

Sex, sexuality, and Christians, Spiritual; 1 of 4

Hi all,

For anyone who knows how I study the Bible, context is everything. Certainly much can be gained by a surface reading of a passage, but a greater depth of understanding comes when we set it in its historical and cultural context.

An example would be I Samuel 24:3-5, where David snuck up on King Saul in the cave and cut off the hem of his robe, only to have his heart convict him, leading him to apologize. Reading it with no cultural understanding certainly is adequate to seeing David's tender heart, but there is more.

The custom of the time as it is to this day among some Orthodox Jewish funerals, is to cut off the hem of a dead person's garment at their funeral. The tassel's and hem stood for the Word of God, and the ceremony of cutting off the hem is a symbolic release by loved ones, telling their beloved they are no longer earth-bound to God's Word, they are free from the law.

When David cut the hem off King Saul's robe, he was telling him 'You're a dead man', rubbing in the fact God had chosen David to replace Saul, who was living on borrowed time. That provides a whole new level of depth to that brief passage doesn't it? It isn't incomplete without that cultural and history information, it just takes on depth.

So it is with early Christianity's understanding and teaching on sexuality. We can read of Adam and Eve and how the two shall become one flesh and gain a certain understanding, but there is more. We can read Paul's words on marriage and even sexual relationships and gain a surface understanding that have meaning, but when we set the NT into the culture of the day, and the larger Jewish culture in which Paul was raised, we gain a far greater depth.

How it all started

Genesis 2:15-24 is the first detail of man and his relationship to his Creator and his spouse, and the sexual aspect of their relationship.

In v18-20 we are told the Lord God said within Himself that it wasn't good for Adam to be alone. But the Lord God said nothing to Adam about it. Instead, this was something that required Adam to come to his own conclusion. To help the process along, the Lord God caused all the animals to pass by Adam so he could name them.

I heard a Rabbi talk of how the naming of the animals was done as Adam got to know their nature, and where they fit in the creation. Adam didn't just see the animals, he got to know their nature, their place among the animal world, and so on.

In fact, the Jewish historian Josephus tells us that Adam, Seth, and Enoch were given perfect understanding of all the earth, the stars and universe, and how it all worked together by the Lord God, their Creator. Adam didn't just see an animal and come up with a name for it, the name was given after fully understanding its place in the natural order.

Josephus also writes that the animals could talk back then, that Adam understood their thoughts and feelings. I believe Josephus was describing words of knowledge, that by the Spirit Adam knew the thoughts and feelings of the animals, for I experienced the same thing in my 'tour' of heaven with pets and animals there.

It was only after naming all the animals that Adam himself now realized they all had mates, male and female, but he had none. It was only then that we are told the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and He took part of his body, a rib, to form the body of Eve, creating her.

Who created them? Christ and the church

A rule of Biblical interpretation is that we understand the Old Testament through the eyes of the New Testament. Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:25-32 that the marriage union between husband and wife is a type of the union between Christ and the church. This makes the sexual act between husband and wife spiritual, mystical, tied to creation and the larger universe.

In Genesis 1:26 we are told 'God said let us make man in our image, after our likeness', and that is the word 'Elohim' or gods. Father, Son, Holy Spirit. But in chapter 2 there is One who steps out of the Elohim (Father, Son, Spirit) to become personally involved in the creation of man. He is identified as the Lord God or Jehovah Elohim.

The Lord God is seen throughout Genesis and Exodus as the One who made man and breathed into his clay body to turn it into human flesh. He appeared to Abraham and Sarah. He is seen by other OT prophets. And to our point, He is identified as the One who spoke to Moses out of the burning bush.

In Exodus 3:14-15 Moses has the burning bush experience. The Lord appeared to him and identified Himself as "I AM that I AM; therefore you will tell the children of Israel that I AM has sent me to you." And God said to Moses; "You will tell the children of Israel that the Lord God (Jehovah Elohim) of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, has sent me to you..."

