

# Africa and its People

## The Old Testament

One of the beauties of the Bible beyond its disclosure of the plan of God is that it enables us to learn of the many locations that various events took place, some of which we may have even been blessed to visit. You are already aware of such places; Greece, Dalmatia or modern day Croatia, Italy, Spain and, of course, Israel, with its different regions and cities.

The historical and prophetic lessons respecting these nations and those whose activities were centrally located in these areas are familiar to us. However, our plan is to consider a different region of the world which the scriptures also detail quite a bit. This would be some of the nations within the continent of Africa along with its people and the lessons the Lord may wish for us to draw from them.

The period of time that we plan to cover spans almost 4,500 years which is impossible for us to address in a 45 minute discourse. Because there is much that we wish to share on this subject, we will do our best to offer our thoughts during this convention through two presentations. The first part will be addressed now and will touch upon certain territories within Africa along with its people during the period recorded in the Old Testament, commencing mostly after the flood. The second portion, will address some of the lessons we can draw from the New Testament, the harvest message and some secular history.

Perhaps you may be thinking why are we focused on Africa and its people, particularly when considering these two points:

All of the Lord's people have experiences, particularly challenging ones, otherwise we would have nothing to overcome in order to obtain the divine life.

The words of Acts 10:34, "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:

Since I have some significantly discernable African roots and have developed some special relationships with many of the brethren from this continent, that got me into thinking about doing a presentation like this.

Here's the other thing which actually was the greatest motivating factor for these presentations. While the documented history of Africans throughout the globe has been extensive, in our world today, there appears to be a heightened awareness, in different respects, of events involving those whose roots come from the African continent combined with the experiences unique to this demographic and that awareness is not limited to those in the world but also from the communications I have recently read and heard among the Lord's people, including the role that such ones may play in God's plan of salvation. According to Matthew 23:8, the Master says "all ye are brethren;" thus as brethren, there should be a mutual comfort that we have in discussing any matter, so long as we use the scriptures for course direction. The Apostle Paul reminds us of this in 2 Timothy 3:16:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

Therefore, since the scriptures do provide us with lessons about some of the nations in Africa and those prominent figures which hail from them, just as we reflect upon other countries from the scriptures and the personalities who spent much time in these nations, our plan is to consider how the lessons we gain from Africa and its people are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and for instruction in righteousness.

One other point that we think is important to emphasize. Admittedly, there have been brethren over the years that have selectively touched upon certain places and personalities from Africa with lessons that we have been blessed by so we don't wish to suggest that this hasn't been the case up to now. However, our plan is to try to more comprehensively address as many all Africa themes as space will permit. That is our hope, trusting that we receive the Lord's blessings in all matters presented.

Before looking at a portion of the scriptural record, we want to share some information and estimates about Africa. There are over 1,275,000,000 residents, the second most populated continent in the world. It is made up of 54 countries. Nigeria, on the west coast of the continent is the most populated country in Africa with 206 million people, the seventh most populous country in the world behind China, India, the United States, Indonesia, Pakistan and Brazil. Seychelles is the least populous country in Africa with 97,000 residents. Algeria is the largest country area wise with almost 920,000 square miles and in addition to having the smallest population, Seychelles, located approximately 130 miles off the coast of East Africa is made up of 115 islands which collectively makes up 177 square miles.

Like most continents, the countries within Africa include different dominant racial groups. These can also be subdivided into multiple subgroups which is an important point since the individuals within these subgroups do not view themselves as a monolithic people when compared to other Africans insofar as looks, culture, language and social status, even when some outside of Africa may view them that way.

Some other numbers: There are roughly 4.5 million Caucasians that live in Africa but mostly in South Africa, Kenya, Zimbabwe and Namibia. Among those in the Mongolian race are Asians in which 3 million are scattered throughout many African countries. It is also estimated that some 50 million indigenous Berbers live in most of the North African countries such as Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Mali and Egypt. However, the largest racial group of people from the African continent is the Negroid race, perhaps in excess of 1.2 billion; thus most of our remarks will be focused on this demographic.

So let's now look at the scriptures, beginning with the Genesis account.

The first dispensation of man's history describes a time when God saw the wickedness of humanity being great, corrupt and full of violence which caused Him to permit a flood to rid the earth of all that dwelled therein except Noah, his wife, his 3 sons and their wives. Genesis 5:32 gives us the names of Noah's son's. The verse reads as follows:

***“And Noah was five hundred years old: and Noah begat Shem, Ham, and Japheth.***

Here is what Genesis 9:19 tells us from the New American Standard:

***“These three were the sons of Noah, and from these the whole earth was populated.”***

So, beyond each of us being a descendant of Noah and his sons which even Ancestry.com does not consider, we also know that however distant it may be, all mankind, including each of us, are related in the flesh.

When the Ark settled in the Mountains of Ararat post the flood, historians suggest that would have been somewhere in the Turkish mountains. If we accept this as being correct, it is believed that Noah, his sons and grandsons would have ultimately migrated from this general area to the regions which surround it. But where?

In the case of Japheth, who had seven sons, Genesis 10:2-4 gives his genealogy, and in verse 5, we read the following:

By these were the isles of the Gentiles divided in their lands; every one after his tongue, after their families, in their nations.

Thus, we would suggest that Japheth’s descendants initially occupied the isles of the Gentiles, a territory that we think describes the coast lands of the Mediterranean Sea; namely through Europe and Asia Minor but after this, they sojourned north throughout Europe and into parts of Asia. Therefore, we would suggest that the earliest expansion of the Negroid race was not throughout Europe and Asia.

