

What God Says About Same-Sex Marriage: Questions Answered (Part 2)

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I. Introduction

The Bible seems to be clear that homosexuality is a sin and thus same-sex marriage is likewise a sin. If this is the case, then why do some Christians think that the Bible either supports homosexuality or is silent/neutral on the matter? What are the arguments used by gay Christians who genuinely think that there is nothing wrong with their homosexuality? And is there an answer to those arguments? Is God truly OK with loving, respectful homosexual relationships?

II. Does the Bible Support Same-Sex Marriage? If It Doesn't, Why Do Some Believe It Does?

Haven't antigay Christians misinterpreted the Bible regarding homosexuality? Some think that the Bible either allows for or supports same-sex relationships. How do they arrive at this conclusion? Their interpretation of the texts that prohibit homosexuality is neutral or sympathetic to homosexuality:

GENESIS 2:18-24, the argument used is this: this passage should not be used as the standard for all sexual relationships because in the beginning, of course it had to be a man and a woman, how else was the population going to grow? Thus, Genesis 2 doesn't forbid homosexuality; it doesn't even mention it. And if Genesis 2 is to be the standard for all couples, then aren't childless couples and couples unable to have sex in sin too?

A reading of the entire Bible shows that Genesis 2 is the standard for marriage and sex. How so? (1) The only relationship that is praised as ideal in Scripture is a monogamous relationship between a husband and wife. (2) Every time homosexuality is mentioned, it is condemned. (3) Jesus repeated the standard of Genesis 2 in the New Testament, Matthew 19:4-6, and so did the apostle Paul, Ephesians 5:21-31. (4) Sex was not just designed for procreation. It was/is a way that God bonds the husband and wife together as one (physically, emotionally, and spiritually). And this oneness was designed for opposite genders, not the same gender. Regarding childless or sexless couples, there's more to marriage than sex or children. In fact, God is the one who blesses us with children or not, e.g., 1 Samuel 1. Thus, children and sex are part of marriage, but they are not the standard for marriage. Adam and Eve had a marriage before they had children.

GENESIS 19:4-9; EZEKIEL 16:49, the argument is as follows: Sodom was destroyed for the inhospitality of its citizens. The problem was that Lot violated Sodom's custom by entertaining guests without the permission of the elders. This is evident by the request of the men of Sodom regarding Lot's male guests, "bring them out to us that we may know them." The Hebrew word for "know" has no sexual connotations here, since its overwhelming use in the Old Testament simply means "to know."

However, Lot's response to the men of Sodom creates a problem for this line of argument. Lot's first statement is, "Please, my brethren, do not do so wickedly." Why would Lot call the desire of the men of Sodom to get "to know" these male strangers wicked? Aren't the men of Sodom simply correcting Lot's inhospitality? Then why call it wicked...unless the men of Sodom have something wicked in mind and as it turns out, something sexually wicked in mind.

Lot's second statement clearly shows that this is exactly what the men of Sodom have in mind. Lot says, "See now, I have two daughters who have not known a man; please, let me bring them out to you, and you may do to them as you wish; only do nothing to these men, since this is the reason they have come under the shadow of my roof." The men of Sodom are not there to get to know these males; they're there to rape them. This leads to another argument some make; they say that Sodom's sin was rape not homosexuality. It is true that the men of Sodom are there to rape Lot's two male guests. But it's also true that homosexuality was rampant in Sodom. How do we know? Because every male in Sodom showed up for this rape, "Now before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both old and young, all the people from every quarter, surrounded the house." This shows that nearly every male, young and old, in Sodom practiced homosexuality.

Some use a third argument based on Ezekiel 16:49. This says that Sodom's sin was general wickedness not homosexuality. How do they prove this? They simply quote Ezekiel 16:49, "Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy." Sounds like an ironclad argument, is it? It has a flaw, in 16:50 it says, "And they were haughty and committed abomination before Me; therefore I took them away as I saw *fit*." The "abomination" committed by Sodom is perhaps more than hinted at in 2 Peter 2:6-7 as being sexual in nature. But in Jude 7 it's quite clear that it was more than just sexual, it was *homosexual* in nature, "as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." Jude 7 destroys all arguments concerning Sodom's sin: Sodom, Gomorrah, and the cities around them were destroyed because of their #1 sin: homosexuality.

LEVITICUS 18:22; 20:13, the argument is that idolatrous homosexuality is the problem not homosexuality in general because the Hebrew word for "abomination" is normally associated with idolatry.

