



IN THE BEGINNING – “ADAM & STEVE”?

Well, “Gay Marriage” is a “hot button” right now and it seems like this is one more juggernaut that will soon become a “legal” reality in the United States. My, how things have changed since 1960. It reminds me of the book of Judges – once Joshua’s generation died off, there soon arose another generation that did not have either a covenant relationship with God or even knowledge of what He had done in the past (Judges 2:10-12). Without commonly recognized authority, human civilization soon degenerates into radical individualism – everyone doing whatever seems “right in their own eyes” (Judges 21:25) and that usually translates into copying whatever your imagination, hormones, or neighbors are advocating. In the Old Testament world, when the “fear/knowledge of God” was absent, look out! Those days have returned.

Although the United States Constitution endorses “freedom of speech,” that is not a highly valued commodity anymore, especially when your opinion is not “politically correct.” Let me say, right off the bat, that many things tell me that homosexuality is just plain wrong! Even though that statement will cause some to label me “insensitive” and “homophobic,” I am standing by my opinion and the right to express it. I really don’t care if I am “politically correct,” for that often signals someone who is “theologically incorrect.” As labeled by the “tolerance advocates,” get ready for some “bigotry, intolerance, and narrow-mindedness”!

Oh, I don’t intend to be nasty, but I do want to mention some angles on this issue that tend to be forgotten or distorted. The other day, one fellow wrote to the Editor of our local paper to say that he was “gay” and a Christian, but was sure that God wanted him to be happy and was going to pray for those who reject “gay marriage” – that God would change their hearts of stone and they would learn the “true message of Christ.” That letter stirred my thinking.

Just what is the “true message of Christ” concerning the homosexual lifestyle? I have not located anything in Jesus’ teaching (Gospels or NT Letters) that moved homosexuality out of the “sin” category. But, don’t take my word for it, let’s survey the Scriptures and lay some foundations.

Biblical Teaching on Homosexuality. The first Biblical teaching we have on homosexuality is associated with Sodom and Gomorrah and their sin was “exceedingly grave” (Genesis 18:20). Genesis 18-19 give us a very clear picture of the “grave” sin of the original Sodom and Gomorrah. After the two angels (in the form of “men” – Genesis 19:1,5,8) had entered the city and gone to Lot’s house, the young and old “men” of the city surrounded the house and demanded that these visitors be brought out so that the townsfolk could “have relations” (NAS) or “have sex” (NIV) with them (Genesis 19:5). Lot responded by offering his own daughters as substitutes (Genesis 19:7-8) to protect those under his hospitality and to avoid such gross wickedness. I understand the importance of hospitality in the ancient Middle East,

but growing up in the school of “John Wayne” I think I would have chosen to heat up the barrel of my shotgun before I would turn over my daughters to such a crowd! Well, the crowd threatened to abuse Lot instead (Genesis 19:9), but the angels intervened. Jude 7 summarizes the sin of Sodom as “gross immorality” and going after “strange flesh” (NAS). Clearly, the sin of Sodom was adult male homosexual behavior.

In the Law of Moses, homosexual behavior was clearly outlawed as a capital offense. In Leviticus 18:22 & 20:13, males lying with males instead of females is called an “abomination” and was punishable with death. “Cultic prostitution,” which was practiced in Canaanite religions, was often bi-sexual or homosexual in nature¹ and this was forbidden (Deuteronomy 23:17).

A scene similar to that involving Lot later occurred in Gibeah (Judges 19:22,23), but on this occasion a female substitute was accepted and it still was a horrendous crime that almost led to the destruction of the entire tribe of Benjamin (Judges 19-21).

Some defenders of homosexuality have pointed to Ezekiel 16:49 and claimed that the “sin” of Sodom was not sexual in nature, but a lack of benevolence towards the poor. This argument misses the point by a good mile. Isaiah (Isaiah 1:1,10) and Ezekiel both used the despised name of “Sodom” as a dishonorable label for the sinful Israelite kingdoms and their capital cities – read the whole chapter in which Ezekiel and Isaiah each made their comments and it becomes obvious that these are criticisms laid against Jerusalem and Samaria long after the original and actual city of Sodom was destroyed. Genesis 18-19 and Isaiah/Ezekiel clearly identify the sins of the historical and figurative “Sodom” under discussion in each context.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul traces the disintegration of society when the knowledge of God is purposely suppressed and God is no longer honored as the Creator (Romans 1:18-23) – the first signs of disorientation are idolatry (worshipping created things rather than the Creator) and then sexual confusion, specifically male and female homosexuality (Romans 1:24-27). The list of what else can be expected in such a cultural climate reads like what we see all around us today (Romans 1:28-32). Note here that Paul identifies “degrading passions/burning in desire towards one another” as the immediate cause of such behavior – the popular label for this today is “orientation.” We all have “hormones,” but a good bit of how we react and express hormonal pressure is rooted in choice – based on learned behaviors and social influences.

[to be continued]

¹ Hence the later reference to “cult prostitutes” (1Kings 14:24; 15:12) as “Sodomites” being expelled by Jehoshaphat (1Kings 22:46) – NAS.