesis 9:18: (NASB) *Now the sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem and Ham and Japheth; and Ham was the father of Canaan.*



Racism - it is one of the hardest, most emotional and divisive subjects in our present culture. Understanding what it means, where it came from and how to deal with it are some of the many pressing questions that surround this issue. One of the utterly false reasonings that helped to provoke our modern day racial experience is "The Curse of Ham." What does it mean, where did it come from and how do we know that it is wrong? Let's us find out!

 Introduction, [Ferguson in 120 seconds, ABCNews.go.com](http://www.ABCNews.go.com)

- (Male reporter) Tensions are high after an unarmed teenager was shot dead by police officers.
- (Female reporter) Police say there was a fight for the officer's gun - a different explanation from the friend walking with Brown.
- (Brown's friend) Officers pulling him inside the car, he's trying to pull away.
- (Recording of a police officer) There is a Family Dollar being looted.
- (Citizen) About the violence, not what my son would want.
- (Male reporter) Young people out on the streets clashed with police.
- (Barack Obama) Now's the time for peace and calm on the streets of Ferguson.
- (Police officer) The officer that was involved in the shooting of Michael Brown was Darren Wilson.

This event has stirred up racial tensions in our country that have not been seen nationally in a long time.



"Noah Damning Ham,"
by Ivan Stepanovitch
Ksenofontov,
Painting, 19th century

The Curse of Ham: *A belief that Ham, the son of Noah, was cursed so that his sons would all have their skin darkened, and they would be destined to be the slaves of all the other offspring of Noah's other two sons...*

This belief would feed the justification for keeping slaves of African descent. But is it true?





To understand this "Curse of Ham" business, we need to establish the context.

What is unusual about this text?

Genesis 9:18-19: (NASB) ¹⁸Now the sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem and Ham and Japheth; and Ham was the father of Canaan. ¹⁹These three were the sons of Noah, and from these the whole earth was populated.



Why is only one of Noah's 16 grandsons, Canaan, mentioned here?

Continuing: Genesis 9:20-23: (NASB) ²⁰Then Noah began farming and planted a vineyard. ²¹He drank of the wine and became drunk, and uncovered himself inside his tent. ²²Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. ²³But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it upon both their shoulders and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were turned away, so that they did not see their father's nakedness.

"Noah's Drunkenness,"
by Michelangelo
Buonarroti,
Fresco 1508-1512
Sistine Chapel ceiling,
Vatican City



Observations:

- **Verse 20** - A process of several years was necessary from the coming out from the ark to the planting and harvesting in order for this event to take place, for the youngest son of Ham is mentioned. (Remember, between **Genesis 1** and **Genesis 6** was 1,656 years! Massive amounts of time transpire between verses.)
- **Verse 21** - This is the first mention of wine and drunkenness in Scripture - perhaps the changed atmospheric condition caused a fermenting that had never occurred before and took Noah by surprise.
- **Verse 22** - Ham sees Noah and tells his brothers. Was this a bad thing? (We will come back to this.)
- **Verse 23** - Shem and Japheth display propriety and respect.

Back to **Verse 22** - Ham did not exercise the propriety he obviously knew about. Instead he **told** his two brothers outside.

Told: Hebrew English Lexicon #5046
1) to be conspicuous, tell, make known; 2) to tell, declare



This indicates a flippant and disrespectful attitude about matters of dignity - not just an oversight. Something was wrong with the way Ham reacted to how he saw his father, Noah.

Proverbs 14:9: (NASB) *Fools mock at sin, but among the upright there is good will.*

1 Peter 4:8-10: (NRSV) *Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins. ⁹Be hospitable to one another without complaining. ¹⁰Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.*

So, where does the "Curse of Ham" come in?

(Source: Excerpts from Wikipedia) ...In medieval Christian exegesis, Ham's sin was regarded as laughter (for mocking his father and doing nothing to rectify his condition). Elsewhere in Medieval Europe, the "Curse of Ham" also became used as a justification for serfdom. Honorius Augustodunensis (c. 1100) was the first recorded to propose a caste system associating Ham with serfdom, writing that serfs were descended from Ham, nobles from Japheth, and free men from Shem.

