

Witness of the Old Testament (part 2)

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Preacher: Jon Hueni

[0:00] Well, we're looking, at last, we've come to where we're looking in the Bible for verses that speak directly to the same-sex sex.

And we're seeing how those who claim allegiance to the Bible as the Word of God are handling the Word of God.

Last week we looked at Genesis chapter 19. And God's visit to Sodom. And we saw just how early in human history mankind went off the rails with regard to human sexuality and God's design for mankind.

And we saw in Sodom widespread same-sex sexuality, young and old, all the whole city given over to it.

And we noted that as a marker showing just how far society had sunk. That was the thing that is mentioned when the Lord says that he would go down and see if the outcry was as bad as what he'd heard.

[1:11] And what does he record as what he saw in Sodom? No doubt many sins in Sodom. But the one thing he did mention was this marker. It serves as a marker that men were having sexual relations with men.

Then, Judges, we didn't have time to spend much time there in Judges 19. But it's a similar situation with the men of the town of Gibeah asking for the male visitor to town to be brought out to them that they might know him again.

And so we have a similar situation as was found in Sodom. Only now the point being made is that it's within Israel.

This is the people of God. This is Gibeah of Benjamin. This is where we ought to see if any place in the world there are people who follow God's order for sexuality.

It ought to be Israel who had the law. And lo and behold, we find that they are on the same level as Sodom. And so, again, it serves as a marker to us because the authorial intent of the end there of Judges is to show that every man was doing what was right in his own eyes.

[2:33] What does that lead to? It leads to sexual debauchery such as was found in Judges 19. So, we'll see when we come to Romans 1 that this becomes a marker as well of society in the depths of depravity to which it is sunk.

Now, we're going to move then from two historical events in the Old Testament to two laws that God gave to his people. So, let's turn to Leviticus chapter 18.

Leviticus chapter 18. And we have two verses found very close together.

Chapter 18 and chapter 20. And any Christian so bold as to quote these two texts in answer to the homosexual, the pro-gay interpretations of Scripture, better be prepared for a counterattack meant to put egg on his face.

It's seen repeatedly in debates. I've seen debate on TV, interviews, literature.

[3:49] I'm told that it was even put into an episode of the popular TV show, The West Wing, back in 2000. I've never seen that show, but in a transcript of it, it had a conservative talk show host that stated publicly that the book of Leviticus condemns homosexuality.

And President Bartlett is out to humiliate her for her position. So, he peppers her with loaded sarcastic questions based on other Mosaic laws, such as, he says, Well, my chief of staff insists on working on the Sabbath.

Exodus 35, too, clearly says that he should be stoned to death. Am I morally obligated to kill him myself, or is it okay to call the police? You see the poking fun at such laws as are found in the Pentateuch.

And here's one, President Bartlett says, that's really important, because we've got a lot of sports fans in this town. Touching the skin of a dead pig makes one unclean, according to Leviticus 11.7. So, if they promise to wear gloves, can the Washington Redskins still play football? So, I say, if you quote Leviticus, these two verses in Leviticus that say that same-sex sex is wrong, you need to be prepared to have these other laws from Leviticus thrown back in your face to show you how silly you are for taking Leviticus as your standard of living today.

[5:23] Now, we're going to return to this tactic later, but first, let's get a big view, then, of the book of Leviticus. Why is this book in our Bibles?

What is its purpose? And after we get the big view, we'll come to these two trees of the forest. Leviticus 1 through 16.

The first 16 chapters set down the regulations for official worship in Israel. And in chapter 17, we begin a new section that deals with private religion and morality.

So, first, you have public worship. And now, we are dealing with private religion and morality.

Chapter 18 states, Which sexual unions are forbidden by the Lord?

Seven times they're told that they're not to behave sexually as the nations who inhabited Canaan before them, or not like Egypt from which they have come.

[6:26] I say seven times just in chapter 18. So, this is the purpose. You have come from a pagan society in Egypt. I brought you out of Egypt and I'm bringing you into Canaan.

But the Canaanites do things just as the Egyptians did things that are detestable to me. And that you must not do. And so it is, especially in the area of sexual perversions.