Next, while we find the genealogy of Shem in Genesis 10:21-30, we will read verses 21 and 22:

***<sup>21</sup> Unto Shem also, the father of all the children of Eber, the brother of Japheth the elder, even to him were children born.***

***<sup>22</sup> The children of Shem; Elam, and Asshur, and Arphaxad, and Lud, and Aram.***

Some Bible scholars associate Shem’s children with the following locations:

Elam – Persia

Asshur – Assyria

Arphaxad – Chaldea

Lud – Lydia

Aram - Syria

As these are all regions of the Middle East, we don’t see the earliest expansion of the Negroid race throughout these territories either.

The last son of Noah to examine is Ham. According to Strongs 2526, Ham derives from the Hebrew word Cham which means hot as in one coming from a tropical habitat or, as some have suggested, sunburned or black.

The genealogy of Ham is recorded in Genesis 10:6-20 and from that account, we know that he had four sons: Cush, Mizraim, Phut and Canaan who was the youngest son. With the exception of Canaan, the other three are believed to have founded certain African nations. In the case of Cush, it was the Sudan and later, Ethiopia. In the case of Mizraim, it was Egypt as Mizraim is the Hebrew and Aramaic name for that land. And in the case of Phut, it was Libya. As to Canaan's descendants, we would suggest that they ultimately settled in the Land of Canaan where they established their own individualized communities. We know that God wanted the Israelites to occupy this land, a territory that was not a part of Africa. Caleb was one of the twelve who were sent into Canaan to spy out the land and report back to Moses and the Israelites about the possibilities of entering and possessing it. Ten of the spies advised against this but Joshua and Caleb recommended, with full confidence in the Lord, to enter the land and drive out its enemies, the Canaanites. 40 years later, the Israelites did under the leadership of Joshua but whether Israelites or Canaanites, the color of both was likely similar but presumed to be distinctly different from the descendants of Cush, Mizraim and Phut that migrated to Africa with complexions described as these coming from a tropical habitat, sunburned or black..

We raise these complexion distinctions as they form the basis in what some associate as being part of the curse that Noah asserts in Genesis 9. Bible Students generally disagree with Christendom with what we would characterize as essential doctrines but interestingly, the curse asserted by Noah in Genesis 9 is not only viewed differently from Bible Student to Bible Student and those within Christendom but some Bible Students actually agree with some in Christendom on how this curse should be understood. Therefore, we find it to be worthy to touch upon this subject.

There is a view which purports that the family Ham, representing the Negroid race, is a cursed people. Our understanding on why some hold this view begins with Genesis 9:20-25 which reads as follows:

***<sup>20</sup> And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard:***

***<sup>21</sup> And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent.***

***<sup>22</sup> And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without.***

***<sup>23</sup> And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness.***

***<sup>24</sup> And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him.***

***<sup>25</sup> And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren."***

So, these texts seem to be clear that Noah farmed and drank the wine from grapes. However, if we were to look back to Genesis 7, there we are reminded that the canopy of the earth opened and collapsed at the outset of the flood which changed the temperature of the earth and thus caused the grapes from Noah's vineyard to become fermented or more specifically, alcoholic in nature.

While Noah may not have known of the effects that the wine would have on him before becoming intoxicated, verse 22 tells us that Ham saw Noah's nakedness and told his brothers who covered him. So, when Noah awoke from his intoxicated state, he stated he knew what his younger son did. What would that be? Well, there are some that suggest that Ham committed a homosexual act on Noah and

because of this, Noah, as God's prophet, cursed Ham's unborn son Canaan, the one we would add did not migrate to Africa. Yet, these same ones suggest that the curse from this purported homosexual act passed on to all of the Negroid race by virtue of those of this race not having fair skin and straight hair but dark skin, coarse hair and harsh experiences in life supposedly unique to the Negroid race. Some give, as an example, that these disadvantages were highlighted during slavery in the United States but historical records reflect that this system of servitude was also widespread within the African continent before then in the forms of debt slavery, enslavement of war captives, military slavery, slavery for prostitution and criminal slavery. With United States slavery beginning over 400 years ago, many would say that it is associated with ongoing systemic problems against the African race in the U.S. and elsewhere which includes limited educational opportunities, being disadvantaged before civil governments, social despair, economic hardships and violent attacks including lynchings, mostly from the past, to other forms of brutality widely reported and seen on video today.

We take a different view. Let's return back to Genesis 9:22:

***“<sup>22</sup> And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without.”***

Therefore, it is because Ham “saw” the nakedness of his father that Noah decided to curse Canaan. What exactly does this word **saw** mean in this context? The word saw comes from Strongs 7200 which is the Hebrew word ra ah (raw-aw) which means to see literally or figuratively, to perceive, watch or look upon. Also, the word **saw** can be found in the scriptures over 534 times and in no instance does the word “saw” connote a perverted or homosexual act. Rather, we are more persuaded to conclude what many commentators have; namely that Ham mocked his father with laughter upon seeing Noah naked, something that his brothers did not do. Therefore, we would suggest that the curse of Canaan, who was not a part of the Negroid race to migrate to Africa, would not appear to fit into the thought of how the black race, through Ham's three other sons, was supposedly cursed through Noah's proclamation.

Some of you may have read the Expanded Biblical Comments for Gen. 9:25 which says “Cursed be Canaan” where we find the term “cursed” which says “Possible start of Negro race,” citing Reprint 2344:6 as a reference. Three points, 1) The statement in the Expanded Biblical Comment Book, Possible start of the Negro race, is not recorded in Reprint 2344. 2) Reprint 2344 is titled “Interesting Questions Answered” and the Pastor's actual comment was in reply to a question on if there is anything to the claim of a pre-Adamic race. In his answer, one of the things the Pastor says is that the scriptures are “positive” in the declaration that Adam was the first human being. 3) The Pastor's actual quote on the negro in this same question is, “the negro race is supposed to be descended from Ham;” with the term “supposed” meaning generally assumed or believed to be the case but not necessarily so; thus we would suggest that all of the Negro race was not passed from Ham to each of his four sons.

