

A Concept of Sexual Immorality and Its Consequences in the Bible

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Our post-modern time is famous for having no absolutes. The law is no longer needed, and people prefer to do as they wish to, almost as it was in the days of the Judges when “all the people did what was right in their own eyes” (Jdg 21:25). On the endless list of modern lawless deeds are adultery and a variety of sexual perversions, such as incest, rape, bestiality, and homosexuality. These sins spread fast and even sneak into the Adventist church.

The purpose of this paper is to show the biblical position on the topic of sexual immorality. Before the presentation of the negative part of sexual human behavior, the original plan of marital purity will be discussed, followed by Jesus’ teachings on this subject. A brief discussion of the biblical view of homosexuality will constitute the major part of this paper. The last segment will discuss the tragic consequences that function as the strongest warning to those who choose to follow after the passion of their fleshly desires and not according to the biblical teachings.

Original Purity of Marriage

Creation Account. From the first till the very last page of the Bible the reader encounters reoccurrence and confirmation of the marriage covenant established by the Creator, His regulations to protect it, His promises to bless it, and all this is manifested in His love to the church that He calls His bride and wife. Marriage was instituted in the Garden of Eden on the sixth day of creation, when God created Adam and Eve. Both of them shared in the image of their Creator and completeness of sexes. The Lord made Eve to be Adam’s companion, friend, helper, and love. Seeing Eve for the first time, Adam said, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man” (Gen 2:23).

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The Hebrew words for “man” and “woman” are *iš* and *iššah* or “husband” and “wife,” respectively. It should be noted that the assonance of *iš/iššah* focuses the reader’s attention on both the differentiation of functions and the oneness of man-and-woman. Adam “cleaved” to his *iššah*. He entered into lasting community of life with Eve because of his love for her. This means much more than just socializing with her; he engaged in “very personal concern, fidelity and involvement.”¹ This unity of two human beings of “sexual gratification finds its legitimate expression only within the confines of marriage.”²

It is important to note here that human beings were created in the image of God and united in His love. The Creation account presents the model of the family as a unit of two loving people of opposite sex mutually united by covenants and promises under God, when both a husband and a wife willingly leave all their old friends, even parents, “and they shall become one flesh” (Gen 2:24). Biblically based marriage is more than a contract between two adults who agree to share their lives under certain conditions. A marriage is used as an “earthly picture of the divine love. Marriage is a reminder of God as the One who loves. More specifically it presents the exclusive nature of the divine love.”³

Another important aspect of marriage has a procreation note. In the Garden of Eden the Lord not only blessed *iš* and *iššah*, but He also gave them a power to reproduce themselves. He said, “Be fruitful and multiply” (Gen 1:28).

Be Holy for I Am Holy. Biblically based purity of marriage is rooted in the very Decalogue. The Lord Himself pronounced, “You shall not commit adultery” (Exod 20:14). This commandment not only prevents from adultery, but also from all kinds of sexually transmitted diseases. The Lord wants His earthly children to enjoy the original purity of their sacred union of marital relationship.

In the next book of the Bible, Leviticus, the reader finds numerous times the following expression, “Be holy, because I am holy” (Lev 11:44). In this and other verses God calls humans to holiness, but this holiness is not their own holiness. God’s holiness requires a total separation from all forms of sin, including adultery. At the same time, He who created humans knows that they can’t be holy in their own power. Therefore, the Lord “who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil 1:6).

Holiness of God also calls humans to the higher standards of God’s perfection. It requires a separation from all things, whatever they might be, to God, who has superior plans for human beings and their marriage relationships. As

¹Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 234.

²Calvin B. Rock, “Marriage and Family,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 2000), 726.

³Stanley J. Grenz, “Theological Foundations for Male-Female Relationships,” *JETS* 41/4 (1998): 623.

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Bruce Wilkinson states, “Holiness is the center of God’s will for you.”⁴ Thus, holiness requires submissiveness to God’s will, His “good, pleasing and perfect will” (Rom 12:2), known from His commandments and revelations.