Genesis 9:24-27: (NASB) *²⁴When Noah awoke from his wine, he knew what his youngest son had done to him. ²⁵So he said, Cursed be Canaan; A servant of servants he shall be to his brothers. ²⁶He also said, blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem; And let Canaan be his servant. ²⁷May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant.*



Observations:

- **Verse 24** - Noah knows of the mockery, humiliation and exposure to which he was subjected.

Ham *told his two brothers outside* - this word, coupled with *told*, helps us see an attitude:

Outside: Hebrew English Lexicon #2351, outside, outward, street, the outside

Ham made his father's condition conspicuous to those elsewhere - like gossiping in the street. He went to expose what he saw without respect or shame. He did nothing to respect his father!

- **Verse 25** - Canaan was cursed - but he was not there! But where is the curse of Ham? Why is Canaan cursed instead?
- This curse is one of servitude. What people did Canaan's posterity become? (We will come back to this.)
- **Verses 26 and 27** - Blessings were given to Noah's other two sons and a restating of the curse on Canaan.



The Decision, Ferguson in 120 seconds, ABCNews.go.com

- *They determine that no probable cause exists to file any charge against Officer Wilson and returned a No True Bill (a finding by a grand jury that there is no probable cause to decide that a crime has been committed) on each of the five indictments.*
- *(Barack Obama) We are a nation built on the rule of law, and so we need to accept that this decision was the grand jury's to make. I join Michael's parents in asking anyone who protests this decision to do so peacefully.*



- *(Reporter) Widespread looting and chaos and buildings throughout Ferguson burning through the night...*

Why did Noah curse Canaan, his grandson, for something that Ham, his son, did? And did this in any way reflect on the future generations of the black race?

Observations:

- Noah's curse was a prophecy. As a man of God, he was given a gift to foretell the future.
- This prophecy of Noah revealed that the character flaw of Ham's perverted satisfaction would be present and perhaps greater in Canaan.

So, does this curse of Canaan relate to black Africans? NO! How do we know?

Genesis 10 tells us the genealogies and geography of Noah's sons and their descendants:

Genesis 10:1-5: (NASB) ¹Now these are the records of the generations of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah; and sons were born to them after the flood. ²The sons of Japheth were Gomer and Magog and Madai and Javan and Tubal and Meshech and Tiras. ³The sons of Gomer were Ashkenaz and Riphath and Togarmah. ⁴The sons of Javan were Elishah and Tarshish, Kittim and Dodanim. ⁵From these the coastlands of the nations were separated into their lands, every one according to his language, according to their families, into their nations.



(Source: Excerpts from Wikipedia) ...The explanation that black Africans, as the "sons of Ham," were cursed, possibly "blackened" by their sins, was advanced only sporadically during the Middle Ages, but it became increasingly common during the slave trade of the 18th and 19th centuries. The justification of slavery itself through the sins of Ham was well suited to the ideological interests of the elite; with the emergence of the slave trade, its racialized version justified the exploitation of African labor.

So, did Canaan have children who would eventually become African slaves?

Protests, "I Can't Breathe" Goes Nationwide, CBS News

- *Two days after a New York City grand jury cleared a white police officer in a chokehold death of an unarmed black man, the protests are growing larger and spreading across the country, including Boston and Chicago. And now another New York grand jury, this one in Brooklyn, is about to investigate the shooting of another unarmed black man. Michelle Miller begins our coverage.*
- *(Crowd chanting) I can't breathe! I can't breathe!*
- *(Michelle Miller) Today the chant on the streets of Chicago was like thousands heard last night in New York, at a protest in Minneapolis and a die-in on the campus of Clemson University.*
- *(Crowd chanting) I can't breathe!*

Genesis 10:6-7: (NASB) ⁶The sons of Ham were Cush and Mizraim and Put and Canaan. ⁷The sons of Cush were Seba and Havilah and Sabtah and Raamah and Sabteca; and the sons of Raamah were Sheba and Dedan.