We see the Lord God is the I AM. When Jesus made the statement to the religious leaders in John 8:54-59 that Abraham rejoiced to see His day, and that He knew Abraham, He added: "Before Abraham was; I AM." They immediately understood Jesus was claiming to be the one to have talked to Moses out of the burning bush, and to have appeared to Abraham, and to have been the One in the Garden of Eden - so they took up stones to kill Him for blaspheme. But He 'hid Himself' and walked through their midst.

Make the connection

Jesus also stated His name as I AM in John 18:5-6 when they came to arrest Him, stating: "I have told you, I AM, now let these others go. And when He had said 'I AM' they were all moved backwards and fell to the ground."

He also claimed to be the I AM in Matthew 14:27-28 when the disciples saw Him walking on the water: "Take courage; I AM, now stop being afraid. Then Peter answered, saying, 'Lord, if you are (I AM), command me to come walking on the water to you.'" (It wasn't a question of a Him being a ghost or not, it was His claim to be I AM)

We can trace our Lord's involvement with man from these statements. He was the I AM now made flesh, who previously appeared to Moses in the burning bush, Abraham in Genesis 18 and 15, and walked with Adam and his wife in the Garden. Jehovah Elohim called Himself I AM in Exodus 3:14-15, the One who made Adam and Eve.

When Paul speaks of Christ and the church, there is a direct reference to the Lord God, our Lord, making man and his wife and telling them they would become one flesh back in the Garden of Eden. This makes the act of sex between husband and wife directly tied to creation, to Christ and the church, mystical. Whether for fun or procreation, the sexual union of husband and wife is spiritual and directly tied to the larger universe in which man was created.

Every plant, every animal, was created to reproduce. The higher animals were made male and female. Adam and Eve were so much one that Eve did not receive her name until AFTER they had sinned. Genesis 5:2 tells us: "He called their name Adam in the day they were created."

They were one. When Christ, the Lord God called out, "Adam, where are you?" Both Adam and his wife came, for they were called Adam. Eve was created as we see cells divide under a microscope - the Lord God literally took the man's rib and started multiplying cells into the various body parts until a fully formed woman was created. They were one, made of the same material, yet individual with each having a spirit and soul.

This mystical, tied to creation element of sexuality has been lost on the church. We see glimpses of it when Paul writes of husband and wife and "I speak of Christ and the church", and our minds just shut off, unable to comprehend the mystical elements of Biblical sexuality.

So we begin this series grounded in the fact that has been lost in our modern world; The act of sex between husband and wife is the physical confirmation and affirmation of a deeper grace and love in their hearts, as a type of Christ and the church. First detailed as they stood naked before their Creator, the One who would one day become a man to die for the sin of the world. But here, in the beginning of the story of man, sex is understood in its proper context. Mystical, a type of the union between God and man, and speaking into man's place in the creation as God's highest and best creation.

We will pick it up there next week. Until then, blessings,
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Hi all,

Last week I shared how the Bible teaches the physical union of husband and wife to be a type of the oneness of Christ and the church. Today we will set that statement into the culture of the first century Roman society.

If children were taught how the union of husband and wife is more than an animal-level act, but a spiritual and mystical type of Christ and the church, they would have context and answers within themselves when facing the onslaught of a sexualized society. They would look for others who understood the mysteries of Christ and what a Spirit-filled marriage looks like. Pop culture today in the US, looks like the Roman world as we experience a sort of re-paganizing of sex:

Sex in the Roman world

In Roman society they did not have words for heterosexual and homosexual. Adult men could have sexual relations with either gender, teenagers included. Female sexuality of the time isn't well documented, but pornographic art has been found on the walls of Roman homes depicting similar behavior by women and men, even in groups. Phallic symbols were part of everyday life, from brothels to wall art and sculpture, even dining vessels. Phallic symbols were 'good luck charms' sold on the streets. They even adorned the outside of bread ovens and walls lining streets and in homes. They hung above door ways...the good luck charm of the Roman world. Sex and images of sex bombarded people everywhere.

