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Sacred Worth Class
Clobber passages
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I want to begin by saying that these are distressing verses for people. Please let me know if I am rattling off too much and you want to move on. Also, if you need to get up and leave for a little bit, that is perfectly fine. This is going to be a hard study, but I hope that it will equip you with multiple interpretations. My goal here is not to ignore or reject the Bible, but to dive in deeper. The purpose of this study is for us to gain a greater appreciation for this book. It is also important to remember that we Christians have misused the Bible before, to justify slavery and not accepting women into positions of leadership.

I am not going to be able to fully go into each of these passages today, but I hope that what we can answer is, “what does this passage have to say about adult, loving, and consensual same-sex relationships today? What do these passages have to say about people who only have a sexual attraction to people of the same sex?

Genesis 19:1-11,

- Two stories about hospitality
 - Let me tell you a story, Two foreigners arrive late one night to a town whose reputation for wickedness is well-known. The foreigners receive shelter and provisions at one home in particular, highlighting the stark contrast between the host and the rest of the wicked town. The two foreigners reveal to their hospitable hosts that they have come that night on a divine mission to destroy the town. However due to the generous hospitality shown them, the two foreigners want to save their hosts and urge them to leave town immediately,. Not looking back as they go. When the escaping family crosses the borders of the town they glance behind them and witness the utter destruction of the entire city and all the wicked occupants therein.
 - Do you recognize that story? This is because it sounds kind of like the story of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19, but it is actually the story of Baucis and Philemon told by the Roman poet, Ovid. This is a

story of guest-friendship, which in greek is xenia, which is where we get our modern word xenophobia. And I believe that Genesis 19 is also about the sacred act of hospitality that was one of the most central commandments in the ancient world.

- Examining the story
 - All the men? Of all ages?
 - In verse four, the men of the city, all of them both young and old, all people to the last man surrounded the house. How could this be a reference to a sexual preference if every man came. This is not a small group, Genesis tells us twice that this is every man. Common sense says that this must be about something else.
 - Send out the foreigner!
 - Verse 5 says, “so that we may know them” but make no mistake, this has nothing to do with having a good time or any sort of consent or mutuality. This is a gang rape in order that these men can show dominance over the outsiders and strip them of their masculinity. This is a practice against prisoners of war, it is violence, plain and simple.
 - The offer of Lot’s daughters
 - In verse 8 Lot offers his daughters to them. This seems like a horrible thing to our modern ears, but this detail is not about sexism, but about the extreme measures that Lot will take to be hospitable. It is about protecting the two foreigners. Plus, if this crowd was gay, Lot would not have bothered.
- What is the sin of Sodom?
 - Ezekiel 16:49-50; Jeremiah 23:14; Matthew 10:14-15
 - If we only had this passage to describe what the sin of sodom was, then we could have a lot of argument about what the true core of this story was. However, thankfully we have Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Jesus to tell us what they took from the story.
 - Ezekiel, because they did not help the poor and needy. Sodom and Gommorrah in the well watered plain was

wealthy, but it did not share with others, it did not offer hospitality.

- Jeremiah: adultery and lying and strengthening the hands of evildoers. They did not call the people to repentance.
- Matthew: Whenever a town does not offer you hospitality and take you into their homes, then shake the dust off your feet, they will be destroyed like Sodom and Gomorrah.
- These are stories about not helping the lowly and not welcoming people with hospitality.

Leviticus 18:22; 20:13,

- What is at stake?
 - This text calls males lying with men as an abomination. The problem with calling people an abomination or a sinful people in the modern context is that it calls people sub-human. I know that most Christians do not intend to call people sub-human, the reality is that this is happening in subtle ways. When someone is considered subhuman it denies that this marginalized group can have secondary emotions, such as love, hope, admiration, pride, conceit, nostalgia, and remorse. These are emotions that make us human. Instead, sub-human people can only feel the primary emotions that we care with animals, Pain, pleasure, fear, joy, surprise, and anger). Have you heard this sub-humanization happen in your own lives, “gay people cannot control themselves or stay in a monogamous relationship.” This is the same sort of things that happened in the American south when slaveholders said that African Americans could experience emotions in the same way as white people.
- Wider context
 - Leviticus 18 are all prohibitions against violating the family dynamic. Things like incest and sacrificing your child.
 - Purpose of Leviticus is for the people of God to be different from the rest of the canaanites.
- Hebrew is confusing
 - “You shall not lie with mankind (zakar) as you do with a woman/wife (ish)” Why use a general term, followed by a specific term?

