

**African American Christians – The Foundation of American
Christianity**
2 Samuel 18.19-32; Mt. 19.27-30

February 4, 2009

Intro – Today I want to both inform and encourage. I want us to reflect and celebrate the wonderful work that God does in people from every tribe and tongue. It is my contention that God in His providence works all things for good for those that love God and are called to His purpose. Italians, Irish, Australians, British, Native Americans all prove that history is just that, His Story.

It is my honor to be called an African American with an emphasis for a moment on American. I'm grateful for the land of the free and the home of the brave. I'm cognizant of the fact that for many years it appeared that for those whose complexion is much lighter than mine, they landed on Plymouth Rock but for those who look like me, Plymouth Rock landed on them. But today I can say that whether you came to America on the Santa Maria or on the slave market ship, God works everything for good. The harsh realities of American slave trade and American slavery in view. The harsh realities of oppression, segregation and lynching. The harsh reality of racism supported by the religious system of America all resonate with the words of Paul when he said that "all things work together for good for those that love God and are called to purpose. I'm happy that in spite of the pain of my journey here that God was involved every step of the way and I have the privilege of making my nation a better nation, a more perfect democracy. I have the opportunity to help improve the quality of life for all Americans and that began long ago.

The invention of the traffic light, the functioning light bulb, the ironing board, successful heart surgery, the elevator, the refrigerator, the cotton gin, the architectural design of the nation's capital, the manpower to build the facilities of the nation's capital and now the leader of that capital and the entire free world have all been made possible because Africa birthed men and women that saved America.

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African American Christians in America

Not only am I proud to be an American, but I'm proud to be an alumnus of RU. If many of us would take off the glasses of our own prejudices and put on the spectacles of research you will discover that this institution is postured to do more for the AA community than the liberal theological institutions across our nation. These institutions that deny the veracity of scripture, plunder the idea of the virgin birth of Jesus, call healing and the Holy Spirit irrelevant and are not looking for the return of the king of kings pale in comparison to Regent. Which of them has partnered with young intellectual Black men like Antipas Harris to establish urban ministries that address gang violence and recidivism? Which of them have called on the academic prowess of the Clifton Clarkes to re-examine global evangelization and not just look at the windows of the lost in Asia and Southeast Asia and North Africa but include those who are dying without Christ in East, West and south Central Africa?

When you AA students walk into your classes or log on online do it with the pride of knowing that you're not here by accident but you are a part of a move of God to change the nations and to deliver this message. That Christianity at Regent is not just white and republican or black and democrat but it is righteousness, peace and joy in the Spirit for any one who will receive the gospel of Jesus Christ!

You see in the life of Seymour and in the life of C.H. Mason the principle of the Cushite runner. What is often lost in the text is that not only does the Cushite show up with accurate, well researched and lucid facts – he was the first one to run! The Principles we're teaching here all had their genesis in AA Christians and some specifically among Pentecostal AA Christians.

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1. The Rise of Pentecost – William J. Seymour

Yale University historian Sidney Ahlstrom, who said Seymour personified a black piety "which exerted its greatest direct influence on American religious history"—placing Seymour's impact ahead of figures like W. E. B. Dubois and Martin Luther King, Jr.”

- The father of American Pentecostalism and the architect global missions
- The forerunner in using print and establishing donor relations to propagate the gospel
- The progenitor of multiracial relationships for the purpose of kingdom expansion

2. The Impact of Church Planting Strategies – Bishop C. H. Mason

Bishop C.H. Mason (1866-1961)¹

Ministry: Founder of Church of God in Christ, Azusa 1906

- The father of coaching and mentoring relationships in the Pentecostal church

Men and women would spend time with him in Memphis and then he would send them to other cities to expand “the kingdom”

- The first use of demographic study to determine church planting strategies

Mason recognized the movement of AA to the northeast as a result of the Industrial Revolution and began church planting strategies for New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Boston, Newark and a host of other cities!

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2. The Impact of Church Planting Strategies – Bishop C. H. Mason

- The first established organized fellowship of churches for covering, relationship and accountability in Pentecost!

For many years all Assembly of God pastors were licensed and ordained by Bishop Mason. Imagine, you walk into a restaurant with your Bishop and he has to go in the back while you sit in the dining room. People say to you, “Who was that n...? And you say “that n... is my spiritual leader”

Imagine the impact on segregation if the AG pastors of old could have resisted the influence of the world that pressed them to separate from their Black leader and covering? Today we have a second chance to deny the world’s influence and embrace one another’s strengths and weaknesses and be the better for it.

3. The Power of the Emancipating Church – Bishop Richard Allen

Bishop Richard Allen: (February 17, 1760-March 28, 1831)

Ministry: Founder of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in 1816

- The focus on meeting the physical and emotional needs of people.

Every major ministry in America now has some type of ministry to assist people in their family issues, financial health and educational pursuits but this all began out of necessity in AA church.

- The philosophy of marketplace ministry was the brainchild of the black church!

Drs. Floyd Flake and Calvin Butts of NYC are modern day examples of the use of CDC’s but before these arms were available to Blacks the churches had their own restaurants, insurance agencies and hotels in some cities. Talk about marketplace ministry!

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- Political involvement didn't start with the great ministries of modern history like the late Dr. Jerry Falwell.

Our great founder of CBN and Regent University has carried on the tradition of the black church by calling Christians to involve themselves in the political process. He and I stand on the shoulders of great men like Adam Clayton Powell who said that, “ *Something happened to me. The people of the streets, the fallen, the misfits, the beaten, the sightless, the voiceless. They captured me and I would love no other. I followed them but only to lead them.*”

Ahimiaz was a good man but Cush who showed up last, knew what was going on. He had accurate information about current events and was able to translate those events into the message that the king needed.