

# Did Jesus Condemn Homosexuality?

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[ 0 : 00 ] Greetings and salutations. Welcome to the Providence podcast. My name is Chris Oswald, senior pastor at Providence Community Church. I've had this idea rolling around in my head for a while. I tend to treat certain ideas like a rock tumbler kind of situation. I just let them roll around in my brain for a while and then wait for them to become something somewhat presentable.

So today I'd like to talk with you about something that, as I said, I've thought about for a few months now and feel like I'm ready to discuss. The topic is the idea or the claim that is something like this, that Jesus never talked about homosexuality or Jesus never condemned homosexuality or something like that. So that's what this subject is going to be about. You've got younger kiddos that listen to the podcast and you don't want them to hear this discussion, then this would be goodbye kids. We'll catch up on the next episode of the Providence podcast. So I'll give you a second to turn this off if you're listening with young ears in the room and then otherwise we'll continue.

All right, so I want to talk about this idea that seems to come up, especially this time of year, and it really has not been a very old argument. This is a relatively new argument that Jesus never talked about homosexuality or condemned it. And this is also connected to a premise. There's a premise behind this line of thinking, something I refer to as red letter chauvinism. The idea that the words directly attributed to Jesus carry more weight than the rest of the Bible. And so I'd also like to deal with that issue as well. But first I'm going to kind of just somewhat accept the premise, the idea that Jesus never specifically condemned homosexuality. And I want to say first and foremost that we can be very certain that Jesus clearly defined marriage as being between a man and a woman. In Matthew 19, 4 through 6, he says,

Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female and said, Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let man not separate. So I want to speak to those who are thinking of changing their position on homosexuality based entirely on what Jesus did or did not say. I want to speak to those who would say, I'm rethinking my position on homosexuality because after all, Jesus never specifically condemned homosexuality. Well, let's just assume that things are as simple as you say they are.

And then we would just simply ask, well, okay, what did Jesus explicitly say? And what I've just shown you in this particular passage in Matthew 19 is that Jesus did explicitly define marriage as being between a man and a woman. So that we see clearly. So here's what I'd like to ask you. With that information in mind, those of you that are considering changing or have changed your perspective on homosexuality in the manner that I've described, would you be willing to do this? Would you be willing to say publicly, number one, my position on homosexuality has evolved because, quote unquote evolved, because I've found that Jesus never spoke about homosexuality. Therefore, all gay people should feel free to have as much gay sex as they would like. So that's the first thing you would say. And then secondly, you would say this, but as I wish to remain consistent to the hermeneutic that led me to that first point, I must hasten to add that marriage is off limits to all gay people because Jesus was clear on that account. So would you be willing to say that? I doubt many would. What does that tell you? What does that tell you? Well, it tells you that the motivation behind this hermeneutic that you're suggesting may not be purely a desire to live and die by the words of Jesus.

[ 5 : 00 ] What we're not looking at here is some kind of strict, pietistic loyalty to Christ, right? It's rather rather than an attempt to be loyal to Christ, it's probably more likely to be a desire to please the crowd. You know full well that if you were to go on social media and say, number one, I've concluded that Jesus never spoke about homosexuality. Therefore, all gay people should feel free to have as much gay sex as they like to. But number two, Jesus did say very clearly that marriage is between a man and a woman and therefore no gay people should ever get married. You know full well that if you said that, you would be doing nothing in terms of solving any controversies. You would be gaining no social status and so forth. So what I did just then was I temporarily granted a premise that I believe is a false premise and I'll show you why in a moment. That premise being that Jesus never explicitly condemned homosexuality.

But I granted that premise because I wanted to show that there probably is a motivation behind that prompt premise that is not allegiance to Christ. That has more to do with following the crowd.

Now, I'm just enough of an optimist to think that this first point, just by pointing out that, you know, well, he did tell us what marriage is. And I think that if you thought about it for a minute, you would not be willing to broadcast that message. I'm just optimistic enough to think that like that may talk some folks off the ledge. I'm going to provide a more granular defense in a moment and suggest that the whole notion that Jesus never condemned homosexuality is false.

But before I even get there, maybe some of you are realizing just by this first point I've made that, yeah, I'm not sure. I'm not sure my motivation is to stick true to Jesus. I think my motivation might be just to, you know, somehow pacify a rather hostile yet small segment of the community.

At this point, I want to just mention, just remind you that the devil's first strategy in Eden was to ask Eve, did God really say? Is it possible that this whole question is sort of wrapped up really in that same attitude, that same deceptive question? Did God really say, is that possibly what's going on here behind this premise? You know, you and I are definitely never beyond that temptation.

