

God and Gay Marriage

The Bible and Homosexual Practice

Homosexual Practice: Leviticus

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- Read Leviticus 20:1-21

Homosexual Practice: Leviticus

CASE CLOSED

(not)

James Brownson

Author - *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*



- “...the prohibition of these practices is part of Israel’s call to be both separate from other nations and holy to the Lord”
- “...there is no parallel injunction against same-sex relations between women in Leviticus.”
- “...to the extent that these passages are concerned with gender at all (beyond a concern with pagan cultic practices), they have a more specific focus that we can also see in the stories of Sodom... and the Levite’s concubine—that is, the preservation of male *honor*...
- “... to ‘lie with a male as with a woman’ is to reduce a male to the status of a female, which inherently degrades him... Sex between females is not mentioned simply because there is no such degradation operative in these cases.”

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- “But how should one respond to gay and lesbian couples who want to commit themselves to each other in lifelong, socially sanctioned relationships, as faithful Christians who seek to honor each other? In such a context, Leviticus’ concerns about idolatry, violations of male honor, and the like seem distinctly out of place... the Levitical prohibitions, understandable and coherent as they may be in their own context, simply do not apply to contemporary committed Christian gay and lesbian relationships.”
- “...Christians no longer regard much of the Levitical law as applying to the church today.”

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- There is an overall canonical movement:
 - Away from defining purity *externally* toward defining purity in terms of the motives and dispositions of the *heart and will*;
 - Away from *defensiveness* and separateness toward *confidence* and engagement;
 - Away from a *backward* look toward the old creation, and shifting to a *forward* look toward the new creation.

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- 1. “Lev 18:22 occurs in a larger context of forbidden sexual relations that primarily outlaws incest... adultery... child sacrifice... and bestiality. These prohibitions continue to have universal validity in contemporary society. Only the prohibition against having sexual intercourse with a woman ‘in her menstrual uncleanness’ does not.” (Lev. 15:19-28, Luke 8:42b-48)
- 2. “The degree of revulsion associated with the homosexual act is suggested by the specific attachment of the word *to’eba*, “abomination,” “an abhorrent thing,” or “something detestable, loathsome, utterly repugnant, disgusting”... In the entire Holiness Code... the only forbidden act to which the designation “abomination” is specifically attached is homosexual intercourse.”

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- 3. “The penalty is extreme: death. This penalty exceeds that required by the Middle Assyrian laws (castration)... Failure on the community’s part to take action against offenders would lead to the expulsion of the whole community from the land of Canaan...”
- 4. “...the laws in Lev 18:22 and 20:13 are unqualified and absolute. They neither penalize only oppressive forms of homosexuality nor excuse either party to the act... There are no limitations to cultic prostitution.”

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- 5. “Contrary to the contemporary trend of Jewish and Christian communities to accommodate to the prevailing cultural approbation of homosexuality, the entire context of the Holiness Code stresses the distinctive holiness of the people of God. God’s people are to imitate the holiness and purity of their God and not the abominable and defiling practices of other peoples.”
- 6. “...it is a prohibition carried over into the New Testament. The position adopted by Paul in the New Testament is not an aberration but is consistent with the heritage present in his Scriptures. The two covenants are in agreement.”

To'evah

- There are Biblical scholars who do not believe *to'evah* should be translated as “abomination”. Many think it should be translated more like “taboo”, and that it only applies to Jews acting like their pagan neighbors.
- Be careful who you believe. Defining the problem away counts on your ignorance to make sweeping assertions without basis in fact.

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- “Homosexual intercourse is singled out among other abominable acts in Lev 18 and 20 as a form of sexual misconduct particularly worth of the designation *to’eba*. .. There is no basis for asserting ‘that *toevah* does not *usually* signify something intrinsically evil.”
- The word is used most frequently to describe God’s view of the worship of other gods, but also for child sacrifice to pagan gods; sorcery; adultery; incest; intercourse with a woman during her menstrual period; cross-dressing (Deut 22:5); remarrying one’s divorced spouse after remarriage to another; bringing a prostitutes’ fee to the temple as payment of a vow; murder; swearing falsely; habitual lying; oppressing the poor, aliens, widows and orphans; a “false balance” used to cheat the poor; robbery; extortion; charging interest to Israelites; treating father and mother with contempt; the arrogant; one who creates family strife... and on, and on. (Bible references, Gagnon, p. 119)
- Not “abominable?”

But... That's Just the OT!

- Aren't we under a new covenant now?
- YES! Thank you, Jesus!
- But as we will see in the next few weeks, these commandments about sexual immorality extended to the New Testament with almost no exceptions.

What About Patriarchy?

- Gagnon: If surrendering dominant male social status were a real issue behind the proscriptions of Lev 18:22, 20:13, we would expect the legislators of the Holiness Code to have made subversion of the male hierarchy punishable by death, not just the “symptom” of homosexual intercourse. We would expect the authoritative role of “judge” Deborah in Judges 4 to have been “judged” an abomination in ancient song and the subsequent narrative tradition. We would expect the Yahwist to have traced the husband’s “rule” over his wife to conditions in the garden of Eden rather than regard it as part of the curse on Eve for listening to the serpent. (Gen 3:16). We would wonder why the Priestly writer likewise failed to ground male superiority and dominance over women in his creation account; why he speaks only of the collective rule of humans over the rest of creation, their differentiation into male and female, and their duty to procreate (Gen 1:26-31).



What About Patriarchy?



- Gagnon: The implication of all these texts is that there was something antecedent and more essential than male hierarchy in the created order: human sexuality as expressed in male and female pairing.
- The thinking... was not “Men should not take on the role of a woman in sexual intercourse because women are inferior beings” but rather “Men should not take on the role of women in sexual intercourse because God created distinct sexes, designed them for sexual pairing, and did so for a reason.”

“Clobber Verses”

- Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, as well as Romans 1, 1 Corinthians 6:9, and 1 Timothy 1:10 (which we will study in future lessons) are known as the “clobber verses” because they are used to clobber homosexuals.
- These verses are direct and deeply convicting. They are true.
- But God... judges our hearts. He tells us the goal is holiness, but knowing we will fall short, tells us that all he asks from us is agreement with Him. All he requires is that we acknowledge His lordship and that we need the sacrifice of Jesus to redeem us.

Hope

- All of us, sexually perverted, lustful, arrogant, rebellious- have options, for now.
- We can agree with God and be saved
- Or, we can say:
 - I don't care- I will do it anyway
 - God is wrong- I will do it my way
 - There is no God but myself- I will seek my own pleasure
- It is really a question of your attitude and the actions that arise from your attitude.
- Question to ponder for next week: where does this leave people who identify as gay?