

Scripture and Marriage Equality: Resources

2006 Colloquy resource materials



Ways of Reading: Interpretation of Scripture—Texts
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“You have heard it said, but the Bible says to you . . .”

Many who argue against marriage equality build their argument on an understanding that homosexuality is “sinful”, and therefore allowing persons of the same-sex to marry would also be “sinful”. Their view of homosexuality is usually based on a handful of biblical texts which they see as condemning same-sex behavior and relationships. Traditional interpretations have not taken into account the historical, sociological, literary, and ideological contexts of these passages and have pronounced them as condemnations of homosexuality, and often of GLBT persons. Modern methods of exegesis allow the biblical reader to better understand both an original meaning as well as a meaning for the modern faith community.

What follows is a sampling of these so-called “clobber passages”. All are taken from the New Revised Standard Version translation.

Gen 1:27-28 So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”

Gen 2:20-24 So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken.” Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.

Gen 19:1-11 The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and bowed down with his face to the ground. He said, “Please, my lords, turn aside to your servant’s house and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you can rise early and go on your way.” They said, “No; we will spend the night in the square.” But he urged them strongly; so they turned aside to him and entered his house; and he made them a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate. But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house; and they called to Lot, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, so that we may know them.” Lot went out of the door to the men, shut the door after him, and said, “I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly. Look, I have two daughters who have not known a man; let me bring them out to you, and do to them as you please; only do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof.” But they replied, “Stand back!” And they said, “This fellow came here as an alien, and he would play the judge! Now we will deal worse with you than with them.” Then they pressed hard against the man Lot, and came near the door to break it down. But the men inside reached out their hands and brought Lot into the house with them, and shut the door. And they struck with blindness the men who were at the door of the house, both small and great, so that they were unable to find the door.

Lev 18:22 You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.

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

Rom 1:26-27 For this reason God gave them up to degrading passions. Their women exchanged natural intercourse for *unnatural*, and in the same way also the men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were consumed with passion for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the due penalty for their error. [italics added]

I Cor 6:9-10 Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, *sodomites*, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers-- none of these will inherit the kingdom of God. [italics added]

I Tim 1:9-10 This means understanding that the law is laid down not for the innocent but for the lawless and disobedient, for the godless and sinful, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their father or mother, for murderers, fornicators, *sodomites*, slave traders, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to the sound teaching. [italics added]

Jude 7 Likewise, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which, in the same manner as they, indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural lust, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.

Appendix

A Translation of Gen 19:1-11, Based on the Hebrew of the Masoretic text as found in the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia.

by Lisa W. Davison, Ph.D.

¹The two messengers came to Sodom in the evening, while Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. Then Lot saw and arose to greet them, he bowed his face to the ground. ²Then he said, "Please my lords, turn to the house of your servant, spend the night, and wash your feet. Then you may arise early and be on your way." But they said, "Ano, in the square we will spend the night." ³He urged them strongly, so they turned to him and came to his house. He made for them a feast and baked unleavened bread, and they ate. ⁴At evening they lay down, when the people of the city, the people of Sodom from the youngest to the eldest, all the people of Sodom to the last one, surrounded the house. ⁵They called out to Lot and said to him, "Where are the persons who came to you tonight? Bring them out that we may 'know' them." ⁶Then Lot went out to them to the entrance and shut the door after him. ⁷And he said, "Please, my friends, do not do such evil. ⁸Look, I have two daughters, who have not known a man, let me bring them out to you and you do to them whatever you wish, only to these persons do not do anything, for they have come under the shelter of my rafter." ⁹But they said, "Stand back!" Then they said, "This one came as a sojourner and now he would judge us. Now we will do worse to you than them." And they pressed hard against Lot, and they drew near to break the door. ¹⁰But the persons inside reached out their hand and brought Lot to them into the house and shut the door. ¹¹Then, the people who were at the entrance of the house were struck with blindness, the youngest to the eldest, so that they could not find the door.