What we think we can reasonably conclude about the curse of Canaan comes from our understanding of the Book of Joshua, Chapters 11 and 12. There we find that the descendants of Canaan, who again are a heterogeneous assembly of tribes known as Canaanites, are included in a list of nations to be exterminated. This destruction began by the Philistines and was later completed by the Israelites; hence the curse, While these are our views, some of you may conclude differently. If so, we would be happy to hear your comments about this.

So, we would like to move on now and next comment on two African countries predominately mentioned in the scriptures. One is Ethiopia which, along with Ethiopian, is referenced in 40 Old Testament scriptures. The other is Egypt, mentioned 611 times in 558 verses.

Before looking to the scriptures, let's look at some statistics. Egypt is reported as having just over 101,000,000 residents, is the second most populous country in Africa and the 14<sup>th</sup> most populous country in the world.

For our scriptural references and lessons about Egypt in the Old Testament, we will consider four:

We have God's call to Abraham to leave Haran and his relatives to go to a land, Canaan, where his many descendants would become a great nation. Upon his arrival, the Canaanites were residing there but Abraham built an altar to the LORD after being informed that this was the land that he would give him. Thereafter, Abraham moved a bit farther south, place to place, to take camp but there was such a famine in Canaan that he had to go even farther south. Where to? It was Egypt, a safe place for him, Sarah and Lot who were traveling with him to dwell (Genesis 12).

For our second scriptural reference to Egypt, we look to Joseph, a type of our Lord, who was sold by his brothers and taken to Egypt but through God's help, he was later released from prison and made ruler over all Egypt, the most powerful person in the land next to Pharaoh. Then, after Canaan was struck with a famine with no food supplies in reserve, Joseph brought his Jewish brothers to Egypt where they could be cared for even though they had mistreated him years earlier by selling him as a slave prior to his exaltation to power.

We now move to our third scriptural reference which comes after the death of Joseph when a new king arose to oppress the Israelites, hold them in bondage and sought to exterminate all male children by having them cast into the river. Through God's providence, a special baby that was placed in a little ark and left in the river was saved not just by a random Egyptian but by the daughter of the king and ultimately being protected by the Egyptian government. Of course, and we have since come to know that little boy as Moses, also a type of Christ.

For our last scriptural reference and perhaps the best encouragement that we get from Egypt today relates to a visually present landmark of many years. It is not only meaningful to us but admired by the world. It is, of course, the Great Pyramid. Many of us have concluded that the Great Pyramid is identified in Isaiah 19:19, 20 so let's read those verses:

***19 In that day shall there be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to the LORD.***

***20 And it shall be for a sign and for a witness unto the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt: for they shall cry unto the LORD because of the oppressors, and he shall send them a saviour, and a great one, and he shall deliver them.***

Like with most prophecies, we may see the details differently but I believe there is support to conclude that when Isaiah wrote this, he was referring to a future time. Let's offer our suggested views concerning its prophetic meaning, keying in on some specific terms in these verses:

**Altar** – Altars make us think of sacrifices and in the grotto of the pyramid, the death of Jesus is pictured, his ransom sacrifice for the world.

**Midst** - The altar is described as being in the midst or middle of the land of Egypt. Simply stated, if we were to draw a line, a latitude meridian, through the area of earth where there is the most land mass, it would run through the area where Egypt and specifically the Great Pyramid lies.

**Pillar** – This term comes from Strong's 4676 which is the Hebrew word Matstebah which means something stationed, a memorial stone, a standing image; in other words, something unmovable. The Great Pyramid is considered as one of the seven wonders of the Ancient World. It is the oldest and the other six wonders that followed it are long gone yet while certainly worn over the years, it continues to stand to this very day as an unmovable image through the permission of our Heavenly Father.

**Border** – If we go back to the times of Ancient Egypt, it was divided with the northern portion belonging to the kingdom of Lower Egypt and the southern portion belonging to the kingdom of Upper Egypt. So the border between both kingdoms shows how the Great Pyramid of Giza could be at the border which, by the way, Giza means border in the Egyptian language.

**Sign** – Is a symbol or a mark which describes something worth beholding and that which is worth beholding is our Lord, his sacrifice and what it will mean to the world but we now have the privilege of now appreciating the sign of the pyramid and what it means to us and soon the world.

**Witness** – Finally, the Great Pyramid in Egypt, North Africa is something that we are prepared to witness about to any hearing ear. The world may not care about this witness in the midst of Africa beyond its touristic appreciation among other pyramids, camel rides and souvenir sales but it will soon speak to mankind when the time comes for the plan of God to be revealed to them through their recognition of the chief cornerstone, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Let's now consider the other prominently named African country in the Old Testament and that is Ethiopia, the third most populous nation on the continent and 15<sup>th</sup> in the entire world with just shy of 101,000,000 people. Like with Egypt, for our scriptural references and lessons about Ethiopia in the Old Testament, we will also consider four:

For our first example, at the age of 40 when Moses was forced to flee from Egypt, he ended up as a refugee in the land of Midian in the northwest Arabian Peninsula. While there and through his kindness in assisting the daughters of Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses was not only taken into his home but later married one of his daughters named Zipporah. In Numbers 12:1, we read, "And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman." Yes, Moses, a Jew and probably the greatest Old Testament prophet, married an Ethiopian woman, an interracial marriage as it were, despite his brother and sister criticizing him for it. But this came at a price to Miriam. Through her jealousy of Zipporah, Numbers 12:11-16 identifies God's punishment against her; namely resulting in Miriam turning white with leprosy until she mended her ways. One other thing about Zipporah. While she was apparently not born a Jew, she came to understand the importance of circumcision. In Exodus 4:24-26, we understand that God was prepared to kill Moses for neglecting the rite of circumcision of his son but it was Zipporah, an Ethiopian, that averted this calamity by reacting quickly and performing this rite; thus saving her Jewish husband.

