

FAQ

FROM THE MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS ARCHIVES (2000-2018)

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MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS
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Frequently Asked Questions

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Abbreviations and Special Terms

The following is a list of abbreviations for reference works and special terms which are used in publications by Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics. Please familiarize yourself with them as the text may reference a Bible version, i.e., RSV for the Revised Standard Version, or a source such as TWOT for the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, solely by its abbreviation. Detailed listings of these sources are provided in the Bibliography.

- ABD: *Anchor Bible Dictionary*
AMG: *Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament, New Testament*
ANE: Ancient Near East(ern)
Apostolic Scriptures/Writings: the New Testament
Ara: Aramaic
ASV: American Standard Version (1901)
ATS: ArtScroll Tanach (1996)
b. Babylonian Talmud (*Talmud Bavli*)
B.C.E.: Before Common Era or B.C.
BDAG: *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich)
BDB: *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*
C.E.: Common Era or A.D.
CGEDNT: *Concise Greek-English Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Barclay M. Newman)
CGL: *Cambridge Greek Lexicon* (2021)
CHALOT: *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Holladay)
CJB: *Complete Jewish Bible* (1998)
CJSB: *Complete Jewish Study Bible* (2016)
DRA: Douay-Rheims American Edition
DSS: Dead Sea Scrolls
EDB: *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*
EJ: *Encyclopaedia Judaica*
ESV: *English Standard Version* (2001)
Ger: German
GNT: *Greek New Testament*
Grk: Greek
HALOT: *Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Koehler and Baumgartner)
HCSB: *Holman Christian Standard Bible* (2004)
Heb: Hebrew
HNV: Hebrew Names Version of the World English Bible
IDB: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*
IDBSup: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplement*
ISBE: *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*
IVPBBC: *IVP Bible Background Commentary (Old & New Testament)*
Jastrow: *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature* (Marcus Jastrow)
JBK: *New Jerusalem Bible-Koren* (2000)
JETS: *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
KJV: *King James Version*
Lattimore: *The New Testament by Richmond Lattimore* (1996)
LITV: *Literal Translation of the Holy Bible* by Jay P. Green (1986)
LES: *Lexham English Septuagint* (2019)
LS: *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell-Scott)
LSJM: *Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell-Scott-Jones-McKenzie)
LXE: *Septuagint with Apocrypha* by Sir L.C.L. Brenton (1851)
LXX: *Septuagint*
m. Mishnah
MT: *Masoretic Text*
NASB: *New American Standard Bible* (1977)
NASU: *New American Standard Update* (1995)
NBCR: *New Bible Commentary: Revised*
NEB: *New English Bible* (1970)
Nelson: *Nelson's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words*
NETS: *New English Translation of the Septuagint* (2007)
NIB: *New Interpreter's Bible*
NIDB: *New International Dictionary of the Bible*
NIV: *New International Version* (1984)
NJB: *New Jerusalem Bible-Catholic* (1985)
NJSB: *Tanakh, A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures* (1999)
NKJV: *New King James Version* (1982)
NRSV: *New Revised Standard Version* (1989)
NLT: *New Living Translation* (1996)
NT: *New Testament*
OT: *Old Testament*
REB: *Revised English Bible* (1989)
RSV: *Revised Standard Version* (1952)
t. Tosefta
Tanach (Tanakh): the Old Testament
Thayer: *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*
TDNT: *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*
TLV: *Messianic Jewish Family Bible—Tree of Life Version* (2014)
TNIV: *Today's New International Version* (2005)
TWOT: *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*
UBSHNT: *United Bible Societies' 1991 Hebrew New Testament revised edition*
v(s). *verse(s)*
Vine: *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*
Vul: *Latin Vulgate*
YLT: *Young's Literal Translation* (1862/1898)
WMB: *World Messianic Bible* (2020)

1 Corinthians 6:9-10

I have heard liberal Bible scholars teach that 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 allows for homosexuality. Is this at all true?

9 Or don't you know that the unrighteous will not inherit God's Kingdom? Don't be deceived. Neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor male prostitutes, nor homosexuals, 10 nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor slanderers, nor extortionists, will inherit God's Kingdom (1 Corinthians 6:9-10, WMB).

adapted from *1 Corinthians for the Practical Messianic*

6:9 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 include what many would consider to be a vice list or catalogue of sins, something which is witnessed in the Apostle Paul's letters. V. 9 opens with the question, "Don't you know that the unjust will not inherit God's kingdom?" (HCSB). The attitude and behavior of the Corinthians, toward fellow Believers, could very well have led them to act in an unrighteous manner, and into some significant sins.