These sexual perversions were found in the surrounding nations within Canaan. But it must not be so among them. And the repeated reason why this must not be is, God says six times in this chapter, I am the Lord your God.

That grounds the command. You're not to be like these people. Why? Because I am the Lord your God. This is my moral will.

This is what I want done. These are my laws, my boundaries not to transgress. And so we see this principle that the Lord's people are to be set apart from the sinful peoples that they live around in this very important matter of sexual behavior.

[7:45] This is one of those areas where outsiders have gone astray. My people, my family must be different on this very score of human sexuality.

We're to be distinctive for our morality at this point. And that's no small part of the holiness of God's people. What does it mean to be holy? No small part of it means that we express ourselves sexually according to God's laws and not according to culture.

That's seen throughout the Bible. We've seen that in the lists of sins that are listed. This is what holiness is for the people of God. Not to act like the culture around us sexually.

So that's been an area that's problematic to fallen mankind in all ages. We must be different precisely here. That's part of our witness as much as our holiness.

We're to be a witness to the surrounding culture by our sexual morality. So Israel was called to be a witness, you see. To let their light shine in the midst of such darkness.

[8:56] Now it was also a motive. I am the Lord your God. That was a motive to obeying God's commandments. And indeed isn't that what we find in 1 Corinthians chapter 6 that deals with sexual immorality.

And don't live in this way. Why? Because you're not your own. I have bought you. You're mine. And so we see that in Leviticus. And we see it in the church in 1 Corinthians chapter 6.

So don't behave as the nations around you in this way. Because I am the Lord your God. Now we come to chapter 18 and verse 22.

It's in this chapter where the various forbidden sexual behavior is being listed. And we're told 18.22. Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman.

That is detestable. Notice it is the behavior that is condemned. I simply say that because of all the focus in our day upon sexual orientation.

[10:04] This is simply saying this kind of behavior is forbidden. For a man to lie with a man as one lies with a woman. So it's saying you're either a man or a woman biologically.

And that fact carries certain consequences for you. If you are a man biologically then it is wrong for you to lie with another man. Biological man. As you would with a woman.

Now same-sex sex then is flatly condemned here by God as something he hates. A very strong word is used. It's something he abhors. He detests. It's an abomination. It's a word of strong disapproval in Hebrew. Found five times in chapter 18. And again in chapter 20.

In the second text that we'll look at soon. We saw this same word used in Ezekiel 16.50. That was a reference to Sodom. For what they did.

[11:03] They did that detestable thing. They were haughty and did detestable things before me. So this is something that our God takes very seriously.

He hates it very much. The second text is Leviticus 20 and verse 13. If a man lies with a man as one lies with a woman.

Both of them have done what is detestable. Same word. They must be put to death. Their blood will be on their own heads. Now we see in chapter 20.

The punishments that are to follow the breaking of these laws of God in Israel are now stated. Not only that the act itself is detestable to God.

But now the nation of Israel is being taught. How are they to enforce this within the theocracy? Well they are to. This was a capital offense.

[12:11] It was punishable by death. And that underscores once again the seriousness of the matter. Now it all seems so clear doesn't it?

As we read these texts. How then do pro-gay interpreters of the Bible. People who claim that they believe just as much as we do. In the inspiration of scripture.

The authority of the word of God. How do they come to a passage like this and say. It has nothing to do with what we're doing. It is not forbidding.

What? Our sexuality. Well they do it in several ways. As we've seen there's not a unified answer. A unified way that these folks deal with the word of God.

But one way. Is that they would come to these two texts. And they would say. This only condemns heterosexual men lying with men.

[13:08] Okay. Since heterosexual men were made for. Wired for. Meant to have sex with women only. Therefore it would be wrong for them.

To lie with another man. As they lie with a woman. It has this whole idea of gender. The idea of homosexual orientation.

That's why we spent time on that subject. That people are viewed as being wired at birth. Some people. Some men are wired to have physical intimacy with other men.

They're called homosexuals. Those who are wired to have sex with women are called heterosexuals. And this passage is clearly not teaching about homosexual men.

Who are wired for sex with other men. Rather it only opposes heterosexual acts. Or homosexual acts by men who are heterosexuals. You see the argument?

[14:13] So this passage is not even speaking about homosexual men. Leviticus doesn't apply. Because homosexual orientation was not understood back then.

