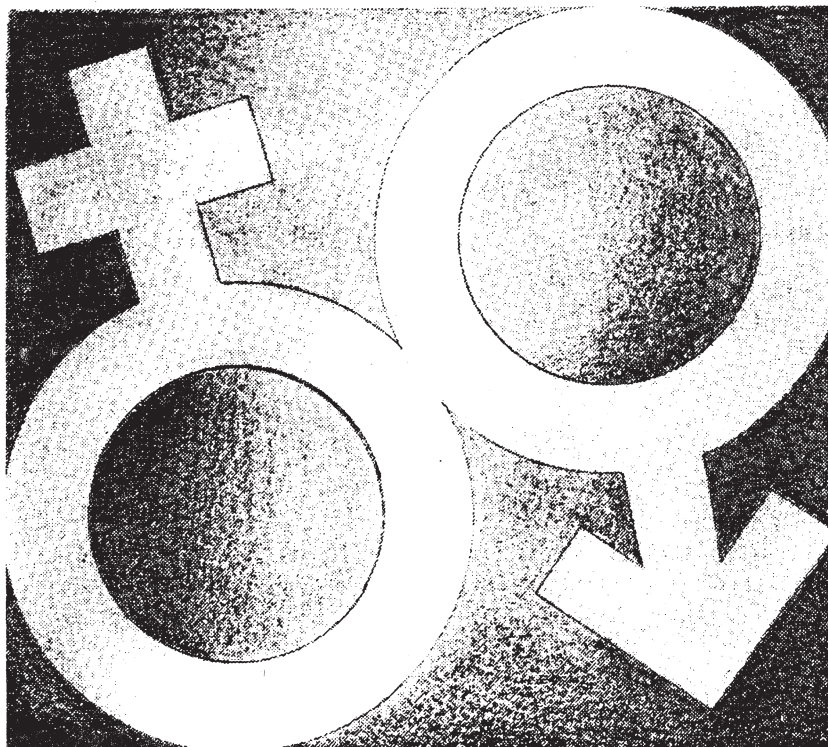


A Study in the Sanctity



of Human Sexuality

● *By James E. Gibbons*

The Apparent Need for This Study

PERHAPS no subject is any more in need of a simple, basic study than that of the sanctity of human sexuality today. In this matter, mankind seems to have lost its way. Sex is no longer looked upon with dignity and respect, regulated by set morals and uniquely assigned to the sanctity (and privacy) of marriage. Accompanied by rock 'n' roll, the sexual revolution was blatantly ushered in, more accurately looked upon as rebellion and insurrection. Producers of movies and television, apparently bent on bringing about the demise of Christian morality, have flooded the airwaves and people's minds with their corrupting influence. Their amoral and immoral message is sexual promiscuity. It hits you in the face. A president of this country became center stage in giving the practice of wanton sexual perversion publicity, even international

publicity, thus promoting the cause of Satan. According to the National Center for Health Statistics, of the 4,115,590 babies born in this country in the year 2004, there were 1,470,152 born to unwed mothers. In other words, 35.7 percent (over 1/3rd) of all births were out of wedlock. Since its legalization, millions of babies have been aborted. We are told that one out of every two marriages ends in divorce. Sodomy is becoming socially accepted, and there is talk of same sex marriage. Sodomy laws are no longer being enforced, as laws favoring such practices are being put in place. Humanism, reducing man to an animal, has set the stage for all of this. And, sad to say, the “professed” church has not been immune to this, as tragic “fall out” is all about us (and sometimes among us). If we don’t respect our sexuality, we will not respect what our sexuality produces, other human beings.

A Study of the ABC’s

The Bible underscores ignorance, and especially not knowing God, as the reason why people engage in fornication and all kinds of unclean and immoral sexual practices. Listen to Paul. “This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their minds, Having the *understanding darkened*, being alienated from the life of God through the *ignorance* that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness” (Ephesians 4:17-19). Also in Romans Paul speaks of those who once knew God, “But became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. *Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools...*[There is nothing more dangerous than educated ignorance] Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves” (Romans 1:21b-32). Also, notice 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8.

Since the Bible equates the practice of sexual immorality and perversion with ignorance, perhaps it would be good for us to search out the Scriptures anew on this subject (especially since we live in a time of widespread Biblical illiteracy). And, then, in an elementary way study the ABC’s of what God has to say about this. Some people don’t do any better because they don’t know any better, then they become depraved in a perverted lifestyle. Sex certainly has a central place in God’s scheme of things. In the place that He put it, it is holy. It is honorable. By knowing His will in this matter, and knowing God, we can move on “unto perfection” in what He intended. We can perfect our holiness as God wants us to be holy. This is a “must.” Therefore, let us study the sanctity of human sexuality.

