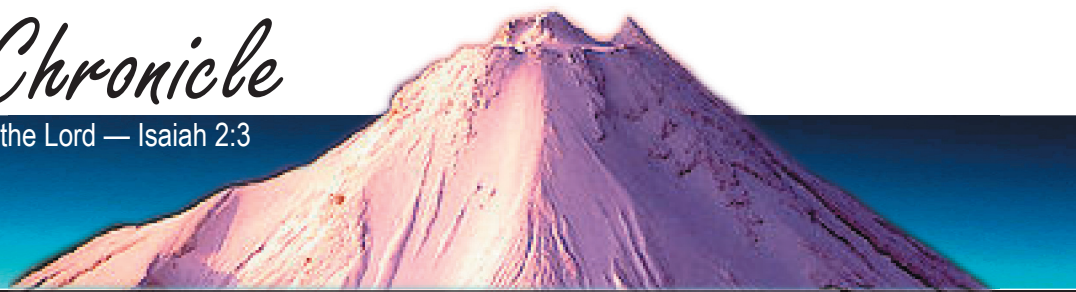


# The Summit Chronicle

Come let us go up to the mountain of the Lord — Isaiah 2:3



Issue 17 Vol 2

A monthly publication for the church of Christ worldwide

May 2009

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## Contributing Writers for this Issue's Articles

- **Rex Banks**
- **Brad Harrub**
- **John W. Moore**

## Scripture of the Month

"Be gracious to me O God,  
according to your kindness;  
according to the multitude of  
your tender mercies blot out  
my transgressions. Wash me  
thoroughly from my iniquity and  
cleanse me from my sin."

— Psalm 51:1

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Greetings brethren,

If you're new to *The Summit Chronicle*, we would like to extend a very warm welcome to you and your loved ones as we greet you in the name of our Lord Jesus!

**Issue 17** is set to bring you—as is the tradition of *The Summit Chronicle*—powerful, faith-building articles from equally faithful and sound brethren.

We would like to thank those of you who have sent email comments regarding how you have found the articles of *The Summit Chronicle* to be very uplifting and encouraging to your faith. While it is a very rewarding work, we are merely instruments of Yahweh in getting His Word out to the world and to His called-out. Its also extremely rewarding to work with our contributing writers without whose work this electronic magazine would not be possible.

Issue 17 wraps up a couple of the series you have been reading from brother Brad Harrub on *Confronting Unbelief* and *Homosexuality: Lifestyle or Perversion?*

We are very fortunate to have had brother Brad allow us to publish his articles which are vital to add to the Christian repertoire against anything which rises up to the knowledge of knowing Christ Jesus our Lord. He is a brilliant creation scientist and if you haven't had the opportunity to hear him speak, we encourage you to do so. You can look him up on **BradHarrub.com** or on the Focus Press website.

Brad has visited New Zealand in the past conducting seminars and each time has been fantastic and very profitable for enriching our faith.

Brother Rex Banks, another great defender of the faith, continues his article on Matthew 24. Rex has done an excellent job with this often misunderstood and misinterpreted passage of Scripture. He

does, however, make it easy and logical for you to follow along and understand the context discussed in Matthew 24.

Its a very interesting and often-talked about passage in the religious circles but with conclusions and interpretations that are anything but accurate. Having a scholar like brother Rex will shed some light on this subject as you read the remaining of the article.

Rex has written numerous articles in the form of series so if you would like to read another series of his, simply go to the official site of the New Plymouth church and access it for free on **[www.churchofchrist.org.nz](http://www.churchofchrist.org.nz)** or alternatively email [SummitChronicle@xtra.co.nz](mailto:SummitChronicle@xtra.co.nz).

We have an article featured in this issue on page 8 called 'The Fullness of Time' which serves as a reminder of how perfect Yahweh's timing is in bringing His only unique Son into this world to die on the cross and bring salvation to mankind through that sacrifice.

Only Yahweh can time things like that! Ecclesiastes 3 comes to mind concerning how everything has been 'appointed' for it's own time. And at the right time, the gospel would spread easily throughout the world—with the roads been made thanks to the Romans love for engineering—and the world was at peace.

Sometimes we are very impatient and want things to happen like right now but God's thoughts and ways are far superior to our's so we just have to wait and see the hand of Yahweh working to cause things to happen at the right time for us as well.

In the service of the Most High God,

**Jaracz J. Heather & Allan G. Fowell**  
*Co-founders of The Summit Chronicle*

# CONFRONTING UNBELIEF (Part 2)

by Brad Harrub

## COMPROMISING CHRISTIANS

But that is not the most heartrending part. The truly tragic part is that many Christians are now clinging to these fictitious theories that are founded on unbelief. People who have confessed the name of Christ are suddenly giving more credence to a CNN news report, than to the inspired, God-breathed, Holy Bible. They, too, are willing to toss aside those powerful words—"In the beginning God created..."—in favor of man's latest scientific theory. Sadly, in the process of discounting the validity of God's Word, these Christians are undermining the very foundation of their own religion. If they question the way the Bible explains how man arrived on this Earth, then what makes them think they can believe what it says regarding salvation and the afterlife? If God did not do it the way He said He did, then why should we believe He sent His only Son to die for our sins? Have Christians not realized the embodiment of all that they are compromising when they buy into humanism, evolutionism, materialism, and skepticism?

School-age children today are receiving a steady diet of unbelief in the classroom. Even in Christian homes, a lackadaisical attitude has allowed a generation to grow up not fully trusting in God's Word. So what has brought about our wane in keeping this propaganda out of our homes? Is it because we have given up and believe in evolution? No, I dare say few Christians would admit openly to being an evolutionist or humanist. However, in the face of what many believe is "overwhelming" scientific evidence, and not wanting to offend either "religious fanatics" or evolutionists (in the name of "political correctness"), some Christians feel intimidated and therefore try to "marry" these two concepts. This

position allows Christians to believe in God and yet accept certain portions of evolutionary theory. By uniting the two, Christians believe they will find a safe "middle ground." However, the ground on which they are standing is not only treacherous, but also soul threatening!

## FAITH—NOT A BLIND LEAP

The story could be repeated in just about any congregation. A young man grows up in the church. Following his baptism, he takes an active role in leading singing and waiting on the Lord's Table. Everyone that is familiar with this young man says the same thing: "He is a strong Christian." And yet, within months after entering college, this "strong Christian" is on the path to becoming an unbeliever. His decision to leave the church was not sudden. Rather, it occurred over several weeks, as this young man wrestled with questions tossed out by his newfound friends.

The problem was this young man never developed a foundation for his faith. In fact, a great deal of his belief system was built around the beliefs of his parents. And to compound the problem, on occasions when this young man sought out answers on which to solidify his faith, he commonly received the same answer: "Well son, we don't know the answer for everything. Sometimes you just have to believe—you have to take a blind leap of faith." In other words, this young man "believed" but he did not know **why** he believed. He was living an "inherited" religion.

So picture an eighteen year-old who suddenly finds his faith challenged by unbelievers. His friends (and professors) confront him with questions and information that directly conflicts with his belief in the God of the Bible. And sadly, all this young man has to defend himself with is the notion that he had

taken a "blind leap." Having, therefore, no good reason to keep on believing, when faced with tough questions, this young man falls headlong into the trap set for him by the "roaring lion"—our adversary, the Devil (1 Pet. 5:8). **Satan was successful in his task because we failed in ours.** How many souls have been forfeited as our young people find themselves in a similar situation? They are presented with problems or alleged Bible discrepancies, and due to a lack of sufficient knowledge, they cast their entire belief system aside and begin supporting and defending worldly views. Unfortunately this young man was not the only one we have told that faith is a "blind leap." Literally thousands have **not** been trained "in the way he should go" (Prov. 22:6), because we did not show them the evidences upon which their faith should have been based.

