

Dear Jill,

Thank you for writing us at Christian Questions Radio. You asked what the Bible has to say about the separation of the races, or segregation.

There is a huge difference between God's separation of a people for a purpose and what we think of as segregation today. Below we will endeavor to clarify this statement.

The only race that the Bible speaks of as being separate is the Hebrew race. The Jews were special to God and were the only people in the Old Testament with whom God had a relationship. "You only have I chosen of all the families of the earth." (Amos 3:2) God called Abraham out of the country of Ur and said, "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; . . . and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you." (Genesis 12:2-3) It is clear from these scriptures that God singled out the nation of Israel for the purpose of blessing. It was through Abraham and his seed, Isaac, Jacob, and his twelve sons that the nation of Israel was formed and from which God's Son, Jesus, was born. Therefore, God set the Jewish people apart by giving them the Prophets and purifying them through the Law for the purpose of leading them to Messiah.

The Jews were told to keep themselves separate from the surrounding nations since these nations were idolatrous, although any foreigner who wanted to accept the one God of the Jews was welcomed. For example, when the Israelites were about to enter the Promised Land, they were helped by Rehab, the harlot from Jericho, who was adopted into the Jewish nation. (See Joshua 2, 6:17, 23; Hebrews 11:31, James 2:25.) Later, Ruth, a Moabite woman, was also grafted into the Jewish nation. (See the Book of Ruth.) Both Rahab and Ruth became part of this separated people through faith and obedience, even though neither was a Jew by birth. Both women are listed in the genealogy of Jesus. (See Matthew 1:5.)

When Jesus came on the scene he focused his ministry mainly on the Jewish people since they were the ones awaiting the Messiah and to whom the promise of the kingdom was originally given. Jesus never discriminated according to social class. He healed the rich as well as the poor. Sometimes he even healed those who were not Jews. The centurion's servant is one example. Jesus said when speaking of the centurion, "I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith." (Matthew 8:10) Jesus also socialized with outcasts such as the Samaritan woman at the well and she, in turn, told other Samaritans about him. "And because of his words many more became believers." (John 4:41) But, as we know, Jesus was rejected by the Jewish nation.

And so, after Jesus' resurrection, the privilege of becoming spiritual sons of God was no longer limited to just the Jewish nation. The Apostle Paul tells us, "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:26-29) It is plain from these scriptures that God does not discriminate along racial or ethnic lines when he calls

out those he wishes to give an opportunity to run for the heavenly prize. But God does command that these called out ones follow his one truth and be religiously separate from the world and its allurements. "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?" (2 Corinthians 6:14)

But, in addition to the heavenly phase of salvation, the earthly phase will encompass all the billions who have ever lived. Jesus died once for all, so that everyone will know of God and of his righteousness and have an opportunity for everlasting life on earth. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." (1 Corinthians 15:22) "This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men-the testimony given in its proper time." (1 Timothy 2:3-6) There is definitely timing and order to God's plan. The Church, or, those who belong to the heavenly phase, are saved first so that they can bless the world later. These blessings will begin in Israel and flow to all the nations of the earth. God reiterated this blessing to Abraham in Genesis 22:18, "Through your offspring all nations of the earth will be blessed."

You asked what the Bible has to say about separation of the races. Biblically speaking, the only "race" that was separated was the Jewish race and that was for the specific purpose of lifting them above the sins of the world by encouraging them to be in line with God's will. Likewise, God has also told the Christian to separate himself from the world, to be holy and to do His will. "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." (1 Peter 2:9)

We can see that God's separation can in no way be considered segregation. God has always separated for the purpose of following Him. God's separation has nothing to do with skin color or place of birth. In God's Kingdom, when people return from their graves, they will learn that all derive from common ancestry, Adam and Eve. In his Kingdom, all the wrongs will be righted. "There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For God does not show favoritism." (Romans 2:9-11) And we are obliged to follow his example.

We hope we have answered your question from a biblical standpoint.

Sincerely,
Christian Questions Radio