Jesus’ Teachings. The Savior of the world, who is also its Creator, has not changed with the time. He taught the people the same truth about marital purity as He did at the creation and on Mount Sinai. Knowing sinfulness was leading humans to their own destruction, Jesus reminded them in Matthew 5 about the spirit of the law. In His antithesis *You have heard . . . But I tell you* “Jesus does not contradict what was said but brings it into sharper ethical focus. Hill calls it ‘a radical intensification of the demands of the law’ (p. 119).”⁵

According to Jesus in Matthew 19:6, “So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.” Marriage as a faithful unity is a principle that shelters “the couple from outside attacks, and from frivolity, capriciousness, and unfaithfulness within the marriage (Ex 20:14). The Christian enters this covenant with total devotion, pledging his or her utmost to love and cherish, in sickness and in health.”⁶

It is very important to note here that a loving devotion of a husband and a wife to each other has nothing to do with the supremacy of one party and the fearful dependency of the other party. Godly relationship involves both sexual parties in the unity of their marriage to present their unique perspectives as loving gifts to each other. Paul declares that in the Lord, “neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man” (1 Cor 11:11). Human sexuality is not a means to gain power over the other person. “Instead, God has entrusted our fundamental masculinity and femininity to us for the sake of serving each other.”⁷

Sexual Perversions

Moral purity and spiritual commitment to their Creator had to keep Israelites as a separate people to witness God’s love to the surrounding nations. As one part of the Moral Code, marriage unity had to be kept clean and unbroken, for family represents society. In spite of God’s given law, prescriptions, and suggestions to keep the marriage bonds unspotted, throughout history human beings have rebelled and continually committed adultery and other sexual perversions.

Most of the adulterous cases and their perversions found in the Bible testify of a sexual relationship with a member of the opposite sex. The seventh commandment of the Decalogue clearly testifies, “You shall not commit

⁴Bruce H. Wilkinson, *Personal Holiness in Times of Temptation* (Eugene: Harvest House, 1998), 14.

⁵Robert H. Mounce, *New International Biblical Commentary: Matthew* (Peabody: Hedrickson, 1991), 44.

⁶Miroslav M. Kiš, “Christian Lifestyle and Behavior,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 2000), 690.

⁷Grenz, 629.

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mandment of the Decalogue clearly testifies, “You shall not commit adultery” (Exod 20:14). This law applies to both men and women, and in Israel if a couple was caught in a violation of this commandment, punishment for both of them was death: “The man who commits adultery with another man's wife, he who commits adultery with his neighbor's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death” (Lev 20:10). The Jewish attitude toward adultery is also the Christian attitude—it is against the will of God. Those who commit adultery are judged by God and will be excluded from the heavenly kingdom (Heb 13:4; 1 Cor 6:9).⁸

In Israel there were also sexual perversions such as incest, for example when two daughters of Noah became pregnant from their father (Gen 19:36) or when Reuben slept with his father's concubine (Gen 35:22). The tragic consequences of both stories are clearly narrated in the Bible. The Ammonites and the Moabites were the fighting enemies of the Israelites, and Reuben was cursed by his father and lost his privileges as first-born son.

Rape is another cruel part of sexual perversions. When biblical writers describe rape, they tell of the man seizing (*tapaš*) a woman or overpowering (*hezik*) her before he lies with her.⁹ This is evident from the story of David's son Amnon raping his half-sister Tamar (2 Sam 13:11-14). The Bible also testifies about prostitution. The Hebrew term for prostitute or harlot is *zonah*, which comes from a root that suggests a person who is wanton, on the outside, and perhaps even repugnant. It is important to note here that a priest could not marry such a woman, for she was unfit for service (Lev 21:7, 14; 19:29), and even her money from prostitution could not be used for temple dues (Deut 23:18). These ladies were part of the society, yet apart from it. The Bible has nothing good to say about prostitution, but there are many narratives where prostitutes left their adulterous ways and through faith became new creatures. For example, there are Rahab from Jericho and Mary Magdalene.¹⁰

In the Scriptures are also several indications of bestiality, when a man or a woman had sexual relationships with an animal. Moses clearly writes about such a distortion: “Nor shall you mate with any animal, to defile yourself with it. Nor shall any woman stand before an animal to mate with it. It is perversion” (Lev 18:23).¹¹ The outcome of bestiality in the Bible is very clear: anyone, man or woman, who engages in sexual relations with an animal deserves death. Leviticus 18:24 reveals even more that because of these sexual perversions entire nations were wiped out. Such sins not only have the power to absolutely distort the

⁸Gerald Larue, *Sex and the Bible* (Buffalo: Prometheus, 1983), 82-90.