If we are ever going to break this cycle then the first thing we must teach our young people is that faith is **not** a blind leap. We have the evidences around us to support our beliefs. We can prove the existence of God. We can prove the Bible is the inspired Word of God. We can prove Jesus Christ's deity. And we can show the foundation of Christ's church. But it all starts with establishing the fact that the Christian religion is not simply a "close my eyes and hope it's true" belief. Only after we establish that primary principle will we have a foundation strong enough upon which to build.

Peter stated that Christians should be "ready always to give answer to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you" (1 Pet. 3:15). We are commanded to "contend earnestly for the faith, once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). With an increasing number of people



doubting God's existence, Jesus' deity, and the inspiration of the Bible, the Christian will find an increased demand upon him to be able to defend these things. Paul stressed that we should "prove all things," and then having done so, "hold fast to that which is good" (1 Thess. 5:21). It was Paul's custom to teach the gospel by presenting the evidences documenting the truthfulness of Christianity (see Acts 17:2-3; 19:8). That is, in fact, how Peter preached the first Gospel sermon—by presenting the evidence in a defense of Christ's resurrection (Acts 2).

Through a study of the evidences upon which Christianity is based, Christians can come to see that Christianity is not a "pie in the sky" or an "I hope so by and by" kind of religion. On the contrary, Christianity is grounded in historical fact. Its roots are deep and its precepts are provable. Through a study of Christian evidences, we can show young people that they can: (a) **know** God exists, (b) **know** Jesus is God's Son; and (c) **know** the Bible is God's inspired, inerrant, authoritative Word. In so doing, we can give young people a clear view of their God, His Son, His church, and their future home of heaven.

Truth does not shrink from exhaustive examination, for it has nothing to fear. Rather, truth welcomes the searchlight of the severest scrutiny, unfailingly confident that it cannot be disproved. A religion that discourages logical examination of its claims is tacitly admitting the doubtfulness of its position. Christianity has no fear of submitting its beliefs to the critical examination of skeptics. Nor does Christianity fear to have its proponents study the claims of other religions (or no religion at all). Truth will not bend or break beneath the onslaught. A faith that cannot withstand a terse, critical examination is a faith not worth having in the first place. As young people are shown the manifold evidences that prove God's existence, Jesus'

Sonship, and the Bible's inspiration—and as they examine other claims (atheism, agnosticism, skepticism, denominationalism, etc.) under the dissecting microscope of God's Word—eventually they will come to accept, and be able to defend, the one true religion of the one true God.

Let us, like Paul, never be ashamed of the gospel, recognizing that it is the "power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16). Let us study diligently to learn it well, and then in turn teach it to our children from the time we arise in the morning until the time that we lie down to sleep at night (Deut. 11:18-21), so that when the time comes for them to "leap," they will find themselves able to see a firm foundation underfoot.

### A CALL TO BATTLE

The statistics are chilling. Even by conservative estimates, those of us in the churches of Christ are losing between 60% and 90% of our young people after they graduate from high school. "Little Johnny" doesn't just leave the home—he also walks out the doors of the church building, never to darken them again. He becomes another casualty in a silent war.

But it does not have to end this way. Christians can make a difference. We have "turned the world upside down" in the past, and we should be doing so right now. The solution is simple. We must return to God's Word, and we must be prepared to defend it. In a day in which people are seeking most of their counsel from self-help books and talk shows, we need to return to the words of our Creator. But here is the cold, hard truth. Studying God's Word takes time and effort—something more than sitting on a sofa mindlessly absorbing whatever comes across a video screen. We are going to have to rise up and answer the battle call, or else the next casualty of war may be one of our own beloved children.

We need to go back and teach our children that, in fact, God does exist. We need to provide the proof for His existence so that our own faith can be strengthened, and so our children will fully comprehend that faith is not simply a "blind leap." There are even some congregations of the Lord's church that need to go back and reestablish this fundamental truth. We need to fully comprehend the cosmological, teleological, and anthropological arguments for the existence of God.

But it does not stop there. There are four additional things that can help us confront unbelief, by simply using the acrostic **R-E-A-D**.

**R = Read the Bible for yourself, and with your children.**

In the time that I have been a Christian, I have been amazed at how little time people spend actually reading God's Word. We live in a world today where everyone is looking for the easy way out. We want things quick and simple. We know we can lose weight by cutting back on food and by exercising, but we'd rather pop a couple of pills or buy some lotion and hope that works. I'm afraid people are treating their spirituality the same way. They know the Bible is God's Word, and that it holds the key to their eternal salvation. But rather than reading and studying this book, people look for an easier way out. Maybe it's just accepting whatever they hear each week from the pulpit, or maybe it's the latest devotional book. But the fact is that many people are not reading God's Word, and our children and grandchildren realize it. And yet we have the nerve to be surprised when they toss aside God's Word and pledge their allegiance to something found in a science textbook.

Not long ago, I had a conversation with someone who made the comment: "I just wish I could have been around when God spoke to men directly. Think about how powerful that would be to have

been Moses or Abraham and heard from God directly.” Have we forgotten that the Bible is God’s Word? It is His way of speaking directly to us today. **But we must read it in order to hear what He is saying to us!**

**E = Educate yourself**

Several years ago, Guy N. Woods, the late editor of the *Gospel Advocate*, carried out an extensive survey among churches of Christ nationwide. The results were not very flattering. According to the survey: 40% of those surveyed admitted that they attended only one worship service a week; 50% indicated that they did not know why churches of Christ do not use instrumental music in worship; 10% believed that one church is as good as another; 90% did not subscribe to a religious publication; 75% could not find the plan of salvation in the Bible.

How much time, energy, and money do we spend learning? I am afraid that within the church we have reared a generation of people that knows one must hear, believe, confess, repent, and be baptized. They may even know some of the Scriptural reasons for things like the Lord’s Supper on the first day of every week, or why we baptize by immersion. But that is pretty much the extent of their knowledge base. The Hebrew writer put it this way: “For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not strong meat. For everyone that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe” (Heb. 5:12-13, KJV). **Sadly, we have too many babes in the church today!** Men and women who have been Christians for decades are still babes in Christ, and the atheists are rapidly killing them on the battlefield.

When we think about how we can better educate ourselves, we should ask:

1. Can I prove the Bible is God’s

inspired Word?

2. Can I point out secular, historical and archaeological evidence to help demonstrate the existence and deity of Christ?

3. What are some ways that I can prove the existence of God, without just saying, “The Bible says so”?

Questions like these are easily answered—with diligence and study.

**A = Anticipate questions**

This one is crucially important. As faithful Christians, we need to understand that we will be challenged and questioned about our beliefs. Those questions should be looked upon as opportunities to strengthen our faith, not time-consuming ordeals that make us uncomfortable or take us away from our Saturday afternoon football game. These are teaching opportunities that can be effectively used for evangelism, as long as we are prepared.