A caller from Indiana suggests a connection with [Leviticus 18:8](#) that the father's nakedness has to do with the father's wife instead; meaning the curse on Canaan was as a child from Ham and Noah's wife.



Although we see it differently, this is a perspective we had not previously heard. We appreciate the Leviticus 18 passage as teaching family propriety.

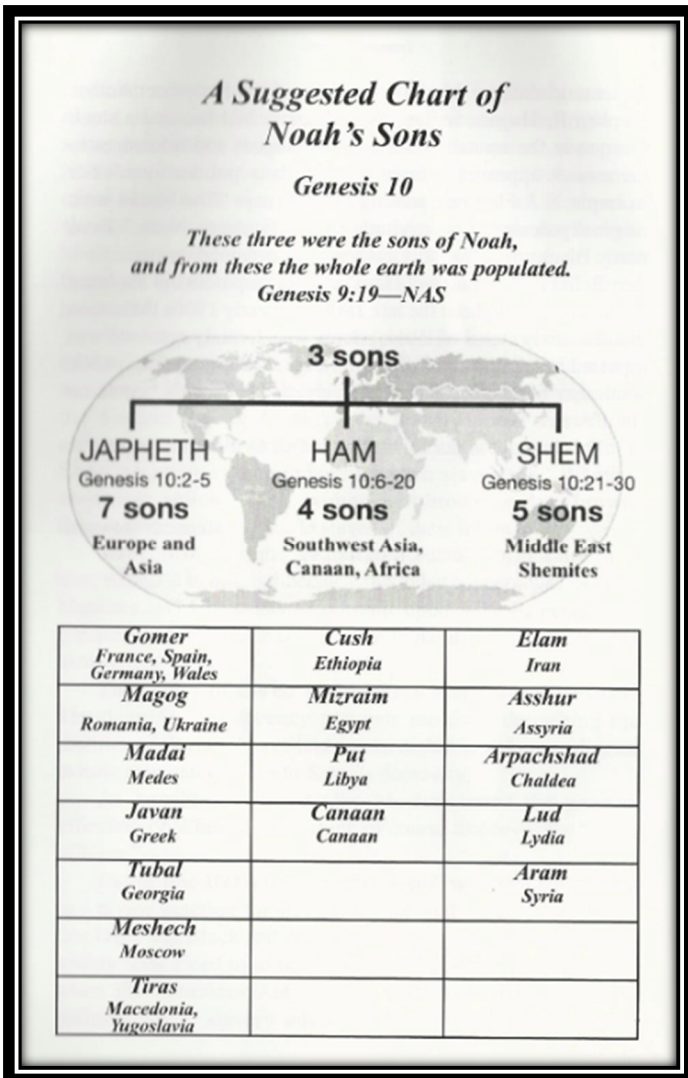
- Cush would eventually settle Ethiopia (in Africa)
- Mizraim would eventually settle Egypt (in Africa)
- Put would eventually settle Libya (in Africa)
- Canaan would eventually settle Canaan (in Asia)

Note the three grandsons *not* cursed settled in Africa. The cursed grandson, Canaan, did *not* settle in Africa.

Before we get to Canaan and what happened there, we need to make one more important point regarding the misnomer of "The Curse of Ham." If Ham's sons were cursed to servitude, then how do we explain the following genealogy from the next verses?

Genesis 10:8-12: (NASB) ⁸Now Cush became the father of Nimrod; he became a mighty one on the earth. ⁹He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; therefore it is said, Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the LORD.

Nimrod was mighty, though not a God-fearing man and according to many Bible scholars, he was black. He was not under servitude but instead ruled over others.



Where did he rule?

¹⁰The beginning of his kingdom was Babel and Erech and Accad and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. ¹¹From that land he went forth into Assyria, and built Nineveh and Rehoboth-Ir and Calah, ¹²and Resen between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city.