According to Jewish hermeneutical principle, when the bible offers a generalization followed by a specific term, the specific term is what matters.

- Mishkevey ishsha - the marriage bed, only other referenced when Jacob is upset with Reuben for having sex with one of Jacob's concubines.
- Abomination - toevah
 - An act that makes an Israelite indistinguishable from the surrounding nations.
 - Toevah is relative -
 - Eating with non-hebrew people (Gen 43:32)
 - Shepherds are toevah to the egyptians (Gen 46:34)
 - Sacrifices to God is offensive to Egyption people (Exo 8:26)
 - Toevah is not sinful
 - There are words for sinful, but toevah is saying that that is against our culture. Though I am sure that we will still say that sacrificing your child to a pagan god is still bad.
 - Lists animals that you cannot eat, but you can give it to a foreigner. What is forbidden to Israel, is not forbidden to sojourners passing through their lands.
 - Toevah is about improper mixing of substances
 - Mixing two kinds of clothing
 - Planting mixed seeds.
- What does that mean for today?
 - We do not know if this was about the patriarch of the house having sex with family members
 - We do not know if this was a universal condemnation of people with same sex attraction.
 - What we do know is that Toevah/abomination is a culturally charged term, intended to speak only to the Jewish people 3,500 years ago. This is not a universal statement meant for all time, afterall we wear different kinds of thread in our clothing, we eat shellfish and pork, we live in a different culture than this passage of Levictus. The point is not that a man sleeping with a man the way of a wife is sinful, it is only saying that this is the way that Isrealite people could be different

from canaanite people. Saying anything more would be using the text for our own purposes.

Romans 1:26-28,

- Historical Context
 - The key to understanding Romans is that this is a fractured community. The Roman Emperor Claudius expelled the Jews (and Jewish Christians) from the city of Rome. from AD 49-54. So Paul is entering a situation where the Jewish Christians are returning to a church that no longer functions in the same way as it did before. So Paul's main purpose is to bring this fractured community together.
- Biblical Context: Romans 1:18-32
 - This section is a bit strange, it is written in a way different way than Paul usually writes. This may not have been written by Paul or Paul copy and pasted this from another source.
 - This passage is about the wicked and the ungodly, who knew about God, but did not honor God. They worshiped Idols and so God gave them over to their sinful desires like sexual impurity and degrading their bodies. But do we take the passage at face value, or do we dive deeper?
 - Paul is no dumb dumb, Paul is well acquainted with GrecoRoman rethoric, aka ways that Greek people formed arguments. Here we have an example of a way of persuading people by placing blame on a group. Paul is calling out the Gentiles in this crowd. Why do I think so? Because he is almost quoting from the Wisdom of Solomon, a contemporary book of Jewish wisdom literature that sought to increase the separation between Jews and Gentiles. IN this book the key takeaway is, Gentiles failed to know God -> turned to idolatry -> engaged in immorality -> Received punishment
 - So what Paul may be doing here, is setting up the two groups. He is saying to the Jewish Christians, everything you think about gentiles is right, they are all sinful and idolatrous. He is pointing at their stereotype and affirming it.
 - So when Romans 2 hits, Paul says, and woe to you who judge others because you are guilty of the same things. All people sin before God, the Jews are no better than the Gentiles and vice versa. The shift from

3rd person, to therefore, and now second person means that Paul is calling out any Jewish Christian who agreed with the previous section, then Paul is calling you out as the source of the problem. There is no excuse for throwing out judgements like the discourse I just gave you. Judgment is God's and God's alone. Genesis 1:18-32 is an enemy to the gospel!

