
The Biblical Answers to Ethnic Divides - Part 1

Topical

Russ Kennedy

We live in a day of ethnic and cultural division, anger, upheaval and lawlessness.

Pandemic has exposed pent-up anger and frustrations...

Deep resentment in the black communities over real, perceived, or exaggerated grievances...

Suspicion, hatred and irreconcilable differences in cultural and political realms have led to dangerous levels of rhetoric...

Social media platforms have become megaphones for amplifying the voice of extremists in just about every area of life and culture...

The church is being driven by even good men into compromising the gospel with social justice agendas...

The response to the pandemic by many governmental authorities has created a terrible provocation for unsubmissive and rebellious hearts to think and act in ungodly ways, even in the church...

One of the questions that I (and we, as the elders) get asked is: "How do we respond to BLM?"

First, go read their website. Click on the links and go to the lower level sites. The response to BLM as a movement is easy. "They are anti-God and anti-Christian in almost every way."

But what about the unjust treatment of blacks and minorities? That is part of this sermon and others like it from the Book of Amos in the late winter and spring of 2021 will address.

What is the church's responsibility in all this? Shouldn't the church be at the forefront of changing the culture to address these injustices? The answer is, "No, not in the way that is being advocated by many in the so-called Christian Social Justice movement..."

In the midst of this I want to emphasize the Biblical order of spheres.

We are first and foremost, citizens of the Kingdom of God.

We are second members of a local church (or you ought to be and shame on you if you are not!).

We are thirdly, citizens of a country. Most of us are citizens of the United States.

Let us look at some Scriptures and at the end we will draw some general conclusions. In future sermons we will go into more detail about the areas of equality, social justice, cultural change and our responsibility as Christians and as a church.

General Response from Biblical Theology

Without commenting on it too much, here are some basic assertions we make:

All humanity were created by God in His image, male and female.

Genesis 1:26–27

²⁶ Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

All human beings, regardless of present color, ethnicity, and language were all made by God through special creation. God created Adam and Eve, the first human beings, in his own image, equal before God as persons, and distinct as male and female. God created human beings in two genders, male and female. We deny that the divinely ordained differences between male and female render them unequal in dignity or worth.

All humanity is descended from Adam and Eve.

Genesis 4:1–2

4 Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, “I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD.” ² And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground.

Genesis 5:1–5

5 This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. ² Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created. ³ When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth. ⁴ The days of Adam after he fathered Seth were 800 years; and he had other sons and daughters. ⁵ Thus all the days that Adam lived were 930 years, and he died.

We have a common ancestor in whose image we are conceived. This includes our humanity and our depravity. All people, born of a human father, are innately sinful and separated from God. Therefore, all people share a common humanity and a depravity. There is no essential, innate difference that can be called “race”.

The present diversity of language and culture are the result of the direct hand of God in confounding human language, and thus creating various human cultures.

Genesis 11:1–9

11 Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. ² And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. ³ And they said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly.” And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. ⁴ Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens,

and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.”⁵ And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built.⁶ And the LORD said, “Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them.⁷ Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another’s speech.”⁸ So the LORD dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city.⁹ Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth. And from there the LORD dispersed them over the face of all the earth.

God divided the world physically and culturally after the world-wide, Noahic flood. Humanity was commanded by God to multiply and to fill the earth. Implicit in filling was going; that is, they were to spread across the face of the earth. They did not do so and attempted to reach back up to the false gods of the pre-flood era by building a tower. As a unified humanity with a single language, there was great danger in exponential growth in knowledge, skill and power.

In order to dilute this and to accomplish other purposes and plans, God replaced the one language in everyone’s soul and mind with different languages. In one short period of time, people were radically changed in souls through the means of suddenly thinking and speaking in a different language. Most people think in languages. Language forms the basis for culture. God had diversified humanity, slowed the development of science advancement, and caused the great migrations that followed.

The historical migration and localization of cultures and nations are the result of the direct hand of God after the flood and down through history.

