

Gay Marriage & Homosexuality

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In 2004 I wrote a tract on “gay marriage.” Much has changed since that time. Gay marriage has gone from being legal in only a couple of US States to now being legal in *nine* States and in the District of Columbia. The States are Connecticut, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Vermont and Washington. Even worse is the fact that support for gay marriage is growing - especially among young people. This reflects a cultural shift away from biblical values and towards moral relativism. At the time of this writing, the Supreme Court of the United States is weighing two cases relating to the legality of gay marriage. The rulings are slated to be announced some time in June, 2013. We may hope and pray for a ruling that upholds the biblical definition of marriage, but what if it goes the other way? And what will change if it does? What are God’s people to do? This article (also in *tract* form) addresses these questions from both a legal (human law) and biblical (divine law) perspective.

An Observation About Human Law and “Marriage”

God did not institute marriage as a “state” or “federal” institution, nor has He ever allowed human legislators and judges to define or *redefine* marriage. Marriage is a *divine* institution and it is divinely *defined* (Genesis 2:24; Ephesians 5:31; Matthew 19:4-6). *{Incidentally, Romans 13:1-4 says nothing about “marriage” as a program or function of the state. Multiple millions of people are living in adultery or other sinful sexual relationships because of loose civil marriage and divorce laws. Having assumed marriage to be a “state” defined contract, these adulterers are deceived into thinking that their marriages are approved (even by God!). They live in the blissful ignorance that the “state” has the right to define the terms of approved marriage. In reality, it does not. God alone determines who is bound and loosed in marriage.}*

Even among God’s people today, much unnecessary controversy and division have occurred because of the belief by some that civil legislators and judges are authorized by God to define, ratify and regulate marriage. If God so uses human governments with respect to marriage, then He authorizes them to sanction and support the marriages of *gays, adulterers, polygamists and other sexual lawlessness* in countries throughout the world. Such a view is simply wrong. God’s law defines and governs marriage. Human government might impose itself upon God’s institution and insert itself into the marriage process, but no such government function was ever given by God.

This begs some important questions: What about the States that *have* “legalized” same-sex marriage? What if SCOTUS *does* strike down DOMA and approve same-sex marriage? How do/would such legal rulings affect Bible believers and their view of marriage? The answer is that it should have **no** affect upon our

belief, teaching and practice with regard to marriage. States have legalized gay and adulterous marriages for some time now, and the US Supreme Court might even *federally* legalize gay marriage, but God's position remains unchanged. Homosexuality is sinful. Consequently, so too is gay marriage.

It has been interesting and even entertaining to listen to people debate the pros and cons of gay marriage from a purely *worldly* and *naturalistic* perspective. Neither side has a standard higher than their own limited reasoning:

- Proponents of same-sex marriage argue from the standpoint of “fairness.” They say that homosexual marriage should be legal as long as heterosexual marriage is legal. Opponents argue that same-sex marriage should not be legal. Of course, both sides are using the word “legal” in the sense of human law, and as I described before, human laws are as fallible and changeable as the people who are proposing and producing them.
- Opponents of same-sex marriage argue that marriage has “traditionally” been between a man and a woman, and that gay marriage violates that tradition. Defenders of gay marriage counter this by citing the fact that traditions change with culture and society.
- Opponents of same-sex marriage also argue that same-sex couples cannot procreate, and should therefore not be allowed to marry. Defenders of gay marriage observe that many *heterosexual* couples also lack the ability (or perhaps the desire) to procreate, and that if procreation is a criterion for legal marriage, then neither should non-procreative heterosexuals be permitted to marry. Gays retort that they can adopt children, or they can use members of the opposite sex as sperm donors or surrogates.

As I said, these arguments are by themselves inconclusive. It is obvious that gay marriage cannot be opposed on a purely *logical* or *legal* basis. Human laws change to reflect the whims of society. A higher and more absolute standard must be invoked. Many of us believe the Bible to be this standard. The Muslim believes it to be the Quran. Other religious and philosophical groups have their own peculiar standards. In the absence of a higher standard, and from a purely *legalistic* and *secularistic* perspective, “gay” marriage is just as defensible as “straight” marriage. One person's definition of “marriage” is just as good as any other person's definition. *{Note: Some people place their faith in the US Constitution when it comes to such issues. However, even the Constitution can be amended and changed by either two-thirds majority vote in both houses of congress, or by a constitutional convention of two-thirds state legislatures. Even the Constitution is changeable. Conversely, God's law is fixed and unchangeable; being “forever settled in heaven” - Psalm 119:89.}*

Biblical Usage Of The Word “Marriage”

The Bible uses the word “marry” (Gr. *gameo*) of both *approved* and *unapproved* marriages. Only a particular context will determine the divine lawfulness of the marriage (whether it is *approved* or *unapproved*). For instance, the Bible says that Herod and Herodias were “married,” even though John had told Herod that it was “unlawful” for him to “have his brother Philip’s wife” (Mark 6:17, 18). Herodias remained bound to Philip, though “married” to Herod.