I. THE ORIGIN AND SANCTITY OF LIFE (Genesis 1:26-28)

The study of human sexuality is not just an isolated subject on the fringe of our thinking; it is a study of life itself. Sex is about life, how we came into being and how we look at the big picture of everything, not just unbridled hedonistic gratification for a moment. It points back to the origin of life in creation and how that life is passed on to every generation. The Bible repeatedly tells us that so and so “begat” so and so. Everything about this subject cries out against the vulgar and implores us to handle it with sanctity. Sex is not just a dirty joke. Human life is sacred. If we don’t respect our sexuality, we will not respect what our sexuality produces, other human beings.

In the Image of God

Coming from God, human life is sacred. Speaking to the oneness of Himself in His triune being, God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” Then we read, “So God created man in his own image...” (Genesis 1:26, 27). Genesis 2:7 adds to this information with, “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life [the spirit]; and man became a living soul” (also notice 1 Thessalonians 5:23). God is called “the Father of spirits” in Hebrews 12:9. Of death, we read in Ecclesiastes 12:7, “Then shall the dust [the body] return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.” Since God is spirit (John 4:24), we conclude that the “image and likeness of God” has to do with the spirit. It is temporarily clothed with a physical body. And, being in the image and likeness of God, human life must be esteemed with the utmost dignity and respect. It is encircled with the halo of sanctity.

Worship God, Honor Parents, and Respect Our Fellowman

The Ten Commandments given to Moses were on two tablets of stone, the first directly having to do with God and the second with man (Exodus 20:1-17; 32:15, 16). God, being the Creator and source of life, was to be worshipped. The second table continued with, “Honour thy father and thy mother...” Yes, God was to be worshipped as the source of life, but parents were to be honored as the means whereby this life was passed on to others (and sex was how this was accomplished). Then because life is sacred, one of the Ten Commandments says, “Thou shalt not kill.” This was followed by, “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” Sex, whereby this life coming from God was passed on to successive generations, was to be held in the utmost sanctity. God has placed sex in the context of marriage and that alone. And the other commandments in

this table have to do with dignity and respect in relationship to other people, people made in the image of God. Sex is sacred because God, and life in His image, is sacred. Respecting our sexuality assures that we will respect what our sexuality produces, life, and other human beings.

The Sanctity of Life in Its Beginning

Eve recognized the uniqueness of human life. With the birth of her first child, she said, “I have gotten a man from the Lord” (Genesis 4:1). It was not just a biological thing that had taken place. The Law of Moses likewise recognized the sacredness of human life, even before birth. Consider this Scripture. “If men strive [fight], and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart from her [so that she gives birth prematurely], and yet no mischief [harm] follow: he [the one who caused it] shall be surely punished, according as the woman’s husband will lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. And if any mischief [harm] follow, then thou shalt give life for life” (Exodus 21:22, 23). In other words, if the aborted baby died, the person responsible would pay with his life. We are told that John the Baptist would be “filled with the Holy Ghost [Spirit], even from his mother’s womb” (Luke 1:15). Human life is sacred, and even before birth the unborn fetus is fully recognized as a human entity. How tragic that modern man would so lightly esteem and so heartlessly regard human life and practice abortion. There is a Day of Judgment coming.

II. “MALE AND FEMALE CREATED HE THEM” (Genesis 1:27, 28)

Let us go on with our ABC’s. Although small children may not understand all of the ramifications, even preschoolers have no problem understanding that they are either boys or girls (but, odd as it may seem, many who are older don’t seem to know). In Genesis we noticed God’s expressed intention to make man. Then we read, “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him: *male* and *female* created he them” (Genesis 1:26, 27). In chapter 2 of Genesis, we find this more fully elaborated upon. God created Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve (as someone has said). We are told in verse 24, as the writer Moses gives his inspired commentary, “Therefore shall a *man* leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his *wife*...” This is unquestionably a heterosexual union.

Homosexual Distortion

Yes, God made mankind male and female (and instituted marriage). That was for the ongoing of the human family (Genesis 1:27, 28), and for the personal and emotional wellbeing of each (male and female). But since Satan is in rebellion against heaven, it is no surprise that he, in time,

would try to abrogate, unmake and destroy God's orderly arrangement of things. Homosexual perversion enters to distort the picture. God has had to deal with this in all three dispensations of time (and it is still with us).

