



WHERE DID THE DIFFERENT NATIONALITIES COME FROM?

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INTRODUCTION

Recently, we have been focusing on questions that are forwarded from theDove audience that relate to the Bible and science and typically center on Genesis 1-11 (questions can be forwarded to hispeoplerejoice@gmail.com). Even though the Bible is explicitly clear on numerous subjects such as the number of days of creation, the reason for a Global Flood and an ark, the death and resultant resurrection of Jesus Christ, and most importantly – the need for salvation from sin – there are some areas of Scripture that do not “fill in all of the blanks” leading to the adage of “the Bible often gives us the mountain tops and not the valleys.” While the directive in I Peter 3:15 – “always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you” – does not mean that Christians should be experts in all fields of science, it does indicate that Christians should be able and ready to give an adequate defense for what they believe.

This month, the following submitted question – “where did all of the different nationalities come from; Asian, African American, Hispanic, East Indian, etc” – illustrates a current enigma between secular science and the Bible in explaining the origin of the various nationalities (or races) that currently exist on this Earth. So, let's look at the secular scientific and biblical accounts of the origin of nationalities.

WHERE DID DIFFERENT NATIONALITIES COME FROM?

To address the issue of different nationality origins, we must first consider related terms that are often used within the context of defining nationalities, and then we will look at the secular and biblical perspective of the origin of nationalities.

NATIONALITY

Membership of a particular nation or state, by origin, birth, naturalization, ownership, allegiance or otherwise.¹ Therefore, a person's nationality is where they are a legal citizen, usually in the country where they are born.²

ETHNICITY

Ethnicity can be defined as a group of people who regard themselves to be different from others such as a person who identifies with a particular racial, cultural, or religious group.³ An example of the difference between nationality and ethnicity is a person whose ethnicity is Latino, but their nationality is Brazilian.

RACE

A *race* is a grouping of humans based on shared physical or social qualities that are placed into categories generally viewed as distinct by society. Since the second half of the 20th century, the association of race with the ideologies and theories of scientific and cultural racism has led to the use of the word race itself becoming problematic⁴ as the term *racist* is typically used in a negative connotation. In the mid 20th century, a racial classification by American Anthropologist Carleton S. Coon, divided humanity into five races:⁵

- Caucasoid (White)
- Negroid (Black)
- Capoid (Bushmen/Hottentots)
- Mongoloid (Oriental/American Indian)
- Australoid (Australian Aborigine and Papuan)

HUMAN RACE

All the people in the world are considered as a group⁶ as all living humans belong to the same species – *Homo sapiens sapiens* – that are a single biological species⁷ and is underscored by the fact that no biological barriers exist to interbreeding among human populations.

With the preceding definitions as a baseline for our discussion on the origin of nationalities, let's turn our attention to considering the difference between secular scientific viewpoints and biblical Scripture. Not surprisingly they are diametrically opposed, both in their explanations and reliance and/or rejection of evolutionary theory. Additionally, the question of the origin of

nationalities should also include the issue of the source of languages as about 7,000 languages are currently being spoken on this planet, yet similar to nationalities, one must also consider their origin. Lets begin with the secular science viewpoint and then consider biblical Scripture.

Note: For simplicity, lets combine the terms nationality, ethnicity, and race to be defined by the term "races" for the balance of this discussion.

SECULAR SCIENCE

ORIGIN OF RACES

It is a fact that people categorize others on the basis of their physical appearance, ethnicity, ancestry, social relations, and the interaction of all of these viewpoints that we call race. The origin of different races can primarily occur from a secular perspective that is based on evolutionary theory as follows:

Evolution by natural selection

"When modern humans left Africa some 100,000 to 50,000 years ago, they migrated quickly all over the world to climates very much different than where they evolved. In these new conditions, different traits were better suited for survival and reproduction in different areas. For instance, near the equator where we evolved, it was beneficial to have darker skin to resist the intense sunlight and people that migrated to extreme northern latitudes; those with lighter skins (due to random genetic variation) were better able to survive as they could absorb more sunlight needed to synthesize important vitamins. Another example is people from eastern Asia like Japan and China tend to have slanted eyes while people from elsewhere tend to have rounder eyes. I'm not sure if an explanation for this has ever been identified. It is possible that these differences are the result of an evolutionary process known as genetic drift. *So, over time natural selection has changed the traits of different groups of humans based on their local environment.*"⁸