Genesis 10:32

³² These are the clans of the sons of Noah, according to their genealogies, in their nations, and from these the nations spread abroad on the earth after the flood.

Acts 17:22–28

²² So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: “Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. ²³ For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: ‘To the unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. ²⁴ The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, ²⁵ nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. ²⁶ And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, ²⁷ that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, ²⁸ for

“ ‘In him we live and move and have our being’; as even some of your own poets have said, “ ‘For we are indeed his offspring.’

Humanity did not begin and spread from Africa. This is a myth. According to the only true and written record given to us by God through Noah, humanity spread from the plains of Mesopotamia (later known as Babylon). God had determined and had caused

those migrations to take place according to His plan for redemptive history. The development of people groups around common and shared languages and their migration and localization in different parts of the world began when the land masses were either joined or at least connected. However it happened, we know that God determined it and caused it. Yet, it also happened in a humanly explainable way: people tended to clump together according to share language and then, as population growth and post-flood climate change pressures forced people to do what they should have done in obedience to God.

The present ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and even physical features are all the result of early migration (movement of people groups) and localization (settling of people groups). One of the results of this was more and more to isolate the genetics for most of the physical distinctives that are attributed to “race”. For more information on this, read materials available through Institute for Creation Research (ICR) and Answers in Genesis (AiG).

Therefore, we believe:

1. There is only one humanity, created in God’s image, created in two genders, who are now reproducing in Adam’s fallen, marred, sinful image.
2. All people born of a father are fallen, innately sinful and separated from God.
3. The diversity of languages, people groups, nations, ethnicities, cultures, and physical features were determined by God according to His plan for redemptive history.
4. What we call “culture” the Bible calls “the world”. The diversity was designed by God and was disfigured and corrupted by sinful people (Romans 1) so that all cultures are sinful but not equally so. Some cultures are superior to others in that they have cultural mores and laws that more closely reflect the moral will of God in their consciences and in the Scriptures.

Sin is the root of all division, conflict, hatred, injustice and evil against others.

James 4:1–4

4 What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? ²You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. ³You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. ⁴You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

At the root of all conflicts in quarrels and fights, whether personally, culturally, or nationally, are wants and desires. These wants and desires function as idols and masters. This is true in the church, to whom James is writing. It is true in the world. All hatred, injustice, revenge and murder are rooted in sin. Sin, not culture; sin, not race; sin, not skin color; sin, not injustice; sin, not economic theory; sin, not political position; sin is the underlying cause from which all these actions come.

Listen to what Paul writes in Galatians 5:19–21:

¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions,

divisions, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Therefore, in the world, all of this trouble is normal. It should be restrained and punished by law. But sinful men exercise the powers of the law, often, unjustly. In all of this we can be salt and light. We, as Christians, ought to be different among ourselves. Sadly, to often, we are not. Sadly, the church can be just as polarized as culture.

All cultures and societies tend to decline religiously and morally.

Romans 1:18–32

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. ¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. ²¹ For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

²⁴ Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, ²⁵ because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

²⁶ For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; ²⁷ and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

²⁸ And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. ²⁹ They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹ foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. ³² Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

This text is both a summary of the history of the world and an overview of what happens to cultures and nations. Both begin with some knowledge of God that is embedded in the conscience and in the culture itself. Then there is the cycle of ever greater sin, with God handing them over to ever greater punishment with sin. In this cycle, God's punishment is to hand them over to themselves and to greater sin. Once a culture or a people reject what they do know of the true God, then it will generally sink into ever deeper expressions of depravity and darkness.

Reflect and Respond: General Response from Biblical Theology

People treat each other the way they do because of sinful beliefs and wicked desires in the heart. The problem is not race, gender, color of skin, country of origin. The problem is deep rooted sin in the heart that causes sins like hatred, violence, stealing, destruction, murder. This is true whether you have black skin or a blue uniform. If what you do is evil, it is not your past history or your present circumstances that is causing it. It may be the occasion for it, the temptation to it, the provocation. But evil acts come from hearts that are refusing to love God and love neighbor.

Romans 12:2

²Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.