

Questioning Jesus

Week 4: The Question(s) of Sexuality

THEME: Present-day questions about sexuality should be viewed in light of God's original design (creation), our sinful hearts and corrupt desires (the fall), Christ's person and work (redemption), and our ultimate end (consummation).

I. INTRODUCTION {Slide 1}

- A. Seriousness and care is required.
- B. This sermon will give a framework for answering questions, but it will only address a handful of questions.
- C. The good news of Jesus Christ is good news even with respect to your sexuality—especially with respect to your sexuality.

D. Revelation 19:6–9 {Slide 2}

- 1. Beginning where we are going to end up.
- 2. Keep the biblical doctrine of God's final goal in mind.

E. Are Christians Prudes? {Slide 3}

- 1. The biblical sexual ethic is not the preservation of ancient preferences and merely cultural norms.
- 2. This ethic is intimately tied to true and spiritual worship of God and to the biblical account of what we are.
- 3. "In our secular age, just as in the early years of Christianity, differences in sexual morality are really about the clash between different pictures of the universe and the place of the individual within it."¹

F. The Bible's sexual ethic must be viewed under the four headings of biblical history: {Slide 4}

- 1. Creation—What God created sex and sexuality to be.
- 2. Fall—What effects our disobedience has on our sexuality.
- 3. Redemption—What the already and not-yet position of a Christian implies for sexuality.
- 4. Consummation—What human sexuality is ultimately leading to in God's great plan.

II. THE BIBLE'S SEXUAL ETHIC

A. Creation

- 1. Genesis 1:26–28
 - a) Humans—both the male and the female—bear God's image and likeness.
 - b) Heterosexuality is implied in the command to be fruitful and multiply.
- 2. Genesis 2:7
 - a) Humans are a unity of dust and breath, or body and soul, or flesh and spirit.
- 3. Genesis 2:22–26 {Slide 5}
 - a) Heterosexuality is specified in God's creation of the woman as the man's helper (cf. Matthew 9:3–6; 1 Corinthians 11:7–9).
 - b) Monogamy and permanence is implied.
 - c) Sex is not shameful for humans in their state of original righteousness.

B. Fall {Slide 6}

- 1. Genesis 3:7–12
 - a) The first man and woman immediately become ashamed of their "nakedness." It means many things, and it includes the shame about sexuality.
 - b) We cannot just go back from this point. We cannot just "liberate" ourselves from sexual taboos and enter back into Eden. The way backward is blocked; those who think that our sexuality can be "liberated" by ignoring our shame have missed God's forward-pointing message (as we will see).
- 2. Romans 1:21–27 {Slides 7–8}
 - a) Worship and sexuality are connected. Sinful patterns in sexuality are connected to idolatry—so throughout the Bible (cf. Ex 34:15; Lev 17:7; 20:5; Deut 31:16; Judges 2:17; Jeremiah 3:9; Ezekiel 6:9;

¹ Kyle Harper, "The First Sexual Revolution," *First Things* (January 2018): 46.

Hosea [all]; Amos 2:7; Acts 15:20, 29; Colossians 3.5; 1 Peter 4:3; Rev 17:5; 19:2; etc.).

- b) What is “natural” in this passage is what God designed and created. What is “contrary to nature” is what is affected by our sin, which perverts the goodness of God’s creation.
- c) We are not “born this way,” as the LGBTQ+ rhetoric suggests. The corruption is so interior and central that it feels as if it is part of our identity, but it is really part of our punishment—a punishment that was taken by Christ for all who would believe in him.
- d) Here is where the good news comes in.

C. Redemption {Slides 9}

- 1. Jesus Christ came to destroy the works of the devil, overcome the world, and live perfectly to take our punishment and give us righteousness instead.
- 2. Romans 12:1
 - a) Our bodies are redeemed now to be living sacrifices.
 - b) The body is not evil, though it does suffer from the corruption of the fall.
- 3. 1 Thessalonians 4:3–8
 - a) God has given the Holy Spirit for us to live as holy people.
 - b) Christians may struggle against sin, but unbelievers do not even struggle. Abstaining from sexual immorality is part of every Christian’s sanctification.

4. Matthew 19:3–12 {Slides 10–11}

- a) Jesus appeals to Genesis 1–2 to discuss the design of marriage.
- b) The divorce laws are seen as arising from the exigencies of the fall, not from the essence of marriage.
- c) The Sadducees have confused the fallen order with the created order—just like our culture!
- d) Jesus mentions three kinds of eunuchs: those who are sterile, those who are castrated, and those who are celibate.

