

Biblical texts used to defend slavery¹ and Biblical texts used to condemn homosexuality

¹ from sermons preached in the 1850s

	Used to Support Slavery	Used to Condemn Homosexuality
Pentatuch	Gen 9:16	Gen 1-2, 19:1-9
	Exod 21:2	Lev 18:22, 20:13
	Lev 25:44	
	Deu 5:7,8	
Prophets		
Gospels		
NT Letters	Rom 13:1-5	Rom 1:24-27
	Titus 3:1, 2:9	1 Cor 6:9
	Philemon	1 Tim 1:10
	1 Peter 2:13-18	Jude 7
	Col 3:22	
	1 Cor 7:21-22	
	Eph 6:5	

Could it be a coincidence that the same gap exists in both columns—that being the fact that neither the books of the prophets nor the gospels have been used to support slavery *or* to condemn homosexuality?

The Pentatuch and the New Testament letters that are cited above, however, must be understood within their historical context to make sense of what the authors were asserting. These two sections of the Bible are very connected to the cultures in which they were written. The Pentatuch was written to the Jewish people who sought justification and salvation through following a strict code of literally hundred of laws. The New Testament letters were written to the emerging Christian Church.

A few questions: Today does the Church allow men to shave their beards? Leviticus forbids that (Lev 19:27)! Do we wear clothing made of two different materials? Leviticus forbids that (Lev 19:19)! Are women allowed to speak in Churches? Paul's letter to the

Corinthians forbids it (1 Cor 14:34-35)! Can women pray without having to wear a head covering? Paul's letter to the Corinthians forbids it (1 Cor 11:5)!

As we see, it is imperative that these books be understood within their historical context to discern what they mean to use today. The Church has come to recognize that Paul's writing on slavery within the context of his time was radical. He wrote, "Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven" (Colossians 4:1). Paul, however, did not want to cause a slave uprising, which I can only imagine, he would have felt would draw the focus away from his mission to share the Good News of Christ's life, redemptive death, and resurrection.

The Church, in studying these scriptures within their historical context, has come around to seeing that slavery is *morally unacceptable and wrong*. Similarly, the scriptures often used to condemn homosexuality must be looked at within the context of the time they were written; otherwise, we will be projecting our modern world and modern ideas into a time completely different from our own. What we will find is that the Bible only talks about homosexual sex within the context of rape (Genesis & Jude), abusive sexual relations (Leviticus), orgies (Romans), and prostitution/pederasty (Corinthians & Timothy). There is simply no blanket condemnation of homosexuality in the Bible and there is Biblical evidence that may in fact support loving, committed homosexual relationships. It is my conviction that those individuals who use the Bible today to condemn homosexuality and who pass laws banning gay marriage will be just as ashamed of their actions 50 years from now as those who used to Bible 150 years ago to support slavery would be if they were here today!

To download my Bible study *The Bible, Christianity, and Homosexuality*, which looks closely at the historical context of these passages used to condemn homosexuality, point your browser to www.TruthSetsFree.net.

Justin R. Cannon – Founder of TruthSetsFree.net © 2005

Biblical texts used to defend slavery in the 1850s were provided by Dr. Carol Hunter, Associate Professor of History at Earlham College.