

From One Blood

Acts 17: 22 – 31ⁱ

Racism is Everywhere These Days

If you spend anytime at all watching, listening to, or reading sources from the mainstream media, by now you probably realize that there is this perception—especially since the summer of 2020—that from the loftiest halls of power to the label of your favorite pancake flour, racism is everywhere.

One interesting form of this revolves around the new Amazon Prime series, *The Rings of Power*. Loosely based on the writings of the late J.R.R. Tolkien, the series purports to tell the story of the Second Age of Middle Earth in the same way that *The Hobbit*, and the *Lord of the Rings*, told the tale of the Third Age. In reality, the writers have taken a handful of Tolkein’s characters and recast them in stories that contradict the stories that he actually wrote and many who thought they might enjoy a return to Middle Earth have found it “dull, lifeless, tedious, self-righteous, and silly.”ⁱⁱ Of course, Amazon, who spent something like a billion dollars to make the series, can’t imagine that it’s just bad writing, so, since some of the cast members are people of color, they have branded anyone who doesn’t like the show as “racist”.

This resonates with what Voddie Baucham wrote in his book, [Fault Lines](#):

Today’s definition [of racism] eschews the individualistic proscriptions of the past, arguing instead that racism is this: “A far-reaching system that functions independently from the intentions or self-images of individual actors.” In other words, today we have “racism without racists.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Which is kind of like saying we have sin without sinners, but racism in the old fashioned sense—race based pride, hatred, prejudice, violence, and injustice, are not sins—or even a special category of sin—because of their association with race, rather, they are all sins in and of themselves with absolutely no reference to the color of either the sinner or the one being sinned against.

Race (as we know it) is not a biblical idea.

Because, the idea of race, as we understand it—dividing people into different groups based almost solely on their physical characteristics (the color of their skin, the shape of their eyes or nose, and the texture of their hair)—this idea of race is foreign to Scripture. I believe that this case could be made from the Greek words *ethnos* (ἔθνος) and *genos* (γένος), but our text from Acts 17 ought to be enough, especially verses 26 – 28:

²⁶ And he...

(that is, “The God who made the world and everything in it”)

...made from one man...

(the majority text reads, “from one blood”)

every nation...

(in Greek, every ethnos, from which we get our word ethnic)

he made from one man **[or one blood]** 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.” ^{Acts 17:26–28 (ESV)}

(that is, genos—generation].

And please pay attention to what’s being said there. When it comes to our humanity we are all the same the kind. Genesis 1, verse 27, and 3, verse 20:

²⁷ So, God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ^{Genesis 1:27 (ESV)}

and,

²⁰ The man called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. ^{Genesis 3:20 (ESV)}

The genealogy of (insert name here)...

See, some people are really into genealogy—tracing their family roots—and that’s OK; the Bible spends quite a bit of time on it too. In the Old Testament we find extensive genealogies that exist for several reasons, but above all, to trace the line of Christ. Matthew also traces the Old Covenant genealogies in the first chapter of his gospel, writing,

¹ The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. ² Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers... ^{Matthew 1:1–2 (ESV)}

leading eventually to verses 16 and 17:

¹⁶ and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ. ¹⁷ So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations. ^{Matthew 1:16–17 (ESV)}

Luke, on the other hand, works backward in chapter 3, verses 23 – 38. He begins,

²³ Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age, being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, the son of Heli... ^{Luke 3:23 (ESV)}

He then walks back through the generations until he comes to verse 34:

³⁴ the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor, ³⁵ the son of Serug, the son of Reu, the son of Peleg, the son of Eber, the son of Shelah, ³⁶ the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the

son of Lamech,³⁷ the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalaleel, the son of Cainan,³⁸ the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God. Luke 3:34–38 (ESV)

So, a couple of things here. If you've ever been tempted to look down on another human being for physical or national reasons (the phrase, "If you're not Dutch, your not much comes to mind), just stop it. Don't ever do that again. (And, I know, the "If you're not Dutch..." thing was just a joke—just a cute little saying to put on a bumper sticker—but stop and think for a minute about how it might have resonated with those who are not Dutch. Just sayin'. All the ugly isms—including racism—begin at home.) And the reason we need to put a stop to this sort of thing is because the concept of race, especially as defined by physical characteristics, is a fiction.

