

## A NOTE ON THE SIN OF HOMOSEXUALITY IN REFERENCE TO GENESIS 19

God's divine plan for not just humanity, but all creation, is to replicate themselves through the production of offspring that glorifies God throughout eternity. As Christians, we believe in a loving, personal God who created the world and designed everything in it to function according to a His plan. That plan includes a very specific pattern for sex, as reflected in the words of Jesus Himself: "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?'" (Matthew 19:4-5). This represents the Bible's most complete and definitive statement of God's intentions for human sexuality, leaving no room for homosexuality as a God-preferred sexual practice.

Today, however, more and more Christian churches and denominations are affirming homosexuality as acceptable, despite the Bible's objections. Some Christian leaders and theologians no longer even view the practice as sinful as long as persons are in a loving, committed, and caring relationship with each other. In the midst of this reshaping of societal sensibilities, those who wish to retain some connection to the Bible insist that the Bible itself shares their viewpoint that same-sex relations are not inherently sinful. They argue that the Bible, in fact, approves of homosexuality in the same way and to the same extent that it approves of heterosexuality.

In order to justify their argument, several biblical passages have been reinterpreted and given new explanations, including the account of the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah recorded in Genesis 19. Traditionally, this passage has been understood to represent a denunciation of homosexuality, which has become so universal, that the word "sodomy" was incorporated into English vernacular as referring to "any of various forms of sexual intercourse held to be unnatural or abnormal, especially anal intercourse or bestiality" (American Heritage Dictionary, 2000).

In reference to Genesis 19, supporters of homosexuality assert that the men of Sodom were simply guilty of inhospitality. The text says that the men of Sodom insisted on Lot bringing the angelic visitors out to them, "that we may know them" (Genesis 19:5). It is suggested that "know" refers to their intention to meet, greet, get to know, or become acquainted with the visitors. However, in its context, this seems far-fetched.

First, the Hebrew verb translated as "know" (*yada*) does indeed possess a wide range of meanings, including "to get to know or to become acquainted." However, Hebrew, in common with other ancient languages, also used "know" as a euphemism for sexual intercourse (Genesis 4:1; 19:8). When Hebrew scholars define "know" as used in Genesis 19:5, they use terminology like "sexual perversion," "homosexual intercourse," and "crimes against nature."

Second, if “know” means simply “to get acquainted,” why does the Bible repeatedly use forms of the word “wicked” to refer to the actions of the Sodomites? Lot pleaded with the men not to “do this wicked thing” (Genesis 19:7), Moses prior said, “But the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful against the Lord” (Genesis 13:13); “their sin is very grievous” (Genesis 18:20), and Peter referred to the “filthy conduct of the wicked” and their “lawless deeds” (II Peter 2:7-8). Simply wanting to “get acquainted” is not “wicked.” In fact, if the men of Sodom were nothing more than a group of friendly, civic-minded neighbors who sought to make the visitors welcome to their city, God surely would have commended them instead of condemning them.

Third, if “know” simply means “to get to know,” why did Lot offer his daughters instead? Surely, he would not have offered his daughters for the purpose of the men “getting to know” or “become acquainted” with them. The daughters already were residents of Sodom, and thus would have been “known” to the men. The offering of his daughters was a sexual alternative (Genesis 19:8). “Known” is another reference to sexual intercourse. Lot referred to their sexual appetite. As astonishing as it may seem for a father to sacrifice his own daughters in this way, it verifies the fact that the unnatural lust of homosexuality was considered even more repugnant than even illicit heterosexuality. Scholars further note that in antiquity, a host was to protect his guests at the cost of his own life.

Fourth, the men of Sodom threatened Lot with the words, “we will deal worse with you than with them” (Genesis 19:9). So, if their intention was simply to “get to know” the visitors, what would “dealing worse with” mean? Did their threat imply that they would become so thoroughly acquainted with Lot that they would take over his house, eat all his snacks, and refuse to leave at a decent hour? If “hospitality” was simply the issue in Genesis 19, the Sodomites should have been commended, since they only wanted to “get to know” and be hospitable to the visitors. In fact, Lot should have been the one condemned since he tried to stop them from greeting the visitors.

Yet another argument surrounding the effort to justify homosexuality concerns the allusions in the prophets to Sodom. Isaiah (3:9), Jeremiah (23:14), and Ezekiel (16:49) all referred to the sinfulness of Sodom, but none explicitly mentioned homosexuality as the problem. In fact, Ezekiel pinpointed the specific sins of “pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness,” and Sodom’s unwillingness to aid the poor and needy. Which means, Sodom was also guilty of additional violations as well.

Then, one must consider the heinous act of rape alluded to in this text. Gang rape has nothing to do with hospitality. Rape, in any form, is wrong and worthy of condemnation, whether homosexual or heterosexual. Still, if gang rape were the issue, why then did Lot offer his daughters in exchange for the visitors? Surely, rape would have been at stake in both cases. Jude sealed the matter when he writes, Sodom and her sister cities had “given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh” (Jude 7). “Given themselves over to sexual immorality” is a translation of the compound word

*ekporneusasai*, which combines the verb *porneuo* (to commit illicit sexual intercourse) with the preposition *ek* (out of). Which means, their sexual appetites had been permitted to take them beyond the range of normal sexual activity.

Finally, because of the progressive nature of sin along with the furthering disapproval of the Bible as humanity's moral guide, the culture may well reach the point where the majority approves of homosexuality as viewed as God-intended behavior. Then those who disapprove may well be accused of being "politically incorrect," intolerant, or "judgmental." However, the objective, unbiased reader of the Bible is forced to conclude that God destroyed Sodom on account of their sinful practice of homosexuality (and other sins), not the lack hospitality.

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