It's true that the things forbidden in Leviticus 18 and 20 were connected to the Canaanites' idolatry. But this argument has one big flaw. If homosexuality is only a problem when it's connected to idolatry, then this standard must be applied to every other sin mentioned in Leviticus 18 and 20. This means that God is OK with adultery, incest, bestiality, and child sacrifice as long as it's not done in connection with idolatry. Additionally, the Hebrew word for "abomination" is not just used in relation to idolatry, e.g., the Egyptians saw the Israelites as an "abomination" because they were shepherds, Genesis 46:34. In fact, in Proverbs 6:16-19, God calls seven specific sins abominations and they have nothing to do with idolatry.

There's another argument that's used: If you say that the laws in Leviticus 18 and 20 apply today, then don't all the laws in the Mosaic Law apply, like laws about how you dress and eat? Further, isn't the Mosaic Law now obsolete? Didn't the apostle Paul declare as much in Romans 6 and Galatians? Therefore, the laws against homosexuality, even if they did condemn all homosexual acts, no longer apply.

But whether or not you agree that the Law is still in effect, there's a greater issue to consider. We must ask two questions, "Does the Law reveal God's general thinking about the moral issues of life?" and if it does, "Does God's opinion ever change on moral issues?" When we look at the Bible as a whole, we see that the Law does reveal God's thinking on morality and His opinion never changes. God considers these things abominations then and now. These things were abominations to God over 400yrs before He gave Israel the Law, Genesis 15:16 (see also Leviticus 18:1-3, 27—as He's giving the Law, He calls them abominations).

Did God think that these things were abominations when it had nothing to do with keeping the Law? Yes: Leviticus 20:11 prohibits sex with your stepmother. This was still sin in God's eyes even if a pagan Gentile, who had nothing whatever to do with the Law, committed this sin, 1 Corinthians 5:1-5. God gave many such commands, which were part of the Mosaic Law, to pagan Gentiles, e.g., Romans 12:19; Galatians 5:19-21; Colossians 3:5. The Mosaic Law may no longer apply, but many of the moral sins it warns against (e.g., murder, adultery, incest, homosexuality, etc.), are still sins today because God's thinking on these matters never changes. These things will always be abominations to God no matter who commits them or when.

THE GOSPELS, one argument used here is that Jesus said nothing about homosexuality, therefore, since Jesus was not concerned about it, we shouldn't be either.

There are several problems with this argument: First, the apostle John himself states that we don't have a record of everything Jesus did or said, John 21:25. Second, the idea that if Jesus didn't mention it, then we shouldn't be concerned about it means that we have to throw out many of the New Testament teachings, things like: every Christian has a spiritual gift and they should use it, Christians shouldn't sue each other, husbands should love their wives as Christ loved His, etc. Third, Jesus may not have mentioned homosexuality, but He did repeat the standard for marriage and sexuality when He quoted Genesis 2:24. The standard for marriage and sex is a male and female in a monogamous marriage, not two of the same gender, Matthew 19:4-6.

A second argument is used: Jesus mentioned homosexuals favorably when He referred to eunuchs. What's their evidence? They say that the definition of the Greek and Hebrew word for "eunuch" includes homosexuals (Matthew 19:12; Isaiah 56:4-5). The problem is that both the Greek and Hebrew word for "eunuch" has nothing to do with sexual preference. In both languages it simply means an individual who is unable to produce offspring due to castration or being born that way.

A third argument is used: Jesus healed a centurion's male lover, thus approving of their homosexual relationship. What's the proof? They say that the word for "servant" in Matthew 8:5-13 was often used to describe the younger partner in a male homosexual relationship. I looked at nine different Greek lexicons (dictionaries) and none of them included this in any of their definitions. The word means *boy, youth, child, slave, or servant*. But even if the word is used that way, it's clearly used in many other ways, which means that there are other options besides a homosexual connotation. And there's nothing in the context of Matthew 8:5-13 that suggests that the servant was the centurion's lover. But didn't Jesus heal the servant as a reward for the centurion's faith? And if He did, doesn't it mean that He approved of their homosexual relationship? First, you have to prove that the centurion and the servant were lovers. Second, just because God rewards someone's faith doesn't mean that He approves of every immoral thing in their life, e.g., God not only rewarded Rahab's faith, He praised it even though she was a prostitute, Hebrews 11:31.