Prostitution was legal and common throughout the Empire. Being married did not mean faithfulness to one another, for it was common to have mistresses and sex with either gender when offering sacrifices to the gods or goddesses.

That is where the liberal agenda of today would take us. On the surface they cry 'freedom' and 'anything goes' and 'this is who I feel I am' or 'who I identify with'. But here is a truth: The physical can only minister to the physical, the mental can only minister to the mental, and the spiritual can only minister to the spiritual.

People give themselves over to all kinds of physical activity in the hopes of reaching that spiritual emptiness inside. But no physical effort can reach the spirit man. The once abused child now a teen or adult, will seek sexual partner after sexual partner hoping the next one will be 'the one', to fill that emptiness inside.

People seek education, classes on psychology, sociology, advanced degrees, looking for that one key truth that will fill the emptiness inside or explain who and why they are. People also seek spiritual solutions from many sources, each one they hope, will fill the void within.

Physical fulfillment can't reach the spirit man. Filling the mind with knowledge can't reach the spirit man. Spiritual efforts outside of Christ can't fill that emptiness of spirit - we are created by God and only He can fill us, spirit to soul to body.

Paul presented freedom, security

The Jewish and Christian values taught among the Greek and Romans of the day were very different. Judaism and Christianity taught as mentioned previously, the union of husband and wife was spiritual, part of the creation order, and mystical as a type of oneness with Christ. Fidelity to one's spouse was a new concept to the Roman world.

To the Roman or Greek woman, Paul's teachings meant freedom. Today the world views Biblical values as constraining. Paul's instructions in Ephesians 5:21-32 were nothing short of revolutionary. Submit to one another, equally, mutually. Her husband was to treat her as he would his own body. That statement alone, in the context of sexual freedom for men to have relations with anyone of any age they chose, was exactly opposite of Roman culture. Men and women who came to Christ found great freedom within their marriages, fidelity, growing together as human beings and also in Christ, faithful and free to know their spouse fully and deeply in every way. The gospel was liberating for

them. It defined from creation's example, their purpose, who they could be with their Creator, individually and within the marriage, which He Himself had invented when He brought Eve to Adam.

Paul and Peter told the husbands to treat the wives like they treat themselves. Peter said to 'assign honor' to the wife in I Peter 3:7, and to be tender hearted towards them. To a Roman woman, this was a breath of fresh air! This was empowering. Liberating. No longer merely objects of sexual pleasure with little say in the matter; Christ gave them honor, respect, as an equal partner in marriage. Paul said for the husband to love his wife like Christ did for the church, laying down his (His) life for us, so too is a husband to treat his wife like that.

I read an ancient Roman comment from those days that said Christian women were easy to identify because they didn't walk 2 steps behind their husband like non-Christian women did; they walked side by side with them.

The gospel had wide-spread acceptance from family to family in large part because the Christian teaching of equality for men and women and how sex is a type of Christ and the church and not degraded to simply fulfill selfish lusts. The reordering of their understanding of sex within the bounds of marriage changed family culture and the 'atmosphere' of the family in a way that made Christians very unique indeed.

In Biblical and historical context, we cannot separate the gospel from sex. God takes the unsaved who are living according to their most base animal instincts, and elevates them to oneness in Christ, and that demonstrated within a marriage where they live out that oneness of body, soul, and spirit. Whether single or married, teen or adult, they can see what God teaches. Modern culture has perverted true Biblical understanding of marriage and sex to make it seem like bondage, especially for the wife, in an effort to paganize sex once again.

Consider still more...

In the opening pages of Genesis we see the man Adam in two beings, united and one in the Lord God their Creator. Remember, they were called Adam in the day they were created, and she wasn't named Eve until after sin came. (Genesis 3:20; 5:2)

We see them being put in charge of a 'Garden', which means work was part of the divine order as well. In its proper context, working is part of God's plan that both provides for our lives and also causes us to depend on Him. The Jewish prayer before a meal starts by acknowledging the God of the universe, our Creator, who supplies the food, drink, bread, etc...that we are about to consume.