For our second scriptural example, we can inform you that tomorrow, we hope to address a eunuch from Ethiopia identified in the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter of Acts but now wish to comment on a different eunuch, one not spoken of as much who we find in the Jeremiah 38 and 39. His name was Ebed-melech who was an official and servant of King Zedekiah in his palace. Ebed-melech had trust in God which is evidenced by his plea to the King, on behalf of Jeremiah, who declared the Lord's message for the Jews to flee Jerusalem. However, the nation assumed Jeremiah was siding with its enemies; hence they wanted Jeremiah put to death. The king yielded and even though the Prophet was not killed right away, he was lowered into a dungeon left to die. When Ebed-melech found out about this, he petitioned the king, causing him to instruct the Ethiopian to secure 30 men to release Jeremiah from the dungeon. Beyond this rescue, perhaps the most impactful lesson from this story is that it shows how Ebed-melech, as an Ethiopian and Eunuch, demonstrated more faith in God through his bravery than the nation of Israel, including Zedekiah; hence God protected him during the capture of the city. Whether Ebed-melech qualifies as one of the unnamed heroes of faith from Hebrews 11 is unclear but we are reasonably certain that our Heavenly Father permitted his story to be recorded for our edification as a person of much faith.

According to the Septuagint, Jeremiah references Ancient Africa and Africans 53 times; thus suggesting that he was very familiar with both as we have already seen with Ebed-melech. For our third scriptural example, we get strong evidence of the Prophet's familiarity with Africans through the text found in Jeremiah 13:23:

***“Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.”***

Jeremiah's question may suggest that Israel could not change the proclamation that he made concerning their soon coming trouble unless God saw reason to intervene due to a change in their heart. Thus the significance that an Ethiopian or specifically a black person could not change their skin color which is generally true. Interestingly, in the February 15, 1904 Watchtower, Reprint 3320 titled Can the Ethiopian Change His Skin, the Pastor suggests that what the Ethiopian could not do for himself, God could do for him. In the same Reprint, the Pastor comments that in September 1901, a 9 year old black boy turned nine tenths white with which a doctor concurred without that person having a disease. However, there are other current day examples of this as this photo depicts so perhaps this is not an exclusive anomaly. Similarly, there are examples of this occurring the other way around as show by this Caucasian gentleman developing a dark skin color so these type of changes are not unusual and potentially could happen to any of us.

For our fourth and final scriptural example regarding Ethiopia to which we will close with, for what sometimes can be the experience of many Africans, particularly in the flesh, we look to 2 Samuel 18:19-32. We won't read the account but it relates to an order that David's nephew and the commander of his army, Joab, gave to his servant, an Ethiopian, to inform David that his son Absalom was killed. As we know from the account, Joab played a pivotal role as the commander of David's forces during Absalom's rebellion when he rallied much of Israel against David who was forced to flee with only his most trusted men. David could not bring himself to harm his son and ordered his men not to harm Absalom. However, during the battle that followed, Absalom got his hair caught, while on a mule, in some tree branches and what followed was Joab and his men killing Absalom. Not wanting to be the one to pass on this information to David, Joab instructed the Ethiopian to tell David what he saw, which we take to mean that Absalom was killed. While Joab is not among us to ask why he did this, perhaps he



assumed that by sending a person of low rank or color would be understood to be a sign of bad news versus one not of color and of higher rank would be the bearer of good news. Interestingly, Ahimaaz, son of the high priest Zadok who succeeded him in that role, insisted to Joab that he wanted to be the one to tell David of the victory in battle, apparently believing that David would present gifts to him after delivering the good news that his men won in battle. Joab opined otherwise but ultimately consented in letting him go. This made Ahimaaz run down the road, right past the Ethiopian, to greet David first and inform him of the victory. However, David was less concerned about this and wanted to know of the welfare of Absalom. Once Ahimaaz denied knowing what happened, David told him to step aside so that the Ethiopian could speak. After he broke the news of Absalom's death, this caused David to be overcome with grief.

Some might suggest that Joab's possible views of the Ethiopian provides a parallel to what many of black African descent during the Gospel Age claim to experience, that as a people, such ones are generally not perceived a bringing things that are of good value but since our time is now gone, we will save our remarks for more about the Gospel Age tomorrow during part two of our presentation on the lessons we get from Africa and its People during the Gospel Age based upon the record of the New Testament, the Harvest Message and those portions of secular history that we will look to consider. We ask the Lord's forgiveness for anything said that was not pleasing in His sight and ask that he be with and bless us during the remainder of this convention. Amen.

## Africa and its People

### The New Testament through the Gospel Age Harvest

During our previous presentation, we shared some thoughts on the lessons we might draw from certain territories and people within the African continent as revealed in the Old Testament. Now, we again wish to see what lessons we can draw from select countries within Africa and the experiences of its people but this time, the source of our remarks will come from the New Testament, the Harvest Message and some secular history.

As mentioned earlier, the considerations that we have made in offering a presentation like this, particularly when Acts 10:34 tells us that God is no respecter of persons, are as follows:

1. The Bible provides substantial accounts of certain nations within Africa and its people thus making them worthy of study.
2. 2 Timothy 3:16 tells us that all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

Therefore, our plan remains to continue with our consolidated presentation on Africa and its people but again, this time during the Gospel Age which we hope to profit in terms of doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness.

For our first discussion point, we would like to highlight a word not found in the Bible but its meaning describes a condition that many in despair have sought in times of crisis and that term is refugee. Throughout human history, many individuals and groups of people have been forced to cross national boundaries to obtain safety due to threats of violence against them within their home lands. Our intent is not to be political but using the United States as an example, there are many individuals that have traveled to America, hoping that this country would empathize with their humanitarian needs due to the threats of persecution from their native lands. Mankind has long been divided on whether such individuals should be accepted in lands from which they did not originate. I'm not sure how the Lord's people feel about this today but perhaps that's a discussion that some of you may wish to have among yourselves.

