

God's Eternal, Multi-ethnic Kingdom
Revelation 5:1-10

Over the past couple of weeks most of us have consumed news, tweets, posts, and all sorts of input that is shaping how we think about the racial issues in our country. Of course, our personal background and life journey is a powerful influence in how we think. Whatever news we tune into and no matter our personal background, more than anything we need to hear from God and allow Him to shape our thinking. We need to get God's perspective. Today, we are pausing our study of James to have a conversation about racism and injustice. We want to seek to get a glimpse of how God thinks about racism and injustice. May we all come to this topic with a humble, open heart.

Read Revelation 5:1-10

1. What is this passage describing?
2. What is the racial picture of heaven that we see in this passage (vv. 9-10)?
3. How does this passage inform how we ought to think about our current racial tensions?

Read Genesis 12:1-3; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8

4. How are these passages connected to the picture we see in Revelation 5?

Steve said:

The book of Acts and the rest of the New Testament reveals how hard it was for the first disciples to understand that Gentiles really weren't culturally and racially inferior. The divide between Jew and Gentile wasn't only religious; it was also racial . . . Galatians 2 describes how Peter didn't want to be seen eating with Gentiles when Jewish Christians from Jerusalem visited. Paul confronted Peter and told him that his hypocrisy was out of step with the gospel (Gal. 2:11-14). Peter's hypocrisy is doubly shocking because we read in Acts 10 and 11 about God giving him a vision to convince him that he should no longer call any food or person unclean. He had a powerful, undeniably spiritual experience; but years later a not-so-subtle type of racism had crept in. This seems to be the challenge for the white church in America. We need to be open to the possibility that our lives aren't consistent with our theology. Our theology says that God is building an eternal, multi-ethnic kingdom; but the way we think and speak and act might be saying, ". . . but He's especially interested in us."

5. How would you describe your personal desire/openness to have any area of your life confronted that is inconsistent with our theology of an eternal, multi-ethnic kingdom?

Read Romans 12:15; James 1:19-20; 1 Peter 5:5

6. How do these passages speak to how we ought to approach the topic of racism?

Steve said:

I think you'll agree that the white church in America has made great strides. But if you listen to our black brothers and sisters in Christ, you will also have to agree that we have a long way to go. There is diversity among blacks in the body of Christ just as there is among whites. But the vast majority of the black voices I am hearing within the body of Christ is that **our silence is complicity** and that if we don't **act differently** we are part of the problem. . . . That is a hard diagnosis to hear, isn't it. But what if they're right? If your heart is anything like mine, you recoil at the idea that you are in any way complicit in racism. "I'm just living my life. I don't condone racism. I don't hate anybody. Get out of my face."

7. How do you react to this idea that "silence is complicity?" What do you think it means?
8. Where is the place for you to start (or continue) to engage this topic in a helpful way? What is God calling you to do?