We work for ourselves and our family, to provide for them as Christ provides us a home in His 'Garden', heaven. The Tree of Life is mentioned as being in the Garden of Eden and also in heaven in The Revelation 2:7, 22:2, 14 - Eden was the perfect example and demonstrates things are going to a full circle of completion. Sexual relations between husband and wife right at the start, demonstrated oneness in Christ in a safe and secure home, and is a type of our eternal home and oneness with Christ.

By not including proper sexual understanding as part of the gospel message, the church has abdicated its responsibility to the world, and they are the loudest and largest voice out there.

We will continue comparing the Roman world with God's culture next week, until then, blessings,
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Sex, Sexuality and Christians, Roman world. #3 of 4

Hi all,

Reading a statement that the gospel and sex were so directly connected to the first century gospel message is probably a shock to many. Most didn't realize how sexualized Roman society was, and

how the message of Christ was so relevant and different to them. Today we hear an evangelistic message and there is no presentation of sex in proper creation context, it is a 'me' gospel, so sterile and high sounding. But back then, the gospel was practical, revolutionary in every way, even entering into the bedroom and marriage. Jesus could change everything.

Go back to the creation story and understand it in context, and then realize Paul was referencing this connection in Ephesians 5:21-end when he said a husband and wife in Christ is like Christ and the church. He mentioned sexual practices in very nearly every one of his letters, that's how integrated sex and the gospel message was. Amazing.

Compared to society

When God's view of sex was presented to people like the Corinthians, Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians, it was revolutionary, a massive reset from the way these (now former) pagans had been raised, and counter-culture to the world around them. This is one reason Paul mentions many times to 'flee fornication'. But he never just said 'stop that' but rather pointed them to who they are now in Christ. That shows us a solution for our day.

This list of sins in I Corinthians 6:9 mirrors the culture of the day: "You know that no unrighteous person will enter the kingdom of God. Those unrighteous who are fornicators (sex outside of marriage), idolaters (sex with temple prostitutes), adulterers (those unfaithful to their spouse), effeminate (homosexual/bi), abusers of themselves with mankind (sexual perversion)....v11: "And such were some of you, but now are you washed, now are you set aside for God, now are you justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ by the Spirit of God."

The emphasis: And such were some of you. This passage lists past sins and the culture in which they lived, but focuses on who they are now in Christ. That is the solution - what is God doing in you now. That culture was still around them in Corinth. But they were to focus on who they are now in Christ.

Be aware of your past, learn from your past - that's why God doesn't wipe our memories when we come to Him - that we may learn and appreciate and be able to share what He did for us. Paul presents here the elevation of sex to its intended divine purpose, order, and place in a person's life as we leave past sexual sins to experience it in proper intent. Now are you washed - you are born again. Now are you sanctified - set apart for God's use. Now are you justified through Christ by the Spirit - justified doesn't mean just cleared of sin, but proven to be God's, with Him as our advocate. That is our focus.

Every Christian is called to a degree of abstinence

The teaching of abstinence for teens is only part of the truth. Everyone is called to a degree of abstinence. Any abstinence a teen is taught must be within the larger context of a life of discipline and self-control. Paul mentions husband and wife abstaining for a season of fasting and prayer, but coming together again before Satan can tempt them by their lack of control. (I Corinthians 7:5)

Abstinence isn't intended to reduce pleasure, but rather to safe-guard a reservoir of love for the right person, in the right way.

Self-control doesn't restrict, it protects. When a couple makes vows to forsake all others and know only they two, they pledge to protect the integrity of their marriage by abstaining from sexual relations with anyone outside the marriage.

Because the revelation of God's plan for sexuality was so revolutionary and counterculture to the Roman world, within 300 years after Pentecost it had overturned the pagan culture of the Empire.

Consider that a proper understanding of sexuality is so central to the gospel, that a Christian who turns from these truths ceases to become a Christian of any meaning or witness to their life.