Shinar - this is where Babylon, the first mighty empire of the world, was established. Obviously this cannot be in line with the supposed "Curse of Ham."

So, what *did* happen to Canaan?

Deuteronomy 9:1-5: (NASB) ¹Hear, O Israel! You are crossing over the Jordan today to go in to dispossess nations (these were "city states" - like mini nations, all from the lineage of Canaan) greater and mightier than you, great cities fortified to heaven, ²a people great and tall, the sons of the Anakim, whom you know and of whom you have heard it said, Who can stand before the sons of Anak? ³Know therefore today that it is the LORD your God who is crossing over before you as a consuming fire. He will destroy them and He will subdue them before you, so that you may drive them out and destroy them quickly, just as the LORD has spoken to you. ⁴Do not say in your heart when the LORD your God has driven them out before



you, ⁵Because of my righteousness the LORD has brought me in to possess this land, but it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is dispossessing them before you.

At this time in the Land of Canaan we have a unique scriptural mix of the descendants of Noah's sons –

Canaanites: HAM

Philistines: JAPHETH

Israel: SHEM

This fulfills Genesis 9:26,27 which tells us that Canaan shall be the servant of both Shem and Japheth. The Canaanites were captured by both Semites (Israel) and Japhethites (Philistines).

God was not giving the land to the Israelites because they were so good, it was because the Canaanites were so bad! Canaan was populated by deep and dark wickedness. At this time also some Philistines (descendants of Japheth) were in Canaan. Between the Philistines and Israel (descendants of Shem) we see the prophecy of Noah fulfilled - not against a black nation and certainly NOT in Africa!

 *I Have a Dream, Martin Luther King, August 28, 1963*

- *I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal."*

So, if this curse of Ham is in no way biblical, then where did it come from?

(Source: Wikipedia) ...In the parts of Africa where Christianity flourished in the early days, while it was still illegal in Rome, this idea never took hold, and its interpretation of scripture was never adopted by the African Coptic Churches. A modern Amharic commentary on Genesis notes the 19th century and earlier European theory that blacks were subject to whites as a result of the "curse of Ham," but calls this a false teaching unsupported by the text of the Bible, emphatically pointing out that Noah's curse fell not upon all descendants of Ham, but only on the descendants of Canaan, and asserting that it was fulfilled when Canaan was occupied by both Semites (Israel) and Japhetites. The commentary further notes that Canaanites ceased to exist politically after the Third Punic War (149 BC), and that their current descendants are thus unknown and scattered among all peoples.

 *I'm not with it, Two New York police officers shot dead, CNN*

- *Lloyd Martin Savage in New York where the news is breaking out of this city. Two New York police officers, in uniform, sitting in their NYPD patrol car were shot in what was described as ambush style today in Brooklyn. We're told that both officers were shot in the head and both have died from their wounds. We're also told that the suspected gunman has been found dead. Here's how one witness described the scene:*



- *(Witness) No, she just told me that they just got shot in the car that they were sitting in, but my whole thing is we got to take back our communities. This can't happen. If you're mad at somebody, be mad at the person that you're mad at. Now, we have two families that's missing somebody for the holidays. Regardless of what, where is your humanity? Like, I know there's a war going on and shout out to Everett Gardner's family and everybody else who lost somebody, but you're not at his house or his lawn. These two, you don't know if they're good or bad. I don't condone this and I'm not with it. I'm not with it.*

We KNOW the “Curse of Ham” did NOT come from any true Christian origin:

Acts 17:22-28: (NASB) ²²So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects. ²³For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.

The ignorance of this world is truly blinding!

²⁴The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; ²⁵nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things; ²⁶and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation,

God has complete, total and unequivocal equality in viewing the race of humanity.

²⁷that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; ²⁸for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, for we also are His children.

All of the human race can equally search for God. Christianity began with that understanding but throughout the ages took some wrong turns contrary to true Christian principles.



A caller from Connecticut suggests “We are all ignorant, only on different subjects.” On racial discrimination, I am colorblind and for the underdog. There is a distinction between being partial and being prejudiced or biased, thinking the other person is inferior to us. No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.

