

When people want to show that the Bible condemns same-sex relations - either to justify depriving LGBTQ people of civil rights, to condemn them morally, to preclude them from serving in church offices, or even to participate at all in faith communities (or for any other reason) - there are a few passages that typically get cited, usually with vigor.

I should stress that there are only a few passages that get cited, since out of the entire Bible - thirty-nine books in the Old Testament, twenty-seven in the New - there are in fact very few that appear to relate to the matter directly. I stress both the adverb "directly" and the verb "appear."

In terms of "directly": It is possible to take thousands of passage that have nothing to do with same-sex relations and say that they are definitive for them (as in the phrase that was already worn out decades ago: Adam and Eve not Adam and Steve).

In terms of "appear": virtually all of the passages that do seem to deal with the issue directly don't mean what people think they mean.

It is very, very, very difficult to read ancient texts with our modern forms of common sense without (wrongly) thinking that \*our\* common sense is the common sense that people had in the ancient world. People who have never considered the problem have, well, obviously never seen it. They just assume that common sense is common to all people at all times in every context and every place. No wonder people have so much difficulty understanding the commonsense views of people today in other parts of the world (Middle East, central Africa, Moscow: pick your spot), let alone people in other times/places (Germany in the late 20s; Romans in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century; whenever...).

This is especially a problem in the Bible. With respect to the current thread, here's the example I'll get to in a few posts. If the Bible says that a certain sex act is "unnatural," we almost automatically think we know what the author means by that. Hey, it's not natural for a man to have sex with a man. No vagina!! Yeah, well, that's actually not what ancient people meant by it being "unnatural." What they thought is not at ALL what we think. If we don't think that what THEY thought made it, then why should we agree with them that it is unnatural???

By the way, as I'll also be arguing (just to show why this thread matters) that no one in the ancient world condemned homosexuality. In the ancient world there was no such thing as homosexuality. Ancients certainly knew that men had sex with men and women had sex with women. But no one had any conception of "sexuality." Seems weird, right? Yup. Different world. You'll see what I mean in a later post.

Before getting to that, I want to turn to the one passage that virtually everyone starts with to condemn same-sex relations (and "homosexuality"). It comes in a brief passage in the Law of Moses, the book of Leviticus chapter 18. It does indeed look pretty straight forward at first glance:

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