⁹See Deut. 22:25-29; Larue, 102-107.

¹⁰Rather strong allusions in Luke 7:37-50, *SDA Bible Commentaries* (5:764-767, additional note on Chapter 7), and also *Desire of Ages* (558-560, 566-ff.) suggest that Mary Magdalene was not only freed from demon possession, but also from prostitution.

¹¹See also Exod 22:19; Lev 20:15, 16; Deut 27:21.

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image of God in the mind of human beings, but also to destroy them physically. Therefore, the Lord's straight message regarding bestiality has an annotation to protect His own people from physical, mental, and spiritual disorders.

Homosexuality

One more form of sexual perversion is homosexuality. Throughout its pages the Bible refers to it at least seven times. Four times the acts of homosexuality are mentioned in the Old Testament and three times in Pauline writings. All of these references are negative and are specified as a crime. In spite of the fact that postmodernism tries to justify homosexuality by developing new theological ideas, the biblical view will never be changed. As Angel Rodríguez says, "The Biblical understanding has been questioned and rejected in some sectors of Western culture. When that happens, it is the responsibility of the church to witness to Biblical truth."¹²

As we saw above, the aim of human sexuality should be not personal satisfaction but interpersonal completeness and wholeness between husband and his wife. The Bible tells us clearly, "The two shall become one flesh" (Gen 2:24). In contrary to that clear statement, homosexuality functions as one of the opposites to the purity of marriage. Together with other extreme movements which have led humans away from God's original plan, homosexuality represents one of the consequences of the Fall, and it should only be seen in this light.¹³ In order to demonstrate the biblical viewpoint, which never approves any form of sexual love within a homosexual relationship, we have to briefly focus on all seven references mentioned in the Scriptures.

Sin of Sodom. The angels of God visited Abraham, and the Lord said to him concerning Sodom, "the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave" (Gen 18:20). The wickedness of this city is also mentioned in Gen 13:13: "the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful against the Lord." Sodomites threatened Lot and his two guests—angels (Gen 19:4-11). They were seeking to get the visitors out of Lot's house in order "to know them" (v. 5). The Hebrew word *yāda'* in this verse has raised numerous arguments from pro-homosexual movements. For example, Sherwin Bailey¹⁴ argues that this story has nothing to do with homosexuality. Sodomites were just a mob who interrogated visitors to find out who they were, or they just wanted to get acquainted with them. His standpoint is the following: the word

¹²Mark Kellner, "Adventist Church Responds to Same-Sex Unions," *Adventist Review*, 11 March 2004, <http://www.adventistreview.org/2004-1511/news.html>. Reprinted as "Adventists Respond to Same-Sex Unions," *Record*, 109/13 (10 April, 2004): 3.

¹³P. Michael Ukleja, "A Theological Critique of the Contemporary Homosexual Movement" (Th.D. dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1982), 136.

¹⁴Sherwin Bailey was an Anglican scholar who first reevaluated the traditional view of the biblical prohibitions. In 1955 he published *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition*.

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yāda' occurs 943 times in the Old Testament, while only 12 times does it mean “to have intercourse with” someone. In other occurrences it is translated as “get acquainted with” or “have knowledge of.” Bailey explains that intercourse, as a means to personal knowledge, depends on more than copulation.¹⁵ Thus, that narrative of Sodom could not fit the sexual implications of the word *yāda'*.

