

Lesson 13: Open Forum – Part 1

I. What is the origin of the races? Can the three races be traced to the three sons of Noah?

A. Let's begin by looking at some facts from the Bible about human races.

1. God created man in his own image.(Genesis 1:26)
2. There was a first man, and that first man was Adam. (1 Corinthians 15:45)
3. God has made of one blood all nations of man. (Acts 17:26)
4. All humans come from Adam and Eve. (Genesis 3:20)
5. There are no racial distinctions in the Lord's church. (Colossian 3:11)
6. Those who obey the Great Commission may make only one classification of the people they encounter: saved or not saved. And those are the same two categories into which all men will one day be placed by God.

B. What are the three races?

1. The question speaks of tracing the three races back to the three sons of Noah (Ham, Shem, and Japheth), and generally speaking there are three major races of man.
 - a) The three races are Caucasoid, Mongoloid, and Negroid.
 - b) Some sources identify a fourth: Australoid or the Australian Aborigines, but that group may also be identified as a sub-group of the Caucasoids.
 - c) Because race classification is so difficult, other classification systems have been proposed, some with as many as two or three dozen races.
2. Biologists determine species by including in a species all individuals that are capable of breeding to produce fertile offspring.
 - a) There is, of course, only one species of man – Homo Sapiens.
 - b) This fact tells us right from the start that whatever differences there may be among the various human races, those differences are minor.
 - (1) The DNA of any two people in the world typically differs by just 0.2%. Only about 6% of that 0.2% can be linked to racial differences.

c) In fact, the differences within the various human races are just as pronounced as the differences among the groups.

3. People often think of skin color when they think of human races, and yet within each of the three human races there is a very wide variety of skin colors ranging from light to dark – and that wide variety did not require millions of years of evolution.

a) There is no such thing as a “black race” or a “white race.”

b) In humans, skin color is controlled by two pairs of genes (Aa and Bb), one pair dominant (A, B) and one recessive (a, b).

c) If Adam and Eve had both been “AABB” then they could have produced only children with the darkest skin color possible, and if they had both been “aabb” then all of their children would have had the lightest skin color possible – and yet we know that neither of those situations could have led to the wide variety we see today.

d) If instead Adam and Eve had both been “AaBb” (called “heterozygous”) (two dominant and two recessive genes), they would have been middle-brown in color and from them – in only one generation – skin color differences could have occurred easily from the lightest possible to the darkest possible and combinations in between.

e) If these children then began to marry only those of similar color (as is often the case), the various “racial” tribes could have begun to form very shortly after the original heterozygous couple began to reproduce.

f) Thus, evolution and great periods of time are not required to explain skin color, and the same is true for other racial differences as well.

C. Do the three races correspond to Ham, Shem, and Japheth?

1. Let's start with what we know.

a) All human life descended from Adam and Eve.

(1) We are all related to each other without regard to whatever minor racial differences may have developed in the intervening years.

b) Prior to the flood it is likely that a wide variety of racial differences had already had time to develop. Many could have developed within just a few generations of Adam and Eve.

c) Those of us living after the flood can trace our history back to the three sons of Noah and their wives (who themselves were most likely not related directly or at least closely to Noah).

d) Genesis 10:32 tells us that from these three family groups “were the nations divided in the earth after the flood.”

2. The common belief is that the descendants of Shem remained in the Middle East (including, for example, both Jews and Arabs), the descendants of Ham migrated to Africa and parts of Asia, and the descendants of Japheth migrated into Europe and other parts of Asia.

a) This view influences our language even today. The term Semitic for Jewish people points back to Shem and his descendants.

3. So what is the answer to the question? The short answer is we don't know for sure but it is very unlikely that the three sons of Noah correspond to the three major races we see today.

a) Instead, those races likely emerged at some point after the flood as people grouped together and genetic differences among the groups became more pronounced.

b) Further, there was very likely much intermarriage among the three family groups prior to the time of their separation.

c) In fact, Genesis 11 tells us that they initially moved about together in one group rather than moving apart as God had commanded.

d) Further, the three sons of Noah were genetically similar, and so the differences among the three groups of descendants would have come primarily from the three wives – and that fact is interesting from a scientific point of view.

(1) Mitochondrial Eve is the name given by researchers to the woman who is the matrilineal most recent common ancestor for all living humans.