ORIGIN OF LANGUAGES

The following are two common examples of secular definitions on the origin of languages:

- "All social animals communicate with each other, from bees and ants to whales and apes, but only humans have developed a language which is more than a set of prearranged signals. When and how the special talent of language developed is impossible to say. But it is generally assumed that its evolution must have been a long process. *The origins of human language will perhaps remain forever obscure*"⁹
- "In asking about the origins of human language, we first have to make clear what the question is. The question is not how languages gradually developed over time into the languages of the world today. Rather, it is how the human

species developed over time so that we – and our closest relatives, the chimpanzees and bonobos – became capable of using language. So, how did we get from there to here? All present day languages, including those of hunter-gatherer cultures, have lots of words, can be used to talk about anything under the sun, and can express negation. As far back as we have written records of human language – 5,000 years or so – things look basically the same. Languages change gradually over time, sometimes due to changes in culture and fashion, sometimes in response to contact with other languages. But the same architecture and expressive power of language stays the same. The question, then, is how the properties of human language got their start. Obviously, it couldn't have been a bunch of cavemen sitting around and deciding to make up a language, since in order to do so, they would have had to have a language to start with. Intuitively, one might speculate that hominids (human ancestors) started by grunting or hooting or crying out, and gradually this somehow developed into the sort of language we have today. When did all of this happen? We do know that something important happened in the human line between 100,000 and 50,000 years ago; this is when we start to find cultural artifacts such as art and ritual objects, evidence of what we would call civilization. If this is when they developed language, were they changing from no language to modern language, or perhaps from protolanguage to modern language? *At the moment, we don't know*"¹⁰

BIBLICAL SCRIPTURE

Lets begin by looking at the biblical account of the origin of races and languages as found in Genesis:

(1) Now the whole earth had one language and one speech. (2) And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there. (3) Then they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar. (4) And they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth." (5) But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. (6) And the Lord said, "Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them. (7) Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." (8) So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city. (9) Therefore its name is called

Babel, because there the Lord confused the languages of all the earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.
Genesis 11:1-9 (NKJV)

GENESIS SUMMARY

Lets briefly summarize the previous account as found in Genesis 11:1-9 for an overall understanding of the 9 verses:^{11,12}

- **One language and one speech**
God who made man as the one creature with whom He could speak (Gen 1:28), was to take the gift of language and use it to divide the race for the apostate worship at Babel indicating that man had turned against God in pride (Gen 11:8-9). Additionally, this also indicates that all humanity used one language and speech until after the Tower of Babel
- **As they journeyed from the east**
God had restated His commission from creation for man to “*be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth*” (Gen 9:7). It was in the course of spreading out from the Ark that the events of this account occurred
- **Let us make bricks, build ourselves a city and a tower, make a name for ourselves**
The Babel enterprise is all about human independence and self-sufficiency apart from God. The builders believed they had no need for God. Their technology and social unity gave them confidence in their own ability and high aspirations in constructing a tower with its top in the heavens that was contrary to God’s plan and directive (Gen 11:4) that people should fill the Earth. In short, human pride was responsible for leading these people to defy God. Additionally, they had to make bricks since there were few stones on the plain. Interestingly, they knew how to fire treat bricks (hardness and longevity) and use bitumen (asphalt) for mortar
- **Whose top is in the heavens**
Not that the tower would actually reach to the abode of God and not that the top would represent the heavens. They wanted it to be a high tower as a monument to their abilities, one that would enhance their fame. In this endeavor, they disobeyed God and attempted to steal His glory
- **Dispersed over the face of the whole earth**
The city-building project was designed to prevent the whole population from dispersing over the face of the Earth, contrary to the command of God (Gen 11:4)
- **Nothing withheld**
They were so united that they would do all they desired to do in direct opposition to God

- **Scattered them abroad**

God directly addressed their prideful rebellion by changing their single language to multiple languages so that they could not understand one another. This resulted in the population having to separate and collect in regions where their own language was spoken and understood