(Source: Blog -The Origins of the Curse of Ham, By Jeremy Pierce, April 22, 2008) ...The people who first came up with this justification for slavery of Africans were very early Muslims, and that view was dominant within the Islamic world (but not outside it) for 100 years until it spread to Europeans via contact with the Spanish and their treatment of Moors. Then Europeans and eventually colonial Americans began to adopt it. So it wasn't even initially a misreading of the Bible. The relevant parts of the Qur'an don't mention Ham at all, so it's not even a misreading of the Qur'an. It's simply a fabrication in order to justify the kind of slavery Muslims had been imposing on black Africans.



History also tells us that Muslims did not limit their slavery victims to just black men and women. In his book "Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters: White Slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast and Italy, 1500-1800," Robert Davis (Professor of History - Ohio State University) observed, "...from AD 1500 to 1650, when trans-Atlantic slaving to the United States was still in its infancy, more white Christian slaves were probably taken to Africa than black slaves to the Americas. ...one million to 1.25 million white slaves."

Galatians 3:27-29: (NASB) ²⁷For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.

There is an equality in Christ.

Did God set up precedent for racism by choosing "favorites" to work with and through?

One last quote on the historical perspective of "The Curse of Ham" and its origin:

(Source: Blog -The Origins of the Curse of Ham, By Jeremy Pierce, April 22, 2008) ...It was early Muslims who first (as far as we know) developed the idea that Ham was cursed. I found a quote in Edwin Yamauchi's "Africa and the Bible" from a Muslim who wrote in the late 7th to early 8th centuries, and the whole view is right there. Noah cursed Ham (not Canaan) by imposing slavery on Africans whenever the descendants of Shem would come across them. It attributes their hair type to the curse as well (but not, interestingly, their skin color, though it does mention their skin color). A 9th century Muslim does bring in a change of skin color because of the curse, and Yamauchi mentions other sources attributing natural slavery to black Africans because of this curse, a view that I'm pretty sure doesn't become entrenched in Europe or the Americas until the slave trade was well underway.

So, this was a made up justification for things they were already doing.



A caller from Connecticut suggests **Ephesians 2:19:** *You were no longer strangers and aliens, but you were citizens with the saints.* The Bible does not support racism; it supports the opposite - the love of unity in Christ. The Bible has been used to support racism, but the Christian knows that the Bible reflects the story of God's love and teaching man that love. **1 Corinthians 2:13:** *We think of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit.* Just as God does not force His love on us, He does not force us to love one another. True scriptural principle teaches that we are one in Christ. Read as a whole, the Bible leads us to freedom from the slavery of the sin of racism. **2 Corinthians 3:6:** *A new covenant, not of letter but of Spirit, for the letter kills but the Spirit gives life.*

God and favoritism - is that similar to racism?

Merriam Webster definition:

Racism

- 1: a belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race
- 2: racial prejudice or discrimination

So, the logical question would be, did the reasons for God choosing "favorites" equate to this definition?



Here are some of God's "favorites:"

Genesis 6:5-8: (NASB) ⁵Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. ⁶The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. ⁷The LORD said, I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them. ⁸But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.

Through the faithful work and life of Noah, God spared humanity. (We are glad He had a favorite or else we would not be here!) Noah preached for over 100 years, so others had the opportunity to live righteously.

Abraham was another "favorite" and given the first promise of unique far-reaching favor:

Genesis 12:1-3: (KJV) ¹Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: ²And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: ³And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

Why was Abram given this unprecedented promise? He was willing to follow God!

Abram would be tested on his dedication, especially with the test regarding Isaac:

Genesis 22:18: (NKJV) In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.

Of course we know that Isaac was a "favorite" as well as Jacob, who became the father of Israel.



What can we observe about God's favor?