What continues in v. 9, as is rendered in the TNIV, is, "Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor practicing homosexuals." While all readers will agree how prohibited sins were detailed here, not all today are agreed on *oute malakoi oute arsenokoitai*. A slight variance is witnessed in the NRSV, which has, "Do not be deceived! Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites." Much of the dispute over how to approach *oute malakoi oute arsenokoitai* does involve a First Century standpoint of what sins Paul had in view. At the same time, liberals who argue that the Bible is permissible, toward homosexuality and same-sex relationships, will often conclude that a passage like 1 Corinthians 6:9 only has homosexual prostitution and/or pederasty (a minor boy in a sexual involvement with an elder man) in mind.

Customarily, *oute malakoi oute arsenokoitai* has been viewed from the perspective of *malakoi* identifying a passive role, while *arsenokoitai* identifies an active role.¹ The term *malakos* is defined by BDAG with, "**pert. to being yielding to touch, soft,**" as well as "**pert. to being passive in a same-sex relationship, effeminate** esp. of *catamites*, of men and boys who are sodomized by other males in such a relationship."² The second term, *arsenokoitēs*, is defined by BDAG with, "**a male who engages in sexual activity w. a pers. of his own sex, pederast.**"³ There is some dispute over the terms,⁴ given how *malakos* can be viewed as a male prostitute,⁵ and *arsenokoitēs* can be used in contexts which involve specific sorts of sexual acts, such as pederasty or in being "rapacious" (*Lattimore*). David E. Garland, representing a traditional and conservative approach, provides the rendering, "nor those males who are penetrated sexually by males, nor males who sexually penetrate males,"⁶ with the paraphrase "both participants in same-sex intercourse" in the Common English Bible. Contrary to this,

¹ F.F. Bruce, *New Century Bible: 1 and 2 Corinthians* (London: Oliphants, 1971), 61; Leon Morris, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: 1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 93; Craig Blomberg, *NIV Application Commentary: 1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 118.

² Frederick William Danker, ed., et. al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, Third Edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 613.

³ *Ibid.*, 135.

⁴ Cf. Anthony C. Thiselton, *New International Greek Testament Commentary: The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), pp 447-451.

⁵ Gordon D. Fee, *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 244.

⁶ David E. Garland, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: 1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 194.

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at the other end of the spectrum, is the rendering seen in The Inclusive Bible, “hustlers, pederasts,” and also The Source New Testament, which offers the ancient terminology, “cinaedi, arsenokoites.”⁷

J. Paul Sampley is one commentator who reflects the position that just same-sex activities where there is abuse, is what 1 Corinthians 6:9 intended to communicate:

“If one knows nothing of the cultural practices and prejudices of Paul’s time, one can more easily take these ancient terms from that context and make of them what one wishes. In Greek and Roman times, what we would call heterosexual married males (and one can suppose the same was true for their female counterparts) might frequently keep a boy (or in the case of wives, a girl) for their pleasure. Sometimes the kept person was a slave, who by definition would have no choice, but there were also boys who solicited sex with elders for pay. For the most part these relationships caught no special attention. Around Paul’s time, however, certain prominent moralists had begun to note the more extreme, exploitative cases and to object to them. All of those instances consider abuses; none of those texts concerns itself with relationships in which there is not exploitation.”⁸

Interestingly enough, the *BDAG* entry for *arsenokoitēs* offers the critical indication, “Paul’s strictures against same-sex activity cannot be satisfactorily explained on the basis of alleged temple prostitution...or limited to contract w. boys for homoerotic service.”⁹

Not all are agreed on the translation of *malakos* as “effeminate,” as a male person who would be considered effeminate, would presumably be one allowing himself to have anal intercourse with another man, including, but perhaps not limited to, homosexual prostitution. A classical source such as the works of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, from the First Century B.C.E., does employ *malakos* to describe the Sixth Century B.C.E. tyrant Aristodemus:

“The tyrant of Cumae at that time was Aristodemus, the son of Aristocrates, a man of no obscure birth, who was called by the citizens Malacus or ‘Effeminate’—a nickname which in time came to be better known than his own name—either because when a boy he was effeminate and allowed himself to be treated as a woman, as some relate, or because he was of a mild nature and slow to anger, as others state” (*The Roman Antiquities of Dionysius of Halicarnassus* 7.2.4).¹⁰