- e) Jesus commends both celibacy and marriage to the disciples. Cf. 1 Corinthians 7.

5. Ephesians 5:22–33 {Slides 12–13}

- a) The profound mystery of marriage is not only backward-pointing to the creation mandate but also forward-pointing to our relationship with Christ in the consummation of all things.
- b) Adam’s exclamation for Eve in Genesis 2 comes once his sin and death are posited; God foreshadows his redemption in the first marriage.
- c) The wife’s submission to her husband and the husband’s self-sacrificing love for his wife are the ideals of the Christian marriage not because they are convenient or traditional but because they are a special participation in the divine mystery!

D. Consummation {Slide 14}

- 1. Matthew 22:30
 - a) Jesus notes that there will be no marriage in heaven, and that we will be like angels in some way.
- 2. 1 John 3:2
 - a) We are destined to be like Jesus Christ, but even the apostles do not have a clear vision of what that will look like.

3. Revelation 19:6–9 {Slide 15}

- a) Cf. Isaiah 54:5; Hosea 2:19–20
- b) Whatever we become, the relationship that we have to Christ is that of a bride to her husband.
- c) Marriage, an aspect of human sexuality, is ultimately imaging the final, consummate, total, eternal union that the Church enjoys with God in Christ.
- d) Our eternal life is likened to a marriage feast, and our works in this world are the adornment of our personal fellowship and position before God.

E. Review {Slide 16}

- 1. Creation: human sexuality was designed as part of his good and very good plan for those who are made, body and soul, in God’s image.

2. Fall: the image and our practices are distorted. It affects believers and unbelievers alike.
3. Redemption: God in Christ has redeemed human sexuality both to accomplish its original purpose in creation and to image his eternal proposal for re-creation. Christ's incarnation, perfect life, death as a substitutionary sacrifice, resurrection in power, and ascension to the right hand of God inaugurated his engagement to his holy Bride, the Church.
4. Consummation: In the final day, the Bride, who is bone of Christ's bone and flesh of his flesh, will enjoy him and glorify him forever.

III. THREE COMMON QUESTIONS {Slide 17}

- A. Does the Bible condemn all forms of homosexuality?
 1. Homosexuality is a fallen distortion of our created image-status and our consummated role as the Bride of Christ.
 2. Homosexual practice and homosexual desires are prohibited for redeemed people.
 3. Those who identify as homosexual are at enmity with God—just like everyone else before they come to faith in Christ! They are not to be excluded from our loving offer of the good news of God's grace.
- B. What about people who are born homosexual and cannot think or act in any other way?
 1. All in Adam are born in sin.
 2. People who are “born” a certain way can still be “reborn” in a new way. God saves sinners—whether the sin is sexual or not.
 3. The good news of transforming power in Christ still applies to people who feel that they are stuck in homosexuality.
- C. Why do Christians insist on maintaining a binary view of gender that excludes transgender and gender fluid lifestyles?

1. Galatians 3:28 does not abrogate all sex and gender distinctions. It proclaims equal status of all races, all classes, and both sexes.
2. Transgenderism denies the creation distinction between male and female, and that both image God.
3. Transgenderism denies the integral unity of body and soul. Like gnosticism, the current transgenderism arguments view *body* as impersonal and *personhood* as non-bodily. This view is a distortion of what is clearly stated in Genesis: we have a *personal body* and a *bodily personhood*.
4. Jesus acknowledges that cultural gender roles may not align with biblical-creational gender roles. His reference to eunuchs in Matthew 19:11–12 allows us to see that the Church has a place for men who are not husbands and fathers—and by extension, women who are not wives and mothers.

IV. APPLICATION {Slide 18}

- A. The biblical sexual ethic is not arbitrary or culturally conditioned; it is woven by God into the fabric of creation at the beginning, and it foreshadows and images the ultimate destiny of the redeemed in Christ at the very end.
- B. Sex and sexuality is important, but sexual “identity” is a modern post-Freudian myth.
 1. Sexuality is central to our understanding of our relationship with God.
 2. Our identity is not reducible to our sexuality; we are more than just our sexuality.
- C. Sexual sin is not a problem just for those outside. We must be gentle with *Christians* who struggle in these areas, and we must be ready to remove the beam from our eyes first.
- D. God so loved the world that he sent his only Son—even for the sexually immoral, in order to restore them to right fellowship with himself and call them to holiness in reflection of his own holiness, to be enjoyed in an eternal bond imaged as the marriage of the Lamb to the Bride.