It's a recently discovered idea. So with one waving of the wand.

Of modern gender and orientation ideas. They've removed another two of the passages that condemn same sex sex.

So how do we deal with that? We've got a person saying I'm a Christian. And I have physical relations and live with a man.

And I am a man. And I have these relations with another man. And this passage is not saying anything contrary to my lifestyle. Well we have to say to them that Leviticus is in the same Pentateuch.

[15:12] The same grouping of the first five books of the Bible as Genesis. And it's not just hanging out here all on its own.

These commands in Leviticus. They're built on a foundation that was given first. Clear back in Genesis 1 and 2. And this law in Leviticus is consistent with God's own creative designs.

That we saw in Genesis 1 and 2. That reserves the one flesh sexual intimacy for one man and one woman. In the covenant of marriage. So this negation found in Leviticus is in perfect harmony with the creation design found in Genesis 1 and 2.

Secondly we must remind the person that this is God's law not man's. There is one law giver who is able to save and to destroy.

So whatever men may claim about recent discoveries about sexual orientation. God our maker fully understood his creatures didn't he?

[16 : 23] So we've just learned about sexual orientation in the last 50 to 100 years. So whatever was said before then in the Bible obviously couldn't have taken that into it.

But now wait a minute. God's the one that made man. And he knew everything about man. And he's the one who placed this law in his word. So we cannot buy the argument that this only condemns heterosexual men lying with other men.

Well someone else would say well this only condemns same sex sex involved with idolatrous pagan religious practices.

And so what's being condemned in Leviticus is not homosexual behavior but idolatrous behavior. That was often connected to and involved with homosexual behavior. And we must say that it is true that some of these things in Leviticus were forbidden because they were part of religious pagan practices.

[17 : 38] For instance in chapter 19 and 27 and 28 we see the cutting of the sideburns and the trimming of the corners of the beards. And the cutting of yourself for the dead.

These were part of pagan mourning ceremonies. Mourning. M-O-U-R. When someone died they would cut themselves for the dead.

They would shave off their sideburns. Trim the corners of their beards. They were elements of idolatry. And God is wanting his people to remain distinctly different from the nations.

We'll see that distinction is made in all sorts of ways. Even in what they eat. They're not to eat certain foods. Because for them they're unclean. Even in that there's to be a distinction between them and the nation.

So even in how they mourn for the dead. That's the way the pagans do it. With their idolatrous pagan ideas. So don't you do the same thing they do.

[18 : 41] Even though there may not be anything in and of itself sinful about shaving your sideburns. You understand? Why some things were forbidden.

Because of idolatrous connections. And that's what some of these interpreters are saying. They're saying that well you had same sex prostitutes in these pagan cultures.

And part of the worship of their God was to engage in homosexual acts. And so obviously God doesn't want his people to be involved in pagan worship.

And the stuff that goes on in pagan worship. And so here he is forbidding lying with a man as man lies with a woman. Because that's the way the pagans worshipped their gods.

Boswell and Bailey point out that Leviticus 18.21. You see that Leviticus 18.21 condemns idolatrous ritual of child sacrifice.

[19 : 59] And they infer that verse 22 follows suit. That the reason it was wrong for a man to lie with a man. Is because that too is a part of idolatrous ritual.

Even as the offering of sacrifices. So if verse 21 is talking about idolatrous sacrificing of your children. So this prohibition against man with man.

Must also be because of idolatrous connections. As one pro-gay interpreter says. These texts simply do not apply to contemporary. Committed Christian, gay, and lesbian relationships.

End quote. So what's being forbidden here. Is not that these acts are in and of themselves sinful.

But because they're related to idolatry.

In the surrounding culture. Therefore God's people were not to participate in them. But we don't live in cultures today where part of the pagan worship is to have homosexual acts to their God.

[21 : 06] So it's okay for us. Is their idea. So our answer. These two Leviticus texts are simple prohibitions against all homosexual acts.

They don't say anything about idolatrous practices. That has been imported into the text. That such acts were sometimes also used in pagan worship.

Only made them doubly detestable to God. But the act itself is detestable. Whether it's used in worship of pagan gods.

