

The story of sodom and gomorrah clearly outlines how the Bible views homosexuality

Within the book of Genesis in the Bible is the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, a tale where God punishes the titular cities for their sins by wreaking havoc and destruction upon them.^{1 2} This story has since been used as strong evidence as to how the Bible indicates Christians should feel towards homosexuality, which has been used within the present day.³ However, I aim to prove that the true views expressed within the Bible are far more complex and nuanced than previously stated, and a passage often used as an excuse for homophobia may be misunderstood by those who use it in that way.

Genesis 19 explains that two angels, disguised as humans, visited Sodom. Lot met these angels and urged them to stay at his house, to which they eventually agreed. However, “before they had gone to bed, all the men from every part of the city of Sodom—both young and old—surrounded the house. They called to Lot, ‘Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them.’”⁴ The threatened angels then blinded the men and urged Lot to flee the city before it was too late. Once Lot and his family had left, “the Lord rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah - from the Lord out of the heavens. Thus he overthrew those cities and the entire plain, including all those living in the cities”⁵ This passage seems to conclude that the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah involved homosexuality, a conclusion which has helped form the basis of christianity based homophobia. This has been shown, although not directly, through a vatican policy from 1992 in which Pope Benedict XVI states that homosexuality is “objective disorder” and that “the practise of homosexuality may seriously threaten the lives and well-being of a large number of people”, believing that it is a “behaviour to which no one has any conceivable right”.⁶ Although this policy is from 1992, it is still active Vatican policy according to human rights campaigner Peter Tatchell,⁷ this shows that it is indicative of some modern Christian beliefs as the Vatican Church and Catholicism by extension has great sway over many European countries.⁸

¹ Genesis 19. 24

² Genesis 18. 20

³ Got Question, *What does the Bible say about homosexuality?* (2023)

<<https://www.gotquestions.org/homosexuality-Bible.html>> [accessed 22 November 2023]

⁴ Genesis 19. 4

⁵ Genesis 19. 24

⁶ Vatican, *Congregation for the doctrine of the faith, some considerations concerning the response to legislative proposals on the non-discrimination of homosexual persons* (1992)

<https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19920724_homosexual-persons_en.html> [accessed 22 November 2023]

⁷ Peter Tatchell Foundation, *Pope Benedict demonised LGBT+ people* (2023)

<<https://www.petertatchellfoundation.org/pope-benedict-demonised-lgbt-people/>> [accessed 22 November 2023]

⁸ The Global Economy, *Percent Catholic in Europe* (2013)

<<https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/rankings/catholic/Europe/>> [accessed 22 November 2023]

However, many have also taken the passage of Sodom and Gomorrah to be a condemnation of a multitude of differing sins, not simply just condemning homosexuality. Ezekiel 16:49 - 50 states “Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy. They were haughty and did detestable things before me.”,⁹ this appears to be implying that the sins of Sodom include pride, apathy, complacency, idleness, and a lack of concern for the underprivileged as does Jeremiah 23:14 which implies the sins of adultery and dishonesty.¹⁰ In fact, later prophets talking on Sodom and Gomorrah fail to mention homosexuality as the reason for their downfall, with only Jude 1:7 “Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion.”¹¹ even directly mentioning perceived sexual perversion. In 2010, Bishop Gene Robinson gave an interview with American progress on what religious texts truly say about gay and transgender rights. Within this, he refutes the idea that homosexuality was the reason for Sodom's destruction, instead citing that Sodom was an incredibly wealthy city which wanted to protect its wealth so much that they “cancelled a very important tradition throughout the Middle East: welcoming the stranger”.¹² Bishop Robinson claims that as this story is not about a “monogamous, faithful, lifelong intentioned relationship” the claim that homosexuality was the issue is incorrect as it is more correctly interpreted, in his view, as being about homosexual rape.¹³

In response, those who believe that the Bible is stringently against homosexuality may point to Leviticus 18:22 which proclaims that any man who lies with a man as he would a woman is an abomination,¹⁴ later decreeing that those who have committed this sin should be put to death.¹⁵ This therefore shows that the Bible repeatedly states what the Christian beliefs surrounding homosexuality should be, proving that Sodom and Gomorrah is a perfect example of these beliefs. Whilst there may have been other reasons for the destruction of the cities, they believe that the Bible makes itself clear that any homosexual relationships are sinful and should result in the ultimate consequences. This is an ideal which has even seeped into the common vernacular through the words sodomy and sodomite referring to homosexual acts or peoples in an often derogatory way.¹⁶

Whilst the Bible may state that homosexuality is a sin at points, it also promotes love and togetherness within Jesus no matter your creed.¹⁷ This is an ideal best exemplified in the story of the good Samaritan, where a man was taken care of by his sworn enemy when those around him would not as despite them being on opposite sides of conflicts they are both one within God.¹⁸ Within modern day, Christians all over the world can be seen

⁹ Ezekiel 16. 49-50

¹⁰ Jeremiah 23. 14

¹¹ Jude 1. 7

¹² Bishop Gene Robinson, Jeff Krehely, Sally Steenland, *What are religious texts really saying about gay and transgender rights?* (2010) <<https://www.americanprogress.org/article/what-are-religious-texts-really-saying-about-gay-and-transgender-rights/>> [accessed 22 November 2023]

¹³ IBED

¹⁴ Leviticus 18. 22

¹⁵ Leviticus 20. 13

¹⁶ Online Etymology Dictionary, *sodomy* (2023) <<https://www.etymonline.com/word/sodomy>> [accessed 22 November 2023]

¹⁷ Galatians 3. 28-29

¹⁸ Luke 10. 25-37

prioritising these values over hatred through outreach programs, support groups, political campaigns, and many more.¹⁹

It is my opinion that whilst the Bible is clear at points, the idea that it is free of contradiction on the topic homosexuality is unfounded especially when the parable of Sodom and Gomorrah is used as the prime example. There are simply too many differing interpretations to come to one simple conclusion. This means that Sodom and Gomorrah does not outline how the Bible views homosexuality as both the story has too many interpretations and the Bible itself is inconsistent on this subject

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¹⁹ Strong family alliance, *Faith Based Organisations* (unknown)

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