

## Sodom and Gomorrah

**Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire. (Jude 7)**

The two words “Sodom” and “Gomorrah” are used to immediately create an association with sexual immorality and specifically homosexuality. Merriam-Webster identifies the origin of the word sodomy with “Middle English, from Old French *sodomie*, from Late Latin *Sodoma* Sodom; from the homosexual proclivities of the men of the city in Gen 19:1–11.”<sup>1</sup> Genesis 19 is the reason the words Sodom and Gomorrah formerly brought to mind homosexual immorality. Judging homosexuality as immoral today (2024) is no longer tolerated. In 2015, in the now infamous *Obergefell v. Hodges* case, the Supreme Court declared all state laws prohibiting same-sex marriage to be unconstitutional. The US Federal Government officially removed the societal stigma associated with same-sex attraction. Now it seems as though only conservative Christians who hold to a Biblical worldview condemn homosexuality as sinful and immoral.

Jesus Himself validated the authenticity of the ancient story of judgment found in Genesis 19. He said, “But on the day when Lot went out from Sodom, fire and sulfur rained from heaven and destroyed them all” (Luke 17:29). (Lot was Abraham’s nephew and was rescued before the destruction.) But why were these cities judged so harshly? In Genesis 18, Yahweh said, “Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very grave. I will go down to see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry that has come to me.” “The sin is very grave” is also translated as “great” and “grievous”. What is this sin that is so egregious that Yahweh must come down to the earth to confirm the validity of the outcry? Once again, the reader of Genesis is confronted with language that doesn’t quite make sense. The triune God knows everything. He doesn’t need to come down to know anything. This language is for the reader. Yahweh coming down magnifies the gravity (the seriousness) of the sin. But what is the sin?

Jude 7 provides incredible clarity: the residents of the cities “indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desires.” Genesis 19:4-5 reveals what Jude describes as unnatural desires. “But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house. And they called to Lot, ‘Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may **know** them.’” Notice the emphasis on biological gender: the men (4x). The NET Bible translation makes what is going on even clearer with these words: “Bring them out to us so we can have **sex** with them!” (19:5). The world no longer thinks it is unnatural for a man to want to have sex with another man. This egregious sin has been normalized. Natural desires are the sexual desires that lead to procreation. The Apostle Paul uses the same “natural relations” language in Romans 1:26-27. “For this reason, God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature, and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.”

The church of Jesus Christ is no longer united on what is and isn’t immoral. Some who even describe themselves as Christians disagree with the Apostle Paul and do not believe same-sex relationships are perverted. Yet the narrative of Genesis 19 screams to the contrary. In Genesis 2, God identified that no one was fit for Adam, and He made Eve fit for him. The biological sexual compatibility between Adam and Eve is what God calls “fit.” The compatibility that God made is natural. Again, we must emphasize that the reason for this compatibility is the necessity of procreation. To procreate, Eve needs to get pregnant in order to have children. Women with women never lead to children. And men with men never lead to children. Same-sex relationships are acts of defiance to what God created and ordained. According to Jesus, God the Father said, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Gen 2:24, Mat 19:4-5). Yahweh prescribes two things for the individual with whom a man becomes one flesh: 1) the person must be a woman, and 2) she must be his wife. Leviticus 20:13 states, “If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death.” Christians do not teach that homosexuals should be put to death. But we know from the Bible just how detestable same-sex sexual immorality is to the triune God who created only two genders and opposite-sex intimacy as the only means of bringing image-bearers into the world. Nothing in the NT even remotely suggests that same-sex attraction or behavior is no longer immoral (see 1Co 6:9-10, 1Ti 1:8-10).

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<sup>1</sup> *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 1996).