[ 8 : 00 ] And it seems to me that someone entertaining this strange new doctrine that hasn't existed until very recently that Jesus never condemned homosexuality. It seems to me that that that is coming from the same one who said, did God really say? You know, I don't think I'm being overly dramatic in that.

In 2 Corinthians 2.11, Paul writes to the church that he loves. He says, I wish you'd bear with me in a little foolishness. Do bear with me. For I feel a divine jealousy for you since I betrothed you to one husband to present you as a pure virgin to Christ, but I'm afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you're hearts of those who are thinking that way, I'm just going to be open and sincere. I'm just going to be open and sincere with you right now. I really think that's probably what's going on here is another Jesus has been introduced to you. And not the Jesus that we see in the Bible, but another Jesus, and it's introduced to you by the same one who said to Eve, did God really say?

If you think about it, the question, did God really condemn homosexuality? Did Jesus really condemn homosexuality? Why are you asking that question now? What's changed culturally? What's changed circumstantially in your life or in your culture or your society that's causing you to ask that question now? I believe that invoking a Jesus that never condemned homosexuality is invoking a false Jesus. But why do you think that's happening? Well, let me give you a few, you know, a few arguments that will hopefully disenchant you from what I think is what I think respectfully is the serpent's spell. Let me give you a few arguments that suggest that Jesus indeed did condemn homosexuality.

The first one would be in Matthew 11. Jesus is speaking woes over the cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida. And the central argument of this passage is that they have been hard-hearted. They've seen the works of Jesus and have not repented. So let me just read Matthew 11, 20 through 24.

Then he began to denounce the cities where most of his mighty works have been done. Because they did not repent. Woe to you, Chorazin, and woe to you, Bethsaida. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

[ 11 : 13 ] But I tell you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down to Hades.

For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you.

So Jesus is saying here that if the ancient cities, the ancient Gentile cities of Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom had seen the works done by Jesus, they would have repented.

Get that? You agree with that premise? That if the ancient Gentile cities of Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom had seen the works done by Jesus, they would have repented. So my question, that's what Jesus is saying. My question is this, repented of what?

What does Jesus think Sodom needed to repent of and would have repented of if they had seen his mighty works? What sin does Jesus have in view?

[ 12 : 23 ] Well, if we could suspend our red-letter chauvinism for a moment, we could look at Jude 7. Jude 7 says, Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.

Now you would say, well, yeah, but that's not Jesus. That's Jude. Well, do you know who Jude was? Jude was the brother of Jesus. Do you think that Jude had one opinion about the nature of Sodom and Jesus had another?

Okay. Well, there's another guy we could consult as well, one of the original 12 disciples who walked with Jesus, a man by the name of Peter. And in 2 Peter 2.6, we read the following.

If by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes, he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly, and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked, for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard, then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority.

Bold and willful, they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones. So what was Peter's understanding of the sin of Sodom? It was an unrighteous lust, a lust of defiling passions.

[ 14 : 14 ] Sensual conduct, he says. So where did Peter get his understanding of Sodom's sins? How did Peter come to believe that Sodom's central sin was the lust of defiling passion?

You see where I'm getting at? Jesus says that Sodom needed to repent. Repent of what? Well, what did Jesus' brother think Sodom's sin was?

Unnatural desire. What did Jesus' kind of lead disciple, Peter, think that Sodom's sin was? The lust of defiling passions.

Wicked sensuality. So here's a sincere question for you. If you're tempted to just make this argument that Jesus never condemned homosexuality.

A sincere question for you is, when Jesus said that Sodom needed to repent, what sin did he mean? And do you think he meant a different sin than his brother and his lead apostle meant?

[ 15 : 19 ] So that's one thing to consider. Before we move on from that passage, I think this is very important. Before we move on from Matthew 11, I think there's a very positive thing to point out here.

Don't miss the good news in this passage. Jesus says in Matthew 11 that if Sodom had seen his works, they would have repented. So this is very good news because it tells us that the sin of homosexuality is not intractable.

Even whole cities, according to Jesus, caught up in this particular sin can repent when they see the true Christ. So if we really want to be helpful, we should show the world the true Christ and not refashion him according to the spirit of the age.

You see, the fake Christ can't free someone caught in the sin of homosexuality or any other sin, but the true Christ can. Indeed, we actually see this happening in the early church.

In 1 Corinthians 9, the apostle Paul writes, And then listen to what Paul says.

[ 16 : 49 ] He says, Isn't that amazing?

Such were some of you. Some of the early saints of Corinth were caught up in the same sin as Sodom. But when they saw the true Christ and believed on him, they found repentance and freedom.