- **Its name is called Babel**

Verse 9 links the name of the city, Babel, with the verb *balal*, which means “to confuse, to mix, to mingle.” Babel is also the name used in the Old Testament for the city of Babylon. As a city, Babylon symbolizes humanity’s ambition to dethrone God and make the Earth its own (Rev 17-18)

Now, let's turn our attention to the specifics as outlined in Genesis 11:1-9 as there are six significant facets to this account that can be itemized as (1) History, (2) Population, (3) Location, (4) The Tower of Babel, and of course the primary focus of this discussion; (5) Races, and (6) Languages:

HISTORY

Renowned chronologist Archbishop James Ussher¹³ places the time of Creation at 4004 B.C. and the Global Flood at 2348 B.C., so there is a 1,656-year gap between these two events. Archbishop Ussher then places the date of Babel at 2242 B.C.¹⁴ indicating that Babel occurred 106 years after the Global Flood. Based on biblical chronology, the construction time frame would appear sometime after 2269 B.C. and before 2020 B.C. (the death of Noah). As a point of reference, Archbishop Ussher also reckons the date of Babylon as 2234 B.C., Egypt as 2188 B.C., and Greece as 2089 B.C.¹⁵

POPULATION

Although the number of people that had accumulated from the Global Flood until the construction of the Tower of Babel is debatable (due to the exact definition of a generation for that period of time), let's make some assumptions and see if we can get a general idea of the number of people that were present.

The three sons of Noah each had a large number of sons; Ham (four), Shem (five), and Japheth (seven), for a total of sixteen families (Gen 10:1-22) in a generation that began *directly* after the Global Flood. As biblical definitions of generations can vary from 20 to 40 years (depending on the era), if we assume the length of a generation in primitive cultures is 20 years as defined by the International Society of Genetic Genealogy,¹⁶ there would have been 5 generations during the 106 years between the Ark and the Tower of Babel. If each family would have produced eight more families (remember God’s directive to be fruitful and multiply and fill the Earth), the population could have reached at least 65,000 in 100 years, sufficient to build a city and tower.¹⁷

Another assumption is based on the 70 nations that are mentioned in Genesis 10, representing probably the generation of Noah's grandsons and great-grandsons. Seventy families would likely have contained 800 or 1,000 people altogether.¹⁸ Remember, these are debatable assumptions but illustrate there were more than a few people present at the Tower of Babel during its construction.

LOCATION

In Genesis 11:2, the Bible describes the Tower of Babel as being located in the plain of Shinar. Noah's descendants were moving westward from the east where Noah had settled to become a farmer (Gen 9:20). Shinar literally means "*between two rivers*" which would have placed the migrating descendants of Noah between the only two parallel rivers in the area – the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers (these rivers can still be located on present day maps). Shinar occurs eight times



Figure 1. Possible Location Of The Tower Of Babel

in the Old Testament and is the region known as Chaldea or Babylonia in southern Mesopotamia. The region of Mesopotamia was the location of Babylon, modern Iraq, today (Figure 1) and was also the past location of Assyria, Babylon and Persia.

THE TOWER OF BABEL

Interestingly, the account in Genesis 11:1-8 indicates that the tower was built (Gen 11:5) but it was the city that was stopped being built by God (Gen 11:8) so it must be assumed that the Tower of Babel was completed before the construction of the city was completed. The oldest recorded image of the Tower of Babel is found in *The Schoyen Collection, MS 2063*, and consists of an inscribed stele with Nebuchadnezzar II and the image of a virtually complete tower (Figure 2),¹⁹ although a small portion at the top portion of the tower is missing on the stele.



Figure 2. Tower Of Babel Stele With Nebuchadnezzar II

In his time, Nebuchadnezzar II wanted to demolish the old and dilapidated tower and rebuild it but did not have the opportunity to do so. The Greek Historian Herodotus commented on it in his day when in Babylon as follows:

“The temple of Bel, the Babylonian Zeus, was still in existence in my time. It has a solid central tower, one stadium square, with a second erected on top of it and then a third, and so on up to eight. All eight towers can be climbed by way of a spiral way running round

the outside, and about half way up there are seats for those who make the ascent to rest on. On the summit of the topmost tower stands a great temple with a fine large couch in it, richly covered, and a golden table beside it. The shrine contains no image, and no one spends the night there except one Babylonian woman, all-alone, whoever it may be that the god has chosen. The Chaldeans who say – though I do not believe them – that the god enters the temple in person and takes his rest upon the bed”²⁰

