

# A Scriptural Response to Homosexuality

## Lesson 7: Homosexuality and the Old Testament (Part 2)

### INTRODUCTION

In regards to what the Old Testament says about homosexuality, a common line of attack that can often catch Christians flatfooted is the accusation of our being inconsistent or selective when it comes to what Old Testament laws are (or are no longer) in force. The line of argumentation goes that the legal prohibitions against homosexuality in the Old Testament come from the same codes of law that forbid eating pork or shellfish or wearing mixed fabrics. Moreover, they include commands that are no longer punishable by death. If Christians are going to uphold the former (that homosexuality is sinful and worthy of God's judgment), they should also uphold the latter (on dietary restrictions, capital punishments, etc.).

What insights do the following Old Testament passages give us about the covenant God made with his people at Mt. Sinai?

**Judges 8:22-23** The Israelites said to Gideon, "Rule over us—you, your son and your grandson—because you have saved us out of the hand of Midian." But Gideon told them, "I will not rule over you, nor will my son rule over you. The LORD will rule over you."

**1 Samuel 8:6-8** But when [the elders of Israel] said, "Give us a king to lead us," this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the LORD. And the LORD told him: "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. As they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you."

a.) God established the government of Israel to be a \_\_\_\_\_

**Exodus 19:5-6** "Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

**Deuteronomy 4:5-8** "See, I have taught you decrees and laws as the LORD my God commanded me, so that you may follow them in the land you are entering to take possession of it. Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the LORD our God is near us whenever we pray to him? And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today?"

b.) God's purpose in giving this body of laws to Israel was twofold:

1.) To show the world that these were \_\_\_\_\_.

2.) To show the nations how \_\_\_\_\_.

**Exodus 19:16; 20:1ff** On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. ... And God spoke all these words [the Ten Commandments].

**Deuteronomy 4:13** “He declared to you his covenant, the Ten Commandments, which he commanded you to follow and then wrote them on two stone tablets.”

**Numbers 4:44-45; 5:1ff** This is the law Moses set before the Israelites. These are the stipulations, decrees and laws Moses gave them when they came out of Egypt[.] ... Moses summoned all Israel and said [the Ten Commandments].

c.) God set the Ten Commandments in a class by themselves. They summarize his \_\_\_\_\_ for all people of all time.

d.) Theologians have generally classified the Sinaitic law code into three categories: civil (crime and punishments, property, etc.); ceremonial (regulating religious life), and moral (the Ten Commandments).

**Deuteronomy 18:15, 18-19** The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him. ...I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account.”

**Jeremiah 31:31-32** “The time is coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD.

e.) God foretold that the Old (Sinaitic) Covenant would eventually be \_\_\_\_\_ and superseded by the New Covenant.

### LEVITICUS 18 – Unlawful Sexual Relations

1.) The Context:

**Leviticus 18:1-5** The LORD said to Moses, <sup>2</sup>“Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘I am the LORD your God. <sup>3</sup>You must not do as they do in Egypt, where you used to live, and you must not do as they do in the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you. Do not follow their practices. <sup>4</sup>You must obey my laws and be careful to follow my decrees. I am the LORD your God. <sup>5</sup>Keep my decrees and laws, for the man who obeys them will live by them. I am the LORD.”

a.) We see God here holding his people, Israel, to a higher standard—all those who claim a covenant relationship with him.

b.) As we began this study, an online commentator claimed that the sexual purity laws we're about to read should be read with the understanding of Greek culture in which it was common for a man to have a young boy lover (pederasty). Use the context of Leviticus 18 to demonstrate why that supposition is false.

## 2.) The Prohibitions (Leviticus 18:6-23):

<sup>6</sup> “No one is to approach any close relative to have sexual relations. I am the LORD.

<sup>7</sup> “Do not dishonor your father by having sexual relations with your mother. She is your mother; do not have relations with her.

<sup>8</sup> “Do not have sexual relations with your father's wife; that would dishonor your father.

<sup>9</sup> “Do not have sexual relations with your sister, either your father's daughter or your mother's daughter, whether she was born in the same home or elsewhere.

<sup>10</sup> “Do not have sexual relations with your son's daughter or your daughter's daughter; that would dishonor you.

<sup>11</sup> “Do not have sexual relations with the daughter of your father's wife, born to your father; she is your sister.