But what about the Bible and specifically the New Testament? Do we have any examples of any that were refugees? Absolutely and the most prominent of all would be our Example, our Lord and Savior who was a refugee, of sorts, living for a period of time in Africa. We know the account from Matthew, Chapter 2 when following his birth in Bethlehem, an Angel of the LORD appeared in a dream to Joseph, telling him that Herod sought the baby Jesus to kill him; thus the Angel instructed Joseph to take Jesus and Mary to Egypt, where they were to stay within this African sanctuary as provided by the Heavenly Father and not return to Israel until Herod died.

While the scriptures are silent as to the exact date of his demise, the records of Josephus would have placed Herod's death around the time that Jesus was two years old when he, Joseph and Mary moved to Nazareth.

As a perfect being, there is no record as to what recollection Jesus would have had in interacting with Egyptians as an infant. We can only imagine that like wise men that fell down and worshipped Jesus after his birth, those in Egypt not only welcomed Jesus and his family as foreigners but were supportive of Joseph and Mary in any way that they could during those first two years since their presence there was under divine supervision.

While Herod's character did not emulate this attitude of heart, perhaps there is a lesson we can learn from the law that God imposed upon the Jews, the spirit of which we should seek to exceed. We quote the following from Leviticus 19:33, 34:

“And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him; but the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.”

While Egypt, at the time, was a part of the Roman Empire, it was outside of Herod's rule. Additionally, it is also believed there were other Jews in Egypt so perhaps Jesus and his parents were amongst those that welcomed him. That aside, Jesus, Joseph and Mary seemingly would have come across some Egyptians, who weren't under the Law, who did not oppress our Lord and his family, something we couldn't imagine doing to him or anyone else either. Rather, the New Creation must exercise the added spirit that Paul encourages in Gal. 6:10, “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men...”

Let's now move from Egypt to Libya. One of its ancient cities on the North African coast near present-day Shahhat in north-eastern Libya was Cyrene. Even though North African countries have a heavy

population of Berbers today, there is no substantive record of such a heavy presence in Africa during the times of the early church. Rather, the people of Cyrene are understood to be descendants of Phut, one of Ham's four sons, whom, as we shared earlier, was believed to have brought a population of dark skinned immigrants to Libya.

Per Acts 2:6, 10, the Cyrenians were among the God fearing Jews visiting Jerusalem that first heard the Apostles speaking in tongues after the Holy Spirit was dispersed on Pentecost. In Acts 11:20, 21, we find that among those from the Church then at Jerusalem that scattered following the persecution of Stephen were brethren from Cyrene who went to Antioch to preach to the gentiles, telling them of the good news of our Lord Jesus Christ. Through the witness effort of the Cyrenians, a great number of people believed and subsequently gave their lives to the Lord.

Further, in Acts 13:1-3, we learn of prophets and teachers from the Church at Antioch that not only included Simeon that was called Niger or as some translations have it, the black man, but Lucius of Cyrene; both of whom were part of the ecclesia when the spirit of the Lord instructed them to set apart Paul and Barnabas for the work he commissioned them to begin their first missionary journey. What an opportunity, what a privilege, what a blessing from the Lord on these two saints from Africa, Lucius and Simeon, during the early stage of the church. They were certainly, from God's standpoint, authorized to lay hands on or endorse Paul and Barnabas.

However, the one from Cyrene that perhaps we are most familiar with is Simon. What he did is recorded in the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, each of which cites the same substantive remark. Let's read the account from Mark 15:21:

***“And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross.”***

Aside from the fact that this African's name and act is cemented in holy writ through only one verse, what other lessons might we be able to learn from him:

1. If any chose to doubt the accuracy of this account, it not only could be corroborated after our Lord's crucifixion by Simon but also his children whom he undoubtedly told. Rufus, while perhaps a common name, may also have been Simon's son who later came into the Lord and became influential within the Church at Rome. We don't know this with certainty but the account from Romans 16:13 tells us, "Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine."
2. As one that was a foreigner to Jerusalem and present as an earnest proselytized Jew looking to celebrate the Passover, Simon seems to have been a morally good and devoted person, having traveled some 800 miles from Libya to share in this celebration.
3. Simon was compelled to carry our Lord's cross in what had to be a volatile atmosphere. None of us desires to be compelled to do anything so Simon was under a lot of pressure. That aside, who among us would not have been privileged to do this for our Lord? Jesus tells us in Matthew 16:24, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." It is hard to imagine that the one that had the privilege of carrying our Lord's cross and, in a way, pre-figured the Christian life did not come into Christ for after all, Simon did in fact,

typically, participate in his sufferings. If we are faithful, we will learn if he made his calling and election sure.

Before moving on to some historical records and the harvest message, we want to make an additional citation from the New Testament which we promised previously to touch upon and that relates to the Ethiopian Eunuch whose account can be found in Acts 8:26-40. The Eunuch is not the sole actor in this drama but rather shares the stage with Deacon Philip.

The account is familiar to us. An angel of the Lord directed Philip to travel from Jerusalem to Gaza, a journey of almost 60 miles. On his journey, this is what we learn:

Philip saw an Ethiopian Eunuch in a Chariot. He was a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, and was in charge of her entire treasury. As such, this Eunuch not only had to be high in rank but well respected by the Queen in being so far away from Ethiopia to travel to Jerusalem to worship.

Upon returning from Jerusalem, the Eunuch was sitting in his chariot reading Isaiah 53:7, 8 when the spirit of the Lord directed Philip to join this chariot, asking the Eunuch if he understood what he was reading. This remains a good lesson for us to never accuse one of something but rather to invoke the question method.

In response to Philip's question, the Eunuch admitted that he couldn't unless someone guided him which Philip did. Notwithstanding the Eunuch's lack of understanding, none of us has the answers to everything and if we accept the premise that we are in the school of Christ to be taught, we give evidence before our Heavenly Father that we are making progress in demonstrating the character qualities that would make us fit to serve on our Lord's throne.