Some time later, Alexander The Great had the tower torn down with the idea to rebuild it, but his untimely death at a young age prevented it from ever being rebuilt. Although many ancient depictions of the Tower of Babel resemble the basic design of the previous description by the Greek Historian Herodotus, it should be noted that the Hebrew word for tower in Genesis 11 is *migdal* which can mean tower but also a flowerbed that yields a pyramidal shape.²¹ This gives some support to the premise that the Tower of Babel could have been pyramidal or ziggurat by design. Remember that the original Egyptian pyramid Djoser,



Figure 3. The Great Ziggurat At Ur

located at Saqqara, was a stepped pyramid along with the popularity of ziggurats that can be found around the world, such as the Great Ziggurat at Ur (Figure 3) and the Mayan temples on the Yucatan Peninsula. As we are not sure of the precise size and design of the Tower of Babel, a person should not be dogmatic over the exact shape/design. However, one fact that can be stated with certainty is the primary purpose of the tower was to keep the people from being scattered abroad over the face of the whole Earth (Gen 11:4).

RACE

Scientifically, all human beings in the world today are classified as *Homo sapiens sapiens*. As a result, scientists have acknowledged that biologically, there is only one human race. Scientists working on the human genome admitted; “they had put together a draft of the entire sequence of the human genome, and the researchers had unanimously declared, there is only one race – the human race,” underscoring this fact.²² Not surprisingly, the Bible does not use the word or term *race* in the Old or