Often among those liberal Christians favorable toward homosexuality, the term *arsenokoitēs* is viewed as perhaps generally involving a “sexual pervert” (REB), or more specifically some form of pederasty. While conservatives, most especially including this writer, would argue that it is inappropriate to limit *arsenokoitēs* to pederasty or some form of sexual abuse—and hence via an argument of silence same-sex relationships and homosexual marriage are somehow permissible—let us be significantly aware of how homosexual prostitution and/or pederasty being a component of 1 Corinthians 6:9, are still reprehensible crimes. As the Jewish philosopher Philo would describe, “If you indulge in any illicit connexions, if you commit adultery, if you do violence to a child (for do not speak of doing so to a boy, but even to a female child)...” (*Hypothetica* 7.1).¹¹

Even though homosexuality does garner a great amount of attention in contemporary examination, let it not be to the exclusion of the other sins mentioned here, either: “neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers” (NASU). These were sins condemned in the Torah with capital punishment, and definitely fell within the non-negotiable entry requirements prescribed by the Jerusalem Council for the new, non-Jewish Believers (Acts 15:19-21, 29).

⁷ Similarly, the Montgomery New Testament, “or catamites, or sodomites.”

⁸ J. Paul Sampley, “The First Letter to the Corinthians,” in Leander E. Keck, ed. et. al., *New Interpreter’s Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 10:859.

⁹ *BDAG*, 135.

¹⁰ Dionysius of Halicarnassus: *Roman Antiquities*, trans. Earnest Cary (1937-1950). Accessible online at <http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Dionysius_of_Halicarnassus/7A*.html>.

¹¹ Philo Judeaus: *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged*, trans. C.D. Yonge (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 743.

Ben Witherington III does detail how “Pedastry, molestation of minors by adult males, was the most common form of homosexuality in antiquity,”¹² referencing Philo (*Special Laws* 3.37-39).¹³ Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner also address how the most common form of homosexual intercourse, was often exploitative and/or involving some form of prostitution:

“In the Roman world, homosexual relations were invariably exploitative relations between men of quite contrasting social statures. It was not uncommon for married men to practice heterosexual sex with their wives (and female slaves and prostitutes) and to also engage in homosexual relations with male prostitutes or slave boys or other young men of lower class who had little freedom to refuse.”¹⁴

Many of those who engaged in homosexual intercourse were not necessarily what people today would consider homosexual, as much as they would be considered bisexual. Likewise, if a verse like 1 Corinthians 6:9 had homosexual prostitution as a major component, this should not be problematic, given how heterosexual prostitution is addressed immediately after this (1 Corinthians 6:12-20). Witherington forthrightly addresses the claim of some, that homosexual behavior in general was not being evaluated, astutely noting how even if 1 Corinthians 6:9 were to just involve pedastry, it was not isolated from other statements in Paul’s letters describing and condemning same-sex activities:

“The two terms {malakoi and aresenokoitai} refer respectively, then, to the leading and following partners in a homosexual pedastric tryst....Some have urged that only pedastry is condemned in the NT, not homosexuality in general. If this were the only passage where Paul addressed the issue, one could argue in that way. But Rom. 1:26f. clearly shows Paul’s view of homosexual relationships in general. The reference there to lesbian relationships shows that Paul’s condemnation of same-sex relationships is not limited to pedastry.”¹⁵

The most significant factor, for sure, in evaluating whether or not the Apostle Paul would have condoned same-sex intercourse and same-sex relationships, involves how the issue of homosexual intercourse was approached in the Tanach or Old Testament, and in Jewish literature from the broad Second Temple period. It cannot be avoided how similar terminology to *arsenokoitēs*, “lying with men” (*LS*),¹⁶ was used in the Septuagint of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13:

“You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female [*v’et-zakar lo tishkav mishkevei ishah*]; it is an abomination” (Leviticus 18:22, NASU).

¹² Ben Witherington III, *Conflict & Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 166; also Fee, 243.

