

“Perverted Persons” in the Temple

by Kyle Pope

n Deuteronomy 23:17, God commanded the Israelites, *“There shall be no ritual harlot of the daughters of Israel, or a perverted one of the sons of Israel”* (NKJV). The word translated “perverted one” in this text is the Hebrew word *qedesh*, meaning “temple prostitute (man)” (*Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew & English Lexicon*, 873). The old King James and American Standard versions rendered this term “sodomite” because of the fact that *qedeshim* (in the plural) were usually ones “practicing sodomy and prostitution in religious rituals” (footnote from NKJV).

In much of the ancient world, homosexual temple prostitution was quite common. Most in ancient Canaan saw it as something good. When God revealed the above prohibition to Moses, He was condemning something that the world of Moses’s day would have seen as an act of religious piety. Ironically, this very word comes from the root *qdsh* which means “separated, or holy” (BDB, 871). Such a person was (as their world saw it) a “sacred person, temple prostitute” (Koehler, Ludwig, & Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 826). It is God who told the Israelites that this was not **holy, but** instead, an abomination to Him (see Deuteronomy 23:18).

Despite this prohibition, the Israelites, on various occasions, allowed this very practice to occur. When Rehoboam, Solomon’s son, reigned, the Bible tells us, *“And there were also perverted persons (qedeshim) in the land. They did according to all the abominations of the nations which the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel”* (1 Kings 14:24). The Israelites even corrupted their own religious practices to allow this practice in their false worship. This is evident from what the Bible tells us about the reforms of Josiah, of whom it says, *“...tore down the ritual booths of the perverted persons (qedeshim) that were in the house of the Lord...”* (2 Kings 23:7). As difficult as it is to consider, God’s chosen people had become so wicked that they had come to the point of committing homosexual acts with male prostitutes in the temple courts itself and imagining that it was **holy!**

In August of 2003, the Episcopal Church appointed their first-openly practicing homosexual as a bishop. This denomination long ago abandoned any pretense of following and respecting biblical authority. In their teachings and practice, they in no way resemble the Lord’s church that is described in the New Testament. Even so, they continue to appeal to the name of Jesus and call themselves “Christians.” Scripture teaches, *“Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity”* (2 Timothy 2:19). Can I consider myself a “Christian” if I continue in behavior that the Lord condemns?

As the years have passed, more and more religious groups have come to accept homosexual behavior, with more and more preachers, members, and religious leaders openly embracing it. Years ago, when this first made the news, an Episcopalian bishop stood in front of a building called “St. Paul’s Church,” defending this appointment by saying that it is only people’s “interpretation” that the Bible condemns homosexuality. I don’t think the apostle Paul would agree with this! Some of the strongest prohibitions against homosexuality in Scripture were penned by the apostle Paul (see Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; 1 Timothy 1:8-11). No church that truly follows Paul’s teaching can accept this sinful practice.

When I first learned about all of this, I was reminded of the Israelites. Isaiah warned, “Woe to

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