We need to learn to anticipate questions and be ready to answer them when they deal with such matters as: (a) the existence of God; (b) whether or not evolution is a proven fact; (c) the inspiration of the Bible; (d) the problem of evil, pain, and suffering; (e) the error of theistic evolution; (f) dinosaurs and the age of the Earth, etc. We must be proactive—not reactive. By doing so, we can rear a generation of children who are able to adequately defend their faith in a world that boldly proclaims there is no God.

**D = Don’t rely on others**

A great deal of time could be spent discussing how parents have turned over to others the responsibility of rearing their children. Parents look to day-care centers, teachers, Bible class teachers, and preachers to educate and train their children. The Bible is very clear on who is to teach the children—their parents! If your child is going to learn the will

of God, such instruction needs to come from those parents (and grandparents). The world has been trying to undercut and discredit the authenticity and authority of the Bible for decades. It is past time that we, as Christians, fought back.

For generations, people have railed against God and the Bible. You may recall, in Jeremiah 36, King Jehoiakim took his penknife, slashed the Old Testament Scriptures to pieces, and tossed them into a fire (Jer. 36:22-23). During the Middle Ages, those caught translating or distributing the Scriptures often were subjected to imprisonment, torture, and even death. Religionists of that day did not want the average man on the street to know what the Bible said. Centuries later, the French skeptic Voltaire boasted: “Within fifty years, the Bible no longer will be discussed among educated people.” The Bible still is being discussed among educated people, while the name of Voltaire languishes in relative obscurity. Like the blacksmith’s anvil—which wears out many hammers but itself remains unaffected—the Bible continues to wear out the skeptics’ innocuous charges, all the while remaining unscathed. Governments come and go. Nations rise and fall. People live and die. Jesus warned that “heaven and earth shall pass away” (Mt. 24:35), but went on to note, “My words shall not pass away.” Isaiah wrote: “The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand forever” (40:8). The question remains, will we faithfully teach it to our children and grandchildren?

**CONCLUSION**

Why do we find the world in the state it is today? Tim LaHaye, in his book, *The Battle for the Mind*, suggested: “Our present society is in a state of moral decay, not because the majority of Americans love degeneracy, but because the influence of humanism has been

**Continued on page 8**

# MATTHEW 24 (Part 4)

by Rex Banks

## Part 4: Matthew 24:15-28

### Signs Which *Do* Indicate that the Destruction of Jerusalem is Near

In our last article we discussed Matt 24:4-14, where Jesus speaks of events which precede the destruction of Jerusalem but which *do not* signify that this destruction is *at hand*. However there are also signs which indicate that the destruction is *at hand* (v 33) and which warn believers to *escape* (e.g. v 16). Like the events of Matt 24:4-14, these signs would come during the lifetime of “this generation” (v 34)

**Matt 24:15-21 (NIV)** “So when you see standing in the holy place (“standing where it should not be”[Mk13:14]) ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel - let the reader understand - 16 then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. 17 Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house. 18 Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak. 19 How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! 20 Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. 21 For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now--and never to be equaled again.”

a. At the appearance of a *particular sign*, “‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel” (see below) “those who are in Judea” are to flee to the mountains”(v 16). Clearly the destructive event heralded by this sign is *local* rather than universal, since it affects the inhabitants of *Judea*, and the mountains offer protection (v 16). *Jesus is speaking of the destruction of*

*Jerusalem*. Lot’s family was warned to “flee to the mountains” to avoid a local disaster, (Gen 19:17) and the inhabitants of Judea are to do the same.

b. vv 17 - 20. Typically roofs were flat and were used as walkways, eating places and such like (v 17) and those upon the housetops, like those working in the fields (v 18) were to take immediate flight. Various factors would make flight more difficult (vv 19, 20) “yet it was right to pray for a mitigation of the circumstances, that it might be as mild as possible” (Barnes). True, “calamity is before us; sickness, pain, bereavement, and death are in our path; yet, though we know that these things must come upon us, it is right to pray that they may come in as mild a manner as may be consistent with the will of God. We must die, but it is right to pray that the pains of our dying may be neither long nor severe” (ibid).

c. Reference to the *Sabbath* reminds us that Jesus is discussing a *local* disaster which impacts upon *Jews*. Flight upon a Sabbath day would have been complicated. The gates of the city were usually closed (Neh 13:19-22) and moreover most Jews refused to travel more than about a mile from home on that day. Christian Jews could expect little help if they violated this man-made law.

d. Reference to “great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now--and never to be equaled again” (v 21) has convinced some that the destruction cannot have been local. They point out that while the fall of Jerusalem caused great distress, the destruction caused by the Flood of Noah’s day and other events surpassed it. However this argument ignores the use of such proverbial expressions

elsewhere in scripture. For example:

- Speaking of the *first* destruction of Jerusalem, Daniel says “for under the whole heaven there has *not been done anything like what was done to Jerusalem*” (Dan 9:12).
- Joel uses similar language: “There has *never been anything like it*, nor will there be again after it to the years of many generations” (Joel 2:2).
- Through Ezekiel God says “I will do among you what I have not done, and the like of which I will never do again” (Ezek 5:9).

e. The claim is made in various ancient writings that because Christians took this warning seriously, they escaped from Jerusalem prior to the destruction of the city. For example the historian **Eusebius** (260-340 AD) wrote:

“But the people of the church in Jerusalem had been commanded by a revelation, vouchsafed to approved men there before the war, to leave the city and to dwell in a certain town of Perea called Pella” (**Ecclesiastical History** Bk 3 chpt 5).

**Epiphanius** (c 315-403), Bishop of Salamis wrote in his **Panarion**:

“The Nazoraean sect exists in Beroea near Coele Syria, in the Decapolis near the region of Pella, and in Bashan in the place called Cocaba, which in Hebrew is called Chochabe. That is where the sect began, when all



the disciples were living in Pella after they moved from Jerusalem, since Christ told them to leave Jerusalem and withdraw because it was about to be besieged. For this reason they settled in Peraea and there, as I said, they lived. This is where the Nazoraean sect began” (29:7:7-8).

“Their sect began after the capture of Jerusalem. For when all those who believed in Christ settled at that time for the most part in Peraea, in a city called Pella belonging to the Decapolis mentioned in the gospel, which is next to Batanaea and the land of Bashan, then they moved there and stayed...” (30:2:7).

b. “The Hebrew root for ‘abomination’ is shaqats, ‘to be filthy,’ ‘to loathe,’ ‘to abhor,’ from which is derived shiqquts, ‘filthy,’ especially “idolatrous.” This word is used to describe specific forms of idolatrous worship that were especially abhorrent, as of the Ammonites (1 Kings 11:5, 7); of the Moabites (1 Kings 11:7; 2 Kings 23:13). When Daniel undertook to specify an abomination so surpassingly disgusting to the sense of morality and decency, and so aggressive against everything that was godly as to drive all from its presence and leave its abode desolate, he chose this as the strongest among the several synonyms, adding the qualification ‘that maketh desolate’ (Daniel 11:31; 12:11), Septuagint *bdeug-ma er-e-mo-se-os*.” (ISBE).

c. Historical fulfilment of Dan 11:31. In Dan 11:31 we have “a veiled - yet scathing - denunciation of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who discontinued the regular sacrifices in the Jerusalem temple and put in their place a ‘desolating abomination,’ usually thought to be an idol, pagan altar, or pagan sacrifice (cf. 1 Macc 1:54; 4:43; 2 Macc 6:5; ...) ... The phrase itself is a derogatory pun on the divine epithet *ba’al shamem*, Lord of the heavens (G: *Zeus Olympios*), to whom Antiochus IV dedicated the Jerusalem temple (2 Macc 6:2)” (New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis).

d. The following from 1 and 2 Maccabees are relevant:

“After Antiochus had defeated Egypt in the year one hundred and forty-three (which would be 167BC), he returned and went up to Israel and to Jerusalem with a strong force. He insolently invaded the sanctuary ... (1 Macc 1:20-22).