Bailey also argues that the rest of the Old Testament in no place suggests that the sin of Sodom was homosexuality. Instead, he presents that Isaiah (1:10-17, 3:8-9), Jeremiah (23:12-14), and Ezekiel (16:48-50) speak of such sins as hypocrisy, social injustice, adultery, general wickedness, arrogance, greed, and indifference to the poor and in no place of homosexuality. He concludes that imposing homosexuality on Sodom’s story derived later as a Christian tradition from apocryphal Jewish sources.¹⁶

Bailey’s arguments regarding the sin of Sodom may convince only a person who does not know the Scriptures very well. To his first argument about the word *yāda'* is a very strong counterargument. Of the 12 times this word occurs in Genesis, 10 times it means “to have intercourse with” someone and, by the way, once in the current passage. It tells about Lot’s offering of his two virgin daughters who had not *yāda'* a man (Gen 19:8). It would be an absurd gesture to make such an offer if Sodomites wanted only a social knowledge of Lot’s guests.

Ukleja points out that “In narrative literature of this sort it would be very unlikely to use one verb with two different meanings so close together unless the author made the difference quite obvious. In both verses 5 and 8 *yāda'* should be translated ‘to have sexual intercourse with.’ The context does not lend itself to any other credible interpretation.”¹⁷

When Bailey presents the sins of Sodom taken from the Prophets, he does this only partially. For the prophet Ezekiel writes, “they were haughty and committed abomination” before the Lord (16:50). Kittel’s Hebrew Bible uses four separate words for abomination. The word used in this passage has the thought of inherent repulsiveness to God in whatever act the word is referring to. Also, this particular word for abomination, *toevah*, is found in Leviticus (18:22, 26, 27, 29, 30; 20:13) in the command to abstain from lying with a man as with a woman.¹⁸ This word comes from the root meaning “to hate” or “abhor” and therefore it is something that is hated by God and is detestable.¹⁹

If Scripture is compared with itself, one can see that the Apostle Peter explains the sexual nature of Sodom’s abomination. He writes, “turning the cities

¹⁵P. Michael Ukleja, “Homosexuality and the Old Testament,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 140/557 (July-September 1983): 259-266.

¹⁶John Stott, *Same-Sex Partnerships?* (Grand Rapids: 1998), 21.

¹⁷Ukleja, “Homosexuality and the Old Testament,” 262.

¹⁸Ukleja, “A Theological Critique of the Contemporary Homosexual Movement,” 149.

¹⁹See Proverbs 6:16; 11:1; also, Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward Old Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 196.

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of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy²⁰ conduct of the wicked” (2 Pet 2:6, 7). Jude adds, “as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh” (v. 7).

In addition to these biblical texts, Thomas Schmidt points out general homosexual acts of Sodom taken from early literature:

The second-century BC Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs labels the Sodomites “sexually promiscuous” (Testimony of Benjamin 9:1) and refers to “Sodom, which departed from the order of nature” (Testament of Nephthali 3:4). From the same time period, Jubilees specifies that the Sodomites were “polluting themselves and fornicating in their flesh” (16:5, compare 20:5-6). Both Philo and Josephus plainly name same-sex relations as the characteristic view of Sodom.²¹

Without any doubt, Sodomites were guilty of many sins and homosexuality was one of them, and probably it was the main reason why this city was severely punished and fully destroyed by fire, which, by the way, serves as a prototype of the final destruction of the wicked.

Holiness Code. The two following texts in Leviticus belong to the Holiness Code: “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination” (Lev 18:22); “If a man lies with a male 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” (Lev 20:13). These biblical verses are set in the context of God’s judgment upon sexual misdemeanors and are an expansion of the God’s holy law.

The Canaanites’ idolatrous practices were on the verge of being spread among the Israelites. God, through Moses, had to build walls of protection to prevent His people from idolatry with all its violent and vicious practices. Throughout these two chapters God strictly forbids temple prostitution, where homosexuality is one of the crimes. But is this only one side of such a strong homosexual prohibition? According to some scholars it is. For example, Blair writes,

²⁰The Greek term of the word filthy is *aselgeia*, which basically means living without any moral restraint, lustful indulgence, especially indecent and outrageous sexual behavior, flagrant immorality. See also Rom 13:13.

