

Render to Caesar the Things that Are Caesar's

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Matthew 22:15-21: “Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might entangle Him in His talk, And they sent to Him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, “Teacher, we know that You are true, and teach the way of God in truth; nor do You care about anyone, for You do not regard the person of men. Tell us, therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?” But Yeshua perceived their wickedness, and said, “Why do you test Me, you hypocrites? Show Me the tax money.” So they brought Him a denarius. And He said to them, “Whose image and inscription is this?” They said to Him, “Caesar's.” And He said to them, “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.” (NKJ)

Yeshua's response to the Pharisees was about Caesar's taxation, but the past week's Supreme Court ruling legalizing same-sex marriage caused the Scripture to jump out at me as one that we will have a lot more to do with from now on. More than ever before, we will have to distinguish between what belongs to God and what belongs to Caesar; Caesar for us meaning our secular governments – federal and state.

Jurisdiction over marriage is claimed by both biblical and secular authorities – the secular authorities due to the health and welfare clauses of their respective constitutions, and the biblical authorities because of the myriad of Scriptures that inform and instruct about marriage. I know I am preaching to the choir here, but allow me to quote just a few of the Scriptures that establish and speak about marriage:

Genesis 2:22-24: “Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: “This is now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man.” Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” (NKJ)

Deuteronomy 24:5: “When a man has taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war or be charged with any business; he shall be free at home one year, and bring happiness to his wife whom he has taken.” (NKJ)

1 Corinthians 7:1-4: “Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.” (NKJ)

Notice that the biblical references to husbands and wives in these Scriptures use the words “him” and “his” for husbands, and “her” and “hers” for wives. That is important because those

advocating same-sex marriages also use the words “husband” and “wife,” but they redefine them so that wives can be men, and husbands can be women.

I previously said that jurisdiction over marriage is claimed by both biblical and secular authorities. We experience this shared jurisdiction when we go to the courthouse to obtain a license to marry, and then go to a church or synagogue to speak the words of covenant that create the marriage when they are spoken before witnesses and before God.

The laws of divorce are also claimed by both biblical and secular authorities, and it is not uncommon for each of these to refuse to recognize the other. For example, one might obtain a decree of divorce from a secular judge, but Orthodox Judaism will not recognize it, and will require a “Jewish” divorce known as a “*get*.” And the opposite is also true; a couple that obtains a “*get*,” is still considered married by the secular authorities until and unless the couple also obtains a decree of divorce from a secular court.

Until now, Bible believers have usually been able to walk astride and satisfy both the biblical and the secular authorities, but the recent Supreme Court decision making same-sex marriage the law of the land has changed that because the sin of homosexuality is at the root of it. Proponents of same-sex marriage speak of love. Why shouldn't two men or two women love one another they say? Why shouldn't two men or two women be able to covenant with each other to share living quarters, household expenses and responsibilities? It is presented in so logical and in so innocent a way that it disguises what is really going on, which is that men are having sex with men, and women are having sex with women. They are committing homosexual acts that are explicitly prohibited in the Bible. I could spend the rest of this message-time reading the many Scriptures that ban such practices, but here are three that pretty much say it all:

Romans 1:18-19, 24-29a, 32: *“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.”..” Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality,”.. “who knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.” (NKJ)*

1 Corinthians 6:9-10: *“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.” (NKJ)*

1 Timothy 1:8-10: “*But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully, knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, ..*” (NKJ)

Normally, I would not be so graphic about sexual matters in a *Shabbat* message, but the situation we find ourselves in, as a result of the Supreme Court’s ruling, calls for it. The last two Scriptures I read refer to “sodomites.” Do you know who sodomites are? They are men who perform the vile sexual act of sodomy on one another (or on women), reflective of what caused God to destroy the city of Sodom.

Now in the face of clear biblical evidence prohibiting homosexual acts, you would think that the Christian Church would be opposing the Court’s legalization of same-sex marriage. Well, some in the Church are, but alas not all, and those that are not, twist Scriptures like Romans 1:18-32 in unbelievable ways like this one that I extracted (and edited) from an article on the Internet:

“The persons involved in the orgies referred to in Romans 1 were former Christians, and were heterosexual. Romans 1 condemns them because they went against their nature – their heterosexual orientation – by engaging in same-gender sexual behavior. By the same reasoning, lesbians and gays who went against their fundamental nature – their homosexual orientation – and engaged in opposite-gender sexual behavior would also be sinning. Therefore, what God really wants is for people to not go against their respective natures; heterosexual people should remain heterosexual, and homosexuals should remain homosexual.”