Sodom and Gomorrah, First Record of Such a Practice

We are first introduced to such an unthinkable practice in the Patriarchal Age, the age immediately following creation. The 19th chapter of Genesis provides the record. And from this unseemly and loathsome episode, the word "Sodomy" has entered our vocabulary. Read this chapter. Reference is made back to the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah repeatedly throughout the Bible. Even in the New Testament Peter says that "God spared not," "turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample [example] unto those that after should live ungodly" (2 Peter 2:6). What was the ungodly living of Sodom and Gomorrah? According to Jude, verse 7, they were "giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh." "Strange flesh" means the unnatural homosexual perversion.

"It Is an Abomination"

Next, in the Mosaic Age, the Law of Moses is very plain and comes down heavy on Sodomy. The Old Testament was the law of sin and death, as it emphasized the exceeding sinfulness of sin. Leviticus 18:22 unmistakably instructs, "Thou shalt not lie with mankind as with womankind: it is abomination." Leviticus 20:13 states this again a little more forcefully, coming down with the punishment that came with such behavior, "If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them." Also notice Deuteronomy 23:17 (1 Kings 14:24; 15:11, 12; 22:45, 46).

The Christian Age Today

Of course we live in the Christian Age today, and the New Testament more limitedly is our rule of faith and practice. What does the New Testament have to say about this? We highlight these truths because some in the circle of so-called "churches" in the denominational world are openly accepting "members" who are living such a "lifestyle" and are ordaining leaders who are likewise living like this. (And the world has already gone that way). But you are either a Bible believer or you are not. True churches need to be vocal and outspoken, lest they become apathetic and their convictions erode. Peter and Jude warned about this (2 Peter 2 and Jude).

Relevant New Testament Scriptures

Consider these relevant Scriptures, listed in the sequence they are found in the New Testament. This is the Word of God.

- “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools...Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves...For this cause God gave them up unto *vile affections*: for even their *women did change the natural use unto that which is against nature*: And likewise also the *men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly...*” (Romans 1:22, 24, 26, 27).
- “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor *effeminate*, nor *abusers of themselves with mankind* [these two refer to homosexual practices], Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10).
- “Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for man slayers, For whoremongers [fornicators], for *them that defile themselves with mankind* [those involved in homosexual practices], for menstealers [kidnappers], for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing contrary to sound doctrine” (1 Timothy 1:9, 10).
- “Even as Sodom and Gomorrah , and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after *strange flesh* [unnatural homosexual perversion], are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire” (Jude, verse 7)

And in the light of Romans 1:24 and 1 Thessalonians 4:7, the use of the word “*uncleanness*” many times refers to sexual sins, and when it is listed with (but separate from) adultery and fornication, it likely refers to homosexual perversion and other deviate sexual practices (2 Corinthians 12:21; Galatians 5:19; Ephesians 5:3-5; Colossians 3:5; 2 Peter 2:10).

III. “AND THEY SHALL BE ONE FLESH” (Genesis 2:24)

Now let us “zero” in on the more intimate relationship of marriage, the sexual union itself. In the abandonment of morals, the world by its unbridled and disgusting behavior has stigmatized the subject of sex. It has become something dirty to the minds of many Christians, and the sex

act itself is regarded as less than holy. Religious people reluctantly talk about it (and perhaps correctly so, because this is a very personal and private matter). However, as this is a study in (and of) the sanctity of sex, we now discreetly continue with the subject. We want to know the teaching of the Word of God.

Honorable in All and Among All

To get right to the point, Hebrews 13:4 sums up how the Bible as a whole looks upon this. “Marriage is *honourable in all, and the bed undefiled*: but whoremongers [fornicators] and adulterers God will judge.” God has placed sex in the context of marriage (and any departure from this will be met with judgment). As everything about marriage is honorable, the sexual union is honorable. This word “honorable,” in the language of the New Testament, comes from the same root word, *timé* (*timao*), used in the injunction to “*Honour* thy father and mother” (Ephesians 6:2). Even as parents are unquestionably to be honored, and marriage is to be highly esteemed by all, the sexual union itself is honorable. It is encased in an element of dignity and sanctity, as it is the procreative act (whereby life comes from God) and the most intimate expression of committed love.

“They Shall Be One Flesh”

In the beginning after God had expressed His intentions of making man, we read, “So God created man,” followed by, “*male and female* created he them” (Genesis 1:26, 27). The end of the chapter gives a summary statement as to what God thought about this creation. “And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, *it was very good...*” In the process of making everything, He had said, “It is not good that the man should be alone” (Genesis 2:18), and consequently and subsequently the woman was made (and brought to Adam). Commenting on this, Moses says, “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be *one flesh*” (Genesis 2:24).

