

THE BIBLE AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION - Part six

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SAME-SEX INTERCOURSE AND THE BIBLE - WHAT DO THE TEXTS SAY AND WHAT DO THEY MEAN?

Years ago Reni and I used to enjoy watching the television show "*The West Wing*." It was politically extremely left-wing (I'll leave that to you to decide whether or not that's a good fit for me) and very cleverly written.

I vividly remember one episode where the President was holding a press conference and a woman - representing those crazy, apparently simple-minded red-necked conservatives - blurted out her view on the sin of homosexuality. She cited some of the texts we're going to study tonight.

The writers of the show, of course, had a ball with this. The President in his calm, superior intellect, cited some of the **other** sins listed in those same passages and quoted the punishment recommended (often **capital** punishment). These capital crimes included things like theft, cursing one's parents, and breaking the Sabbath. And his point was, of course, we don't kill people for these things anymore so let's not harken back to these obviously primitive accounts.

And the feisty blond reporter looked like an idiot in front of the whole crowd. The writers obviously felt they had made their point and won their case. But did they? We need to be able to show why they only showed their misunderstanding of God's Word.

1) **THE CREATION ACCOUNT IS THE FRAMEWORK THROUGH WHICH OTHER BIBLICAL TEXTS ARE PROPERLY UNDERSTOOD**

In our last study I listed the example of texts containing the words of Jesus and Paul. They clearly linked their ethical imperatives based on the very words of the Genesis 2 text. Their words are pointed in the same permanent, marriage based, exclusively heterosexual pattern. And the pattern clearly comes from the creation account.

Remember, Jesus **affirmed** the regulative authority of the creation account knowing full-well the frequent departure of it in the Old Testament due to what He called the "**hardness of the sinful heart**." He knew the Old Testament record of Solomon's many wives and the same-sex practices of the nations. Jesus is saying a clear "**no**" to all of this and refers back to exclusive heterosexual union based on the creation account.

It is still stunning to me to think that **Tony Campolo** still argues from Jesus' silence on same-sex intercourse that Jesus it wasn't a big deal to Him. He said nothing about **child-abuse** either. But He did rebuke all deviations from the creation heterosexual basis for marriage.

But there are other texts. And some are more widely interpreted. Take, for example, two texts in the book of Leviticus. I'm going to read these verses with quite a bit of surrounding context, so stay with me:

Leviticus 18:22-28 - "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination. [23] And you shall not lie with any animal and so make yourself unclean with it, neither shall any woman give herself to an animal to lie with it: it is perversion. [24] "Do not make yourselves unclean by any of these things, for by all these the nations I am driving out before you have become unclean, [25] and the land became unclean, so that I punished its iniquity, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. [26] But you shall keep my statutes and my rules and do none of these abominations, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you [27] (for the people of the land, who were before you, did all of these abominations, so that the land became unclean), [28] lest the land vomit you out when you make it unclean, as it vomited out the nation that was before you."

Then, there are very similar sounding words in **Leviticus 20:10-16 - "If a man commits adultery with the wife of his neighbor, both the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death. [11] If a man lies with his father's wife, he has uncovered his father's nakedness; both of them shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them. [12] If a man lies with his daughter-in-law, both of them shall surely be put to death; they have committed perversion; their blood is upon them. [13] If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be**

put to death; their blood is upon them. [14] If a man takes a woman and her mother also, it is depravity; he and they shall be burned with fire, that there may be no depravity among you. [15] If a man lies with an animal, he shall surely be put to death, and you shall kill the animal. [16] If a woman approaches any animal and lies with it, you shall kill the woman and the animal; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them."

There is a common approach taken by the gay community (and those endorsing same-sex intercourse) in approaching these texts. The verses specifically addressing a man who "**lies with another man**" are seen as warnings about the male prostitution that was common in the land God's people were about to enter. This is drawn particularly from the **Leviticus 18** text:

Leviticus 18:24-28 - "Do not make yourselves unclean by any of these things, for by all these the nations I am driving out before you have become unclean, [25] **and the land became unclean**, so that **I punished its iniquity, and the land vomited out its inhabitants.** [26] But you shall keep my statutes and my rules and do none of these abominations, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you [27] (for the people of the land, who were before you, did all of these abominations, so that the land became unclean), [28] **lest the land vomit you out when you make it unclean, as it vomited out the nation that was before you.**"

The idea here is so it is argued, God is condemning the male prostitution of the worship practiced by the nations **before** God's people arrived. God drove those nations out because of that wicked worship. So God warns His people that **they** mustn't practice male prostitution in **their** worship of God. But this is not a condemnation of **all** same-sex intercourse, especially that which is loving and consensual.