As I said earlier, I know that I am preaching to the choir, but I believe these things need to be said. Attempts to justify homosexuality have been with us since the earliest of times, but we are now at a new place because, for the first time, it has been embraced as a normative way of life by the government, and has been made the law of the land. What is coming (if it is has not already come) is a general assault on the Scriptures, and persecution of those of us that uphold Scripture’s commandments. I have already heard the term “Bible-believing bigot” used by the media.

Let us be clear that while the Bible condemns homosexual acts, it does not condemn individuals who have an unhealthy attraction for members of their own sex but do not act on it. Such people are in an unhappy bondage, and are in need of God’s deliverance to be set free. I read 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 to you earlier, but I will read it again and this time include verse 11:

“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Yeshua and by the Spirit of our God.” (NKJ)

So, the Bible condemns homosexual acts and those who continue to practice them, but, at the same time, promises deliverance, forgiveness, and restoration to those who repent of prior sexual sins and seek spiritual help in the name of Yeshua, and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The subject of this message is “Render to Caesar the Things that Are Caesar’s, and to God, the things that are God’s” (from Matthew 22:21). We may have treated the Scripture as academically interesting in the past but, as more and more pressure is put upon us to comply with the Supreme Court’s ruling, and persecution comes to those who show disapproval of it and resist the ruling, each of us will have to search our souls for how firmly we believe the Scriptures and, as Martin Luther is alleged to have said, we too must be able to say: “HERE I STAND!”

Am I sounding the alarm too quickly? After all, no one is talking about abolishing biblical heterosexual marriage, and I am sure that none of us here who are unmarried intend to marry a person of his or her own sex. No, forcing us to marry contrary to Scripture is not the way that the persecution will come. It will come by penalizing us socially, politically, and economically when our views against same-sex marriage become known, and we act on those views. I do not consider that same-sex marriage is anything but sin, and I will refuse marriage counseling to those who are engaged in it, except to counsel them to repent and get out of it. Will I be sued for my refusal? Perhaps, but for this I am willing to be sued. How will Ohev respond if a same-sex couple begins to attend our services and *chavurot* and do not immediately repent? Of course we will minister the word of God to them, but what if we start liking them and they us? And what if their presence and eventual acceptance in our community begins to influence others to the normalcy of same-sex marriage? Will we have the courage to eject them? Well, if they claim to be believers or they become believers while they are with us, Scripture requires it, for 1 Corinthians 5:1 & 5 says:

“It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles-- that a man has his father's wife!” ... “deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Yeshua.” (NKJ)

A different sin, but the principle applies.

Consider 1 Corinthians 5:9-13:

“I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner-- not even to eat with such a person. For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? But those who are outside God judges. Therefore “put away from yourselves the evil person.” (NKJ)

And also 2 Thessalonians 3:6:

“But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.” (NKJ)

These are real end-time things that will begin to happen and, when they do, we will have to be prepared to deal with them biblically despite almost certain retribution. One of the consequences that I see down the road is that Messianic Jewish congregations and Christian churches that hold the line on biblical values will have their 501(c)(3) tax exemptions taken away. The result will be that you who tithe here will no longer receive a tax deduction for your tithes. Will you have prayed this through and be prepared to stand on biblical principle when the time comes?

The UMJC just introduced emergency legislation in an attempt to protect its member congregations; it says in part:

“Because marriage is a sealed and divinely affirmed covenant between a man and a woman, our congregations do not recognize same -sex unions as marriage, and decline to perform or affirm same sex unions.”

It’s a start, but there are so many other ways that we can be impacted.

So, what do we do? First of all, we pray for God’s protection and for wisdom on how to respond to each assault as it comes. Second, we take comfort that an assault on us is also an assault on God and, although we are caught in the middle, He is on His throne and in control.

Remember what Paul reminded us in 2 Timothy 3:12 when he said:

“Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Messiah Yeshua will suffer persecution.” (NKJ)

And take solace from what Yeshua said in Matthew 5:10-11:

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.” (NKJ)

So, we are to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s. May the Lord give us wisdom to know which is which, so that when the persecution we expect arrives we (as did Martin Luther) will point to the Bible and without hesitation proclaim: “HERE I STAND!”