“On the fifteenth day of the month Kislev in the year 145,

‘the abomination of desolation’ was set up on the altar of the Lord” (1 Macc 1:54).

“The Temple Desecrated: Not long after this, the king sent an Athenian senator to force the Jews to abandon the customs of their ancestors and live no longer by the laws of God; also to profane the temple in Jerusalem and dedicate it to Olympian Zeus... The Gentiles filled the temple with debauchery and revelry; they amused themselves with prostitutes ... even in the sacred court. They also brought into the temple things that were forbidden, so that the altar was covered with abominable offerings prohibited by the laws” (2 Macc 6:1-5).

## 2. Daniel 9:27 and 12:11.

a. Clearly when Jesus speaks of the “‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel” in connection with a *future* disaster which will affect those in Judea, He does *not* have in mind Antiochus IV Epiphanes and the events recorded in the books of Maccabees (above). However in connection with *another* future event, Daniel also speaks of “one who makes desolate” and who will come “on the wing of abominations” (9:27).

b. Briefly, in Daniel 9:24-27 we have the so-called “70 weeks” or “70 Heptads” prophecy, a prophecy which begins with the “issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem” (v 25) and which ends with the destruction of “the city” (of Jerusalem) by “the people of the prince who is to come” (the Romans under Titus) (v 26). It is in connection with *this Roman* destruction of Jerusalem, that Daniel speaks of “one who makes desolate” and who will come “on the wing of abominations” (9:27).

There is no real way of determining the source and reliability of the traditions which lie behind these and similar references.

## The “abomination of desolation”

The sign warning that immediate disaster is at hand is “ ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel” “standing in the holy place” (v 15). It is helpful to say a word about Daniel’s use of this expression.

### 1. Daniel 11:31.

a. Beginning at Daniel 11:4 we have a prophecy concerning events to follow the death of Alexander the Great, particularly the activities of the Seleucid and Ptolemy dynasties (the “king of the North” and the “king of the South”) which impact upon the Jewish people. Daniel 11:21-35 describes the activities of a Seleucid king who is described as a “despicable person” (v 21). His forces “desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and do away with the regular sacrifice” and they “set up the *abomination of desolation*” (v 31).

c. Very likely, reference to “the abomination of desolation” in Daniel 12:11 is also a reference to the *Roman destruction of 70 AD*, and the Lord’s words “let the reader understand” (Matt 24:15) connect with Daniel’s remark that “those who have insight will understand” (Dan 12:10). Having access to these prophecies, first century Christians were indeed people of *understanding* and *insight*, able to heed these warnings. Daniel had been told to “conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time” (Dan 12: 4 c.f. 9) and in due time Jesus reveals their meaning.

d. Matthew says: “Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation ... standing in the holy place .... flee to the mountains ... “ and Luke provides the key to understanding the specifics of this prophecy by recording that Jesus also said: “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her *desolation* is at hand. Then let those who are in Judea flee ...” (Lk 21: 20). Note that the term “surrounded” is a present participle, “being surrounded.” Clearly it would be too late to flee the city *after it had been surrounded*.

e. Josephus records that Cestus Gallus began to lay siege to Jerusalem with the Twelfth Legion and goes on to say:

“It then happened that Cestius was not conscious either how the besieged despaired of success, nor how courageous the people were for him; and so he recalled his soldiers from the place, and by despairing of any expectation of taking it, without having received any disgrace, *he retired from the city, without any reason in the world* (emphasis mine) “ (**Wars** Bk 2, chpt 19, 7).

**R. C. Foster** suggests that “Since Cestius Gallus started to lay siege to Jerusalem and then retired without any

evident reason, it was probably at this juncture that the Christians fled.” This may be the case. On the other hand, it was in *A.D. 66* that the Roman general Cestius Gallus surrounded Jerusalem with the Twelfth Legion and the text seems to suggest that the danger is *immediate*.

f. Some argue that by use of the expression *the holy place*, Matthew must mean the Temple, rather than the city of Jerusalem or the land of Palestine, but this is not the case. Jerusalem is called the “holy city” in the “70 Weeks” prophecy (Dan 9:24 c.f. Neh 11:1 ;) and Palestine is called the “holy land” in scripture (Psa 78: 51). Matthew elsewhere speaks of Jerusalem as “the holy city” (4:5; 27: 53). It is true that the expression “the holy place” can refer to the Temple, but “the Roman standards were actually introduced into the Temple only after it had been entered by Titus, that, too late to serve as a warning for the Christians of Judea” (**Catholic Encyclopaedia**).

**Matt 24:22** “If those days had not been cut short, no one (lit *no flesh*) would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.”

a. *No flesh* is limited by context. It’s true that “all flesh” can refer to every living creature (Gen 7:15) but it need not have this general meaning. In Isaiah 66:16 we read that “the Lord will execute judgment by fire And by his sword on *all flesh*,” but the judgment in view is not the *universal* judgment upon all mankind, but judgment upon Israelites who are amenable to the Mosaic Law (those who ‘eat swine’s flesh [v 17]). In Matt 24:22, “all flesh” refers to those first century inhabitants of Judea threatened by the might of Rome.

b. The “days” that are “cut short” are the *days of the siege*. Interestingly **Josephus** tells us that following the siege Titus viewed the fortifications

of the city and exclaimed “We have certainly had God for our assistant in this war, and it was no other than God who ejected the Jews out of these fortifications; for what could the hands of men or any machines do towards overthrowing these towers?” (**Wars** Bk 6 chpt 9, 1).

c. Perhaps the siege was shortened by the presence of what Josephus calls “three treacherous factions in the city” (**Wars** Bk 5, chpt 1, 4). Josephus explains that these factions waged war with one another while attempting to defend Jerusalem against the Romans, adding that it was “as if they had on purpose, *done it to serve the Romans*, (emphasis mine) by destroying what the city had laid up against the siege, and by thus cutting off the nerves of their own power” (ibid). He continues:

“Accordingly, it so came to pass, that all the places that were about the temple were burnt down, and were become an intermediate desert space, ready for fighting on both sides of it; and that almost all that corn was burnt, *which would have been sufficient for a siege of many years* (emphasis mine). So they were taken by the means of the famine, *which it was impossible they should have been, unless they had thus prepared the way for it by this procedure.*”

5. “And now, as the city was engaged in a war on all sides, from these treacherous crowds of wicked men, the people of the city, between them, were like a great body torn in pieces. The aged men and the women were in such distress by their internal calamities that they wished for the Romans, and earnestly hoped for an external war, in order to their delivery from their domestical miseries.”

d. The days were shortened “for the sake of the elect.” “The term ‘elect’ (in Matthew only at 22:14; 24:22, 24, 31; plus the variant at 20:16) most naturally refers to all true believers, chosen by God; so it is reasonable to assume that it does so here” (D.A Carson). The longer the turmoil, the greater the hardships, and inevitably this would affect Christians. (Next **Warnings about False Christs**).

