

CH 5. WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS AND DOESN'T SAY ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY

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FROM JESUS, THE BIBLE, AND HOMOSEXUALITY BY JACK ROGERS**

CH 5 - WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS AND DOESN'T SAY ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY

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- * The Bible is a drama of a good God who created a good world.
- * This perspective is often absent from the current debate about homosexuality in the church.
- * That debate focuses on, at most, eight texts: Genesis 19:1-29; Judges 19:1-30; Leviticus 18:1-30; Leviticus 20:1-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-17; 1 Timothy 1:3-13; Jude 1-25; and Romans 1.
- * Together they cover a maximum of twelve pages in the Bible. None of these texts is about Jesus, nor do they include any of his words.

The First Seven Texts

- * Sodom and Gomorrah: Genesis 19:1-29
- * The Rape of the Levite's Concubine: Judges 19:1-30
- * The Old Testament Laws: Leviticus 18 and 20
- * New Testament Vice Lists: 1 Corinthians 6:9; 1 Timothy 1:10
- * Jude 5-7
- * ROMANS 1



PROJECT

SODOM AND GOMORRAH

GENESIS 19:1-29

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Sodom and Gomorrah

- * “The central idea in these passages is the sacred obligation of hospitality for travelers.” 67
- * Because the normal hierarchy in ancient cultures is patriarchy, men raping men was a means of asserting dominance, not a statement of their sexual preferences.
- * Dale Martin: “To be penetrated was to be inferior because women were inferior.” p. 67

Sodom and Gomorrah

- * Gender, not Sexuality was paramount. The violence of treating a man like a woman was the default social construct defining relations to subjugated persons.
- * The sin of Sodom as Ezekiel explains is that “She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy. They were haughty and did detestable things before me. 16:49”
- * There is no mention of sexual sin, though it might be included in “detestable things”. The emphasis is on social sins.



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THE RAPE OF THE LEVITE'S CONCUBINE

JUDGES 19:1-30

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The Rape of the Levite's Concubine

- * This account holds the same characteristics as the sin of Sodom.
- * Though both the visiting angels and men were required by the angry crowds, the Levite was able to mollify the crowd with his concubine, whom they raped and killed.



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THE OLD TESTAMENT LAWS

LEVITICUS 18 AND 20

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The Old Testament Laws

- * The holiness codes defined Israel's religious, civic, and cultural identity.
- * They were to be different from the nations around them.
- * Do not mix with the nations, do not adopt their customs or rituals.
- * Male gender superiority must be maintained.

The Old Testament Laws

- * "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination" (Lev. 18:22; cf. 20:13).
- * Abomination, (Hebrew *toevah*) is concerned with *ritual purity* like the prohibition of having sex with a menstruating woman.
- * In Christ we are not obligated to adopt those culturally conditioned laws which have been used to justify censure, exclusion, and punishment of homosexual people faithful to Christ.



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NEW TESTAMENT VICE LISTS

1 CORINTHIANS 6:9, 1 TIMOTHY 1:10

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New Testament Vice Lists

- * The two words found in those lists, *arsenokoites* and *malakos*, translated as homosexual activity are suffering from circularity. The translation comes from what you assume to be true.
- * *Arsenokoites* is coined by Paul in these passages. And the word is not found in their contemporary Greek or Jewish literature or culture.
- * “*arsenokoites* probably refers to ‘some kind of economic exploitation, probably by sexual means: rape or sex by economic coercion, prostitution, pimping, or something of the sort.’” p. 70-71

New Testament Vice Lists

- * *Malakos* meaning “soft” or effeminate was “treated as a moral failing.” 71
- * We have King James to thank for the term Sodomite, not used in the Hebrew text to refer to homosexuality or the location of one’s birth.
- * Dale Martin reads the 1 Timothy 1:10 verse using *arsenokoites* contextually suggesting that the following persons in the list, slave traders, refer to people who exploit others, and infers that *arsenokoites* probably refers to those who exploit others sexually.



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JUDE

VERSES 5-7

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Jude 5-7

- * “Jude is the only book in the Bible that refers to Sodom’s sin as sexual immorality. In Jude there is a lot of discussion about sex between humans and angels (angels with human women, and human men with male angels) that is labeled as ‘sexual immorality’ and ‘unnatural lust.’
- * “But for Schmidt, or anyone else, to make the leap that this text somehow condemns present-day Christians who are homosexual strikes me as bizarre.” p. 72



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ROMANS

CHAPTER 1

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Idolatry, Not Sexuality

- * Some think that this chapter is definitive in stating how homosexuality is sexual sin. But that reading is also circular.
- * The topic of Paul's discussion here is idolatry, not sexuality. The logic of the Scriptures here is that because people practiced idolatry, God gave them up to degrading passions.
- * Paul points out that Jews should not be smug because they refrain from idolatry, because all have sinned, Jews and pagans included.

Cultural Norms, Not a Theology of Creation

- * When Paul speaks of Nature, he is speaking of cultural conventions. Romans 11:13-24 describes the circumstance where God does the unconventional by grafting in Gentiles to the Jewish olive tree.
- * Paul says this is an unnatural act by God and he means that this act is not ordinary, not that it is sinful. . .
- * Paul is not talking about a violation of creation.

Male Gender Dominance

- * In patriarchal cultures, men were to remain dominant over women. Both Hebrew and Greek cultures maintained this strict hierarchy, as Paul says, “God-Christ-Man-Woman.
- * Violating this strict structure in patriarchal societies amounts to shame before God. (1 Cor. 11:3-16)
- * Transgressing gender roles amounts to impurity. It is against nature (as convention).