But the problem with this explanation is the way it **redefines** the nature of the same-sex sin committed. It doesn't take seriously the actual words describing the same-sex sin. Look at it carefully again in each of these texts:

Leviticus 18:22 - "You shall not lie with a male **as with a woman**; it is an abomination."

Leviticus 20:13 - "If a man lies with a male **as with a woman**, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them."

These verses **tell us** what the forbidden sin is. The nature of the sin is very specifically fingerprinted. The sin is when a man lies with another man "**as with a woman**." Note it well. The sin isn't in whatever form of **worship** is being corrupted with this act. Nor is it defined in terms of some violation of **consent**. The sin lies **in the exchange**, the **substitution**, in this case, of another **man** for a **woman**. The sin lies in the breaking of the **creational intent** we examined at length in the first point of this teaching. The sin is identified as exchanging a **different** sexual gender for a **same** sexual gender. Male-male intercourse puts a male in the place of a female. That's the way the very words of these texts describe the transgression.

2) **SEXUAL REGULATIONS CAN BE UNDERSTOOD AS ABIDING FOR ALL TIME BY THE WAY THEY PROTECT AND DEFINE THE ORIGINAL DESIGN AND ONGOING INTENT OF OUR CREATOR**

So no, it is no longer a moral sin to "**lie with a woman during her menstrual uncleanness**" (**Leviticus 18:19**), or a host of other things listed in **Leviticus 15**. Meats and garments and a host of other regulations were considered ceremonially "**unclean**" only because those regulations were designed **temporarily** to keep Israel separate and distinct from the other nations. This was because the coming world Redeemer was to be born, as promised, by the seed of Abraham.

But once Jesus arrived God's kingdom was no longer **ethnically defined**. It wasn't for the **Jewish** nation, but for **all** the nations. The ceremonial distinctives that once marked Israel as God's people are now all abolished in Christ Jesus.

But there are other sins listed in a totally different category. They aren't just **reminders** of ceremonial uncleanness. They betray the ongoing intention of our Creator for **all** peoples. How shall we know which sins are which?

The regulations guarding the original monogamous, permanent, heterosexual design are abiding in importance and apply to **all** the nations, even in the Old Testament. This is why those Leviticus texts, written to **Israel**, clearly state that God drove out the "**nations**" from the land when certain sins were committed, including when a man lies with a man as with a woman. Clearly, these were not merely temporary theocratic ceremonial regulations applying only to the nation of Israel.

The permanent design is stated in **Genesis 2:24** - "**Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.**" This is the repeated norm in the New Testament. It is the standard by which God judges the sexual conduct of **all** nations. And all of the abiding regulations regarding human sexuality must be seen as **protecting this one design**.

Here's what I mean. I'll list a sexual sin and then restate its positive protection of the original permanent heterosexual design:

Homosexuality - too much sameness. Incest - too much sameness. Bestiality - too much difference. Adultery - no faithfulness. Prostitution - no faithfulness. Polygamy - no exclusiveness.

Heterosexual marriage is the ***measuring stick***, the ***defining reference point*** for ***all*** sexual sins. All of these sins are measured by the way in which they ***betray*** and ***distort*** the originally designed pattern of ***monogamous, faithful, heterosexual*** relationship. And these sins are ***still*** sins because God's plan for human sexuality still needs protecting. This is the measuring stick for deciding which laws ***carry over*** into the New Testament church age and which ***ceremonial laws*** are fulfilled and terminated in Christ Jesus.

This is a crucial difference that intelligent Christians must process and think through. The Bible must be read as a meaningful whole. For example, what did Paul mean when he said, "***I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself....(Romans 14:14)***"? Was he really giving the green light for bank robbers, incest, prostitution, and child abuse?

No. Paul was recognizing there used to be things that made people ***ceremonially unclean*** (foods, fabrics, bodily fluids) that are now abolished in Christ Jesus. But same-sex intercourse isn't a sin in that class. And the way you can ***tell*** is the way it still protects the Creator's intent for the ongoing design for sexuality and marriage.

And if you stayed with me through this whole teaching, God bless you!