In Mark 10:11, Jesus said, “*Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her*” (see also Matthew 19:9 and Luke 16:18). Though it would result in an *adulterous* marriage, the unlawful divorcer might “marry” another woman (“*might,*” not “*may*”). Such would be an *unlawful* or *unscriptural* “marriage.” Sadly, loose civil marriage laws on divorce and remarriage allow people to comfortably and frequently do this under many modern legal systems today. Man’s law is not always harmonious with God’s law.

Let us consider one other example of how the word “married” is used in the Bible. After telling the wife to not depart from her husband, Paul said, “*But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband...*” (1 Corinthians 7:10-11). The word for “unmarried” is *agomos* - the negative (“a”) of marriage (*gamos*). The point is clear: Though this woman remained spiritually bound to her husband, her departure left her in an *unmarried* state. Thus the Bible uses the word “married” to describe a *physical/sexual* union. The word does not inherently imply anything with respect to the legitimacy of that union. People are called “married” even when their “marriage” is unlawful or adulterous. People are called “unmarried” even when they are still bound to a mate.

The fact that two men or two women might civilly “marry” each other does not in any way legitimize the marriage relationship. Sinful sexual relationships are not sanctified or justified merely by labeling them as “marriages.” Gay marriage is unlawful marriage.

Homosexuality Is Condemned By God

For same-sex marriage to be lawful, homosexuality must be lawful. However, homosexuality is condemned under all dispensations of God’s dealings with men:

- It was condemned under the Patriarchal system. Genesis 19:5 speaks of the wicked men of Sodom demanding of Lot that he allow them to have sex with his male visitors (hence, the name “sodomites”). God destroyed the men of Sodom with a devastating destruction. Whole towns were incinerated because of the sexually perverse practice of homosexuality (Genesis 19:24). Jude said that God had set Sodom and Gomorrah forth as examples, “*suffering the vengeance of eternal fire*” (Jude 7). {*Note: Physical “burning sulfur” was not the extent of their punishment. Their spirits would go on to suffer “eternal fire.”*}

- It was condemned under the Mosaic system, Leviticus 18:22 says, *“Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination.”* Homosexuality was a capital offense under the law of Moses. Leviticus 20:13 says, *“If a man also lie with mankind, as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them.”*
- It is condemned in this present Gospel dispensation, as we shall see from the passages below.

Homosexuality has always been a violation of God’s law, and it has always been severely punished. We aren’t under the patriarchy or old law today, and no such *physical* punishment is stipulated under the New Testament. However, the *eternal* consequence remains unchanged - the punishment of eternal pain and suffering in hell (Revelation 21:8; Jude 7). Since we are now *“under law to Christ”* (1 Corinthians 9:21; Galatians 6:2), I will here cite legislation from God’s present law - the Gospel - the New Testament. The apostle Paul wrote to the saints at Rome:

“Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error” (Romans 1:26, 27).

This passage addresses what is commonly known as "gay" and "lesbian" sexual conduct. Paul described it as being sinful and unnatural. Along with those who practice the other sins listed in these verses, those who do such things are *“worthy of death”* (Rom. 1:32). We will see in the next passage, that like other sins, homosexuality can be *forgiven*.

“Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10).

These verses show that, like any other type of sin, homosexuality, can be repented of and forgiven. Like fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, drunkards and thieves, homosexuals *can be* "washed, sanctified and justified." However, *not in their sins!* They must quit their sinning in order to have the hope of forgiveness (Lk. 13:3,5; Acts 17:30; 2:38). The same is true with the effeminate and homosexuals. Paul described those who do such things as *“unrighteous”* and said they *“shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”* Though some of the Corinthians had practiced these sins in the past (*“such were some of you”*), they had

repented of those sins and met the other conditions of God's grace that enabled them to be justified (*faith and baptism* - Acts 18:8).

The Greek word for homosexuals (*arsenokoites*) is also found in 1 Timothy 1:10. It means for a man to lie with mankind as he would womankind. Paul said:

"We also know that the law is not made for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and the sinful, the unholy and the irreligious, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for the sexually immoral, for those practicing homosexuality, for slave traders and liars and perjurers - and for whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine" (1 Timothy 1:9, 10).