They were washed, they were sanctified, and they were justified. Again, if we want to be helpful to our homosexual neighbors, we'll show them the true Christ. The one who thought Sodom needed to repent.

So, so far we've gone through two arguments. First one, just a reminder. Jesus was extraordinarily explicit about the nature of marriage. And he said that between a man and a woman, this excludes homosexual marriage.

Which I don't think that, I don't think would win you any favors by proclaiming that message. Number two, we do see that Jesus believed Sodom had to repent of something.

[ 17 : 57 ] And when we press in a little bit to those closest to Jesus, we see that they believe that Sodom's central sin was sexual in nature. And perverse sexuality more than just sexual in nature.

Now let's go to a third argument. And that would be Jesus' use of the word pornea. This is the Greek word that is usually translated in our English Bibles as sexual immorality.

Jesus uses it multiple times. But for the sake of brevity, I'm going to just focus on two passages. The first one is Matthew 15, 19. Where Jesus says, So the first thing to notice here is that this is a list of sins.

The second thing to notice is that Jesus differentiates between adultery, which is cheating on your spouse, and pornea, which is here translated as sexual immorality. So what does pornea mean?

Well, this was settled. The meaning of pornea was settled for 2,000 years. Up until like last Tuesday, the meaning of this word was settled.

[ 19 : 12 ] It simply included all sexual activity outside of marriage. And in fact, I'm going to point out that it might have included even more than that. Okay, New Testament scholar James Edwards states that pornea can be found in Greek literature.

Now this is how we know what words mean. And we look at the context of the scriptures. We look at the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint. And we look at uses of the Greek in the contemporary times in which the words were used in scripture.

So James Edwards has done that work. He's looked at the contemporary uses of the word pornea across other Greek literature, not just the Bible. And he says this.

Pornea can be found in Greek literature with reference to a variety of illicit sexual practices, including adultery, fornication, prostitution, and homosexuality.

So the idea that Jesus never condemned homosexuality is extremely fallacious. It's simply not true.

[ 20 : 18 ] He repeatedly calls pornea a sin. And the contemporary understanding during his time of what pornea meant included adultery, fornication, prostitution, homosexuality, and so far.

Now, the category of pornea is very, very wide. In fact, some Greek scholars think it extends even into certain acts in the marriage bed.

Meaning it could imply that there are even sexual acts within marriage that could be unlawful. But that's a different topic for a different time. My point is simply to say that up until a few short years ago, everybody understood homosexuality was part of the pornea package, if you will.

And then secondly, to point out that Jesus calls pornea a sin, right alongside murder, adultery, theft, and so forth. Now, let's go to one more usage that Jesus uses, the word pornea.

And that's in Revelation 21. Let's read Revelation 21, 5 through 8. And he who is seated on the throne said, Behold, I am making all things new.

[ 21 : 35 ] Also, he said, Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true. And he said to me, It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment.

The one who conquers will have this heritage. And I will be his God and he will be my son. Verse 8. But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, here's pornea, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.

Now, I bring this passage up to you because it first highlights another use of the word pornea amongst a bunch of other damnable sins, which ties in with 1 Corinthians 9 and other places throughout Scripture.

But I also bring this up to you because now we're going to start touching on this broader issue of what I referred to as red-letter chauvinism. Red-letter chauvinism being this idea that somehow the words of Jesus carry more weight than the rest of Scripture.

So I brought you to this passage because I want to ask you, who is speaking in this passage? Who is seated on the throne? By the way, it's not who is seated, but who was seated on the throne, as if there was an installation that occurred.

[ 23 : 12 ] Who is the Alpha and the Omega? Do you feel comfortable saying that this is Jesus speaking here? Now, another thing to bear in mind is that we're getting this revelation from John.

And you like John. You like John's descriptions of Jesus in the Gospel of John, right? So we're okay there, too.

I brought this up because I want to poke some holes in this general idea of prioritizing Jesus' words in Scripture over other words in Scripture.

So right now, I'm looking at a red-letter Bible. There's the pages scrolling. And as I'm looking at this, what we can say is that Revelation 1 through 3, first three chapters, are almost entirely in red letters.

You know, those are all direct quotations from Jesus there. And then as we scan through Revelation, we see a little bit of red in chapter 4. And then again in chapter 16.

[ 24 : 24 ] And then a few more places in chapter 22. That passage that I just read to you, however, from Revelation 21, that isn't in red letters, which I find surprising.

I actually turned to that passage assuming it would be in red letters in my red-letter Bible. But I guess if you look at it more closely, specifically verse 7, well, let me read it to you.