²¹Thomas E. Schmidt, *Straight and Narrow? Compassion and Clarity in the Homosexual Debate* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1995), quoted in Joe Dallas, *A Strong Delusion: Confronting the “Gay Christian” Movement* (Eugene: Harvest House, 1996), 190-191.

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That the very pronounced Old Testament judgment against a man's having sexual relations with another man is included in the priestly Holiness Code of Leviticus (18:22 and 20:13) is significant because the concern of the priests was one of the ritual purity. It was not the moral preaching of the prophets. From this priestly point of view, it is clear that above all else, Israel was to be uncontaminated by her pagan neighbors. In all things, she was to remain a separate "pure vessel unto the Lord." At this time, male prostitutes in the temples of the Canaanites, Babylonians, and other neighboring peoples, were common features of the pagan rites. There, it is understandable that this "homosexuality" connected with the worship of false gods would certainly color Israel's perspective on any and all homosexual activity.²²

In order to argue with Blair regarding these passages, we have to understand that ritual purity and morality go together. In no place does the Bible differentiate between these aspects. In contrast to understanding, Blair divides the priests with their ritual purity from the prophets with their morality. "But the prophets preached to the needs of their day. Anything not included in their teachings is more logically explained by that particular sin's absence among the sins of that generation, rather than by a rigid distinction between ceremonial and moral purity."²³

Homosexual movements argue that Levitical texts prohibit only religious practices which have come to their end a long time ago and therefore have no application to modern homosexuality. But they fail to see that this prohibition refers to every kind of homosexual practices, for ritual purity is just an expansion of morality. They also compare the prohibition of homosexuality with the ceremonial law which was dispelled in Christ's death and resurrection. But this proscription does not point to or anticipate Christ. As Bahnsen correctly argues, the character of the Holiness Code is moral, and its content is still required today.²⁴

In other words, according to pro-homosexual theology, idolatry is not morally wrong, for the ritual purity of the Holiness Code is not a part of the moral law or Decalogue. The same is true of child sacrifice and bestiality. But this would be illogical, for it clearly contradicts the moral law, and Blair does not want to end on that absurd note; thus he simply adds that cultic and moral purity *often* coincide.²⁵

It is very important to note that the content of sexual relations in Leviticus 18, as a part of the Holiness Code, is framed by God's own signature, "I am the Lord your God" (vv. 4, 30). Emphasis on God follows in the next chapter as

²²Ralph Blair, *An Evangelical Look at Homosexuality* (Chicago: Moody, 1963), 3.

²³Ukleja, "Homosexuality and the Old Testament," 263.

²⁴Kaiser, 118.

²⁵Ukleja, "A Theological Critique of the Contemporary Homosexual Movement," 152.

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well, where there is a call to general holiness, “You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy” (19:2).

The clear explanation of these two Leviticus texts is the following one: obviously the Lord wanted to separate His people from idolatry for a special purpose, to spread His message among the surrounding nations, but at the same time He wanted to preserve that which He created in the Garden of Eden—a pure marital relationship of husband and wife and their family unit.

Gibeah Narrative. Another Old Testament reference to homosexuality is written in Judges 19:22-26. The Gibeah narrative is very similar to the story of Sodom. In this parallel account of sexual crime, the men of the town of Gibeah in the territory of Benjamin attacked an old man’s house asking for his guest, a Levite, to be given to them for the same reason as Sodomites asked for Lot’s guests. They wanted to have intercourse with him, to *yāda’* him. In order to be hospitable, the owner of the house offered them his virgin daughter and the Levite’s concubine, who was seized and put out of the house. The men of Gibeah raped her to the point of death in substitution for the Levite.²⁶

Verses 23 and 24 suggest that the violent intention of the men of Gibeah was homosexual lust. The host tells the people, “do not act so wickedly. . . do not commit this outrage . . . do not do such a vile thing.” The verb *rā’ā*, “to do evil,” “to act wickedly,” deliberately links the Gibeahites’ behavior with the general spiritual and ethical degradation of the nation during the days of the judges. The second expression, *hannēbālā hazzō’t*, translates literally “this foolishness.” It denotes emptiness, vanity, without moral, spiritual, or reasonable restraint.²⁷