A husband and wife each abstains from the sins mentioned above in order to be faithful to one another. A single person is to abstain until they marry. That is actually great freedom, a singleness of purpose, an elevation to the sexual union to a type of Christ and the church in a divine creation order. If a person wants their life to be ordered by the Lord, they will include in that order their sexual desires and practices. Self-control allows a person's purpose to be revealed, His divine order to their life, education, work, and relationships to be defined in Him.

The church has failed to teach the spiritual and mystical meaning of sex between husband and wife. At the most a church may preach abstinence, but rarely does it teach the deeper truths comparing the world and its bondage masquerading as freedom, with the freedoms within Christ.

Within the bounds of marriage there is great freedom. The freedom to know another person in such a way that no one else on earth knows them as well - spiritually, emotionally, intellectually, physically - there is great freedom and fulfillment within the bounds of marriage.

When a husband serves and honors his wife as Christ loves the church, then he becomes the husband to the Proverbs 31 woman; "His heart does safely trust in her." (v11) That safety, that rest, that security, is great freedom. Like a nation with secure borders, within those borders is peace and safety. If the borders, marriage or nation, are not protected, destructive elements enter in and eventually that home will fail.

There is so much more to share....we conclude next week, until then, blessings,

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Sex, Sexuality, and God #4 of 4

Hi all,

In the conclusion of this series on sexual love and the gospel, we must realize if we truly believe Christ is in us, then how we treat our bodies and with whom we join ourselves, is a reflection of our faith.

If our lives are a means by which Christ brings His kingdom to earth, bringing us and those we are in relationship with into His divine order, we must include sex and sexuality as part of the gospel message. Not separate. Not hidden away from view, with no education coming to our children until they enter pre-marriage counseling.

In house church, which is an extension of family at its core, with the gathering of several families, children see successful marriages as a pattern of all we are talking about. They also see the struggles. The arguments, how they settle issues. Children learn how to argue, how to negotiate, how to forgive, how to be the bigger person in a conflict.

No matter the age of the couple, from elderly to newly married or young couples, children realize there is this thing called sex that binds these couples together, they are curious about because they haven't experienced it yet. In that context they realize when they see mom and dad and other moms and dads and kids, that sexuality can be healthy and part of a balanced married life. To the singles they see self-control and examples to live by. And all that is wrapped up in how they are in Christ. The family dynamic, including sexuality, is part of Christian life.

In short, the gospel and sexuality are part of the larger community. At the base level things like farming, pets and livestock, reproduction and death, are all part of a healthy context by which to understand sexuality and the gospel. They aren't separated, even children pick up on these intangible elements of healthy adult marriages.

In the Roman pagan world, the slaves and the common peoples' chief purpose was to make babies and serve the sexual desires of others. The teaching of fidelity and being one with Christ individually and in marriage was liberating, finding its appeal to the lower classes of society who were used to being used by the privileged.

Perhaps the single greatest element of setting Christians apart from Roman culture was how God viewed sex. A Roman could easily explain away just another god named Jesus, for they too had gods. They could explain

away how these Christians didn't have idols in their homes, and it was confusing to them, but it was just another religion in their thinking.

But to teach that human life had value, created in the image of God, created with purpose to be one with Him in Christ, and therefore humans should be as faithful in marriage as Christ is to us, was mind-boggling to the Roman mind. To limit and elevate sexual union between a husband and wife to be an example of a mystical union with God rather than merely a means to make babies or fulfill selfish desires, was unheard of in the Roman culture.

Life now had meaning, purpose, sexual union was a vivid picture every person in the Roman Empire would have understood, and to say that is a picture of Christ and the church....so freeing! So liberating! In the same way the stained glass windows of medieval Europe were made to tell the gospel story because everyone was illiterate, centuries earlier in a Roman culture that viewed sex as a means to fulfill selfish desires, the teaching that fidelity in marriage and sexual union with your spouse was a type of Jesus and His bride, painted a vivid image in this mystical, celestial union. Even at the end, the heavenly Jerusalem is described as looking like 'a bride adorned for her husband.' (Revelation 21:2) - what a vivid picture for believers that was SO different from Roman culture.