Philip was pleased to preach Jesus Christ to the Eunuch and after doing so, they came to a pool of water which upon asking, Philip baptized him. Following this, the Eunuch went on his way rejoicing.

It's hard to imagine that upon the Eunuch's return to Ethiopia, he would not have shared the teaching of Jesus Christ and him crucified with others which thus led to the spread of the gospel message throughout Ethiopia and we would suggest, other parts of Africa. As a Jewish proselyte reading Isaiah, it would seem that the Eunuch was intrigued by the promises made to Israel but Deacon Philip advised him that the way to life was through Christ. Like Jeremiah, he probably felt it was like a burning fire shut up in his bones that he tried to contain but could not keep silent. To that end, we are each very much like the Ethiopian Eunuch in desiring to share the gospel with every hearing ear.

The last scriptural account that we have in the Bible is, of course, the Book of Revelation, written during a period that many estimate was between 90 and 100 AD. It is true that Revelation does provide a final message to the true Church during the Gospel Age through a series of visions written in symbolic language by the Apostle John. In Chapters two and three, the Apostle points to seven churches where each has a designated messenger trumpeting a specific message yet collectively, all the messengers speak to us as they represent the entirety of the saints throughout the Gospel Age.

While brethren may not agree as to who the messengers are to each period of the Church, we also don't know the names of each faithful consecrated believer throughout the Gospel Age. We have a better idea now, during Laodicea, who our brethren are since applications like Zoom allow us to see and hear the

fruitage that comes from each prospective saint around the world in real time so we thank the Lord for this technology. But again, during prior periods of the Church, it is hard for us to pinpoint the names of every individual who may have made a full consecration to the Lord, absent some who were identified in Scripture during Ephesus. This also includes brethren of African descent that were spirit begotten within Christendom before Babylon fell more than 140 years ago.

Those of the African race can not only now be found on the African continent but in practically every nation around the world. This includes the United States, my birth country and residence. As such, our next set of comments will mostly consist of remarks specific to the U.S. In our opening remarks, we advised that our reference sources would include the New Testament, the harvest message and secular history. To that end, we will next examine some secular history beginning with the subject of slavery and a reference we have used for some of our remarks comes from The Pluralism Project of Harvard University.

Historically, in 1606, King James I of England granted charters to both the Plymouth Company and the London Company for the purpose of establishing permanent British colonial settlements in America on its Atlantic Coast. The London Company established the Colony and Dominion of Virginia in 1607, as the first permanent English settlement in America, notably in Jamestown, Virginia. Colonies continued to be added through the rest of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and into the 18<sup>th</sup> century until and through the American Revolutionary War. If we recall from our high school classes in social studies, these colonies declared independence from Great Britain in 1776 to form the United States of America.

Going back to the time of the first established settlement in 1607, it was soon thereafter, in 1619, that the first African captives entered North American colonies at Jamestown, Virginia. For over the next 200 plus years that followed, Africans, largely from the west Coast of Africa including Angola, “Goree, Senegal’s slave island” and Cape Coast Castle in Cape Coast, Ghana, where several American brethren have traveled to over the past 20 plus years, were transported to the American South through the then existing slave trade where they provided hard manual labor that supported the South’s lucrative exports of cotton and tobacco.

Before continuing with the outgrowth of slavery in the United States, we will compare that time to the lessons we should draw from the letter Paul wrote to Philemon. Paul describes Philemon as a fellow laborer in the vineyard and writes about his relationship with his slave, Onesimus. During Philemon’s day, the owning of slaves was not considered an evil practice as it was in the New World between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Paul explained to Philemon that Onesimus had not accepted Christ when he wrongly ran away from him, as his slave owner, to Rome where Paul was imprisoned. While the account lacks explicit detail on why Onesimus left, Paul tells Philemon that Onesimus became a Christian post his flight and after some discussions with Paul whom he knew prior to his imprisonment. While that was a good thing, Paul recognized that reconciliation was in order between Philemon and Onesimus because they were now brothers in Christ. Thus this became a test of sorts to see how Onesimus and Philemon would now accept one another, in brotherly love. While the scriptures are silent as to the outcome of their meeting, we have to believe that they did reconcile, thus serving as an instruction in righteousness to us, otherwise why include this lesson as a part of the holy writ. Yes, Onesimus had to seek forgiveness for his transgression of running away and Philemon had to now accept his slave, Onesimus, as his brother in

Christ whom he would gladly serve, presumably before, and as tradition has it, Philemon was martyred by Nero by or around 68 AD.

Do historical records show an embrace of these lessons on brotherly love from the Book of Philemon by U.S. slave owners, many who professed Christianity towards the slaves transported from Africa? Let's again look back to that time.

From the outset, most Africans were denied the privilege of teaching or recognition of being Christians in America by those that opposed them, fearing that perhaps converted slaves would have to be freed and treated in love as would be accorded to non-African Christians. Granted, all Africans were not brought to America but individuals such as the Scottish missionary, David Livingstone, traveled through the continent over lengthy periods where a good deal of his focus was on introducing Christianity to many people, particularly through various personal challenges. But for those Africans who were in America, they found themselves brutalized, including those that professed Christianity.

However, this view began to change from the highest government seat when in 1860, Abraham Lincoln won the presidency on a platform of halting the expansion of slavery. As a result, several slave states broke away to form the Confederacy which triggered an insurrection in 1861, the American Civil War, when the northern states loyal to the Union had to fight off southern states that seceded to form the Confederate States of America, all over the controversy of the enslavement of black people, inclusive of any that accepted Christ as their Redeemer. On January 31, 1865, Congress passed the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment to abolish slavery and involuntary servitude except as punishment purportedly found as a result of a crime. By April 9, 1865, Robert E. Lee surrendered the last major Confederate army to Ulysses S. Grant and less than a week later, on April 15, 1865, President Lincoln was assassinated.