The gang rapers and murderers of the Levite’s concubine were active homosexuals who were not only engaging in practices clearly condemned in the earlier writings of the Scripture (Lev 18:22; 20:13), but also violating the norms of hospitality. As Weston Fields writes, “The introduction of these sexual crimes into the narrative relegates the men of Gibeah to the category of ‘Sodomites,’ people who are a by-word for this particular sexual aberration. Such brazen, public behavior and legal climate should have precluded it.”²⁸ But that was not so, for the last verse of the book of Judges concludes, “In those days there was no king in Israel; all the people did what was right in their own eyes” (Jdg 21:25).

²⁶At this point we will not discuss a Levite’s cruel act of self protection by allowing his concubine to be raped while remaining ignorant of her fate until morning, when he found her dead. From this account as well as from other biblical passages it is seen that women often were considered the property of a man, expendable if the alternative was harm to a man.

²⁷Daniel I. Block, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 6:536.

²⁸Weston W. Fields, *Sodom and Gomorrah: History and Motif in Biblical Narrative* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997), 126.

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The night of horror made a powerful impact on the whole of Israel, for the result of this violent action, in which all the townsmen were involved, was a civil war and the ultimate destruction of the city. Even some centuries later the prophet Hosea recalled the depth of Gibeah's corruption when addressing the sins of Israel. He writes, "They have deeply corrupted themselves as in the days of Gibeah . . . Since the days of Gibeah you have sinned, O Israel" (Hos 9:9; 10:9).

Throughout history of humanity written in the Old Testament God has dealt with people in different ways and different times. At the same time, His standards for righteousness have never changed. If God's morality has changed, then the character of God has changed, too, because the basis of morality is in the character of God. But as Malachi writes, God does not change: "For I am the Lord, I do not change" (Mal 3:6).

Paul's Address in Romans. Greco-Roman world was very well acquainted with homosexuality and regarded it highly, as is evident from Plato's and Plutarch's writings. It was a feature of social life, indulged in by their gods and emperors. The homosexual reputation of the women of Lesbos was also well established.²⁹

The Apostle Paul, who was raised and educated in Tarsus, was familiar with Greco-Roman philosophies and practices. He knew about homosexuality with all its detestable acts. It is no wonder that when he wrote his letter to the Romans he clearly mentioned Sodom's sin: "For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due" (Rom 1:26, 27).

In this passage pro-gay movements see two points supporting their own position. They argue that Paul is speaking about heterosexuals who have consciously committed homosexual acts, thus going against their real nature. Consequently, for them, homosexuality, if committed by true or natural homosexuals, is not a sin. And secondly, Scripture describes here idolaters and not gay Christians who worship the true God.

To prove that such theology is wrong, we have to look more closely at the context of this Scripture passage. Here is an allusion to God's creation of 'iš and 'iššah as complementary sexual beings. Robert Gagson states that "The reference in 1:24 to the same-sex intercourse as a 'dishonoring of their bodies,' combined with the reference to 'natural use' in 1:26-27, confirms that Paul viewed same-sex intercourse as an 'unnatural' use of the gendered body because of the clear anatomical 'discomplementarity' of such intercourse."³⁰

²⁹James D. G. Dunn, *Word Biblical Commentary: Romans 1-8* (Dallas: Word, 1988), 38A:65.

³⁰Robert Gagson, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 258.