Or in other context. Any other context. How can we say this? Well the word here for man. Or for male. Is just the common word for man.

Or male. It's not the word for male prostitute. There is such a word. And we do have an example of Old Testament law prohibiting same-sex prostitution in worship.

[22:06] You can find it in Deuteronomy 23. And in comparing our texts. Our two texts with that text. We find that our two texts in Leviticus. Are much broader in condemning all same-sex sex.

Not just that used in worship. That's what Deuteronomy 23. 17 and 18 does. But there a different word is used. For such male prostitutes.

That's not used here. Because what's in view here is just the flat forbidding of any man with another man. So it's not just cultic same-sex behavior.

But all male-to-male sexual behavior that's being forbidden. Secondly, notice what the forbidden sex is contrasted with. What is the forbidden sexuality contrasted with?

In 1822. Lying with a woman. What is that? That is God's creative design for a man, isn't it?

[23:16] To lie with a woman. That was God's plan. And that's what is being contrasted here. Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman. The forbidden sex is contrasted with God's acceptable norm.

His standard. And it harps back to Genesis. And what God has designed for man. And what his aim for man's sexuality is. It's for him to have a woman.

And so we see that this is a violation of God's created order. Which is man with woman in marriage.

Another reason we answer this charge against this idolatry. These chapters in Leviticus also condemn other sexual acts such as bestiality, adultery, and incest.

You can read of all the things that are being forbidden. Hardly anyone would argue from scripture that these things are only wrong if they're connected to false worship in some way.

[24:26] No, they're wrong in and of themselves. Incest. Adultery. Adultery. It doesn't have to be adultery in a pagan orgy to their God.

Any form of adultery. Any form of incest. Any form of bestiality. So what we're seeing is that these things are in and of themselves wrong.

Whatever their context in which they happen. The same is being said here of a man lying with a man. It is inherently sinful in and of itself.

Another point is that if the only thing that made it wrong for them to sacrifice. If the only thing that made it wrong was its connection to idolatry. In verse 22.

Are they prepared to say that of verse 21? That the only thing that makes it wrong to sacrifice your child. Is if it's involved in the worship of Moloch.

[25:23] That it's the worship that causes it to be something evil. Then that would mean that it's right in certain contexts to sacrifice your children. You see, that's nonsense.

These deeds are wicked in and of themselves. Leviticus 20.13 furthermore orders capital punishment for both parties. And this flies in the face of what is often used as an argument of the pro-gay community.

And their treatment of scripture that would say that same-sex acts are legitimate. If they're consensual. If both parties are willing participants.

But this text shows that though both are complicit. Both are guilty of serious law-breaking. Both are to be put to death. So, it's not enough to say, well, yeah, it's wrong.

It was wrong for the men of Sodom to rape the visiting men that came to town. But when there is consensual relations that it's okay.

[26:25] Not so. Both are here. Said to be put to death. And then the context of these prohibitions on same-sex sex claim that these detestable practices were the very reason for the Canaanites being expelled from the land.

These were not just certain laws that were only peculiar to Israel. This law was not something that only applied to Israel, God's people. There were such laws.

But this isn't one of them. Because we're told that it's because of this that the Canaanites were vomited out of the land. In other words, it was sinful for the Canaanite men to lie with men.

That's a violation of God's moral standard. Not just some law for his people, Israel. And you can see that in verses chapter 18, 24 to the end of the chapter.

Here, do not defile yourselves in any of these ways. Because this is how the nations that I am going to drive out before you became defiled.

[27:32] Even the land was defiled. So I punished it for its sin. And the land vomited out its inhabitants. And so on he goes. So this was vile for Canaanites.

Even as for Israelites. These are not some special laws just for Israel. Since we no longer have those special laws. Therefore it's okay for us. No, it doesn't hold up. So God's law condemned

idolatry.

You shall have no other gods besides me. You shouldn't make for yourself an idol in the form of anything. It also condemned homosexual behavior. It is detestable for a man to lie with a man as with a woman.

And the two are not confused. They both are their own violation of God's righteous standard. Here's an example of this logic. Drunkenness is condemned in the Bible in several texts.

But in 1 Corinthians 11. Drunkenness is condemned at the Lord's table. Some were coming and getting drunk at the Lord's table.