<sup>12</sup> “Do not have sexual relations with your father's sister; she is your father's close relative.

<sup>13</sup> “Do not have sexual relations with your mother's sister, because she is your mother's close relative.

<sup>14</sup> “Do not dishonor your father's brother by approaching his wife to have sexual relations; she is your aunt.

<sup>15</sup> “Do not have sexual relations with your daughter-in-law. She is your son's wife; do not have relations with her.

<sup>16</sup> “Do not have sexual relations with your brother's wife; that would dishonor your brother.

<sup>17</sup> “Do not have sexual relations with both a woman and her daughter. Do not have sexual relations with either her son's daughter or her daughter's daughter; they are her close relatives. That is wickedness.

<sup>18</sup> “Do not take your wife's sister as a rival wife and have sexual relations with her while your wife is living.

<sup>19</sup> “Do not approach a woman to have sexual relations during the uncleanness of her monthly period.

<sup>20</sup> “Do not have sexual relations with your neighbor's wife and defile yourself with her.

<sup>21</sup> “Do not give any of your children to be sacrificed to Molech, for you must not profane the name of your God. I am the LORD.

<sup>22</sup> “Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable.

<sup>23</sup> “Do not have sexual relations with an animal and defile yourself with it. A woman must not present herself to an animal to have sexual relations with it; that is a perversion.

a.) A general observation: These verses include all kinds of (hetero)sexual sins—among them adultery and incest. God is not singling out homosexuality.

b.) Breakdown of Verse 22: *“A man with a male is not to lie down as in the beds of woman. It is detestable.”*

c.) What word describes God's reaction to homosexual activity?

### 3.) God's Overarching Warning (Leviticus 18:24-30)

<sup>24</sup> “ ‘Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, because this is how the nations that I am going to drive out before you became defiled. <sup>25</sup> Even the land was defiled; so I punished it for its sin, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. <sup>26</sup> But you must keep my decrees and my laws. The native-born and the aliens living among you must not do any of these detestable things, <sup>27</sup> for all these things were done by the people who lived in the land before you, and the land became defiled. <sup>28</sup> And if you defile the land, it will vomit you out as it vomited out the nations that were before you. <sup>29</sup> Everyone who does any of these detestable things—such persons must be cut off from their people. <sup>30</sup> Keep my requirements and do not follow any of the detestable customs that were practiced before you came and do not defile yourselves with them. I am the LORD your God.’ ”

#### LEVITICUS 20 – Punishments for Sins (v. 9-15)

<sup>9</sup> “ ‘If anyone curses his father or mother, he must be put to death. He has cursed his father or his mother, and his blood will be on his own head.

<sup>10</sup> “ ‘If a man commits adultery with another man's wife—with the wife of his neighbor—both the adulterer and the adulteress must be put to death.

<sup>11</sup> “ ‘If a man sleeps with his father's wife, he has dishonored his father. Both the man and the woman must be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads.

<sup>12</sup> “ ‘If a man sleeps with his daughter-in-law, both of them must be put to death. What they have done is a perversion; their blood will be on their own heads.

<sup>13</sup> “ ‘If a man lies with a man as one lies with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable. They must be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads.

<sup>14</sup> “ ‘If a man marries both a woman and her mother, it is wicked. Both he and they must be burned in the fire, so that no wickedness will be among you.

<sup>15</sup> “ ‘If a man has sexual relations with an animal, he must be put to death, and you must kill the animal.

1.) What do you notice again about the punishments in the surrounding context? What was the prescribed punishment for homosexual behavior?

2.) Breakdown of verse 13:

וְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁכַּב אֶת-זָכָר מִשְׁכַּב אִשָּׁה תוֹעֵבָה עָשׂוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם מוֹת יוּמָתוּ דְּמֵיהֶם בָּם:

*“And a man who lays down with a male as in the beds of a woman, both of them have done an abomination. They will surely be put to death, their blood on themselves.”*

3.) Many authors who defend homosexuality argue that these chapters in Leviticus are condemning homosexuality in connection with idol worship, not homosexuality itself. After reviewing these chapters, refute that argument.

4.) In the Old Testament homosexuality is mentioned in contexts with idolatry. Why would that be?

### JUDGES 19-21

Context: This episode is bookended with the author's note that this took place in the early days after the Israelites had begun to take over Canaan when Israel had no king and "everyone did as he saw fit" (21:25).