(2) Passed down from mothers to offspring for thousands of years, her mitochondrial DNA is now found in all living humans.

(3) Mitochondrial Eve is the female counterpart of Y-chromosomal Adam, the patrilineal most recent common ancestor, although they lived at different times.

(4) She is believed by scientists to have lived about 140,000 years ago in what is now Ethiopia, Kenya or Tanzania. The time she

lived is calculated based on the molecular clock technique of correlating elapsed time with observed genetic drift.

(5) In human genetics, Y-chromosomal Adam is the patrilineal human most recent common ancestor from whom all Y chromosomes in living men are descended.

(6) By analyzing DNA from people in all regions of the world, geneticist Spencer Wells has concluded that all humans alive today are descended from a single man who lived in Africa around 60,000 years ago.

(7) Without commenting on how long ago scientists believe they lived and the accuracy or inaccuracy of those estimates, isn't it interesting that scientists now tell us that the common female ancestor lived long before the common male ancestor – just as the Bible has been telling us for 1000's of years.

D. An incident we must not overlook in answering this question is the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11.

1. The Bible tells us that the descendants of Noah did not disperse as commanded but rather stayed together and attempted to build a tower reaching up to Heaven.

2. God not only dispersed them – but he changed them! His stated intent was to make them different from each other.

a) Genesis 11:7-8 Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. 8 So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.

b) We know God changed their speech – perhaps he also changed their appearance. We are not told.

3. This incident also helps us explain an interesting phenomenon: giant pyramidal structures are found all over the world, supposedly built by people who never had any contact with each other.

a) We associate pyramids with ancient Egypt. But pyramids are not uniquely Egyptian.

b) Pyramids and pyramid-like structures can be found all over the globe, built by cultures that span vast distances of geography and time.

c) They appear in the ancient African kingdom of Kush, along the Nile ... in Mesopotamia and Sumeria ... in England and Ireland ... in India and throughout Southeast Asia ... in ancient China ... in Peru's coastal and

Andean regions ... in the ancient Olmec and Mayan realms of southern Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Belize, and El Salvador ... in pre-Columbian Illinois... and elsewhere.

d) How can it be that a form as distinctive as the pyramid was built in such widely separated locales? Was it merely coincidence? Or was there another force at work?

e) Scientists tells us it is coincidence. But I think those dispersed by God at Babel kept up their building programs all over the world! Genesis 11:8 tells us that the people quit working on that city, but it does not tell us they did not work on other cities and towers after they were scattered.

II. What does the Bible say about tattoos?

A. To begin, let me note that these comments are directed less to those who already have a tattoo than to those who are thinking about getting one.

1. A 2006 a study done by the Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology found that 24% of Americans between 18 and 50 are tattooed; that's almost one in four. And the survey showed that about 36% of Americans age 18 to 29 have at least one tattoo!

B. While the practice of tattooing can be traced to the earliest history of man, the English word “tattoo” is of recent origin.

1. The word “tattoo” comes from Polynesian languages and was first used in English by Capt. James Cook in 1769.

2. Sailors introduced (or more likely re-introduced) the custom into Europe at that time, which explains why even today tattoos are commonly associated with sailors.

C. The practice of marking the body goes back much further, and is specifically condemned in the Old Testament.

1. Leviticus 19:28 “Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I am the LORD.”

2. The point of the verse and the surrounding verses is that God’s people were not to be like the people around them in the world, and specifically were not to follow any of their pagan religious practices.

a) All agree that tattooing traces its history to pagan religious ceremonies and the occult.

b) Even today, tattoo parlors are often linked with astrology, incense, and magic.

3. While marking the body is not specifically mentioned in the New Testament, the same injunction to be different from the world appears throughout the New Testament and is, for example, the theme of the Sermon on the Mount.

D. A Christian must hold his own body in the highest regard because it is no longer his own body but rather belongs to another.

1. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? 20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

E. Some suggest that Jesus himself had a tattoo, and they point to Revelation 19:16.

1. Revelation 19:16 And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

2. There are many things wrong with that idea.

a) First, the verse itself says that the name was written on his vesture and on his thigh – the most likely explanation being that the text was on his vesture and the vesture was on his thigh.

b) Second, Revelation is a book of figures and symbols – a book in which Jesus is also shown, for example, as a lamb.

c) Third, to say that Jesus had a tattoo is to say that he violated the Law of Moses, which we know he did not do.

d) Fourth, if we are going to turn to Revelation to find out what God has to say about tattoos, a more instructive passage might be 13:16-18.