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In this text Paul uses specific words to emphasize human biology: *arsenes*, “male,” and *theleias*, “female.” When these words appear in the New Testament they usually emphasize the masculinity and femininity of the subject. In this context, Paul is clearly saying that the homosexual activities committed by these people were unnatural to both males and females; he is not taking into consideration such things as sexual orientation. He is saying that “homosexuality is biologically unnatural—not just unnatural to heterosexuals, but unnatural to anyone.”³¹

Another argument used by pro-homosexuals is idolatry. In this passage Paul describes the silliness of both homosexuals and idol-worshippers. The last are foolish for trading “the glory of the incorruptible God” for “an image” (v. 23), the Creator for a creature. In the same way, those who practice any kind of homosexuality actively disgrace their own bodies, pursue dishonorable obsessions, and ignore “the natural use for what is against nature” (v. 26). The self-degrading and shameful character of both actions is integrally linked to the obviousness of their error.³²

Homosexuality of both inverts and perverts has a connection with idolatry and as a part of human’s sexual perversions, it began with a break in the communion with God and has its own consequence, Paul says: “God gave them up” (vv. 24, 26, 28) to reap their own choices. Paul is saying in these verses that not only idolatry, but also homosexuality changed the created order.

Besides idolatry and homosexuality, this passage names a number of other sins and speaks about God’s wrath on unrighteousness. Paul presents the whole list of wicked actions that lead to the ultimate fate of death (vv. 18-32). These are wickedness, covetousness, murder, strife, deceit, etc. (vv. 29-30). If verses 26 and 27, testifying to men and women substituting ‘natural use for unnatural,’ apply only to idolatrous homosexuals and lesbians, and thus their acts are not sinful if committed without a link to idolatry, then the same rule must be valid to the sins we just mentioned above. This would mean, Dallas jests, that Paul condemned wickedness, murder, strife, and other sins only because they were committed by people involved in idolatry. Otherwise they are acceptable.³³ Obviously, that such theology is ridiculous and unreasonable.

Homosexuality in 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy. There are two more biblical texts that mention homosexuality. These are 1 Cor 6:9-10 and 1 Tim 1:9-10. Scholars usually consider both of these verses together because the verses use a word that is unique to the New Testament: *arsenokoitai*. 1 Corinthians 6:9 characterizes homosexuality as a sin that cannot be practiced by those who wish to inherit God’s kingdom, and 1 Tim 1:9-10 emphasizes a number of rebellious

³¹Dallas, 195.

³²Gagnon, 266, 267.

³³Dallas, 196, 197.

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types of people for whom the law was made. Among the ungodly, unholy, murderers, kidnappers, liars, etc., sodomites are also mentioned (NKJV).

1 Corinthians 6:9 uses two words that describe sexual perversions: *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai*. The literal translation of the first word is “the soft ones,” which may relate to the Greek practice of *paidierastia* (“loving of boys”), homosexual relations between men and boys. The second word, *arsenokoitai*, combines two Greek words together: *arsane*, “male,” with a strong emphasis on gender, and *koite*, “bed.” This word can be translated “male-bedders” or “males who take other males to bed.”

Pro-homosexuals argue about the point of the word *arsenokoitai*, which appears in both references. They say that because this combined word does not appear in any other New Testament passages, most likely Paul refers here only to male prostitution, which was common at that time. But Paul has adopted this unique word from the Holiness Code in the Septuagint, Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, which strongly forbids homosexuality.

It is interesting to note that the other word, *malakoi*, is placed between the word adulterers, people who commit immoral sexual acts, and *arsenokoitai*, those who practice an immoral act of same-sex intercourse. Thus, immoral sexual intercourse would be an identifying mark of the *malakoi*, where the description “soft” itself suggests passive males playing the female role in sexual intercourse with other males.³⁴

Peter Coleman agrees that the two Greek words *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai* “have precise meaning. The first is literally ‘soft to the touch’ and metaphorically, among the Greeks, meant males (not necessary boys) who played the passive role in homosexual intercourse. The second means literally ‘male in bed,’ and the Greeks used this expression to describe the one who took the active role.”³⁵ In other words, *arsenokoitai* refers to same-sex intercourse and is strengthened by its pairing with *malakoi*. Paul is not writing only about male prostitution or *paidierastia*, but he strongly points out that any form of homosexuality, passive or active, is immoral, and those who practice it will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

What Are the Outcomes?

Having examined some biblical texts dealing with sexual perversions, especially homosexuality, and identifying these acts as sins or crimes, it is a time to briefly focus on the outcomes of those who commit sexual immorality. In many places the Bible presents only two ways for fallen humans to choose: the way of life or the way of death. There is no third option. “I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and

³⁴Gagson, 308.