### Overview:

[A Levite from Ephraim, his servant and concubine are traveling north from Bethlehem.]

<sup>19:11</sup> When they were near Jebus and the day was almost gone, the servant said to his master, "Come, let's stop at this city of the Jebusites and spend the night."

<sup>12</sup> His master replied, "No. We won't go into an alien city, whose people are not Israelites. We will go on to Gibeah." <sup>13</sup> He added, "Come, let's try to reach Gibeah or Ramah and spend the night in one of those places." <sup>14</sup> So they went on, and the sun set as they neared Gibeah in Benjamin. <sup>15</sup> There they stopped to spend the night. They went and sat in the city square, but no one took them into his home for the night.

<sup>16</sup> That evening an old man from the hill country of Ephraim, who was living in Gibeah (the men of the place were Benjamites), came in from his work in the fields. <sup>17</sup> When he looked and saw the traveler in the city square, the old man asked, "Where are you going? Where did you come from?"

<sup>18</sup> He answered, "We are on our way from Bethlehem in Judah to a remote area in the hill country of Ephraim where I live. I have been to Bethlehem in Judah and now I am going to the house of the LORD. No one has taken me into his house. <sup>19</sup> We have both straw and fodder for our donkeys and bread and wine for ourselves your servants—me, your maidservant, and the young man with us. We don't need anything."

<sup>20</sup> "You are welcome at my house," the old man said. "Let me supply whatever you need. Only don't spend the night in the square." <sup>21</sup> So he took him into his house and fed his donkeys. After they had washed their feet, they had something to eat and drink.

<sup>22</sup> While they were enjoying themselves, some of the wicked men of the city surrounded the house. Pounding on the door, they shouted to the old man who owned the house, "Bring out the man who came to your house so we can have sex with him."

<sup>23</sup> The owner of the house went outside and said to them, "No, my friends, don't be so vile. Since this man is my guest, don't do this disgraceful thing. <sup>24</sup> Look, here is my virgin daughter, and his concubine. I will bring them out to you now, and you can use them and do to them whatever you wish. But to this man, don't do such a disgraceful thing."

<sup>25</sup> But the men would not listen to him. So the man took his concubine and sent her outside to them, and they raped her and abused her throughout the night, and at dawn they let her go. <sup>26</sup> At daybreak the woman went back to the house where her master was staying, fell down at the door and lay there until daylight.

- The priest cut the dead concubine into twelve parts and sent them to the 12 tribes of Israel to make manifest this awful deed.
- All the leaders and men of Israel (400,000 of them) assembled at Mizpah and vowed to attack Gibeah.
- They united to form an army and demanded that the Benjamites give up the perpetrators from Gibeah, but they refused and went to war instead.
- In the assaults the first two days the Israelites lost 40,000 soldiers. On the third day God promised to give them victory. An ambush was set and all the citizens of Gibeah killed along with its soldiers.
- 25,000 Benjamite soldiers killed and all their towns, population and property destroyed. 600 men remained besieged at the rock of Rimmon for four months.
- Israelites vowed not to give any of their daughters to the Benjamites.
- Wept before the Lord that a tribe would be cut off from Israel.
- Found out that no one from Jabesh Gilead had come to fight. They put the city to the sword except for 400 virgins and gave them to the Benjamites so that their tribe would not disappear from Israel.
- Other virgins were kidnapped from the (Canaanites) at Shiloh.

## CONCLUSION

- 1.) These Old Testament accounts and the punishments decreed and carried out make it clear that homosexuality (along with countless other sexual sins) is something sinful, disgraceful, not to be practiced, pursued, or praised among God's people.
- 2.) God gave these as a warning to people then and now that embracing sin cuts one off from God's holy people and leads to eternal destruction.
- 3.) Remember that these laws and events took place under the theocracy of Israel. Even as the Israelites carried out punishment against the Benjamites they lamented and grieved doing so.
- 4.) In the New Testament God does not call or allow the church to use physical force or violence against anyone. It is the government's job to curb immoral behavior (cf. Rom. 13). We are to use the word. Any who would presently advocate violence of any kind against homosexuals in the name of Christ are equally guilty of distorting God's Word for their own evil purposes and will be cut off from their share in the Tree of Life and the holy city (cf. Rev. 22:19).