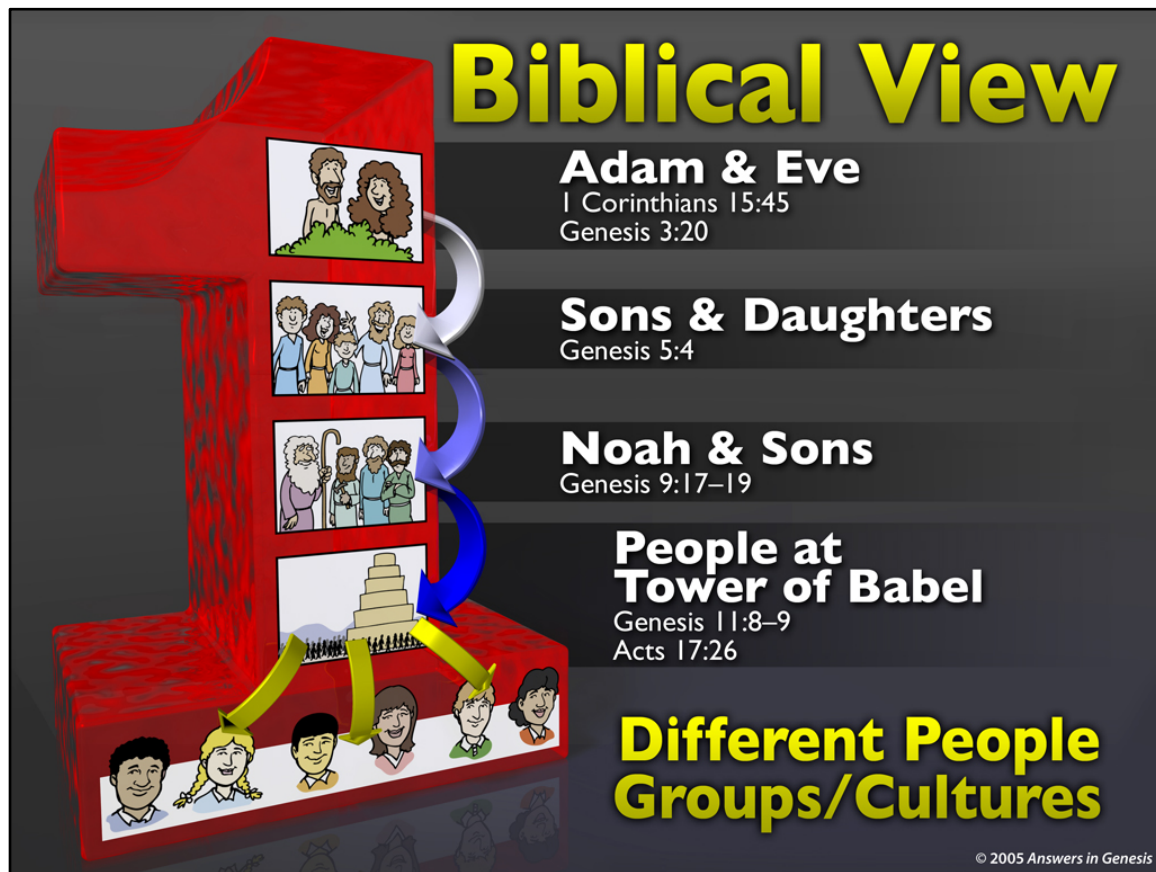


Figure 4. Biblical View Of The History Of The Human Race

New Testament, but does describe all human beings as being of “one blood” (Acts 17:26). This means that all humans on Earth are related and are descendants of the first man Adam (1 Cor 15:45), all human ancestry has passed through Noah,

his sons, and their wives, and all groups of people have developed from this one family since the end of the Global Flood (Figure 4). So, how did different groups of people with differing physical attributes such as skin colors, hair and facial features develop from Noah's family? Lets look at two significant factors; (1) families, and (2) genetics/environment that are responsible for varieties of physical attributes in the human population since Noah's family, remembering that modern humanity is a direct consequence of whether the ancestors of any group of people worshipped the living God or deliberately rejected Him:

Families

"So the Lord scattered them abroad from there (Babel) over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city"
Genesis 11:8

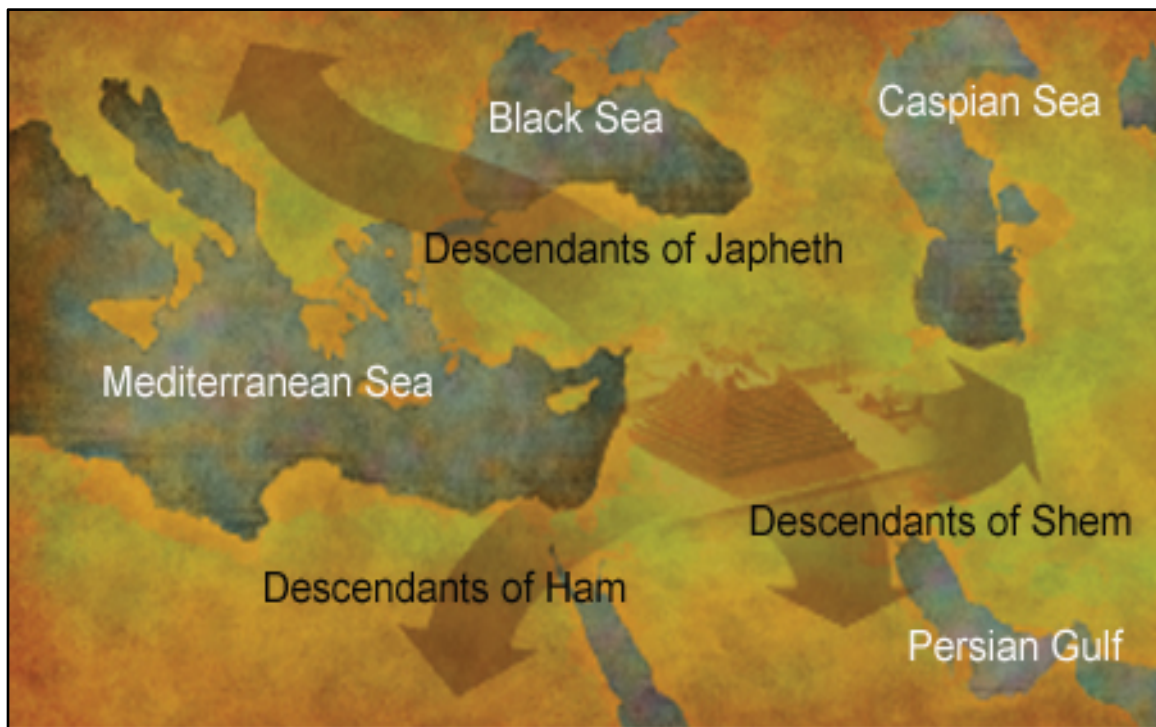


Figure 5. Families Of the Earth Were Scattered

Genesis indicates that the families of the Earth were separated, everyone according to his language (Gen 10:5) and were divided on the Earth after the Global Flood (Gen 10:32) causing them to collect in regions where their own language was spoken (Figure 5). Genesis 10:1-32 specifically details where the families of Noah's three sons settled:

- Japheth's families settled in the coastlands (Gen 10:2-5)
- Ham's families settled in Shinar, Assyria, and Canaan (Gen 10:6-20)

- Shem's families settled in Mesha going toward toward Sephar, the mountains of the east (Gen 10:21-31)

Genetics/Environment

Today we know that genetics plays an important role in the varying diversity of humans. As a result, there are an untold number of combinations of height, weight, skin color, hair, complexion, and the list goes on. However, as a consequence of Babel, the varying groups of people at Babel could not easily mix. As a result, they became genetically isolated and produced offspring within their particular group. As the years passed, each group developed its own culture and inherent characteristics. Genetically isolated, certain traits became more prominent in each group. As an example, lets consider skin color and eye profile.

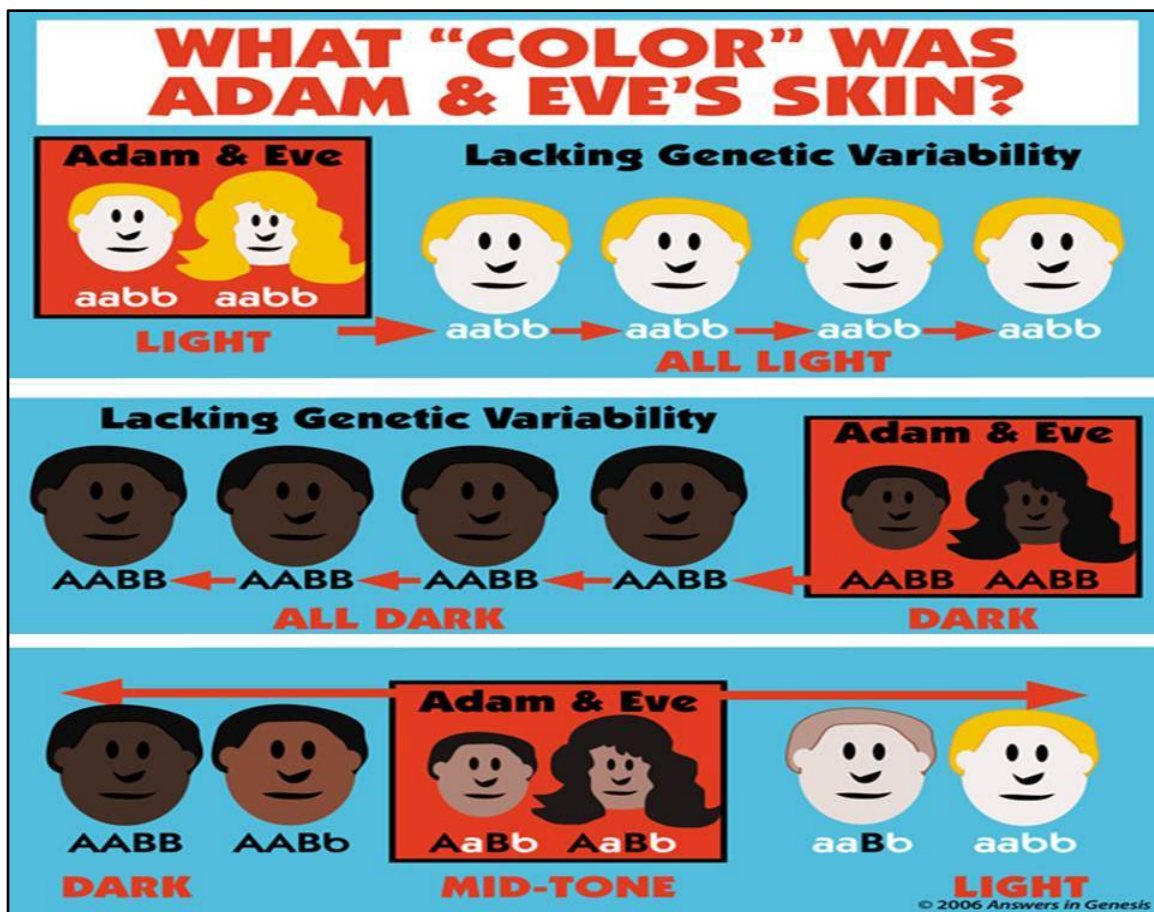


Figure 6. Adam And Eve Were Likely Mid-Tone

The pigment *melanin* is responsible for producing our skin, eye and hair color. There are two main forms of melanin: eumelanin (brown to black) and pheomelanin (red to yellow) that combine to produce the particular shade of skin, hair and eye color that we have.²³ Melanin also helps to protect the skin from sunburn by absorbing ultraviolet light from the sun. As a result, people

with darker skin would have been more likely to survive in areas where sunlight is more intense (near the equator) and those with lighter skin that lack the melanin necessary to protect them from ultraviolet rays would be more likely to die from skin cancers. So, it is easy to understand why the inherent amount of melanin can determine a person's color based on environmental characteristics, and over many generations, these favorable characteristics would be carried forward in the gene pool, and the less favorable characteristics would tend to disappear. Additionally, it is likely that the skin shade of Noah and his family was middle brown or mid-tone (many geneticists also believe that Adam and Eve were middle brown or mid-tone as in Figure 6) as this would give the widest range of skin tones in their offspring, from very light to very dark.²⁴

The Caucasian eye only has one layer of fat while the eyes of oriental people have a double fold of fat giving the eye an almond appearance. The doubly insulated almond eye was likely useful in cold snowy environments by offering increased insulation and also protecting the eye from reflected ultraviolet light from the sun. Therefore, this trait would have been favored and inherited in these types of climates.

LANGUAGES

Languages

From Creation, let's start with the first recorded use of language in the Bible as found in Genesis:

Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth"

Genesis 1:28

This verse indicates the beginning of a language from a human perspective and occurred when God directed Adam and Eve to multiply and fill the Earth. Clearly, Adam and Eve did not only understand the language that God used but also used it as a means of a two-way communication with God (Gen 3:9-10). This single language continued until the account of the Tower of Babel (Gen 11:1) when the people collectively rejected God and received the judgment of confused languages forcing them to spread out over the face of the Earth. This judgment also explains why humanity does not speak the same language today. However, as there are about 7,000 languages in use today,²⁵ one must wonder where they all came from? The simplistic answer to that question is that linguists agree that most languages have similarities to other languages and languages change over time. Let's go back to the Tower of Babel and look at Genesis 10.

The Bible lists Noah's many grandsons who received a language at Babel (Gen 10). From Japheth (Gen 10:2-5) came 14 language families, from Ham (Gen 10:6-20) there came 39 language families, and from Shem (Gen 10:10:22-31) there came at least 25 language families for a total of 78 root language families. Vistawide World Languages believes that the total number is closer to between 94 and 120-root language families.²⁶

In conjunction with the aforementioned root languages that originated from the Tower of Babel, languages can and do change over time. As an example, lets look at how the English language has dramatically changed over the past years and look specifically at the beginning of Matthew 6:9:^{27,28}

Matthew 6:9	Date
<i>Our Father who is in heaven</i>	Late Modern English (1700's)
<i>Our father which art in heauen</i>	Early Modern English (1500-1700)
<i>Oure fader that art in heuenis</i>	Middle English (1100-1500)
<i>Faeder ure pu be eart on heofonum</i>	Old English (A.D. 1000)

From this simple example, it is easy to see that the original English language bears few similarities to the modern English language version yet they both come from the same root language. Additionally, the preceding varieties of the English language are rather different from English that is found around the world (i.e., British English, Canadian English, Indian English, Australian English, Scottish English, and so on). From a biblical perspective it was feasible for Noah's descendants to multiply to the current world population of 7.6 billion²⁹ in just 4,000 years since the Global Flood and it was just as possible for the current number of languages used around the world to also have increased to about 7,000 from Noah's descendants in just 4,000 years.

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