- He rewards those who diligently follow His precepts.
- His timetable is much longer than ours - He allows suffering to seemingly drag on.
- He chooses "favorites" for the purpose of benefiting all of the rest! God's favoritism is contrary to racism. Racism has nothing to do with kindness, love, mercy and justice. God's favoritism is for the building up of all mankind for eternity.

Rough places plain, Martin Luther King, August 28, 1963

- *I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, and every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain and the crooked places will be made straight. "...And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together." This is our hope, and this is the faith that I go back to the South with. With this faith, we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith, we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith, we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.*



Does God elevate his favored ones the same way a racist elevates his own race?

We know that Jacob's name was changed to "Israel" and his 12 sons became the 12 tribes of Israel. Once they were delivered from the slavery in Egypt (which by the way is an interesting way for God to show his favor to them) and once they finished wandering in the wilderness for 40 years (another example of God's favor!) they were finally in position to inherit their long-promised land.

What did God's favor require of them?

Instruction regarding their "separate" existence as a favored people:

No mixing of societies or creating alliances: Deuteronomy 7:1-12: (NKJV) *¹When the LORD your God brings you into the land which you go to possess, and has cast out many nations before you...²You shall make no covenant with them nor show mercy to them.*

No mixing of families and no mercy on His own people if they turn from Him: *³Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son. ⁴For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods; so the anger of the LORD will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly.*

No mixing of worship: *⁵But thus you shall deal with them: you shall destroy their altars, and break down their sacred pillars, and cut down their wooden images, and burn their carved images with fire.*

You are a different people than those around you: *⁶For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. ⁷The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; ⁸but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.*

No mercy on those who perpetuate sinful practices: *⁹Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments; ¹⁰and He repays those who hate Him to their face, to destroy them. He will not be slack with him who hates Him; He will repay him to his face.*

No breaking of His promise to protect them if they remain true: *¹¹Therefore you shall keep the commandment, the statutes, and the judgments, which I command you today, to observe them. ¹²Then it shall come to pass, because you listen to these judgments, and keep and do them, that the LORD your God will keep with you the covenant and the mercy, which He swore to your fathers.*

This is Part 1 of the question, "Does the Bible support racism?" Our object was to deal with biblical context and history and right some wrongs in terms of biblical interpretation. In Part 2 a few weeks from now, we will be dealing with the practical issues surrounding racism, as well as the emotional import.

To God, favoritism equates to requiring much of those favored for the purpose of having them live a higher life than those around them as an example of loyalty to something higher than themselves. The purpose was for them to be positioned to BLESS all of the rest! This is not racism but blessing according to God's own time clock. That is why we can be assured God has no sense of racism in His creation and does not want it in us against each other.



 **Free at Last, Martin Luther King, August 28, 1963**

- *...Let freedom ring (crowd cheering and clapping) and when this happens, when we allow freedom to ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when ALL of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual: Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!*

God's plan will make all of us "free at last," and there will be no racism and no favoritism that does not bring glory to all mankind. That is God's plan through Jesus.

*So, does the Bible support racism? (NO!)
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*

*And now even more to think about...
only in the **Full Edition** of CQ Rewind!*



More detail on God's "favorites"...

God's favor continued with Abraham's son: This text is God talking to Isaac.

Genesis 26:3-5: (NASB) ³Sojourn in this land and I will be with you and bless you, for to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath which I swore to your father Abraham. ⁴I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and will give your descendants all these lands; and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; ⁵because Abraham obeyed Me and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws.

God's favor continued with Abraham's grandson: This text is God talking to Jacob.

Genesis 28:12-14: (NASB) (Jacob) ¹²He had a dream, and behold, a ladder was set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. ¹³And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants. ¹⁴Your descendants will also be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

Another text to verify that there was no mention of wine or drunkenness before the flood:

Luke 17:26-29: (NRSV) ²⁶Just as it was in the days of Noah, so too it will be in the days of the Son of Man. ²⁷They were eating and drinking, and marrying and being given in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed all of them. ²⁸Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot: they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building, ²⁹but on the day that Lot left Sodom, it rained fire and sulfur from heaven and destroyed all of them.