“One Flesh” Means Sexual Union

Thus, God instituted and set up marriage, consummating in the sexual union (and the sexual union typifying the oneness of the whole relationship). That is the significance of the expression, “and they shall be *one flesh*.” This is how Paul understood and applied it in 1 Corinthians 6:16 (15-20), as he deals with the problem of fornication in the church. The physical union, experienced by being sexually united with a prostitute, was what God had designed for marriage. Thus Paul prods their thinking with questions, one being, “What? Know ye not that

he which is joined to an harlot is one body? For two, saith he, shall be *one flesh*.” Thus, “One flesh” in Genesis 2:24 basically has reference to sex.

“Be Thou Ravished Always With Her Love”

We let the explicit language of Proverbs, as follows, speak for itself as the father gives words of wisdom and advice to his son. “Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well. Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad, and rivers of waters in the streets. Let them be only thine own, and not strangers’ with thee. Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love. And why will thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger?” (Proverbs 5:15-20). Faithfulness to his wife in the intimate relations of marriage is urged, instead of being drawn away by a prostitute.

“To Avoid Fornication”

The city of ancient Corinth was notoriously famous as a cesspool of sexual immorality. There was a saying that “not every young man should go to Corinth.” To Christians who lived in such an environment, Paul wrote, “To avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence [conjugal rights]: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of [authority over] her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of [authority over] his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not [deprive ye not in this matter] one the other except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency [lack of self-control]” (1 Corinthians 7:2-5). This language is plain in showing the appropriateness of sexual relations between a Christian man and his wife. God has created us with sexual drives and feelings, which only can be acceptably fulfilled in marriage. If we remain unmarried, God expects us to live celibate lives.

Because of the “Present Distress”

In view of what Paul has said in these verses above (1 Corinthians 7:2-5), some might be perplexed by the verse right before this (7:1). Here he wrote, “It is good for a man not to touch a woman [to marry],” but then he goes on, after saying “Nevertheless,” to make suggestions about marriage that we have just noticed. Why did he say, “It is good for a man not to touch a woman”? Perhaps verses 26 and 27 have the answer, “I

suppose therefore that this is good for the *present distress*, I say, that it is good for a man so to be [remain as he is]. Art thou bound unto a wife? Seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? Seek not a wife." The present and coming times of persecution and distressful situations would not be conducive to married life and having children. They could survive better unmarried without a family to have to look after. Looking to the coming of the destruction of Jerusalem, Jesus had said, "And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!" (Matthew 24:19). Circumstances like that seem to be in Paul's mind when he said, "It is good for a man not to touch a woman." It was not to disparage the institution of marriage. In fact, Paul later wrote to Timothy warning about a coming departure from the faith wherein its adherents would be "forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats" (1 Timothy 4:1-6). Yes, marriage is honorable in every way.

An Interesting Question

Winding down our thoughts on being "one flesh," an interesting question naturally enters our minds. Why has God created us in such a way that the act of procreation is such an intensely pleasurable experience? (Only to be marred by the pains of childbirth). Perhaps the pleasure of the procreative act is to encourage such a union so that mankind will reproduce. Also, perhaps it typifies and is indicative that life itself should be a pleasant experience. Reproduction comes across as a beautiful and fragrant experience in the blossom of flowers and in the delicious fruit on trees in the plant kingdom. It is almost like God is celebrating life, which should be a joyous experience. But the pains of childbirth remind us that we are sinners (Genesis 3:16) and that we have thrown God's order of things out of kilter.

IV. OTHER MISCELLANEOUS AND RELATED MATTERS

Under this last section, we would like to deal with several other matters related to the theme of this article, but perhaps miscellaneous in nature. What we are writing here is not exhaustive, but important enough to be "touched upon" in this study. We have been trying to look into the sanctity of human sexuality. Becoming and being informed, we will be better equipped to be "perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1).

"Until Death Do Us Part"

The Pharisees approached Jesus with a question whereby they hoped to ensnare him, "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" His answer summed up several Scriptures that we have

already studied as he got to the crux of their question. (Herein we see the teaching of the kingdom). “And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave [be glued] to his wife: and they twain [two] shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain [two], but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, *let not man put asunder*...And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away [divorce] his wife, *except it be for fornication*, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery” (Matthew 19:3-9). In this day of laxity, and the breaking down of the home, this matter needs to be taken seriously. God’s plan is that marriage be “until death do us part.”

