

A SAMPLER OF SCRIPTURE – RACE, RACISM AND RECONCILIATION

The following is a Sampler of Scripture providing a “walk through redemptive history.” For those seeking to more fully understand the biblical foundation for multiethnic ministry and to be exposed to some key authors in the movement as they interact with Scripture this will provide a good launching pad. This is not an exhaustive list of either Scriptural texts or helpful resources, but is illustrative of some of the key foundational concepts.

Genesis 1-2

God’s instructions to Adam and Eve to multiply and harness the world is sometimes called God’s “cultural mandate.” Soong-Chan Rah sees this mandate as God’s impetus to reflect the image of God in the creation of culture (Rah, pp. 133-4). An understanding of the image of God through a corporate, community context reinforces the important role of the cultural mandate in our understanding of the dynamics of race and culture.

Genesis 4:15; 9:24-25

These verses were used historically and inappropriately to justify slavery (Anderson, pp. 128-129), and cannot be used to support prejudice toward African-Americans today.

Genesis 11

God confused languages at the Tower of Babel when fallen humanity used unity for self-exaltation rather than submission to God. So God does not endorse a unity that comes with the price of exclusion.

Micah 4:1-3

The restoration of the unity of the nations centered in God (Rah, p. 123). Rah sees Micah 4 promising the reverse of the curse of the Tower of Babel. The image of a multitude coming from a diversity and plurality of people groups reveals the polar opposite image of the Tower of Babel.

Matthew 28:19-20 (contrast to Matthew 10:5-6).

In contrast to Matthew 10:5-6 where the apostle’s message was restricted to the people of Israel (Anderson, pp. 138), the command of Jesus is to “Go and make disciples of all nations (*ta ethne*, source of the English word “ethnic” and could be translated “people groups).

John 4

Jesus models cross-cultural interaction and witness by His interaction with the Samaritan woman ([A Credible Witness](#), McNeil).

John 17

Jesus prays in his high-priestly prayer for oneness (DeYmaz, pp. 5-11), with 17:20-26 focusing on future believers who would come to know Christ through the ministry of the Apostles (17:20). It is significant because this prayer is offered the night before Jesus knew He would die, and He prays that they will be one (21, 22) and brought to complete unity (23) so that the world would know Jesus is the Redeemer.

Acts 1:8

The Spirit will empower to be witnesses to all ethnicities. The ripple effect of the early church is to be Jerusalem, Judea & Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Acts 2

Pentecost marks the “birth” of the church and includes proclamation of the Gospel through a supernatural gift of languages and conversion of thousands as a result of Peter’s message to a multi-ethnic audience. Some see Pentecost as a reversal of Babel (Anderson, pp. 133-134).

Acts 9-13

Philip, Paul, Peter, and Barnabas constantly push beyond their own groups to people who are different from them. The Church at Antioch is established as a church with persons of all kinds represented (DeYmaz, pp. 15-24). God uses persecution (8:1) and supernatural intervention (Acts 9 – 10) to lead to the establishment of the Church at Antioch under multiethnic leadership (Acts 11-13).

Romans 1:25

Racism is idolatry (Rah, p. 81), elevating the physical image above the spiritual image of God endowed by the Creator, a form of “worship of the creature instead of the Creator.”

I Corinthians 9:20-22

Paul’s ministry demonstrated a multi-cultural versatility for evangelism. Paul’s outreach went beyond simply announcing the gospel with a deep level of identification and living cross-culturally for the sake of the gospel (Anderson, p. 140)

II Corinthians 5:17-21

Every believer has the ministry of reconciliation as an ambassador for Christ.

Galatians 3:26-28

The oneness of being in Christ unites us, overcoming the differences that often divide.

Ephesians

The Church at Ephesus was also multiethnic (Acts 19:10, 17; 20:21) and the “mystery” of the Gospel was the breaking down of the wall between Jew and Gentile (DeYmaz, pp. 27-34). Paul commends the saints at Ephesus for their love for all the saints (1:15-16). He then explains how the work of Christ has united those of different ethnicities (Jew and Greek) as one in Christ by breaking down the dividing wall of hostility (2:11-22), and Paul’s calling to make known the “mystery” of the Gospel (3:1-13).

Revelation 7:9

For all eternity the throne of God will be surrounded by those from every nation and language. “The cultural mandate gives humanity the impetus to reflect the image of God in the creation of culture. The cultural mandate culminates in the image of a multicultural gathering of believers in Revelation 7:9.” (Rah, p. 134)

Anderson, David A. *Multicultural Ministry*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2004.

DeYmaz, Mark. *Building a Healthy Multiethnic Church*. San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass, 2007.

McNeil, Brenda Salter. *A Credible Witness – Reflections on Power, Evangelism and Race*. Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Books, 2008.

Rah, Soong-Chan. *The Next Evangelicalism – Freeing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity*. Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Books, 2009.

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