To the one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God, and he will be my son. So I guess technically this is not Jesus.

This is God the Father. And here's a serious question. What's the difference? I'm not being sarcastic.

Like, I really want you to think about it. Is Jesus God? I bet you'd say yes. Okay, great. If not, by the way, then who the heck cares what he thinks about anything? So, is Jesus God?

[ 25 : 29 ] Yes. Okay. What's the difference between Jesus and God? In terms of authority. Does Jesus have more authority than God?

Does Jesus have less authority than God? There's no difference, right? So what's the difference between Jesus' words and God's words? See, there's no difference.

All throughout the Gospels, we see Jesus quoting the Old Testament as authoritative. Jesus takes the Old Testament as authoritative.

So what should you do, Mr. or Mrs. Jesus adherent? He quotes from the Old Testament 180 times. Jesus sees the Old Testament as God's word.

Man shall not live by bread alone, but only on the words that proceed from God. Now, if the Old Testament is God's words, or Jesus thought so, and we're going to take Jesus' words.

[ 26 : 39 ] See, you see where we're getting? We're really winding up in some pretty serious exposure, some undercutting of the entire red-letter chauvinist premise.

So when we say Jesus never condemned homosexuality, you know, that's factually erroneous, as I've shown you. He said that Sodom needed to repent.

He said that pornea was a sin. But it's also categorically erroneous. Pitching Jesus' words against God's word, it just doesn't make any categorical sense.

In fact, I think the only place this leads us is to making Jesus not God. I think that this whole red-letter chauvinism thing winds up getting us on a train that leads to one final stop.

Jesus was a good moral teacher, and his words are good for us in that respect. I'm not sure I'm right about that, to be honest with you.

[ 27 : 44 ] I'm sure I'm right about a lot of this other stuff. Not sure I'm right about that. But what I'm seeing here is that when we, as soon as we become red-letter chauvinists, we've got a false Jesus.

I'm confident in that. I'll leave it there. I'm almost finished. But I want to show you one more thing in Revelation 21, another reason I brought this up.

So in verse 7 through 8, Jesus says, or God says, tomato, tomato, as Michael Scott would say, the one who conquers will have this heritage.

This is Jesus saying this, or God saying this. Again, is there a difference? The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God, and he will be my son.

That's verse 7. Verse 8. But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.

[ 28 : 54 ] So here, in addition to condemning pornea, and a bunch of other sins, Jesus also condemns cowardice and faithlessness.

And I'm sorry to throw this punch, but I do it in love, I promise you. Do you think maybe that what's behind this novel suggestion you're tempted to adopt, namely that Jesus never condemned homosexuality, and therefore you won't either, do you think maybe that what's behind that brand new idea that didn't even exist, say, you know, 10 years ago in any substantial way, is it possible that what's going on here is related to cowardice and faithlessness?

Listen, friends, I know it's tough out there. I know it's hard to be called names, to lose friends, but I just want to remind you, as someone who cares, you know, your spiritual forefathers endured much worse.

And now they are with God forever in glory. And I want you to be there too. So man up, or woman up.

As Paul says in Romans, let God be true and every man a liar. I don't know who will listen to this. I record this just as a complete stab in the dark, trusting that God will send it to someone who needs to hear it.

[ 30 : 33 ] And so I do say to you, in all seriousness and sincerity, I mean this in love. But I just want to leave you with something that is written in the book of Hebrews.

In chapter 10, verse 35, to a group of people who were feeling the pressure of a culture turning against them, the writer of Hebrews says this, Therefore, do not throw away your confidence.

Do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward, for you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what is promised.

For yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay. But my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.

But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls. So that's about all I've got to share on this subject.

[ 31 : 51 ] I'd love to hear from you. I imagine basically everybody who listens to this knows how to get a hold of me. But yeah, after a couple months of thinking about this, this idea that I've been hearing pop up left and right, I wanted to just address it.

I think that there are real categorical problems with this idea, and that I think there are actually factual problems with this idea. I do believe that Jesus did address homosexuality, and I also believe that it is a terrible idea to pit the words of Jesus against the rest of the scriptures.

Jesus certainly doesn't do that himself. Well, I pray this would be a blessing to you and an encouragement to trust God, even in the midst of a fiery trial. You have need of endurance?

I do too. God has promised to be faithful and fill us full of fresh faith when we double down on what he tells us to do in the book of Proverbs.

To trust in the Lord with our whole hearts and not on our own understanding. In all our ways, acknowledge him, and he will direct our paths. I'm praying for you out there. Stay strong.

[ 33 : 00 ] Bye-bye.