

~ 6 ~

Homosexuality In The New Testament

The fact that homosexuality is mentioned exclusively in the negative not only in the context of the Old Testament, but also in the New Testament is considered a grave argument against homosexuality. However, with regard to the New Testament, a similar issue has to be resolved. The ancient world at the time of the Gospels and the letters of the apostles also knew homosexuality as a cultural phenomenon that went hand in hand with most unpleasant excesses. Whether the apostle Paul – who made the statements about homosexuality in the New Testament – also wanted to take a clear stand against the long-lasting partnership of two people with a homosexual disposition, or whether he even knew and could have known this kind of relationship, cannot be unambiguously answered.

In Greek culture, women were regarded worth less than men who mostly only married at a more advanced age and often very young and sexually hardly mature women or girls. The youthful, well-formed male body was considered the epitome of beauty. Before a late marriage, men spent most of their time in company of other men which is why sexual contacts generally focused on prostitutes or on (younger) men. Homoerotic relationships among men were not only held in high esteem, but were sometimes even considered more valuable than the love to women and, thus, continued alongside heterosexual contacts with one's own wife.

A man could take a boy as his 'lover' – which is why we speak of 'pederasty' – and then assumed something like the role of a protector. These 'lovers', however, were exchangeable. As soon as the boy became older, he often had to give way to a younger successor. Young, male slaves, who were sold and traded on a special market, could also be used for sexual services. Finally, there were also the so-called 'malakoi' (Greek for 'weakling'), most likely some kind of male prostitute, who shaved all their body hairs, wore make-up and dressed in women's clothes, and who asked for money for their services.

In contrast to the times of the Old Testament, homosexuality among women was known, but a lot rarer than among men, with the effect that only one explicit statement in this regard can be found in the New Testament.

Ultimately, homosexual practices could also be found as part of idolatrous orgies at the time of the New Testament, especially in the multicultural cities of Asia Minor that Paul visited repeatedly on his missionary journeys.

And still, all of these manifestations had a lot in common: sexual arbitrary power or violence, greed and indifference, or at least changing relationships or even promiscuity – exercised by otherwise heterosexually active individuals. This background definitely has to be taken into account in our following considerations.