¹³ “Moreover, another evil, much greater than that which we have already mentioned, has made its way among and been let loose upon cities, namely, the love of boys, which formerly was accounted a great infamy even to be spoken of, but which sin is a subject of boasting not only to those who practice it, but even to those who suffer it, and who, being accustomed to bearing the affliction of being treated like women, waste away as to both their souls and bodies, not bearing about them a single spark of a manly character to be kindled into a flame, but having even the hair of their heads conspicuously curled and adorned, and having their faces smeared with vermilion, and paint, and things of that kind, and having their eyes pencilled beneath, and having their skins anointed with fragrant perfumes (for in such persons as these a sweet smell is a most seductive quality), and being well appointed in everything that tends to beauty or elegance, are not ashamed to devote their constant study and endeavors to the task of changing their manly character into an effeminate one. And it is natural for those who obey the law to consider such persons worthy of death, since the law commands that the man-woman who adulterates the precious coinage of his nature shall die without redemption, not allowing him to live a single day, or even a single hour, as he is a disgrace to himself, and to his family, and to his country, and to the whole race of mankind. And let the man who is devoted to the love of boys submit to the same punishment, since he pursues that pleasure which is contrary to nature, and since, as far as depends upon him, he would make the cities desolate, and void, and empty of all inhabitants, wasting his power of propagating his species, and moreover, being a guide and teacher of those greatest of all evils, unmanliness and effeminate lust, stripping young men of the flower of their beauty, and wasting their prime of life in effeminacy, which he ought rather on the other hand to train to vigor and acts of courage; and last of all, because, like a worthless husbandman, he allows fertile and productive lands to lie fallow, contriving that they shall continue barren, and labors night and day at cultivating that soil from which he never expects any produce at all” (*Special Laws* 3.37-39; *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged*, pp 597-598).

¹⁴ Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *Pillar New Testament Commentary: The First Letter to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), pp 242-243.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 166.

¹⁶ H.G. Liddell and R. Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 119.

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“And you shall not sleep with a male as in a bed of a woman [*kai meta arsenos ou koimēthēsē koitēn gunaikos*], for it is an abomination” (Leviticus 18:22, NETS).

“If *there* is a man who lies with a male as those who lie with a woman [*v'ish asher yishkav et-zakar mishkevei ishah*], both of them have committed a detestable act; they shall surely be put to death. Their bloodguiltiness is upon them” (Leviticus 20:13, NASU).

“And he who lies with a male in a bed for a woman [*kai hos an koimēthē meta arsenos koitēn gunaikos*], both have committed an abomination; by death let them be put to death; they are liable” (Leviticus 20:13, NETS).

There is continued dispute over the term *arsenokoitēs*—although the two words which make up the compound, *arsēn* or “male,” and *koitē* or “bed,” do appear in the LXX of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13—given how some classical usages may employ *arsenokoitēs* as describing heterosexual rape.¹⁷ However, an evaluation of the Apostle Paul’s position on homosexuality is not limited to disputes some may have over the terminology of *arsenokoitēs*; Paul was one who strongly asserted, “I have committed no offense...against the Law of the Jews” (Acts 25:8a, NASU), which we can take as representing the Torah, Prophets, Writings, as well as mainline Jewish theological positions reflected in various extra-Biblical sources. There is uniform agreement witnessed in a wide array of ancient Jewish sources, that homosexuality and homosexual intercourse were perversions:

“[W]hat reason can there be why we should desire to imitate the laws of other nations, while we see they are not observed by their own legislators? And why do not the Lacedemonians [Spartans] think of abolishing that form of their government which suffers them not to associate with any others, as well as their contempt of matrimony? And why do not the Eleans and Thebans abolish that unnatural and impudent lust, which makes them lie with males?” (Josephus *Against Apion* 2.273).¹⁸

“[T]he Greeks...ascribed...sodomitical practices to the gods themselves, as a part of their good character; and, indeed, it was according to the same manner that the gods married their own sisters. This the Greeks contrived as an apology for their own absurd and unnatural pleasures” (Josephus *Against Apion* 2.275).¹⁹

“The majority of other men defile themselves in their relationships, thereby committing a serious offense, and lands and whole cities take pride in it; they not only procure the males, they also defile mothers and daughters. We are quite separated from these practices” (*Letter of Aristeas* 152).²⁰

“And I said, ‘Woe, woe! How very frightful this place is!’ And those men said to me, ‘This place, Enoch, has been prepared for those who do not glorify God, who practice on the earth the sin [which is against nature, which is child corruption in the anus in the matter of Sodom?].....And all the world will be reduced to confusion by iniquities and wickednesses and [abominable] fornications [that is, friend with friend in the anus, and every kind of wicked uncleanness which it is disgusting to report], and the worship of (the) evil (one)” (2 *Enoch* 10:4; 34:2).²¹

“Neither commit adultery nor rouse homosexual passion...Do not transgress with unlawful sex the limits set by nature. For even animals are not pleased by intercourse of male with male...Guard the youthful prime of life of a comely boy, because many rage for intercourse with a man” (*Pseudo-Phocylides* 3, 190-192, 213-214).²²

¹⁷ Cf. A. Nyland, trans., *The Source New Testament* (Australia: Smith and Stirling Publishing, 2007), 315.

