

What Does the Christian Bible Say?

By Frank Jernigan

On the Defense

Here is a brief description of key verses used to condemn us, and what they really mean:

- **Leviticus 18:22** – “Thou shall not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination.” (There is a similar reference repeated in Lev. 20:13). Both references probably pertain to temple prostitution and idolatry. They are no longer under the law. If this law is still in effect, all the other laws described in Leviticus would also be in effect (the requirement for circumcision, prohibitions against eating pork and shellfish, etc.) Ask your audience how many people follow those rules. Leviticus is the only apparently explicit reference to homosexuality in the old testament.
- **Genesis 19:4-9** – The story of Sodom leading up to the city's destruction became the basis of the belief that the sin of Sodom was homosexuality (hence the term “sodomite”).
- The offense described in this passage is not homosexual behavior, but rather the mistreatment of strangers and rape. Ezekiel 16:49,50 (NIV) says “Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters are arrogant, overfed, and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy. They were haughty and did detestable things before me.”
- What Jesus had to say about homosexuals – Nothing!
- What Paul had to say about homosexuals – The word translated as “homosexuals” in modern versions of the bible (“effeminate” in the King James version) is must disputed and probably means male temple prostitute. It would be difficult to deny that Paul was your basic homophobe, as most explicitly revealed in Romans 1:26-27. (“Because of this [practice of idolatry], God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural 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 indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.”) He goes on to describe these same people as being “filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed, and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant, and boastful...” In fact, every person is included here in one category or another, including all born-again Christians. This is merely the beginning of Paul's premise that “There is no one righteous, not even one” that he follows with the explanation that salvation cannot come by our own efforts, but only through the grace of God.

On the Offense

There are many biblical passages that suggest God loves lesbigays as much as he loves any human being, including our behavior:

- **Old Testament:** A prominently recurring theme is that God is on the side of the oppressed (Psalm 103:6 – “The Lord works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed.” Psalm 82:3 – “Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed.”) There are many others.
- “Do not mistreat an alien [stranger, misfit, or queer] or oppress him, for you were aliens in Egypt.” This is one of the most repeated commandments in the Old Testament. Exodus 22:21, 23:9, Leviticus 19:34, Deuteronomy 24:17, and over thirty similar versus in the rest of the Old Testament. Compare the number of versus proscribing homosexual acts (two, if any) and the number of versus proscribing mistreatment of queers (over thirty). Which do you think God is more concerned about?

- **New Testament:** Which of the following is closer to a statement of the “gospel,” the “good news” that Christ commissioned his followers to tell the world:
 - A. God, the unrelenting avenger of sin, is coming to seek out all people unworthy of eternal life to throw them in the fires of Hell for eternal torment. Therefore, you better try to understand every requirement of God (both do’s and don’ts) and try as hard as you can to live according to them, in the almost impossible hope that you won’t be among the condemned.
 - B. God, who is love, unbounded and unconditional, has completed in Christ whatever was necessary (for whatever reason it was necessary) to reunite all people with God. By experiencing, i.e., receiving, trusting in, contemplating the reality of this divine acceptance, we can grow in our ability to feel and express this kind of love for other people.

A prominently recurring theme, God’s unconditional love, is found in the following passages:

- **Romans 5:8** – “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”
- **Romans 8:38** – “For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
- **I John 3:1** – “How great is the love of the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!”
- **I John 4:7-12** – “Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. [My, how inclusive!] Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love each other, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.” [Is it even remotely conceivable that such love would exclude people on the basis of their sexual orientation???].

And finally,

- **Romans 8:31** – “If God is for us, who can be against us?”

Dealing with Dogmatists

Who are the religious dogmatists?

- Probably all religions have them.
- They rely on an externalized expression of “truth.”
- Self-worth is measured in degree of conformity to this “truth,” whether conformity through the intellectual knowledge of it, adherence to its practices, or parroting its sanctioned phrases.

Keep in mind:

- You will not be able change the mind of a hard-core religious dogmatist.
- By presenting yourself as proud to be who you are, self-confident in the face of “moral attack,” you will say more to the others in the room than any amount of arguing can.

Preparation for fielding religious questions:

- Examine your own beliefs and learn to articulate them.
- Rely on what you believe to be true within yourself.
- Uncover the basis you have for believing you are OK.

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