Control and Moderation in All Things

- * In both Hebrew, Christian, and Stoic cultures, failure is defined as going to excess. To say that orgies are wrong doesn't mean sex within marriage is wrong.
- * He's not talking about "wrongly oriented desires, but inordinate desires — going to excess, losing control."

- ✱ “Idolaters fail to give God glory and gratitude. God then allows them to lose control in erotic passion, which brings them dishonor.”

The Plain Text

- * Read pg 76 first full paragraph, four points.
- * Heterosexual sex can be moral or immoral. The same applies to homosexual sex.
- * “We know of gay and lesbian Christians who truly worship and serve the one true God and yet still affirm in positive ways their identity as gay and lesbian people. Paul apparently knew of no homosexual Christians. We do.”



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ARGUMENT SUMMARY

FROM A BIBLICAL POINT OF VIEW

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| Biblical Arguments | Against Homosexuals in the Church | Jack Rogers |
|----------------------------|---|--|
| Genesis | Judgment for Homosexuality | Lesson about Hospitality, judged for pride, overeating, too much idleness, careless about the poor, haughtiness, detestable behavior |
| Judges | Judgment for Homosexuality | Hospitality again, rape of strangers to assert dominance |
| Leviticus | Man lying with man = abomination | Abomination = ritual uncleanness |
| I Corinthians 1 Timothy | <i>Arsenokoites</i> reads strictly as homosexuality | Word undefined in biblical and cultural context, probably means sexual exploitation |
| Jude | Sodom's sin is sexual immorality | Contextually not strictly about humans |
| Romans 1 | Romans 1 condemns homosexuality | The theme of Romans 1 concerns idolatry |

What is the weakness of the main exclusion argument?

- * The main argument for treating homosexual people as outsiders to the Church relies on circular reasoning.
- * Modern culture using a variety of arguments under the assumption that homosexual attraction is against nature reads that assumption into texts that do not support the assumption.



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NON-BIBLICAL THEORIES IMPOSED ON ROMANS 1

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Non-Biblical Theories of Romans 1 - 76

- * Natural Law
 - * Sexual Orientation: A Choice? No
 - * Can People Who are Homosexual Become Heterosexual? No
 - * Is Homosexuality Idolatry? No
 - * Homosexual Relationships: The Worst Sin of All? Really?

Non-Biblical Theories of Romans 1 - 76

- * The weakness of Natural Law as an argument:
 - * Foucault in the *History of Sexuality* Vol 2 and 3, where he discusses animal analogies as guides of human behavior in the process of self-mastery, the analogy of elephant to human sexuality centers around aspects of elephant couples that are supposed to be guides for human couples.
 - * Later Christian writers adopt these analogies.

Non-Biblical Theories of Romans 1 - 76

- * The question arises naturally, in the same fashion that Socrates queries Thrasymachus about why humans are supposedly the measure of all things.
- * Socrates asks, “Why not an ape-faced baboon?”
- * What forces us to take an analogy as compelling?

“The model of conjugal fidelity was one promoted by any number of Greek and Roman moralists. But Foucault references the use of Pliny’s exemplar, the elephant, by St. Francis of Sales who ‘held out a mirror to married couples, recommending the example of the elephant and the good morals it manifested with its mate.’.”

–*Michel Foucault, The Use of Pleasure, p. 17*

Non-Biblical Theories of Romans 1 - 76

- * Homosexuality as Example of the Fallenness of Humanity, again assumes the conclusion it states
- * The arguments hang on a variety of evidence that is culturally based, not based on the Bible.



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A MODEL OF MONOGAMOUS HETEROSEXUAL MARRIAGE IN GENESIS?

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A Model of Monogamous Heterosexual Marriage in Genesis? - 82

- * Reuniting the Binary Split?
 - * This is a comment on a purely speculative idea, with some reference to Plato's Symposium.

A Model of Monogamous Heterosexual Marriage in Genesis? - 82

- * Male Female Relationship as the Image of God in Humanity?
- * This set of reasons for exclusively heterosexual marriages relies on Karl Barth's appeal to natural law as a foundation instead of Scripture.
- * "Marriage is the fullest expression of the image of God in people." (who is left out then?)
- * There is a bias toward the male gender in the partnership.

A Model of Monogamous Heterosexual Marriage in Genesis? - 82

- * Male Female Relationship as the Image of God in Humanity?
- * “Barth places some human relationships immediately under suspicion” by blessing heterosexual marriage above all other relations.
- * This is a culturally conditioned model

A Model of Monogamous Heterosexual Marriage in Genesis? - 82

- * Male Female Relationship as the Image of God in Humanity?
- * Andrew Comiskey claims that “God also tells us that to discover our true humanity, we must be known by the opposite sex.” 85
- * “The claim that the image of God is rooted in the male-female relationship leads us away from the biblical text.”

“The image of God is not a capacity embodied only in some classes of people but denied to others. To be in God’s image is possible for all.”

–Jack Rogers 85

“Those who rely ... on natural law and biased cultural assumptions twist and distort the fundamental message of the gospel.”

–Jack Rogers 85



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A RELEVANT BIBLICAL ANALOGY

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A Relevant Biblical Analogy

- 86

- * Luke Timothy Johnson shows that homosexual members of the church should be received into full fellowship even as the Gentiles in Acts 10-15 are acknowledged as full members in the church.