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A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE ON SAME-SEX “MARRIAGE” AND CIVIL UNIONS January 2009

Same-sex “marriage” is a controversial issue, both in New York and in many other states and countries. Here in New York, neither same-sex “marriages” nor civil unions have been legalized – yet. Former Governor Eliot Spitzer introduced a same-sex “marriage” bill that passed the New York State Assembly on June 19, 2007. Despite the enthusiastic support of Governor David Paterson and the ongoing efforts of powerful special interest groups, that bill has not been voted on in the New York State Senate. Following Election Day 2008, the New York State Senate will continue to be the battleground in the same-sex “marriage” struggle.

Questions abound: What is marriage? How should marriage be legally defined in our diverse, pluralistic society? What perspectives should Christians bring to the marriage issue? Is it unloving to oppose same-sex “marriage?” And – most importantly – what is a godly, Biblical perspective on same-sex “marriage?” This paper will help to answer these important questions.

* **Marriage was ordained by God as the union of one woman and one man.** God defined marriage in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:15-25), and commanded humankind to be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 1:28). In Matthew 19:4-5, Jesus tells us, “[A]t the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female’ ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.’” After creating Adam and Eve, “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good” (Genesis 1:31). A godly marriage relationship between a man and a woman symbolizes the relationship between Christ and the church (Ephesians 5:25-33).

* **Same-sex partnerships, by definition, are not marriages.** God’s design for marriage is not fulfilled by unions of same-sex partners. Such unions do not possess the complementarity between the sexes that God intended for marriage. It would be dishonest for New York’s laws to call homosexual relationships “marriages.” God hates dishonesty (Proverbs 6:16-19).

* **Homosexual behavior is sinful.** Every mention of homosexual behavior in the Bible reveals that such behavior is not good (Genesis 19:1-29; Leviticus 18:22; Romans 1:18-32; I Corinthians 6:9-11; Jude 1:5-7). Even if the Bible never specifically mentioned homosexual behavior, it would still be sinful. In His infinite wisdom, God commands us to engage in sexual activity only within the context of marriage (Matthew 5:27-28; I Corinthians 6:18). Sexual immorality – whether heterosexual or homosexual – violates that command. Homosexual behavior undermines God’s creative intent for marriage and human sexuality and distorts the true, God-given gender identities of those who participate in it. God loves sinners, but He hates sin. If we refuse to repent of our sins, God allows us to have our way and be separated from Him. If we die in that state of separation, that separation becomes permanent (Romans 6:23).

* **Homosexual behavior is not rooted in an innate, unchangeable characteristic.** Contrary to popular belief, homosexual attractions are not unalterable, nor are they predetermined by genetic factors. First, defining homosexual behavior as sin and creating people with inescapable homosexual impulses would contradict God’s loving nature. Second, the Bible clearly shows that God has the power to free people from homosexuality: “Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do

not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. *And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God*” (I Corinthians 6:9-11). Many people have been set free from homosexual attractions through the power of Christ and have either married or lived morally upright lives as unmarried persons. The rhetoric underlying the movement for same-sex “marriage” is based upon the false premise that some people are intrinsically, and unchangeably, homosexual. In reality, the solution to the legal/political issues faced by same-sex partners is not same-sex “marriage” or civil unions, but repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. (For more information on freedom from homosexuality, see <http://www.exodus-international.org/>.)

* **Human laws should not call good what God calls evil.** Government is ordained by God (Romans 13:1). Human laws are the collective expression of our morality. Good laws reflect the eternal truths contained in God’s Word. Although we live in a society that often denies God’s truth, that truth is not contingent upon mankind’s beliefs. It is the height of arrogance for any government to pass laws that contradict God’s law – as if any government knows better than He does (Proverbs 3:5-6). Marriage is encouraged and promoted under our laws because it is a good thing. Legalizing same-sex “marriage” or civil unions would encourage and promote sinful behavior, and would place homosexual relationships on the same legal footing as the God-ordained marriage relationship. This would be an act of rebellion against God. As Christians, we have a responsibility to speak the truth and to be “salt and light” in the world (Matthew 5:13-16), including our halls of government. Same-sex “marriage” and civil unions subvert God’s truth and should be opposed by believers. “Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness . . .” (Isaiah 5:20).

* **It is not unjust or unloving to limit the institution of marriage to relationships between one man and one woman.** God hates injustice (Leviticus 19:15), but it is not unjust to oppose same-sex “marriage” and civil unions. New York’s Court of Appeals has ruled that there is no constitutional right to same-sex “marriage” (see *Hernandez v. Robles*, 7 N.Y.3d 338 (2006)). Also, New York law gives unmarried persons the right to marry any consenting, unmarried, unrelated adult of the opposite sex. Justice does not require the redefinition of marriage to accommodate homosexual preferences. Jesus said that “by this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35). However, the Bible also says that “love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth” (I Corinthians 13:6). It is neither loving nor just to support the legalization of civil unions and same-sex “marriage,” because such laws promote untruth, validate homosexual behavior, and encourage people to make lifelong commitments to relationships that distance them from God. Christians should display the love of Christ to those with homosexual inclinations, encouraging them to accept Christ as Savior and repent of their sins – including homosexuality.

* **Same-sex “marriage” compromises the needs of vulnerable children in order to accommodate the preferences of adults.** The Bible tells us that there are serious consequences for those who mislead the young (Matthew 18:6). Same-sex “marriage” and civil unions would mislead young people into believing that homosexuality is a true identity and that homosexual behavior is an acceptable alternate lifestyle choice. Also, the legalization of same-sex “marriage” or civil unions would encourage parenting by same-sex couples. Homosexual relationships do not provide the stable family structure that God intended for children and that children must have in order to thrive in their environments. While many children already grow up without two opposite-sex, married parents, our state government should not encourage same-gender parenting by placing same-sex couples on the same legal footing as married couples. Children need both mothers and fathers, and our state laws regarding marriage should be geared toward the best interests of children rather than the preferences of adults.