**Continued from page 4**

greater on our culture than the influence of the church” (189). The time has come to reverse that trend! Christ said: Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a lamp, and put it under a bushel, but on a stand; and it shineth unto all that are in the house. Even so let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven (Mt. 5:13-16).

God’s people are to uphold that which is right, and oppose that which is wrong. In so doing, we set an example for all around us. We must oppose atheism/humanism because its teachings are contrary to the teachings of God’s Word. We must come to understand, and help others to understand, the folly of human “wisdom” such as is found in societies current philosophies.

For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and discernment of the discerning will I bring to naught. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of the world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world through its

wisdom knew not God, it was God’s good pleasure through the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe (1 Cor. 1:19-21).

Human wisdom leads away from God if not founded on, guarded by, and subject to biblical revelation. Human wisdom is at war with God (Rom. 8:7), and is foolishness as far as God is concerned (1 Cor. 3:19-20). Christians must reject unbelief, and help others to do the same.

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**The Fullness of Time**

But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons (Galatians 4:4-5).

Those who would deeply ponder the body and shed blood of Jesus weekly, must begin by looking into God’s wonderful plan. Before he ever formed the world, our Father made provision in case man should sin (Ephesians 1:3-4, 9-10; 3:10-11). Or, to put it another way, God could see Calvary before he ever formed the world. Knowing how hard it is for men to dread an event just a few days removed makes one marvel at the persistence of the Almighty.

It would take centuries for the time to be

fully ripe for the coming of the “seed of woman,” a clear reference to Jesus (Genesis 3:15; Matthew 1:18-25). Numerous things would be carefully brought into place. For instance, God showed Nebuchadnezzar in a dream four great world empires beginning with his own Babylonian, then the Medo-Persian, followed by the Greek and culminating in the Roman. It would be “in the days of these kings” that God would set up his own, eternal kingdom (Daniel 2:1-45).

Virtual worldwide peace made it possible to enter nearly every nation under heaven. Additionally, the Roman love of engineering led to a vast system of roads, making travel simpler and smoothing the way for those sent forth under the great commission to take their proclamation over the whole world (Colossians 1:23). Also, Koine Greek, essentially the language of the common man, had begun to be used almost universally for trade. Anything written in Greek could be read by people all over the globe, thereby opening the door for the written word to be read far and wide.

Finally, man had come to see his great need for a Redeemer. Once man had been driven from the Garden, God began to command men through instructions given to the heads of households, like Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Then, he delivered a law through Moses on Mount Sinai. Slowly, through unendingly repetitious sacrifices, man began to realize he could not live perfectly and would need a perfect sacrifice to extricate him from the terrible bondage of sin. Paul expressed it best in Romans 7:24-25a, when he wrote, “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!” With such in mind, let us all reverently thank God for the body and blood of his only begotten Son. ■



# HOMOSEXUALITY: LIFESTYLE OR PERVERSION? (Part 3)

by Brad Harrub

## Changability of Homosexuality— Evidence Against Genetics

An individual born with diabetes has no hope of changing that condition. Likewise, a child born with Down's syndrome will carry that chromosomal abnormality throughout his or her life. These individuals are a product of the genes they inherited from their parents. Homosexuality appears to be vastly different. Many people have been able to successfully change their sexual orientation. [Truth be told, some individuals experiment with a variety of sexual partners—male/female—often, going back and forth. One might ask if the bisexual condition denotes the existence of a “bisexual gene?”] Ironically, however, the removal of homosexuality as a designation from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Psychiatric Disorders* by the American Psychiatric Association has kept many physicians from trying to provide reparative therapy to homosexuals.

Robert Spitzer conducted a study on 200 self-selected individuals (143 males, 57 females) in an effort to see if participants could change their sexual orientation from homosexual to heterosexual (403-417). He reported at least some minimal change from homosexual to heterosexual orientation that lasted at least five years (403). Spitzer observed: “The majority of participants gave reports of change from a predominantly or exclusively homosexual orientation before therapy to a predominantly or exclusively heterosexual orientation in the past year” (403). In summarizing his findings, Spitzer declared: “Thus, there is evidence that change in sexual orientation following some form of reparative therapy does occur in some gay men and lesbians.” He concluded:

“This study provides evidence that some gay men and lesbians are able to also change the core features of sexual orientation” (415).

Six years earlier, the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality (NARTH) released the results of a two-year study stating:

Before treatment, 68 percent of respondents perceived themselves as exclusively or almost entirely homosexual, with another 22 percent stating that they were more homosexual than heterosexual. After treatment, only 13 percent perceived themselves as exclusively or almost entirely homosexual, while 33 percent described themselves as either exclusively or almost entirely heterosexual (see NARTH, 1997, p. 1).

The study also reported: “Although 83 percent of respondents indicated that they entered therapy primarily because of homosexuality, 99 percent of those who participated in the survey said they now believe treatment to change homosexuality can be effective and valuable” (1).

These data are consistent with the ongoing research project of Rob Goetze. He has identified 84 articles or books, that contain some relevance to the possibility of sexual orientation change. Of the data reported, 31 of the 84 studies reported a quantitative outcome of individuals able to change sexual orientation. These are not studies that merely speculate on the ability to change; they actually have the numbers to back it up! All of these data come on the heels of warnings from the Surgeon General, The American Academy of Pediatrics, and all of the major mental health associations who have issued position statements warning

of possible harm from such therapy, and asserting that there is no evidence that such therapy can change one's sexual orientation. For instance, the 1998 American Psychiatric Association Position Statement on Psychiatric Treatment and Sexual Orientation noted:

...there is no published scientific evidence supporting the efficacy of reparative therapy as a treatment to change one's sexual orientation.... The potential risks of reparative therapy are great, including depression, anxiety, and self-destructive behavior (American Psychiatric Association 1131).

Thus, physicians are caught in a quandary of a double standard. On the one hand, they are told that it is unethical for a clinician to provide reparative therapy because homosexuality is not a diagnosable disorder, and one should not seek to change. And yet, they contend that not enough studies have been conducted to determine the effectiveness of reparative therapy. Their message is loud and clear: “Do not do this because it is unethical to ask a homosexual person to change. However, we have not collected enough data to know if a person could safely change their sexual orientation or not.”

In situations where sexual orientation is being measured, studies face serious methodological problems (i.e., follow-up assessment, possible bias, no detailed sexual history, random sampling, etc.). But even given these serious shortcomings from behavioral studies such as these, there are sufficient data to indicate that an individual can change his or her sexual orientation from homosexual to heterosexual—something that would be an impossibility if homosexuality were

caused by a gay gene.

## The Only Sin Many Recognize— Intolerance

“Total acceptance!” This is often the answer given when homosexual activists are asked what they are seeking from the public in general. The activists equate acceptance with civil liberties and equality. They believe that individuals who do not accept the homosexual “lifestyle” are committing the unpardonable sin—the sin of intolerance. In fact, certain school systems today actively teach youngsters the idea that we must embrace every concept society popularizes, otherwise we will be unloving and intolerant. Thus, many children are quietly convinced from a very young age that if they do not give everyone “total acceptance,” then they are bigoted and mean spirited.