Think about the genealogy of Jesus in Luke. Every human family—every genealogical line—converges at Noah. I'm an American of Irish and English descent, some of you come from other family trees that passed through continental Europe and even Africa, and other parts of the world, but if we trace all those lines back far enough, we are all (every one of us) the sons or daughters of Noah, and a thousand years before that,

³⁸ the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God. Luke 3:34–38 (ESV)

The Fruit of the Family Tree

On what basis then would we let national origin, or the color of our skin, or the shape of our eyes, or the texture of our hair become a reason for pride, hatred, prejudice, violence, or injustice?

⁷ For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it? 1 Corinthians 4:7 (NKJV)

(as if, you were superior by your own doing?)

In the end, we are all sons or daughters of Adam and Eve, and this is the reason for our pride, hatred, prejudice, violence, and injustice toward one another. Our problem is not out there in the world—some sort of systemic problem that in the end makes literally everyone a victim, and can, therefore, hold no one responsible. Our problem is here, in our heart and in our mind.

⁸ If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us... ¹⁰ If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. 1 John 1:8, 10 (ESV)

We are sons or daughters of our first parents, Adam and Eve, and this is the fruit of our family tree.

⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way... Isaiah 53:6 (ESV)

²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, Romans 3:23 (ESV)

But did you notice why God

²⁶ ...made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings... Acts 17:26 (NKJV)

He did this in order

²⁷ that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him.

And the thing is,

²⁷ ...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.” Acts 17:27–28 (ESV)

Paul went on:

²⁹ Being then God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. ³⁰ The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹ because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.” Acts 17:29–31 (ESV)

One People. One Race. One Savior.

See, our sins are not out there in the world waiting for a political party to come along and fix them by way of legislation. Our sins are here, in our heart and in our mind, and we need a Savior—the world needs a Savior—one who has borne the image of the man of dust, just as we do, but without sin, and has carried all of *our* sin to the Cross, giving Himself fully for the salvation of His own,

⁹ ...from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages... Revelation 7:9 (ESV)

I recently saw a black t-shirt with some white printing on the front, and of course, these days, you make assumptions, but when I looked closer I saw an unexpected message. The shirt read, “One People. One Race. One Savior.” And it’s true, for

²⁶ ...[God] has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, ²⁷ so that they should seek the Lord...though He is not far from each one of us... Acts 17:26–27 (NKJV)

The answer, then, to race based pride, hatred, prejudice, violence, and injustice is not really another addition to the judicial code or even the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The answer to race based pride, hatred, prejudice, violence, and injustice begins when we recognize our common origin, and our common fallen nature, in the humanity that descends to us from our first parents. Then, recognizing that there is only one race and one people, acknowledging that whoever you are, wherever you’re from, whatever you look like, there is only one Savior, Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. Romans 10:12 (ESV)

So, turn to Him right now—right where you are. Trust in Him. Call on Him this very morning, if you have not already.

¹³ For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord...

(Everyone!)

⁹ ...from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages... Revelation 7:9 (ESV)

¹³ ...“everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” Romans 10:12–13 (ESV)

i All Scripture citations, unless otherwise noted, *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016).

ii Nolte: Desperate Amazon Declares ‘Rings of Power’ Critics Racist, <https://www.breitbart.com/entertainment/2022/09/10/nolte-desperate-amazon-declares-rings-of-power-critics-racist/>

iii Voddie Baucham, *Fault Lines* (Washington DC: Salem Books, 2021), 84 – 85.