One Spirit

When Paul told the Corinthians in I Corinthians 6:16-20 not to go to the temple prostitutes he referenced all we are talking about: "Don't you know when you join yourself to a prostitute you become what is written; they two shall be one flesh? But he that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit with Him. Flee fornication for you are one with Christ, and He has bought you paying an expensive price, so glorify God in your bodies..."

In our world they ask the question; Am I a man or am I a woman? But the gospel is: How are we to be man and woman? Marriage has to be complimentary because only men-women 'fit together' or compliment one another, in the divine order of all creation. "Male and female created He them" is the foundation upon which our understanding of sexuality in the divine order of creation is built. When anthropologists and archaeologists find ancient human skeletons, the way they identify male or female is the shape of the pelvis. Women's pelvis's from birth are wider than a male's, which allows them to give birth. The rest is emotional and mental issues in terms of who identifies as whom.

Trace the line of thought...

When someone believes in evolution, they believe they are a random act of nature. Follow that to its logical conclusion and it means their only purpose in life is what they assign to themselves. Morality and ethics, right and wrong, is whatever they say it is, because everything was one big accident. No purpose, no reason to live.

The gospel presents the truth - we are a unique creation, created with purpose and a loving Heavenly Father who with His Son, has prepared a home for us. We are eternal beings, being spirit-beings, and are already in eternity.

So follow this line of thought....

If a person refuses the truth that God created male and female, and that marriage between a man and woman is the highest expression and type of God's union with man through Jesus Christ, they begin to think other things.

Gay marriage for instance is accepted, because when you reject what God says, they degrade sexuality to its most base form, as something merely for selfish fulfillment and self expression, rather than procreation and as picture of Christ and His bride. It means confusion reigns in the world as to the purpose of human sexuality, and when that is believed, a person thinks of themselves as a piece of meat, used and abused by others, leaving them searching for higher meaning, empty and feeling dirty inside.

This is why the gospel and sexuality must be presented together, one part of the other. This is the context of the gospel letter to the Corinthians, the Romans, the Ephesians, the Galatians - human sexuality and its proper context are mentioned throughout. The union of Christ and the church is seen in the sexual union of a husband and wife.

In Romans 1:18-32 he tells of people who reject God given over to wrong thinking, even sexual pervasion because 'they did not want to retain God in their knowledge'. The converse is true - if they wanted to know God they would understand sexuality and morality as He defines them, and dig themselves out of wrong thinking and lifestyle.

To the Corinthians and Romans sexuality and idol and temple worship were talked about, detailing the difference between Christ and the local culture. To the Galatians he mentions works of the flesh that included a variety of sexual sins. Jude v4 admonishes not to turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, 'loose living' sexually that in that day described all manner of sexual activity. Human sexuality is throughout the letters of the New Testament.

Parents are the key educators and examples

How many children are taught their body is a good thing? That their body is a temple in which God lives? That what we might call complimentary marriage (men and women fit together by nature) is foundational and right, as seen in creation and common sense. God created masculinity and femininity, and they become one flesh.

When a society elevates and promotes the needs of self over and above the needs of others, sexual confusion is going to happen. Living in a nuclear family teaches children the needs of others over self. They see mom and dad sacrifice and work for them. They in turn, sacrifice for their parents and siblings, and in house church - they help meet needs in friends they fellowship with as part of a larger family and community of faith.

The Greek word for sexual love is eros

Eros without restraint, when focused on self, produces hurt, confusion, and lives that fall apart. Eros when understood in Christ, makes stable families, babies, and functions well within a community of faith. The very concept of righteousness, the Hebrew word 'tsedakah', demonstrates because we are right with God, His love flows through us outward into our world to which we are joined as part of a larger creation.

When a man or woman, child or teen, allows God's love to condition and define their relationships, their world will be set in divine order. And this world needs divine order, wouldn't you say?

Hope this has been interesting...new subject next week, until then, blessings,

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