Notwithstanding 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment decree and the Reconstruction era period which intended to reintegrate the southern states into the Union while determining the legal status of black people, the spirit of slavery and hostility against the black race remained with many across America. However, there have been individuals over the years that spoke out against these practices, sometimes to their physical detriment. One of the early groups was the Quakers in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century but the group we want to focus on are the Abolitionists whose efforts spread through multiple countries, including the United States.

There were a number of Abolitionists that we are familiar with whose ways and methods varied greatly. Frederick Douglass, John Brown, Harriett Tubman and William Lloyd Garrison were some of the prominent figures of the day. However, the Abolitionist that we would like to briefly comment on is Sojourner Truth.

Born into slavery in New York as Isabella Baumfree in 1797, she was sold in 1806 at an auction at 9 years old to a man that didn't treat her well. She was sold a couple more times and ultimately was owned by someone who taught her English. She escaped to freedom in 1829 and ultimately lived with a couple who treated her well. While living with this family, we are told she became a devout Christian through her love of God and His beloved Son. It is also reported that in 1843, she began to share, as she could understand it, God's truth and plan of salvation with others. It was that same year that she gave herself a new name, Sojourner Truth, Sojourner meaning resident alien, stranger or foreigner, namely within this world, and Truth because she wanted to declare God's Truth, as was then discernable, to humanity. It is further reported that Truth joined the Miller Movement in 1843 which expected the

return of Jesus in the flesh by 1844 to destroy the world by fire which, of course, did not happen. She died on November 26, 1883.

As mentioned earlier, we know that the purity of the Truth message was available to be understood during the day of the Apostles in Ephesus and in the harvest, Laodicea. The number of brethren that made their calling and election sure during the intervening periods is not clear but we know that some did.

Notable about Sojourner Truth is that she mostly lived during the Philadelphia stage of the Church, a period that we would offer may have run from about 1517 AD to 1877 AD which means we place the start of Laodicea close to the beginning of the gospel age harvest, just after our Lord's return.

In Reprint 5718, the Pastor wrote an article titled The Hour of Temptation. The theme text for this article is Revelation 3:10 which reads as follows:

***"Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth."***

In this article, the Pastor suggests that the Philadelphia Church was spared from the hour of temptation and that possibly, the Lord meant that some of the Church from that period would live into Laodicea without being subjected to the special trials of this hour. Also in this article, the Pastor referred to a fine old gentleman of the Philadelphia era who, at the age of 90, received Present Truth with joy and spoke it with much zeal but could not trust his mental judgment because of the opposition he faced to what he spoke. Nonetheless, the Pastor went on to say that this gentleman may have been a representative of a large class, unable to take his stand and come out of Babylon yet could be a part of the body of Christ.

Who all of these individuals may have been that were unable to take a stand and come out of Babylon is something that we do not know but could courageous individuals like Sojourner Truth, who lived during the transition of Philadelphia to Laodicea, fit the Revelation 3:10 picture?

Without question, Sojourner Truth is a very recognizable person in human history. While 1 Corinthians 1:26 tells us that, "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:" but it doesn't say "not any" are noble.

We wish to be clear. We are not here to affirm that Sojourner Truth became a member of the bride class but maybe the example of her life is worth considering in light of the Revelation 3:10 picture.

We would now like to share something we can affirm because there is a written record of it. We just quoted a portion of an article written by the Pastor who, as we know, wrote many things throughout his ministry. Like I trust is the case with each of you, I appreciate the Pastor's ministry and believe he serves as the Laodicean messenger bringing meat in due season. It is not often that what we are about to mention is stated publicly but since many quote different things that Bro. Russell wrote, as we have already done, we'd like to touch upon some other matters that he published as a part of our presentation.

While we certainly are not critics of Bro. Russell, we think it is good to publicly touch upon even the most sensitive aspects of his ministry; including those comments he has made about the African race. Some of the Pastor's critics claim he wrote untoward or even racist remarks and if true, why should the African race, or for that matter any race, embrace him and his ministry.

In our view, the Pastor's ministry need not be defended any more than the ministries that any of us are actively involved in for if we are blessed by each other's ministries, it stands that God has blessed it first which makes it right to appreciate. However, because we each likely have more written material from the Pastor than any other brother during this final stage of the Church, we do want to see how we might be blessed through his statements which others may have found to be questionable.

One example comes to us from the April 15, 1900 Watchtower Reprint under the heading "The Volunteer Work." Part of what we find is as follows:

"There are probably as many as a hundred colored brethren on the Watch Tower lists, some of them very clear in the truth, and very earnest in its service, financially and otherwise. We have received letters from several of these, who had intended engaging in the Volunteer work, expressing surprise that in the call for Volunteers in the March 1st issue we restricted the inquiry to white Protestant churches.....The reason is that so far as we are able to judge, colored people have less education than whites – many of them quite insufficient to permit them to profit by such reading as we have to give forth. Our conclusion therefore is based upon the supposition that reading matter distributed to a colored congregation would more than half of it be utterly wasted, and a very small percentage indeed likely to yield good results. We advise, therefore, that where the Watch Tower literature is introduced to colored people it be not by promiscuous circulation, but only to those who give evidence of some ear for the truth."

Admittedly, the approach that each of us would have taken on a matter such as this may be different, be it in 1900 when the Pastor wrote this portion or even in 2021. As for me, if the Pastor was on the scene today, I might ask him if he felt his conclusion was consistent with our Lord's words in Matthew 24:14 to preach the gospel in the whole world as a witness, even if it meant that the one preached to lacked the educational capacity to have him find one to help him understand, just like, in Acts 8, Philip helped the Eunuch who didn't understand what he was reading.

Regardless of how we may interpret his conclusions, in this instance, we think there is far more evidence to the contrary to show how Bro. Russell felt about brethren from the African race and presumably, those saints of African descent during the course of his ministry and beyond, who had and continue to have a genuine love for him and his service.