Using books like *Heather Has Two Mommies* and *Daddy’s Roommate*, teachers have begun instructing that there are essentially no right or wrong actions when it comes to relationships and families. Anything goes, as long as “love” is the ultimate motivation. Consider the message that we are sending our children as they sit in classrooms filled with pictures of family units—some with two female “parents” or two male “parents,” some with a picture of a husband and wife. Homosexual activists argue some homosexual couples show **more** love than heterosexual couples, so where is the harm? By focusing attention on “tolerance,” homosexual activists have successfully taken the spotlight off of their immoral behavior and immoral acts. Students are told that homosexual parents are “normal,” and that they should be “accepted.” Otherwise, the student is labeled as intolerant.

Those who graduate from the halls of academia, with any objection to homosexuality intact, are castigated

as “homophobes,” “hatemongers,” “bigots,” “sexists,” “puritanical fanatics,” “religious fundamentalists,” etc. It no longer is referred to as sodomy (the longtime historical term for same sex relations), but rather an “alternative lifestyle.” Members of the media certainly do not view homosexuality as sin, but rather as a valuable contribution to “diversity.” Organizations or individuals who dare to speak out against homosexuality and expose it as an evil, immoral practice often are challenged by militant activists who try to quickly spin the equation back into an “equal rights” issue. And they are often successful in doing so. This fact has caused many Christians to remain silent, for fear of being labeled a hater or worse. Many Christians seem to have forgotten the words of our Savior: “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake” (Mt. 5:10-11, KJV). [All Scripture references are taken from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.] Yet, at times the homosexual’s quest for “total acceptance” goes unchallenged because the Scriptures have been twisted and perverted to accept “alternative lifestyles,” and believers in Bible morality have been effectively silenced. That silence has allowed the homosexual rights movement to make inroads into many areas of our culture, with the most recent being “gay marriages.”

### What Does the Bible Say?

The social engineers of “political correctness” have been largely successful in reversing the historically universal rejection by American civilization of the legality, political legitimacy, and social propriety of homosexuality. As a result of changing social norms and the pressure of an emerging politically active “gay”

community in the United States, the American Psychiatric Association deleted homosexuality from its official nomenclature of mental disorders, the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) in 1973 (see APA). The American Psychological Association followed suit in 1975 (Herek). In the midst of this reshaping of societal sensibilities, some who wish to retain their affiliation with the Bible and maintain political correctness insist that the Bible, itself, teaches that same sex relations are not inherently sinful. They argue that the Bible, in fact, **condones** homosexuality in the same way and to the same extent that it approves of heterosexuality.

### Homosexuality in the Patriarchal Period

What, precisely, is God’s will concerning human sexuality? That will was demonstrated originally in the creation of the first human beings: “Male and female created He them” (Gen. 1:27). God’s decision to create a female counterpart to the male was not coincidental. The female uniquely met three essential criteria: (1) “It is not good for man to be alone” (Gen. 2:18); (2) a helper, **suitable** to him, was needed (Gen. 2:18,20); and (3) the human race was to be perpetuated through sexual union (Gen. 1:28). Both Jesus and Paul reiterated this same understanding (Mt. 19:4-6; 1 Cor. 7:2). So the woman was: (a) the divine antidote to Adam’s loneliness; (b) a helper **fit** for him; and (c) the means of the propagation of the human race. Here, we see the divine arrangement for the human species.

Not long after God set into motion the created order—which He had pronounced as “very good” (Gen. 1:31)—man began to tamper with the divine will, and altered God’s original intentions concerning human sexuality. Lamech—not God—introduced

**polygamy** into the world (Gen. 4:19). God could have created two women for Adam, but He did not. Rather, He made **one man for one woman for life**. That is the divine will—"male and female He created them" (Gen. 1:27). Genesis 19 now comes into view:

Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground. And he said, "Here now, my lords, please turn in to your servant's house and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you may rise early and go on your way," And they said, "No, but we will spend the night in the open square." But he insisted strongly; so they turned in to him and entered his house. Then he made them a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate. Now before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people from every quarter, surrounded the house. And they called to Lot and said to him, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may know them carnally." So Lot went out to them through the doorway, shut the door behind him, and said, "Please, my brethren, do not do so wickedly! See now, I have two daughters who have not known a man; please, let me bring them out to you, and you may do to them as you wish; only do nothing to these men, since this is the reason they have come under the shadow of my roof." And they said, "Stand back!" Then they said, "This one came in to sojourn, and he keeps acting as a judge; now we will deal worse with you than with them." So they pressed hard against the man Lot, and came near to break down the door. But the men reached out their hands and pulled Lot into the house with them, and shut the door. And they struck the men who were at the doorway of the house with blindness, both small and great, so that they became weary trying to find the

door (19:1-11).

Defenders of homosexuality who seek justification for their viewpoint from the Bible have pursued a revisionist interpretation of the account of the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. This passage has traditionally been understood to be a denunciation of homosexuality. This understanding has been so universal that the word "sodomy" was incorporated into English vernacular as referring to "any of various forms of sexual intercourse held to be unnatural or abnormal, especially anal intercourse or bestiality" (*American Heritage Dictionary* 1651). How may the account of Sodom be reinterpreted to place same-sex relations in a favorable light? Two explanations have been offered in an effort to promote the biblical legitimacy of homosexuality.

### **Inhospitality or Homosexuality?**

The first claim maintains that the men of Sodom were simply guilty of inhospitality. The text says that the men of Sodom insisted on Lot bringing the angelic visitors out to them, "that we may know them" (Gen. 19:5). It is argued that "know" refers to their intention to meet, greet, get to know, or become acquainted with the visitors. However, contextual indicators exclude the feasibility of this interpretation.

First, the Hebrew verb translated "know" (*yada*) certainly has a wide range of meanings, including "to get to know, to become acquainted." For the most part, the nuances of the Hebrew verb parallel the corresponding English verb. However, Hebrew, in common with other ancient languages, also used "know" as a euphemism for sexual intercourse (Gen. 4:1; 19:8). Other Semitic euphemisms similarly used include "lie with" (2 Sam. 11:4), "uncover the nakedness of" (Lev. 18), "go in unto" (Gen. 16:2; 38:2), and "touch" (Gen. 20:6; Prov. 6:29;

1 Cor. 7:1). Ancient languages that shared this figurative use of "know" included Egyptian, Akkadian, and Ugaritic (Botterweck 455, 456, 460), as well as Syriac, Arabic, Ethiopic, and Greek (Gesenius 334). When Hebrew scholars define "know," as used in Genesis 19:5, they use terminology like "sexual perversion" (Harris, et al. 366), "homosexual intercourse" (Botterweck 464), and "crimes against nature" (Gesenius 334).

Second, if "know" simply means "to get acquainted," why did the Bible writers repeatedly use forms of the word "wicked" to refer to the actions of the Sodomites? Lot pleaded, "Do not do so wickedly!" (Gen. 19:7). Moses, by inspiration, already had given God's assessment in the words, "But the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful against the Lord" (Gen. 13:13); "their sin is very grievous" (Gen. 18:20). Peter referred to the "filthy conduct of the wicked" sodomites and their "lawless deeds" (2 Pet. 2:7-8). But "getting acquainted" is not "wicked"! In fact, if the men of Sodom were nothing more than a group of friendly, civic-minded neighbors who sought to make the visitors welcome to their city, God surely would have **commended** them—not **condemned** them!