“Whosoever Looketh on a Woman to Lust After Her Hath Committed Adultery With Her Already in His Heart”

Another matter that, likewise, really needs to be taken seriously today was spoken by our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount. “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That *whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery* with her already in his heart” (Matthew 5:27, 28). In dealing with this problem, Jesus speaks of plucking out ones eye and cutting off a hand, spiritually speaking, rather than having the whole body “cast into hell” (5:29, 30). Like punishment for the overt act of adultery (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10; Galatians 5:19-21; Revelation 21:8), lust (adultery in the heart) will cause a person to go to hell (unless there is repentance). God’s law has placed sex and strong compulsive sexual feelings in the context of marriage. Here this is lawful and proper. However, such compulsive feelings outside of marriage are called lust, which is unlawful desire. These feelings must be reined in.

Modest Apparel and Eye Control

Modesty, having the body properly covered, is taught from cover to cover in the Bible. Adam and Eve, who were being expelled from the Garden of Eden (subsequently to set up human society), had their bodies clothed and completely covered by God. “Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them” (Genesis 3:21). Speaking of spiritual nakedness, but at the same time showing the parallel truth in reference to the physical, the Lord said to the Laodiceans, “I counsel thee to buy of me...white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the *shame of thy nakedness* do not appear...” (Revelation 3:18). In the preacher’s handbook written to Timothy, the

apostle Paul taught “that women adorn themselves in *modest apparel*, with shamefacedness and sobriety...” (1 Timothy 2:9). There are undertones of the possibility of sexual impropriety behind all of these words. David, although he was called a man after God’s own heart, succumbed to the sin of adultery. It all started with the lust of the eyes. One night when David had arisen from his bed and had walked the stairs to the upper level of his king’s quarters, “from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon” (2 Samuel 11:2). We know the rest of the story. Adultery in the heart became the overt act. Realizing such potential danger, Job said, “I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?” (Job 31:1).

Unseemly and Indecent

In view of these sobering truths, it is alarming to live in the kind of world that we have to live in today. Sex no longer seems to be a sacred and private matter exclusively limited to the holy bonds and bounds of marriage. Its cheap and degrading display hits a person right between the eyes at every turn, whether it be in entertainment, advertising, or how a person dresses (or undresses). Style always seems to be geared to sex in some way. We live in a society wherein young women and older women present themselves as painted sex objects. Everything seems geared to invite the illicit and lustful gaze of the opposite sex. And if dresses are not embarrassingly short, as “style” many times would have them, another vulgar and provocative sight is there to be seen. Young women unabashedly put themselves on display in their skin tight, hip hugger jeans, indecently exposing their naked middle. Virginity evidently is looked upon as something outdated and undesirable. We are sad to say, but many “professing Christian” women and girls cannot be distinguished from those of the world in this matter. Like the demoniac healed by Jesus, may we kindly say, they need to be “clothed, and in his [their] right mind” (Mark 5:15).

Paul Has Some More to Say

As we move on toward a conclusion in this article, here are some summary statements about sexual sins and their consequences the apostle Paul makes in Ephesians 5:3-7, as well as other sins. “But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh [is fitting for] saints. Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting [off color jokes], which are not convenient [not fitting, not decent]: but rather giving of thanks. For this we know, that no whoremonger [fornicator], nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Let no man deceive you with vain [empty] words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them.” This would cover all the sexual sins and off color jokes about them. “All uncleanness” is very inclusive. Paul even went on to say, “For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret” (5:12). What about such being featured as prime time entertainment, then? (Philippians 4:8 would be a good Scripture to consider here). Human life is sacred, and this underscores the sanctity of human sexuality (and the home). Life is not a dirty joke. It is a trust from God.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Yes, the Bible teaches the sanctity of human sexuality. The concise statement in Hebrews 13:4 “pretty well” sums it up, “Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers [fornicators] and adulterers God will judge.” Let us respect and follow God’s wise arrangement of things, holding this in the highest esteem. It is for our well-being, and there is a great Day of Judgment coming (Revelation 20:12-15; 21:8).

Needless to say, in this day and time, many have made a mess of their lives in sex related matters. Howbeit, there is hope. God has no delight in the death of the transgressor (Ezekiel 33:11). The apostle Paul wrote in Romans 5:20, “But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” In 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, the picture is pretty dismal as Paul lists all of these different kinds of sinners, then solemnly declares that they “shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” Among those sinners are “fornicators,” “adulterers,” “effeminate” and “abusers of themselves with mankind” [those who practice homosexuality]. But the verse that follows (6:11) is most encouraging. “And such *were* some of you [past tense]: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” How wonderful! Christianity is all about forgiveness and redemption. Didn’t Jesus say to the woman taken in adultery, “Neither do I condemn thee: *go, and sin no more*”? (John 8:3-11). □

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