

# Interracial Marriages

The question to be answered in this News treats a matter of Christian ethics. While it is true that Scripture does not speak directly to all issues that arise in our life's calling, it does lay down principles that can and must serve as our guide to walk in a way pleasing to God. The question is especially important in some parts of the world: "Does the Bible forbid marrying between races? Is this the meaning of marrying 'after their kind' in Genesis 1?"

The expression to which reference is made in Genesis 1 (verses 11, 12, 21, 24, 25) cannot refer to interracial marriages for two reasons. First, these references refer to plants, creeping things, fish, birds and animals, but no such reference is made to man, and, obviously, could not be made in connection with the creation of man. God only created one man and one woman. Second, the creation of all other living things into "species" was a part of the creation ordinance. The division of mankind into races took place at Babel, and was a punishment of God on men who desired to establish at Babel an anti-Christian kingdom.

Incidentally, Babel was not only a confusion of languages, but it was also the formation of races, with all their physical and mental peculiarities. It is the wound of the beast mentioned in Revelation 13:3, which prevents the premature realization of the Antichrist, according to the purpose and plan of God. But I mention this as an aside.

We must recognize that different cultures have different conceptions of interracial marriages than we, from the West, may have. In the Orient, some consider a marriage between a Chinese and a Filipino to be interracial; others do not. Some consider a marriage between a coloured person and a white person to be interracial, whether the coloured person be black or yellow, while others consider a marriage of a black and white to be interracial, but not a marriage between yellow and white. This, in itself, says something about the rightness or the wrongness of interracial marriages: no one can quite agree on what is meant by the term.

There is no biblical passage that condemns interracial marriages. On the contrary, there are certain individuals who married from different races whose marriages are not condemned in Scripture. I refer to the twelve sons of Jacob, for example. All of them, with the exception of Joseph, married Canaanites, and Joseph married an Egyptian. That these marriages were, in a sense, interracial marriages is evident from the fact that the Canaanites were descended from Ham, while the twelve patriarchs were descended from Shem; and the division of the peoples of the earth into races followed the lines of the three sons of Noah.

Further, we read of Moses that he married an Ethiopian woman: “And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman” (Num. 12:1). Again, the Ethiopians were almost certainly from Ham, while Moses was born in the line of the descendants of Shem. God approved of that marriage, because Miriam and Aaron were condemned for their criticism of Moses. It is true that, according to Numbers 12:2, Miriam and Aaron also objected to Moses’ position as leader in the nation: “And they said, Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us?” But the two objections Miriam and Aaron brought against Moses were related to each other. We may safely conclude that God’s approval rested on Moses’ marriage.

The same was true of the sons of Jacob. Not only were these Canaanite women the mothers of the promised seed of Abraham, but Tamar, a daughter-in-law of Judah, was incorporated into the line of Christ (Matt. 1:3). And Joseph, married to an Egyptian, Asenath, received that part of the birthright blessing which consisted in a double portion of the father’s possessions.

There might be practical problems involved in interracial marriages. There are significant differences between the races. These differences are not only physical (color of the skin, color of the eyes, facial features, size, etc.), but they are also psychological. The differences between the races are striking and powerful in this respect. The Chinese way of thinking is so very different from the way Occidentals think that the possibilities of misunderstandings are always present.

The result is that these differences make adjustments to married life more difficult. It is hard enough for a man and a woman to adapt to life in the most intimate relationship of all human relationships. But when racial differences are added, the adjustment becomes even more difficult.

Nevertheless, the union of one church in Christ transcends all racial and cultural differences and unites even a man and a woman in the one bond of the covenant family of God. Within that union of a man and a woman, who are brother and sister in Christ, differences of all kinds can be and are resolved. Such a marriage can be and is a picture of the marriage of Christ and His church.

Many claim that an interracial marriage places an extra burden on a man and a woman because it is socially unacceptable in many parts of the world. Whatever may be the truth of this, and it is certainly characteristic of many cultures and was once true in the United States, social unacceptability is of little or no importance. The child of God who walks according to the principles of the kingdom of heaven is always socially unacceptable, and he or she will become increasingly so as persecution grows.

Some have said that they would never want their children to marry inter-rationally. I can understand this and I am fully aware of the problems created in some instances. But it is better for a man and a woman who are brother and sister in Christ to marry in spite of social problems, than for a son or a daughter of believing parents to marry an unbeliever. Then the problems become insurmountable.