As proof of this, there was a book published in 1900 by Charles Carroll titled "The Negro a Beast"...or.... "In the Image of God." Among the many things that Carroll wrote, he stated that "while the Negro was a beast, he was created with articulate speech and hands in order to be of service to his master, the White man."

Apparently this book was selling extensively at the time, particularly in the south, and there were concerns that it would stir up strife that the Negro was not human but a beast. Thus in the July 15, 1902 Watchtower, the Pastor addressed what was articulated in this book which we find in Reprint 3042, as a retort, in the article titled "The Negro Not a Beast."

This is an extensive article which not only rejects Carroll's assertions but also addresses whether interracial marrying should be considered a crime, how we account for racial differences, some of which we touched upon earlier, How we should understand the curse Noah proclaimed in Genesis against Canaan, also was addressed before and whether, per Jude 11, those that have gone in the way of Cain



and ran greedily after the error of Balaam and perished in the gainsaying of Core has any bearing on the negro.

Admittedly, the Pastor lived during a time where racism had some of the common themes which exist in various circles of society today but if anything, Bro. Russell was not an activist or leader of human or civil rights but a servant that sought not only to preach the Gospel message but help build up and encourage the household of faith. He was, however, challenged in this way.

Here is one last example. During one of the Pastor's presentations on the Photodrama in New York City, he asked roughly 25 percent of those who were in attendance, that were Black, to solely take their seats in the gallery. Mind you, this was during a time that African Americans made up 5 percent of New York City residents but they, as a people, appear to have had a greater proportionate degree of attendance in hearing the Photodrama on this occasion than those from other backgrounds in and around New York City.

The Pastor expressed that white attendance appeared to be dropping due to their preference not to intermingle with other races, but were his acts discriminatory in informing Africans where to sit? This is how he addressed the matter in the April 1, 1914 Watchtower, Reprint 5434 titled "The Color Line Found Necessary:"

"To these we explained that it is a question of putting either the interests of God's Cause first, or else the interests of the race first. We believed it our duty to put **God** first and the **Truth** first – at any cost to others or to ourself! We explained that we thought that all the colored brethren should know our attitude toward them – they should know that we love to serve them in any way possible and to give them the very best we have to give of the Gospel Message; and that it is only a question of whether our giving to them in one way would deprive us of giving the Truth to others."

Indeed, 1914 was a difficult time for people of color in interacting with others who looked different from them. Had the Pastor lived in 2021, however, I have to believe that his approach would have been different. As there continue to exist divided social pockets during our day, there are also many evidences of social integration and there is no better human examples of this than among the brotherhood. To that end, we thank the Lord for the opportunities he gives each of us to fellowship while building one another up in spirit, truth, faith and love.

In conclusion, the promulgation of the plan of God has been a blessing to every individual that has had a relationship with Him from the time of creation to the present, regardless of fleshly history, gender or race, and those which hail from the African continent are no exception.

The Lord's people that come from the African race, however, should not be pitied or empathized with in the flesh to a higher degree than any others that are His as we each, in the flesh, and particularly for Christ's sake, have experiences of one sort or another which we must overcome. Consider these comments which begin the Manna Text for January 5<sup>th</sup>:

"The reproaches of them that reproached Thee fell on Me. **Romans 15:3**

LET us see to it that we bear the reproaches of Christ as He bore them, – with pity and prayer for the erring and depraved, if perchance God may grant them repentance; and with humble fortitude esteeming it a privilege to prove our devotion to the Lord by enduring hardness in His service as good soldiers."

To that end, it is probably the failure of some of the spirit begotten throughout the entire Gospel Age to bear these reproaches that has accounted for the seeming delay in the full establishment of the Kingdom that was anticipated by the brethren more than a century ago.

But what we do know is that the Scriptures clearly teach the body of Christ will come from every corner of the earth. Consider Revelation 5:9, “And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; “

Out of every people and nation. One of the statements made in Volume One, that I fully embrace, comes from page 91 and states as follows” (C)

“In 1861 the reports of the Bible Societies showed that the Gospel had been published in every language of earth, though not all of earth’s millions had received it.”

Here’s the point, the harvest could not come without Christ’s second presence to direct the reaping work if, per Matthew 24:14, the gospel had not been first preached throughout the entire world for a witness for the purpose of finding the bride of Christ. While some have suggested the Truth is finally reaching Africa, perhaps because on that continent there seems to be greater receptivity to hearing the harvest message than in the western world, through the Gospel Age, consecrated individuals in Babylon must have made their calling and election sure in every nation where the Gospel was preached because had such not been the case, the Lord would not have given instructions for a global witness before now, near the full end of the harvest.

So yes, whether we are talking about Australia or the countries within South America, North America, Europe, Asia and, of course, Africa, the body of Christ will be represented by every people and nation which will help mankind as they come up the highway of holiness, knowing that those that are overcomers had relatable experiences to them which will prove to be a blessing.

Having made several trips to Africa, we have been privileged to meet saints from close to 20 countries, but even in those nations where we have not met brethren, let’s remember the importance of Deacon Philip’s interaction with the Eunuch resulting in his being baptized and thus causing him to return to Ethiopia rejoicing, likely leading to the gospel message being spread not only throughout Ethiopia but other African countries during Ephesus and continuing through the dark ages where probably only a comparatively few here and there, regardless of background, proved to be worthy.

But whether our forefathers come from Shem, Ham or Japheth, let none of us be complacent in thinking that our heredity brings us special privileges, opportunities and rewards before the Lord, but bear in mind how Paul describes such thinking in 2 Corinthians 5:16, 17:

***16 Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.***

***17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.***

Let each of us daily demonstrate our reverence to our Heavenly Father and we ask His forgiveness for anything said that has not been pleasing in His sight. Amen.