Eating, drinking, etc. typifies carrying on with the normal tasks and responsibilities of life and does not imply any sort of drunken revelry.



Wikipedia: Medieval serfdom and "Pseudo-Berosus:" In medieval Christian exegesis, Ham's sin was regarded as laughter (for mocking his father and doing nothing to rectify his condition). Elsewhere in Medieval Europe, the "Curse of Ham" also became used as a justification for serfdom. Honorius Augustodunensis (c. 1100) was the first recorded to propose a caste system associating Ham with serfdom, writing that serfs were descended from Ham, nobles from Japheth, and free men from Shem. However, he also followed the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7:21 by Ambrosiaster (late 4th century), which held that as servants in the temporal world, these "Hamites" were likely to receive a far greater reward in the next world than would the Japhetic nobility.

The idea that serfs were the descendants of Ham soon became widely promoted in Europe. An example is Dame Juliana Berners (c. 1388), who, in a treatise on hawks, claimed that the "churlish" descendants of Ham had settled in Europe, those of the temperate Shem in Africa, and those of the noble Japheth in Asia (a departure from normal arrangements, which placed Shem in Asia, Japheth in Europe, and Ham in Africa), because she considered Europe to be the "country of churls", Asia of gentility, and Africa of temperance. As serfdom waned in the late medieval era, the interpretation of serfs being descendants of Ham decreased as well.

Ham also figured in an immensely influential work called *Commentaria super opera diversorum auctorum de antiquitatibus* (Commentaries on the Works of Various Authors Discussing Antiquity). In 1498, Annius of Viterbo claimed to have translated records of Berosus, an ancient Babylonian priest and scholar; which are today usually considered an elaborate forgery. However, they gained great influence over Renaissance ways of thinking about population and migration, filling a historical gap following the biblical account of the flood. According to this account, Ham studied the evil arts that had been practiced before the flood, and thus became known as "Cam Esenus" (Ham the Licentious), as well as the original Zoroaster and Saturn (Cronus). He became jealous of Noah's additional children born after the deluge, and began to view his father with enmity, and one day, when Noah lay drunk and naked in his tent, Ham saw him and sang a mocking incantation that rendered Noah temporarily sterile, as if castrated. This account contains several other parallels connecting Ham with Greek myths of the castration of Uranus by Cronus, as well as Italian legends of Saturn and/or Camesis ruling over the Golden Age and fighting the Titanomachy. Ham in this version also abandoned his wife who had been aboard the ark and had mothered the African peoples, and instead married his sister Rhea, daughter of Noah, producing a race of giants in Sicily.



European/American slavery, 17th and 18th centuries: The explanation that black Africans, as the "sons of Ham", were cursed, possibly "blackened" by their sins, was advanced only sporadically during the Middle Ages, but it became increasingly common during the slave trade of the 18th and 19th centuries. The justification of slavery itself through the sins of Ham was well suited to the ideological interests of the elite; with the emergence of the slave trade, its racialized version justified the exploitation of African labor.

In the parts of Africa where Christianity flourished in the early days, while it was still illegal in Rome, this idea never took hold, and its interpretation of scripture was never adopted by the African Coptic Churches. A modern Amharic commentary on Genesis notes the 19th century and earlier European theory that blacks were subject to whites as a result of the "curse of Ham", but calls this a false teaching unsupported by the text of the Bible, emphatically pointing out that Noah's curse fell not upon all descendants of Ham, but only on the descendants of Canaan, and asserting that it was fulfilled when Canaan was occupied by both Semites (Israel) and Japhetites. The commentary further notes that Canaanites ceased to exist politically after the Third Punic War (149 BC), and that their current descendants are thus unknown and scattered among all peoples.