(1) Revelation 13:16-18 And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: 17 And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. 18 Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.

3. One thing you sometimes hear is that people with tattoos are rebels just like Jesus was a rebel.

a) If we leave here this morning with nothing else, please leave here with this – Jesus Christ was not a rebel!

b) Luke 2:51 tells us that he was subject unto his parents.

c) Philippians 2:8 tells us that he was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

d) Jesus came to this world not to be a rebel but rather because we were rebels and he wanted us to be otherwise.

F. Tattoos send the wrong message to the world.

1. The Latin word for tattoo is stigma, which tells us much about how tattoos were viewed at least at that time.

2. Throughout history, tattoos have been used to identify criminals with a mark of reproach and disgrace.

a) Today in many prisons over 80% of the prisoners have a tattoo, and over 50% get more tattoos while in prison.

3. One author has described them as marks of indecency, depravity, perversion, and rebellion.

4. And yet we often hear that all that has changed in our modern world – that today a tattoo is a mark of high-fashion. Really? Let's look at some statistics.

a) Dr. Timothy Roberts is a pediatrician who himself has a tattoo. He believed that people with tattoos were unfairly stereotyped and so he set out to remedy the situation. What he found surprised him.

b) Young people between 11 and 21 with tattoos are:

(1) Four times more likely to engage in sexual intercourse.

(2) Over two times more likely to drink alcohol.

(3) Nearly two times more likely to use drugs.

(4) Over two times more likely to be violent.

(5) Over two times more likely to drop out of school.

c) His conclusion was that permanent tattoos have strong associations with high-risk behaviors in adolescents, and the presence of a tattoo during an examination should prompt an in-depth assessment for high-risk behaviors.

5. Oh, but while that may be true for young people, we adults can handle it. Our tattoos are just fashion statements.

a) And yet what are those “fashion statements” saying to our children? And what road are we putting them on when we directly or indirectly encourage them to get tattooed?

6. Is a tattoo going to help me spread the gospel or hurt me in that endeavor? What kind of reflection will a tattoo have to the world? We should ask those questions before we have our body – or rather the Lord’s body – tattooed.

III. Were sins rolled forward in the Old Testament? Does God remember forgiven sins?

A. Let’s start with the second question first: When the Bible says that God will remember our sins no more, does that mean that he literally forgets the sin?

1. The answer must be no.

a) If we remember our own past sins and if God knows our thoughts, then how can he not know something that we know?

b) Also, the Bible records many sins that we know were forgiven – sins by Moses, Abraham, and David, for example. How can God not know something that is recorded in the Bible?

2. Another reason the answer must be no is that a Christian can fall from grace, and when that occurs those formerly forgiven sins are no longer forgiven.

a) Matthew 18:32-34 Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: 33 Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? 34 And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

3. What then does it mean when God does not remember our sins?

a) I think the phrase is an idiom meaning that God no longer holds those sins to our charge. He does not remember them against us – but he does remember that they occurred.

B. The other question has to do with the common notion that sins in the Old Testament were rolled forward rather than forgiven.

1. Some verses appear to indicate that sins were forgiven prior to Jesus’ death on the cross.

a) Leviticus 4:31 And he shall take away all the fat thereof, as the fat is taken away from off the sacrifice of peace offerings; and the priest shall

burn it upon the altar for a sweet savour unto the LORD; and the priest shall make an atonement for him, and it shall be forgiven him.

b) Mark 1:4 John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

c) Mark 2:5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.

2. Other verses appear to indicate there could be no forgiveness prior to Jesus' death on the cross.

a) Hebrews 9:22 And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

b) Hebrews 10:3-4 But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. 4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

(1) Verse 3 is where we get the concept of sins being rolled forward – there is a remembrance made every year.

3. What is the solution?

a) The solution is not difficult. Forgiveness before the cross looks forward to the cross just as forgiveness after the cross looks back to the cross. Everything looks to and depends on the cross whether it is before or after that event.

b) Galatians 4:4-5 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, 5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

c) Hebrews 9:15-17 And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. 16 For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. 17 For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.

d) Jeremiah 31:31-34 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: 32 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: 33 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my

law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.