

Marriage and Homosexuality in a Christian Worldview

Review

This subject has important lessons for us regarding a) how to do battle with the deceitfulness of sin in our lives, and b) how to practice Christian love. For definition, marriage is a covenant of companionship for life in which two people, male and female, have the gift of marital intimacy with the potential of bearing children [or with the design of filling the earth]. Sexual immorality is any form of sexual intimacy that transgresses the boundary of marriage established by the Creator's design. Therefore, as a violation of the boundaries of marriage established at creation, homosexuality is a sin. Notably, a strategy in "gay exegesis" of Scripture on this topic marginalizes marriage as a creation ordinance. So, instead of comparing homosexuality with marriage these exegetes emphasize the comparison of heterosexuality with homosexuality. This strategy *fragments and distorts the biblical picture elevating human sexuality disproportionately and opening the door for simply finding one's preference. When we compare homosexuality with marriage, we keep all of Scripture squarely before us emphasizing God's design of male and female for marriage with the potentiality of procreation in a covenant of companionship for life.*

Relevant Biblical texts

Therefore, although there are only a few texts in Scripture that deal explicitly with homosexuality, as a breach of the design of marriage from the beginning, it is included by implication in all passages that discuss sexual immorality generally. The critical and explicit texts are 1) Gen 19 (Sodom), 2) Lev 18 (Holiness Code), 3) Rom 1 (exchanging the natural for the unnatural), 4) 1 Cor 6.9, 5) 1 Tim 1.10, 6) Jude 7 (unnatural desire). Here is the pattern we will follow in discussing these seven texts in three steps.

- 1) Holiness Code of Leviticus 18 (develops the definition of marriage and sexual immorality)
- 2) Rom 1 with Gen 19 & Jude 7 (Rom 1 roots the natural in creation as does Jude with Gen 19)
- 3) 1 Cor 6.9 with 1 Tim 1.10 (raise the difficult question of application in Christian love)

2. The Holiness Code in Leviticus

A. Introduction

1. Delicate and pungent subject matter

Because of the nature of our subject, some details are best left in the land of euphemism, though our culture contradicts that everyday. To maintain respect for marriage and especially for the sanctity of marital intimacy, I will use euphemism as possible; note the euphemism in this very sentence. I may use footnotes to balance clarity with delicacy. Some things are better left unsaid or at least not repeated once made plain. Euphemism has the positive function of giving theological instruction (deep God centered meaning) along with preserving respect. For example, "to know one's wife" connects intimacy to the context of the covenant of companionship. This elevates marital intimacy as a symbol of the fellowship of husband and wife with each other and with God, at the same time that it reveals its subordinate place in marriage. Although frank, consider how Gen 2.25 is richly euphemistic by stating that they were both naked and unashamed. For sexual intimacy in Lev 18, we have "uncovering nakedness" and "to lie with."

2. Outline of Leviticus 18

- a. General call to holiness, 1-5
- b. Specific sins to avoid, 6-23
 - 1) Incest, 6-18
 - 2) Intimacy during menstrual uncleanness, 19 (cf. 15.24)
 - 3) Adultery, 20
 - 4) Child sacrifice, 21
 - 5) Homosexuality, 22
 - 6) Bestiality, 23
- c. Warning for disobedience, 24-30

B. The relevance of this code for Christians

Questioning relevance: this is a law code for Israel in the OT that includes blood and dietary laws (extending from Lev 17-26), so how can it apply to the church of the NT? How is menstrual uncleanness a sin and one that applies beyond a mere OT ritual to NT ethics? Should we not simply follow Soards who identifies homosexuality as a sin while denying the applicability of Lev (*Scripture and Homosexuality*, 16-17)? There are a number of things to consider in defense of the relevance of this code for Christians.

1. A distinction exists within the code that indicates universal applicability

Different from things like the dietary laws, the matters of Lev 18 are identified as sins for which God is bringing judgment on those outside of Israel and for which He will judge Israel if she commits them: 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, ²⁵and the land became unclean, so that I punished its iniquity, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. ²⁶But 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), ²⁸lest the land vomit you out when you make it unclean, as it vomited out the nation that was before you (18.24-28).

How do these verses answer the question of relevance? How do they govern our approach to menstrual uncleanness? 1) V. 25 shows that these acts (6-23) are iniquities of people universally outside of Israel's code. 2) This governs our approach to v. 19: we have to make it fit with the reality of these sins.