Robert Boyle—a 17th-century scientist who also was a theologian and a devout Christian—refuted the idea that blackness was a Curse of Ham, in his book *Experiments and Considerations Touching Colours* (1664). There, Boyle explains that the Curse of Ham used as an explanation of the complexion of coloured people was but a misinterpretation embraced by "vulgar writers", travelers, critics, and also "men of note" of his time. In his work, he challenges that vision, explaining:

And not only we do not find expressed in the Scripture, that the Curse meant by Noah to Cham, was the Blackness of his Posterity, but we do find plainly enough there that the Curse was quite another thing, namely that he should be a Servant of Servants, that is by an Ebraism, a very Abject Servant to his Brethren, which accordingly did in part come to pass, when the Israelites of the posterity of Sem, subdued the Canaanites, that descended from Cham, and kept them in great Subjection. Nor is it evident that Blackness is a Curse, for Navigators tell us of Black Nations, who think so much otherwise of their own condition, that they paint the Devil White. Nor is Blackness inconsistent with Beauty, which even to our European Eyes consists not so much in Colour, as an Advantageous Stature, a Comely Symmetry of the parts of the Body, and Good Features in the Face. So that I see not why Blackness should be thought such a Curse to the Negroes... [author's italics and capitalization]

A number of other scholars also support the claim that the racialized version of the Curse of Ham was devised at that time because it suited ideological and economical interests of the European elite and slave traders who wanted to justify exploitation of African labour. While Robinson (2007) claims that such version was non-existent before, historian David Brion Davis argues, as well, that contrary to the claims of many reputable historians, neither the Talmud



nor any early post-biblical Jewish writing relates blackness of the skin to a curse whatsoever.

The Origins of the Curse of Ham, By Jeremy Pierce, April 22, 2008

...The people who first came up with this justification for slavery of Africans were very early Muslims, and that view was dominant within the Islamic world (but not outside it) for 100 years until it spread to Europeans via contact with the Spanish and their treatment of Moors. Then Europeans and eventually colonial Americans began to adopt it. So it wasn't even initially a misreading of the Bible. The relevant parts of the Qur'an don't mention Ham at all, so it's not even a misreading of the Qur'an. It's simply a fabrication in order to justify the kind of slavery Muslims had been imposing on black Africans.

It was an early Muslims who first (as far as we know) developed the idea that Ham was cursed. I found a quote in Edwin Yamauchi's *Africa and the Bible* from a Muslim who wrote in the late 7th to early 8th centuries, and the whole view is right there. Noah cursed Ham (not Canaan) by imposing slavery on Africans whenever the descendants of Shem would come across them. It attributes their hair type to the curse as well (but not, interestingly, their skin color, though it does mention their skin color). A 9th century Muslim does bring in a change of skin color because of the curse, and Yamauchi mentions other sources attributing natural slavery to black Africans because of this curse, a view that I'm pretty sure doesn't become entrenched in Europe or the Americas until the slave trade was well under way.

Its first appearance in the colonies isn't long after the British occupied American territory and started importing slaves, but it had been in Europe before that. Various versions of it appear even before the Reformation, as early as the mid-15th century, but that was in formerly-Muslim Portugal regarding the now-enslaved Moors. European theologians generally resisted the idea, and it probably didn't take serious hold until the modern concept of race came into existence through the work of Immanuel Kant and his contemporaries who sought to explain differences in physical features by means of biological essences of different races.

So Muslims, a very dominant form of which has an awful lot of problems with human rights even today, seem to be the initial impetus behind one of the key justifications of European and American slavery of blacks. This doesn't excuse the Europeans and Americans who did it, but Muslim writers were originally responsible for the idea, and it came to the colonies and Europeans via the cotton trade. I think it's time to stop blaming this on Christianity even if there were plenty of Christians who have held this view that originated in Islamic



slavery. It's silly enough to blame Christianity for a view that hasn't held sway for most of Christian history but only appeared late and lasted only a couple hundred years before going the way of the dodo except in offshoot groups like Mormons. But if the view originally came from another religion entirely and has been dominant in the members of that religion's justification of slavery, while Christians steadfastly resisted it for centuries before falling sway to it for a few hundred years, I think it's justifiable to claim that those who blame this on Christianity are relying on historical ignorance.