ROMANS 1, a plain reading of Romans 1 seems to leave no room for a sympathetic view of homosexuality. So how do they get around this? One argument is this: the ancients were not aware of loving homosexual relationships. Thus, since Paul was unaware of faithful, loving homosexual relationships, what he was condemning in Romans 1 is exploitative homosexual relationships like pederasty (man/boy relationships), prostitution, and rape.

However, although there must have been abusive gay relationships, the ancients were aware of permanent, faithful, lifelong male/male partnerships. It's evident that they did from things like Plato's Symposium which mentions such relationships or Homer's Iliad, where he speaks of the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus. Paul, therefore, would have been aware of such relationships. In fact, he likely saw them while in Corinth, a city that had every kind of immorality imaginable (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Additionally, the relationships that Paul talks about in Romans 1:26-27 are not abusive or exploitative. Both men and women have a *mutual* desire for each other, "burned in their lust for *one another*," 1:27. Thus, these relationships do not involve rape, prostitution, or pederasty. If Paul wanted to, he could have used language that addressed abusive homosexual relationships but he didn't.

There are several other arguments used which follow the same vein: Paul was talking about lustful homosexual relationships. Or, Paul was talking about idolatrous homosexual acts performed in ritual prostitution (see 1:22-25). Or, Paul was talking about heterosexuals who aren't really gay but they practice homosexuality, thus "changing their nature" (see 1:26-27).

All these arguments have the same assumption: Paul condemns bad homosexual acts, but he doesn't condemn good, loving, respectful homosexual acts. The problem with all of these is that Paul in no way qualifies his statements about homosexuality. In fact, in 1:26-27, which is used by one of these arguments, clearly shows that Paul is talking about the very nature of how ALL men and women were designed sexually. That is, the men and women in 1:26-27 left the natural use for each other and did what was "against nature." Therefore, Paul is saying that any and every homosexual act is against nature, whether it's practiced by a heterosexual, a loving homosexual, or a wicked homosexual. There's another problem with this line of reasoning. If you're going to say that God is OK with loving, respectful homosexual acts, but He's upset with wicked homosexual acts, then you have to apply this same standard to all the other sins in Romans 1, because homosexuality is not the only sin mentioned. But if we do that, then it would mean that there's a loving and respectful way to be covetous, malicious, full of envy, to murder, etc., which is obviously absurd.

1 CORINTHIANS 6:9-10 and 1 TIMOTHY 1:9-10, the argument is this: when Paul used the word *malakos* (translated “effeminate,” “male prostitutes,” or “homosexuals”) in 1 Corinthians 6:9, he wasn’t referring to gay men but men who prostitute themselves, perhaps even dressed as females or assumed a feminine sexual role. And when Paul used the word *arsenokoite* (translated “abusers of themselves with men,” “homosexuals,” “homosexual offenders,” or “sodomites”) in 1 Corinthians 6:9, he was referring to prostitution only or immoral behavior in general.

What’s their evidence? Regarding the word *arsenokoite*, this is a word that Paul invented. If he wanted to say “homosexual,” there were other words available in Greek. But instead Paul created his own word, thus, proving that Paul didn’t mean “homosexual.” Regarding the word *malakos*, it doesn’t necessarily mean “homosexual.” It also appears in Matthew 11:8 and Luke 7:25 where Jesus uses it to describe men who wear “fine/soft clothes.”

Though the word *malakos* doesn’t necessarily have to mean “homosexual,” the story is different when it comes to the word *arsenokoite*. Why did Paul invent this word? Why didn’t he simply use one of the words available? There’s a very good reason. The word *arsenokoite* is a combination of the words *arsenos*, which means “male,” and the word *koite*, which means “couch” or “bed” with a sexual connotation. When Paul combined these words, he didn’t give any sign that he had prostitution in mind. What he did have in mind is this:

Arsenokoite is the Greek counterpart to the phrase *mishkab zakur*. *Mishkab* is Hebrew for “bed” or “couch” with a sexual connotation; *zakur* in Hebrew means “male” or “males.” The phrase *mishkab zakur* is found in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13. And the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament Hebrew, which Paul was very familiar with, uses the terms *arsenos* and *koite* when translating them:

“Thou shalt not lie with mankind as with womankind” (Leviticus 18:22)
“...meta arsenos ou koimethese koiten gyniakos”

“If a man also lie with mankind, as he lie with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination...” (Leviticus 20:13)
“...hos an koimethe meta arsenos koiten gynaikos”

Paul didn’t invent this Greek word out of thin air, he took it from the Greek of the Septuagint of Leviticus 18 and 20, which translated the Hebrew prohibitions against homosexuality.

III. Conclusion

For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.