- Refuting the text
 - God's wrath against ungodly (1:18) but Paul refutes it by saying judgment left to come (2:5-6)
 - Discourse declares that GOD has specific judgment toward the Gentile people, but Paul refutes that later by saying God has no partiality (2:9-11)
 - God gives up people to wickedness and death (1:24, 26, 28) but aPaul refutes that by declaring that tGod give life to the dead (4:17)
- Paul refutes everything about this passage, by saying it is against the Gospel. What we cannot say this is what Paul thinks, but we can say that this is part of the Jewish prejudice against pagans.
- The point is not that God works in this way or condemns same-sex sex acts, the point is that this is Jewish pregidice against pagans. Which Paul says this kind of stereotyping is against the gospel.
- Dishonorable, Unnatural, and Shameless
 - Dishonorable passions: Greek "atimia" (verse 26)
 - Culturally shameful, something that is atimia is something that has no value or worth.
 - Not wrongful or sinful, but cultural.
 - Similar to having long hair (1 Cor. 11:14).
 - Shameless acts: Greek "aschomosune" (verse 27)
 - Unseemly or indecent, perhaps public spaces or in conjunction with pagan temple idol worship
 - The point is the idolatry mentioned before.
 - This is not an example of mutual and equal relationship built out of love. This passage forbids any sex act that is idolatrous, exploititive, and culturally offensive sex act.
 - Contrary to Nature: Greek "para phusis"

- Better translate into, was this sex procreative.
 - Not about the morality of the act.
 - A man having sex with a prostitute is “according to nature”
 - Having sex with a wife in a part of the body that does not beget children, is against nature.
 - This is not an example of lesbianism, but a reference to anal heterosexual sex.
 - Remember that God grafting of the gentiles into the olive tree (people of God) is para phusis. (contrary to nature). Are we to say that God is acting in evil ways?
- What does this mean for us?
 - What does a few verses about people accused of turning their backs on God, worshipping idols, and giving into their lusts have to say about people who are gay and Christian, people in loving and committed same-sex relationships?
 - Paul wrote a letter to a church in Rome who were judging one another. Paul exposed the Jewish prejudices against gentiles and how these prejudices were working against the gospel. Now in a tragic twist the church uses his words to break apart the church.

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 and 1 Timothy 1:9-10

- Let us consider a question, is heterosexual sex considered sinful? Well, I am sure many of you might nod, others might raise your hand and ask wait a moment, because you are thinking of a number of examples. What about sex before marriage, A married person having sex with someone who is not their partner, Or if I went to a strip club or slept with a prostitute. Nevertheless, even though I just gave you a list of probably sinful things, if I talked about sex within the covenant of marriage, you would say that this is okay. So heterosexual sex is in the sometimes yes, sometimes no categories.
- Words to translate
 - The Problem with this text is that it is a list of sexual and economic vices using words that are difficult to translate. The first word, Malakos could mean anything from a soft piece of cloth, a soldier who doesn't like war, a spineless individual, or a womanly man. Whereas the second word may be a combination of two words that Paul made up, a portmanteaus.
 - Malakos - Soft (soft fabric). Spineless (lacking self control), effeminate.
 - Arsenokoitēs - male prostitute, economic exploitation. (Literally, Male Bed)

- If this is talking about sexual sin, then malakos would be referencing the person who takes the passive (feminine) position in sex. So it could easily be translated into male prostitute or be a reference to the Roman practice of pederasty, where an upper class person passes on the way of culture by having sex with young boys. Now this is a legitimate interpretation, but unclobbered seems to think that this is more about economic exploitation or prostitution in general.
- Looking more specifically at Arsenokoites, one of the ways that Biblical scholars try to figure out what words mean, is to see how they are used in other contemporary writings. This is useful since this word does not appear other places in the Bible, in other contexts, it had nothing to do with sex, and was just a referencing economic or exploitation.

What have these texts about what the Bible is teaching against?

What does these texts not mention?

What does this texts teach us about what is not permitted for hetero and same-sex relationships?