[28 : 44] That does not warrant the conclusion that therefore all these other texts must only condemn drunkenness if it's in the context of the Lord's Supper. You see?

No. No. Both are condemned. Drunkenness is sinful wherever you do it. And if you do it at the Lord's table, it's only doubly detestable. That's the way the scriptures reason.

Not that the only thing being condemned here is idolatry. Yes, idolatry is wrong. But these texts don't even whisper the word idolatry. They're speaking of the sin itself.

All right? Of same-sex sex. A third line of way around these texts for the pro-gay interpreter.

Another claim is that same-sex sex was forbidden because of widespread male honor issues in the ancient world. I don't have time to go into this, but that there was this idea of a macho man and the idea around the nations, the cultures they were in.

[29 : 51] And for a man to take the position of a woman was degrading to his maleness. And in that culture, since male macho man was so important, therefore we don't want to violate the cultural standards.

So in this situation, we shouldn't do so. Well, anyway, the fourth way, and perhaps the one that's most popularized and most often seen, the fourth way that these folks get around the Leviticus text is to say that these Levitical laws are obviously no longer relevant or binding for us living in the New Testament.

It's used to silence criticism and to disarm you of two of your big guns in this battle. They're even used to poke fun at you and such of you.

If you say that the verses on same-sex sex from Leviticus apply to us today, well, then you also have to say that all the other texts in Leviticus apply to us today, including those that command us to stone adulterers, including those that the command, do not plant your field with two kinds of seeds.

Do not wear clothing woven of two kinds of material. I snooped in my closet and found we have a lot of clothing that is made up of polyester and cotton and wool and mixtures of nylons and different kinds of material.

[31 : 20] Well, how can I dismiss that command and still be holding on to the wrongness of a man lying with a man as with a woman?

I'm told when you plant a new tree not to eat its fruit for three years in the fourth year, give it all to God. And only in the fifth year can you finally eat the fruit yourself. Do you do that with the trees you plant? Don't trim your sideburns, the corner of your beards.

Don't eat any meat with the blood still in it. And if you eat rare steaks with the blood dripping out of it, the dietary laws, pork is unclean, as is shrimp and lobster and weasels and lizards and rats and bats.

So are we obeying all these commands or are we just picking and choosing? You see how they're putting the onus on us and now suddenly we're backpedaling.

Here we thought we had two pretty potent verses to quote and now all of a sudden we're on the defensive by these arguments. It's all or nothing.

[32 : 23] You can't pick and choose. They all stand or fall together. And few would say that they all stand together. There are those theonomists that say that all the Old Testament laws stand together.

But by default, most hold that they all fall together. All Levitical laws are lumped together as obsolete. We're freed from these old laws. They no longer apply in the New Covenant.

We're not under law but under grace. You ready to answer that one? What would you say?

It's all or nothing. It's an overreach, isn't it? That's right. Look at Leviticus.

Excuse me. The Bible itself does not allow us to take an all or nothing approach to the book of Leviticus. It's true that some of these laws were only for the Old Testament Jewish theocracy.

[33 : 23] That nation that had God as its king and that these laws are not for us today. Acts chapter 15 tells us we no longer have to be physically circumcised in order to belong to the family of God.

That's a change. Isn't it? The book of Hebrews tells us we didn't need to bring an animal sacrifice today as we came to worship. That we could come without any blood being spilt on an altar outside before we come in and worship God.

Jesus declared all foods to be clean. So you can eat shrimp and lobster and weasels and lizards and bats and rats. There's no law against it anymore.

So what we're saying is that the Bible doesn't allow us just to... So we see some laws here in Leviticus have been set aside.

Some of them were simply meant for the Jewish theocracy. The nation of Israel. And once that nation was no longer the national political people of God, the theocracy of God, these laws had run their course, had served their purpose, and therefore no longer apply today.

[34 : 34] But that's not true of all the laws found in Leviticus. Look at chapter 19 and verse 18. Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself.

I am the Lord. You ready to throw that one out with the bathwater? Say that doesn't apply to us anymore? Well, Jesus says it does.

Paul says it does. And in fact, it even says that this is the second greatest commandment.

And together with loving God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength, it sums up the whole law on the prophets. This is what the whole Old Testament is about.