³⁵Peter Coleman, *Christian Attitude to Homosexuality* (SPCK, 1980), 95, 96.

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cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live” (Deut 30:19a).

Any sexual perversion, including homosexuality, is a sin against God and a fellow human being. If people sin openly and even defend their sins by their own theology, the Bible tells us to love such people, but defy their sins as did Christ. His way does not conflict between God’s holy law and His love. Jesus spoke of love in terms of fulfilling the law (Matt 5:19). Love is “that which seeks the will of God in the object loved”³⁶ and the will of God for mankind is to “choose life, that both you and your descendants may live” (Deut 30:19b).

However, any sexual perversion contradicts the will of God and, therefore, should be addressed clearly by condemning sin in a loving manner. For a sinner there is only one way to get free from a sin with its inclinations and to become a new person—it is through Jesus Christ. Paul declares, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Cor 5:17). Jesus gives a new heart and a new life even to homosexuals (Ezek 11:19).

The way for those who commit wicked acts is death. The Bible is not silent about the consequences of sin. Paul clearly states in the book of Romans, “For the wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23a). The same is true in the Old Testament. There were three types of penalty for the most serious crimes against family, religion, and life itself. They were “(1) ‘cutting off’ an offender from his people (Lev 20:5, 6), (2) restitution of the stolen property or goods (Lev 6:4), and (3) the death penalty.”³⁷

Among the punishments for murder and adultery were also punishments for sexual perversions—for these the sentence was the strongest. Walter Kaiser describes the sexual crimes for which the death penalty was invoked:

Adultery—Lev 20:10; Deut 22:21-24.
Incest—Lev 20:11, 12, 14.
Bestiality—Exod 22:19; Lev 20:15, 16.
Sodomy—Lev 18:22; 20:13.
Homosexuality—Lev 20:13.
Rape of betrothed virgin—Deut 22:25.
Priest’s daughter committing fornication—Lev 21:9.³⁸

The only way to satisfy the demands of the law was by death, for sin has no excuse (Rom 1:20). Not only has sin disrupted the relationship between human beings and their God, but it has also poisoned the relationship among human beings. The consequences of sin is death, but this did not come as a surprise to

³⁶Charles C. Ryrie, *A Survey of Biblical Doctrine* (Chicago: Moody, 1972) in P. M. Ukleja, “A Theological Critique of the Contemporary Homosexual Movement,” 174.

³⁷Kaiser, 297.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 298.

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the first couple who first sinned, for God had warned them of it (Gen 2:17), and it should not be a surprise to those who consciously continue in sin.

If in the times of the Old Testament the sinners often were punished right away, in the New Testament era they reap the consequences of their poor choices during this life, while the death sentence is postponed till the later time. Death is a natural result of sin and, at the same time, it is also the final punishment that comes to all impenitent sinners in the form of “the second death” or final eradication (Rev 20:10, 14, 15).³⁹ Jesus, in Matthew, describes the second death: “Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels’” (Matt 25:41).

The second death will be similar to the experience of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. As we saw it earlier, these two cities were annihilated because of their cruel wickedness, including homosexuality. The destruction of these cities was complete and not reversible, and Jesus Himself compared it with the last events of this sinful earth. He said, “Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot . . . on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all” (Luke 17:28, 29). The second death is the ultimate fate of everyone who consciously rebels against their Creator and Law-giver.

Conclusion

This brief study demonstrates that the Bible presents the original purity of marital relationship, which is based on the creation account as well as on the holiness of God and His law. The Bible is not silent on human sexual perversions such as adultery, incest, rape, bestiality, and homosexuality. The punishment for these sins was immediate death in the Old Testament times and ultimate annihilation by fire of every unrepentant sinner during the final eschatological judgment or at the time of the second death. The only way to a clean and pure life is through Jesus Christ, as in the case of any other forgiven sinner.

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³⁹John M. Fowler, *Sin*, in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, 252, 253.