Third, if "know" simply means "to get to know," why did Lot offer his daughters to the men? He would not have offered his daughters for the purpose of the men "getting to know" or "become acquainted" with them. The daughters were already residents of Sodom, and would have been known to the men. Lot was offering his daughters to the men as sexual alternatives. Lot said, "I have two daughters who have not known a man" (Gen. 19:8). "Known" is another reference to sexual intercourse. Lot referred to their sexual status for the very reason that these men were interested in sexual impropriety. As astonishing and objectionable to us as it may seem for a



father to sacrifice his own daughters in such a fashion, it verifies the fact that the unnatural lust of homosexuality was considered far more repugnant than even illicit heterosexuality. Scholars have further noted that in antiquity, a host was to protect his guests at the cost of his own life (Whitelaw 253).

Fourth, the men of Sodom threatened Lot with the words, “we will deal worse with you than with them” (Gen. 19:9). If their intention was simply to “get to know” the visitors, what would “dealing worse” with Lot entail? Perhaps it would have entailed their becoming so thoroughly acquainted with Lot that they would perpetually remain in his presence and make a pest of themselves? Maybe they intended to impose on Lot’s hospitality to the point that they would monopolize his living room couch, consume all of his snack foods, and refuse to vacate his home at a courteous hour?

In a further effort to achieve sanction for homosexuality, attention has been directed to the words of Jesus in His commissioning of the Seventy. He instructed them, in their evangelistic travels, to enter into those cities that would receive them and feel free to partake of their hospitality (Lk. 10: 7-8). However, should a city fail to receive them, they were to shake the dust off their feet against the city (Lk. 10:10-11). Jesus then declared: “It will be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city” (Lk. 10:12). Defenders and practitioners of same sex relations claim that Jesus was drawing a comparison between the inhospitality of Sodom and the cities that the disciples would encounter. They claim that the inhospitality of a city that would reject Christ’s own emissaries would be a greater evil than Sodom’s inhospitable treatment of the angelic visitors.

However, if “hospitality” was the issue at stake in Sodom, the Sodomites

should have been commended since they only wanted to “get to know” and be hospitable to the visitors. In fact, Lot should have been the one condemned, since he attempted to deter the hospitable overtures of the “Welcome Wagon.” In reality, the words of Jesus in Luke 10 were not directed against the cities’ refusal to be hospitable toward the disciples. Rather, He condemned them for their refusal to accept the teaching of the disciples. Jesus pinpointed their task when He warned: “He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me” (Lk. 10: 16). Jesus placed Sodom at the top of the list of the most notoriously wicked cities of antiquity. He stressed the fact that, to reject Christ and the Gospel would be a far greater offense than what the most wicked city in human history ever did. What the inhabitants of Sodom did was repulsive, repugnant, disgusting, and incredibly depraved. But to reject the antidote to sin is the **ultimate** insult and the final infraction against God.

Yet another argument marshaled in an effort to justify homosexuality concerns the allusions in the prophets to Sodom. Isaiah (3:9), Jeremiah (23: 14), and Ezekiel (16:49) all refer to the sinfulness of Sodom, but none explicitly mentioned homosexuality as the problem. In fact, Ezekiel pinpointed the specific sins of “pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness,” as well as her unwillingness to aid the poor and needy. In response, we should not be surprised that a city that was guilty of sexual perversion also would be guilty of additional violations of God’s will.

Isaiah, in his discussion of Sodom, did not specify a particular sin, but merely noted how brazen and open the Sodomites were with their sin: “The look on their countenance witnesses against them, and they declare their sin as Sodom; they do not hide it.” Interestingly, this depiction is very

apropos of the “in-your-face” attitude of those who seek to advance the homosexual agenda in our day. Jeremiah makes essentially the same point in his comparison between Judah and Sodom when he wrote that “no one turns back from his wickedness.” He, too, was noting the sodomites’ blatant, unbending, determined intention to proceed with their sin. Ezekiel, though mentioning the additional sins listed above, nevertheless referred repeatedly to Sodom’s “abomination” (16:50; cf., vs. 43, 47, 51, 52, 58). Moses also linked “abomination” with homosexual activity (Lev. 18:22).

### Homosexual Rape?

The second explanation offered to justify homosexual relations is that the men of Sodom were not condemned for their homosexuality, but for their inhospitable intention to engage in homosexual rape. Rape, being nonconsensual, they say, is wrong and worthy of condemnation—whether homosexual or heterosexual. However, this extension of the inhospitality quibble is likewise contextually indefensible. First, if gang rape was the issue, why did Lot offer his daughters in exchange for the visitors? Rape would have been at issue in both cases. Lot’s offer of his daughters indicated his clear concern over gender and same-sex relations. Second, the men of Sodom were declared wicked and guilty of “very grievous” sin before the visitors ever came to town (Gen. 18: 20).

Third, Jude cinched the matter in his allusion to the sin of Sodom. He wrote that Sodom and her sister cities had “given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh” (Jude 7). “Given themselves over to sexual immorality” is a translation of the compound word *ekporneusasai* which combines the verb *porneuo* (to commit illicit sexual intercourse) with the preposition *ek* (out of). The

attachment of the prepositional prefix indicates intensification, i.e., that the men of Sodom possessed “a lust that gluts itself” (Thayer 199). Their sexual appetites took them beyond the range of normal sexual activity. The idea of force or coercion is not in the meaning of the word. “Strange” refers to “one not of the same nature, form, class, kind” (Thayer 254), and so pertains to the indulgence of passions that are “contrary to nature” (Barnes 393)—“a departure from the laws of nature in the impurities practiced” (Salmond 7). The frequent allusion to “nature” by scholars is interesting, in view of the fact that Scripture elsewhere links same-sex relations with that which is “against nature” (Rom. 1:26-27) or unnatural, i.e., out of harmony with God’s original arrangement of nature (e.g., Gen. 1:27; 2:22; Mt. 19:4-6). Summarizing, Jude asserted that the sin of Sodom was homosexual **relations**—not homosexual **rape**.

Fourth, homosexuality itself is condemned in Scripture, since under the Law of Moses, God made homosexuality a capital crime and stipulated that **both** participants in the illicit sexual activity were to be put to death (Lev. 20:13). God would not have required the innocent victim of homosexual rape to be executed along with the rapist.

American culture may well reach the point where the majority approves of homosexuality as acceptable behavior. Those who disapprove may well be accused of being “politically incorrect,” intolerant, and “homophobic.” It surely is reminiscent of our day to observe that when Lot urged the sodomites not to do “so wickedly,” the men accused Lot of being **judgmental** (Gen. 19:9; cf. Deut. 23:17-18). Nevertheless, the objective, unbiased reader of the Bible is forced to conclude that God destroyed the men of Sodom on account of their sinful practice of

homosexuality.

## Homosexuality in the Mosaic Period

In addition to the pre-Mosaic, Patriarchal Period of history, God made clear His will on this matter when He handed down the Law of Moses to the Israelite nation. In a chapter dealing almost exclusively with sexual regulations, His words are explicit and unmistakable.

You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination. Nor shall you mate with any beast, to defile yourself with it. Nor shall any woman stand before a beast to mate with it. It is perversion. Do not defile yourselves with any of these things; for by all these the nations are defiled, which I am casting out before you. For the land is defiled; therefore I visit the punishment of its iniquity upon it, and the land vomits out its inhabitants. You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, and shall not commit any of these abominations, either any of your own nation or any stranger who sojourns among you (for all these abominations the men of the land have done, who were before you, and thus the land is defiled), lest the land vomit you out also when you defile it, as it vomited out the nations that were before you. For whoever commits any of these abominations, the persons who commit them shall be cut off from among their people. Therefore you shall keep My ordinance, so that you do not commit any of these abominable customs which were committed before you, and that you do not defile yourselves by them: I am the Lord your God” (Lev. 18:22-30).... 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).