"In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire" (Jude 7).

These New Testament passages plainly show homosexuality to be sinful. It is a shame that so many people are unaware of this New Testament teaching. Even so-called "churches" and "religious leaders" are now advocating for gay marriage:

- The Green Street United Methodist Church in Winston-Salem, NC recently stated that they will stop performing marriages until United Methodist pastors are permitted to perform ceremonies for same-sex couples.
- Rob Bell, a popular "faith leader," recently said, "Yes, I am for marriage. I am for fidelity. I am for love... whether it's a man and a woman, a woman and a woman, a man and a man."

So-called "churches" and "faith-leaders" that endorse gay marriage do not act according to "faith," for *"faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God"* (Romans 10:17). These are false churches and false teachers. They should not be supported (2 John 9-11).

Some religious people refuse to condemn homosexuality on the basis that it is not explicitly condemned by Christ in the four gospels. However, Jesus did condemn *fornication*, which includes all forms of sexual immorality (Matthew 15:19). Furthermore, the apostles were Christ's special *ambassadors* who spoke on His behalf (2 Corinthians 5:20). Jesus said that those who listened to His apostles listened to Him, those who despised the apostles despised Him, and those who despised Him despised the Father (Luke 10:16). Paul said that he spoke *"the commandments of the Lord"* (1 Corinthians 14:37). The words of the apostles are the words of Christ.

Marriage Is Between A Man And A Woman

Gay marriage is **not** authorized by God. Referring to Genesis 2:24, Jesus said:

“And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female,

“And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?”

“What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder” (Matthew 19:4-6).

God made mankind “male and female” and authorized their being yoked together in a marriage relationship. A God-approved marriage involves a “male” and a “female.” No Bible passage approves a male/male or female/female relationship. In order to avoid sexual immorality, Paul said for each “man” to have his own “woman,” and for each “woman” to have her own “man” (1 Corinthians 7:2). Homosexual relations are condemned in Scripture. Bible-rejecting secularists may reason that gay marriages should be accepted. However, no Bible believer can defend gay marriage.

Along with being unauthorized, gay marriage does not accomplish God’s will for the marriage union. After making man “male and female,” God told them to *“be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth”* (Genesis 1:27-28). Same-sex couples cannot “multiply.” As noted above, they can adopt children or use surrogates, but they cannot reproduce. The very concept of homosexuality is inherently flawed. If practiced by all humans, homosexuality would terminate the entire human population after just one generation.

The Legalization of Gay Marriage Will Lead to the Acceptance of More and More Sexual Perversity

Once the traditional and biblical standard of what constitutes a “marriage” has been abandoned, the flood gates are thrown open for state recognition of other forms of sexual perversity. For example:

- Polyamorist organizations are now working to legalize their multi-partner sexual relationships. They claim that states that recognize same-sex marriage are morally and legally obligated to recognize polyamory.
- The North American Man-Boy Love Association (NAMBLA) has been pressing to be accepted by society. Will some states next grant marriage rights for pedophiles to “marry” young “consenting” boys?
- Various news reports have shown that some people want to marry their pets. Perhaps not all of these animal “lovers” are having sex with their pets, but some do. Bestiality involves sexual relations between humans and animals. Leviticus 18:23 specifically condemns the practice, making it also a capital offense. Like homosexuality and lesbianism, bestiality is a type of fornication. Will some states expand the definition of “marriage” to include pet marriage?

- Polygamists continue to push for legal recognition of their relationships. Mormonism once forced this country to take a stand against polygamy. Will that stance now be reversed?

This is indeed a slippery slope. We have gone from “domestic partner” legislation to the extension of visitation rights and legal benefits to gay partners to full-blown gay marriage. We should not be surprised if other sexually perverse relationships are also “legalized.”

Conclusion

The Bible says that *“evil men and seducers shall grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived”* (2 Tim. 3:13). The moral character of nations tends to degenerate. “Righteousness” exalts a nation (Proverbs 14:34), but righteousness involves the speech and action of individuals. We must thwart the growth of sin and perversion in order for our nation to be exalted.

We must also reject the foolish notion that human legislatures and courts have the God-given role of defining and “ratifying” marriage. State and federal governments might “legalize” gay marriage, but this does not make such unions approved by God. Much damage has been done to the institution of marriage by governments inserting themselves into the marriage process. While we should meet civil requirements with respect to marriage that do not conflict with the will of God (Acts 4:19-20; 5:29), such compliance is merely a matter of civil obligation and should not be equated with divine law. God alone decides who is bound or loosed in marriage (Matthew 19:3-12).

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