¹⁸ Flavius Josephus: *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged*, trans. William Whiston (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987), 811.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ R.J.H. Shutt, trans., “Letter of Aristeas,” in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol 2 (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 23.

²¹ F.I. Andersen, trans., “2 (Slavonic Apocalypse of) Enoch,” in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1983), pp 118, 158.

²² P.W. Van der Horst, trans., “Pseudo-Phocylides,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol 2, pp 574, 581.

“But you, my children, shall not be like that: In the firmament, in the earth, and in the sea, in all the products of his workmanship discern the Lord who made all things, so that you do not become like Sodom, which departed from the order of nature” (*Testament of Naphtali* 3:4).²³

“For the unjust will not inherit the kingdom of God, nor will the adulterers, nor the accursed, nor those who commit outrages and have sexual intercourse with males, nor the gluttons, nor the worshipers of idols, nor those who utter imprecations, nor those who pollute themselves outside of marriage; and others whom we have not presented or even mentioned shall not come near the kingdom of God” (*Testament of Jacob* 7:20).²⁴

For an interpreter such as myself, I am satisfied that when Paul used *arsenokoitēs* in 1 Corinthians 6:9, he was describing homosexuality per the usage of similar terms in the LXX of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13. When this is compounded, however, with quotations from Second Temple Jewish literature²⁵—albeit very diverse on a whole host of other issues—I cannot possibly see how some would conclude that Paul would be approving of same-sex intercourse which is consensual, much less same-sex marriage! 1 Corinthians 6:9 is notably not the only place where homosexual activities were described by him:

“For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error” (Romans 1:26-27, NASU).

“[K]nowing this, that the Torah is not laid down for a righteous person, but for the lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, ¹⁰for fornicators, for homosexuals, for slave traders, for liars, for perjurers, and if there be any other thing contrary to the sound doctrine” (1 Timothy 1:9-10, author’s rendering).

Evangelical commentators on 1 Corinthians, surely having to evaluate not only what a passage like 1 Corinthians 6:9 means—but also how to approach this for modern Believers and people wrestling with homosexuality in society—have offered a number of important thoughts. Craig S. Keener thinks that for Paul,

“He never addresses the modern question of homosexual ‘orientation’ but presumably would view it as merely a sphere of temptation like its heterosexual counterpart, reserving sin only for a mental or physical act....Bisexuality was extremely common among Greeks, especially because of the shortage of available wives, which apparently occasioned the late age of marriage for most Greek men.”²⁶

Craig Blomberg offers the further conclusion,

“While it is false to claim that the ancient world knew nothing of apparent homosexual *orientation* but only actions, it is true that one’s predisposition need not lead to actual sin. Celibacy remains the biblical mandated alternative to heterosexual marriage for people of any orientation unable to find a permanent partner of the opposite sex. It is also linguistically invalid to limit the type of homosexual behavior Paul describes either to pedasty (adult men with underage boys) or to homosexual prostitution (casual sex for profit between individuals not committed to a lasting relationship with each other).”²⁷

The spiritual and social components involving the Twentieth and Twenty-First Century gay rights movement, same-sex marriage, and now the controversies present in both Judaism and Christianity over the

²³ H.C. Kee, trans., “Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol 1, 812.

²⁴ W.F. Stinenspring, trans., “Testament of Jacob,” in *Ibid.*, 917.

²⁵ Cf. Garland, 213 fn#31 for a further, grand list.

²⁶ Craig S. Keener, *New Cambridge Bible Commentary: 1-2 Corinthians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp 54-55.

²⁷ Blomberg, 121.

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validity of homosexuality and ordination of homosexual clergy, go well beyond the scope of this analysis.²⁸ It is surely not going away, though—even for today’s Messianic people—as we are all likely to know a friend, an acquaintance, or even a family member, who is homosexual. For my own religious studies, a former vice president of Asbury Theological Seminary, which I attended from 2005-2009, and which continues to say on its ethos statement, “We commit ourselves to the practice of celibacy in singleness and fidelity in Christian marriage which we affirm as a sacred union between one woman and one man”²⁹—did two years after his retirement (2014) come out in favor of same-sex marriage.³⁰ There are many dynamics present among theological examiners, indicating in the academic world that there will be more and more coming out in favor of homosexual marriage (even though they themselves might be heterosexual). When we witness this, how many incensed evangelicals will be conscious of how contemporary Christianity’s widespread dismissal of God’s Torah or Law **is a significant factor?** *Probably not enough.*