We suggest that a reader would need help to misunderstand these

injunctions.

Another graphic account is given in Judges 19 during the period of the judges, which was a time of spiritual and moral depravity and decay—the “Dark Ages” of Jewish history. “Sons of Belial” (i.e., wicked scoundrels) surrounded a house where travelers had taken refuge for the night. As in Sodom, they desired to “know” the male guest (Judg. 19:22). The host, like Lot, knew exactly what they meant, as is evident from the fact that, like Lot, he offered them a sexual alternative (which, of course, God did not approve). Their sexual desire was labeled as “wickedness,” “outrage,” “vileness,” “lewdness,” and “evil” (Judg. 19:23, 24; 20:3, 6, 10, 12, 13). The rest of the Old Testament corroborates this judgment of same-sex relations. For example, during the period of the kings, Josiah instituted sweeping moral and religious reforms. These included tearing down the homes of the Sodomites (2 Kgs. 23:7).

## Homosexuality in the New Testament Period

The New Testament is equally definitive in its uncompromising and unquestioned condemnation of illicit sexual activity. Paul summarized the “unrighteous” and “ungodly” behavior of the Gentile nations, and declared:

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. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness,

maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them (Rom. 1:26-32).

This passage uses Greek terms that linguistic scholars define as “forbidden desire,” “impurity,” “unnatural vice,” “shameful passions,” “not in accordance with nature,” and “individuals of the same sex being inflamed with sensual, sexual desire for each other” (Arndt and Gingrich 28, 118, 119, 240, 583, 877). Not only is God displeased with those who participate in such behavior, but verse 32 indicates that He is equally displeased with those who are merely **supportive** of such conduct—though they themselves do not engage in the activity. To the Corinthian church, Paul asked:

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, will inherit the kingdom of God. **And such were some of you.** But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God (1 Cor. 6:9-11, emp. added).

The Greek word translated “homosexual” is a metaphorical use of a term that literally means “soft” and, when referring to people, refers to males allowing themselves to be used sexually by other males. Again, lexicographers apply the term to the

person who is a “catamite,” i.e., a male who submits his body to another male for unnatural lewdness, i.e., homosexually (Thayer 387; Arndt and Gingrich 489). Paul, in his letter to the church at Corinth, makes the point that some of the Christians used to hold to these immoral practices—however, **they changed**. Here we have a clear biblical indication that someone can change their sexual orientation and be forgiven of a past immoral lifestyle. Christians need to understand that homosexuals living today have this same ability to change.

The term “sodomites” (“abusers of themselves with mankind” in the KJV) is a translation of the term *arsenokoitai*. It derives from two words: *arsein* (a male) and *koitei* (a bed), and refers to one who engages in sex with a male as with a female (Thayer 75). Paul used the same term when he wrote to Timothy, and identified some behaviors that are both “contrary to sound doctrine” and characteristic of the one who is not “a righteous man” (1 Tim. 1:9-10). When Paul said: “such **were** some of you,” he proved not only that homosexuals may be forgiven, but that they can **cease** such sinful activity. We are forced to conclude that sexual activity between persons of the same sex is **not a matter of genetics**; but is a **behavioral** phenomenon associated largely with environmental factors (see August 2004 issue of *Reason and Revelation*).

Illicit sex is just one of many departures from God’s will that American civilization is facing. God identified all departures from His will pertaining to sexual intercourse as “fornication.” The Greek word for fornication, *porneia*, is a broad term that covers **every form of illicit sexual intercourse**, including adultery, incest, bestiality, bigamy, polygamy, bisexuality, homosexuality, necrophilia, and more. Our sex-crazed society is so promiscuous,

and so estranged from God’s view of human sexuality, that our public schools consider it appropriate to teach children to simply “take precautions” when they engage in sexual escapades outside of marriage. But God **never** encouraged people to practice “safe sex.” The Bible definition of “safe sex” is sex that is confined to a divinely authorized, Scriptural marriage. Rather, He instructed people to exercise self-control, self-discipline, and moral responsibility. The Bible teaches that we are not to be self-indulgent. We are to put restraints on ourselves and control our sexual urges and desires according to God’s teachings.

Encouraging young people simply to “take precautions” only encourages additional illicit behavior. It encourages more promiscuity. It contributes to an increase—not a decrease—in the number of pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. Despite several decades of inundating our schools with sex education and the promotion of so-called “safe sex,” the statisticians inform us that **in the next thirty days, 83,850 unwed girls will become pregnant** in this country (“Teens in Crisis” 1). The social liberals “solution” has not worked. In fact, the problem has greatly worsened.

The depths to which our country has slumped morally is evinced by the legality of condom distribution to students, and the **illegality** to distribute Bibles or to teach Bible principles. The time has come for our nation to wake up and for all citizens to understand that **freedom requires restraint**. Rights require personal responsibility. People must take responsibility for their choices, and accept the consequences of their own actions. Paul declared: “flee fornication” (1 Cor. 6:18). He did not write, “engage in ‘safe’ fornication”! There is no such thing as “safe” sin or “safe” immorality, because all sin is damning (Jas. 1:15). God said a person must



run away from it, resist it, and reject it (2 Cor. 6:18). To a youth, Paul said: “Keep yourself pure” (1 Tim. 5:22). The writer of Hebrews insisted that the marriage bed is to be kept “undefiled.” “[F]ornicators and adulterers God will judge” (Heb. 13:4). Paul said there should not be so much as a hint of sexual immorality among Christians (Eph. 5:3).

Please understand: God loves **all** sinners—regardless of the specific sins they have committed. The faithful Christian will do the same. But it is imperative that we be about the business of alerting those who are engaged in sexual sin regarding God’s will, in an effort to “snatch them out of the fire” (Jude 23), and to “save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins” (Jas. 5:20). One day it will be too late for those who “not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them” (Rom. 1:32). Indeed, the “sexually immoral...shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone” (Rev. 21:8).

## Conclusion

It is not scientifically accurate to refer to a “gay gene” as the causative agent in homosexuality. The evidence clearly shows that no such gene has been identified. Additionally, sufficient evidence exists that homosexuals can change their sexual orientation. Future decisions regarding treatment and policy should reflect this knowledge.

Sexual sin undoubtedly will go down in history as one of the major contributors to the moral and spiritual deterioration, decline, and downfall of American society. Fornication is one more glaring proof of the sexual anarchy that prevails in American civilization. One wonders how much longer such widespread unchastity can go on in our land before God will “visit the punishment of its iniquity upon it, and the land vomits out its inhabitants”

(Lev. 18:25). When professors at a Christian university denounce a colleague for speaking out against homosexuality, describing his remarks as “intemperate,” and apologizing lest he “insulted,” “demeaned,” or “injured” those who may be “struggling with same-sex attraction,” it is time to reacquaint oneself with the God of the Bible by rereading His own remarks (see Tippens).

Every society in human history that has followed a course of moral and spiritual depravity has either been destroyed by God or has imploded from within. Like these previous civilized nations, our society will not be permitted to survive indefinitely into the future—unless, of course, God is prepared to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah.

**Acknowledgement:** Special thanks to my two colleagues who worked with me: Dr. Dave Miller and Dr. Bert Thompson

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