It's about loving God with all your heart and loving your neighbor as yourself. That means these are not irrelevant to the New Covenant Christian.

[35 : 45] They're still binding. And so in the same way, are we to say that bestiality is no longer binding in the New Testament? That child sacrifice, incest, adultery mentioned here in Leviticus are now okay in the New Covenant, since they're found in this ancient book of Leviticus.

You see, we must throw them out if we adopt an all-or-nothing approach. But the Bible itself does not allow us to adopt such an approach to Levitical law.

The New Testament view of the law is far more nuanced than an all-or-nothing approach.

Otherwise, we do throw out the baby with the bathwater.

We throw out loving your neighbor as yourself, along with not cutting your sideburns. Rather, what we find is that the New Testament often grounds its ethics upon commands found in the Old Testament.

So Ephesians chapter 6 tells children to obey your parents. And what is it grounded in? Because it says, children, honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise.

[36 : 59] Found where? Found in Exodus, in the Pentateuch, alongside of Leviticus. So there are clearly some of the commands found in the Old Covenant that are still binding in the New Testament.

So this all-or-nothing method of Levitical or Old Testament law is unbiblical. And it's way too simplistic. It will lead to such things as homosexuals claiming that it's no longer wrong for men to have relations with men.

It's a gross failure to distinguish things that differ, things that are found in the Bible, maybe even side by side. So we need to remember that all these commands were equally binding upon Old Testament Israelites.

The Old Testament Israelites didn't say, now is this one binding for me or not? The sideburn law, the shrimp and lobster law, the same-sex law, the loving your neighbor law.

It was all law to him. Everything, everything was his duty to God. And that's how he thought of it. But now as we've stepped into the New Testament, some things have changed, haven't they?

[38 : 24] And so we're looking at it differently than the Old Testament guy. And so we're having to ask ourselves, how do we determine which laws are for today and which laws are not?

Some judicial and ceremonial laws were temporary commands for the theocracy of Israel. Some were laws that further set them apart from the surrounding nations and marked them out as different and emphasized there's to be no mixture between you and them, no intermarrying between you and them.

Laws against mixture symbolized and reminded them that they are a special people to the law, separated from the nations around them.

And that was proven in minor and major matters of life. Not marrying, but it might also just be not eating pork. Something that is not sinful in and of itself.

Whereas to marry an unbeliever is sinful in and of itself. So we find that these, there are differences.

[39 : 36] And all, it even came down to the things that they ate, as we said. But you remember the very first sin had to do with things that we ate and forbidden.

Things that weren't wrong. I mean, there's nothing wrong with that tree. It was fine. But the only thing that made it wrong was God said don't. And it isn't interesting that we find Jesus in the wilderness obeying in this area of diet when he had not eaten for 40 days and is hungry and is being tempted to use his divine powers to change stones into...

In this very same area where Eve failed, Jesus triumphs. And the Israelites were being put to the test. Will you obey me? Will you change the way you eat simply because I say so, you see?

So there were such laws in Israel. And our time is gone. What I want you to do is get out your 1689 Confession of Faith this week and just read through chapter 19 on the law of God.

Excellent. If you don't have a Confession of Faith, go to the ARBCA website and it's all there.

Chapter 19, the law of God. And it makes very clear distinctions between...

[41 : 09] In these commands in the Old Testament, some are moral, some are ceremonial, some are judicial. And that distinction will help us to deal with the book of Leviticus and these commands and to know, how do I know whether this command is still binding upon us in the New Testament or whether it has fulfilled its purpose in Old Testament Israel?

Chapter 19, the law of God in 1689 Confession. You'll find it in the back of our hymnals as well, the Westminster and the Baptist Confession.

So we'll have to pick up there next week. Are there any questions that you'll give me a week to prepare on that this has stirred up in your minds, of how they use their arguments?

And we believe the Bible, but let's be sure that we understand what the Bible is forbidding, is what they're saying. Well, it's idolatry, or it's heterosexuals behaving as homosexuals, or it's okay because these laws are all passe now for the New Testament Christian.

Any other questions, comments before we close? Well, we're blessed if we have eyes to see and the Spirit of God to be our teacher. Well, let's be dismissed then.