Unlike the issue of females in ministry—where egalitarians, including myself, will argue from concrete examples in Scripture of females serving in leadership (which in Paul’s letters would include Phoebe [Romans 16:1-2], Prisca or Priscilla [Romans 16:3-4; cf. Acts 18:18-28], Junia [Romans 16:7], and Euodia and Syntyche [Philippians 4:2-3])—**there are no examples in Scripture of same-sex intercourse or same-sex relationships being commended.** One of the significant places where a same-sex marriage, of sorts, is actually found, is in how the Emperor Nero actually had a boy surgically altered to become female, dressed him as a woman, and went through a wedding ceremony:

“Having tried to turn the boy Sporus into a girl by castration, he went through a wedding ceremony with him—dowry, bridal veil and all—took him to his palace with a great crowd in attendance, and treated him as a wife. He dressed Sporus in the fine clothes normally worn by an Empress and took him in his own litter not only to every Greek assize and fair, but actually through the Street of the Sigillaria at Rome, kissing him amorously now and then” (Suetonius *Nero* 6.28).³¹

Readers, who oppose the validity of homosexuality, should not be afraid of homosexual prostitution and/or pedasty being a likely component of the vice list of 1 Corinthians 6:9, as this verse is not to be read isolated from other passages where homosexual behavior was condemned. Yet, while homosexuality might garner more attention than some of the other vices, we need to be reminded how Paul fully said, as it appears in the Kingdom New Testament, “Don’t you know that the unjust will not inherit God’s kingdom? Don’t be deceived! Neither immoral people, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor practicing homosexuals of whichever sort.” Inappropriate heterosexual activity would be further condemned by Paul. And indeed, the only legitimate, blessed, and co-equal alternative to a monogamous marriage relationship between one man and one woman—which seldom gets the attention it deserves among contemporary Believers—is actually celibate singleness (1 Corinthians 7:7-8, 26, 32).

6:10 The vice list which continued from v. 9 in v. 10, included more immoral or unethical character traits, which did receive condemnation for sure, but did not merit capital punishment—although if unchecked and unregulated, could lead to the sins in v. 9: “nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God” (NIV). As is obviously seen in vs. 9-10, the sexual sins which Paul listed get the most amount of attention among commentators, and get debated the most as well. The challenge for Paul’s audience was to make sure that their attitudes and spiritual ideology were in alignment with the will of God, and not their base and fallen human instincts. Richard B. Hays offers the very useful observation,

²⁸ For a general overview, consult Dan O. Via and Robert A.J. Gagnon, *Homosexuality and the Bible: Two Views* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003).

Our own Messianic community is blessed to have two excellent works written about homosexuality, by Michael L. Brown: *A Queer Thing Happened to America* (Concord, NC: EqualTime Books, 2011); *Can You Be Gay and Christian?* (Lake Mary, FL: FrontLine, 2014).

²⁹ <<http://asburyseminary.edu/about/our-theological-orientation/our-ethos/>>.

³⁰ Steve Harper, *For the Sake of the Bride: Restoring the Church to Her Intended Beauty* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2014).

³¹ Suetonius: *The Twelve Caesars*, trans. Robert Graves (London: Penguin Books, 1957), 228.

“To use this text—as is often done—primarily to condemn one of the other classes of sinners in Paul’s vice list (such as ‘fornicators’ or ‘homosexuals’) is a strange perversion of Paul’s message. Faithful attention to 1 Corinthians 6:1-11 will lead us to reflect primarily upon whether we as a community are harboring and even tacitly approving ‘the greedy.’”³²

It is very easy to cherry pick a verse like 1 Corinthians 6:9 about fornication or homosexuality, and then forget how greedy, or even drunken behavior, can lead to craving inappropriate sexual congress—be it with the opposite sex or with a member of the same sex. The practicing heterosexual adulterer is just as much a sinner as the practicing homosexual. The one who is greedy or covetous of power and money, and could care little for sex, is a sinner too. Balancing all of these sins together as problems **for which only the salvation of Israel’s Messiah is the answer**, is not often easy, especially in our Twenty-First Century time when some of them are dividing religious institutions, and they have been heavily politicized.

³² Richard B. Hays, *Interpretation, A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching: 1 Corinthians* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1997), 99.