

The Messenger



“... How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!” Romans 10:15

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A Review of the Arehart-Asher Debate on Homosexuality

by Keith Sharp

Jeff Asher, who preaches at the Dumas Drive Church of Christ in Amarillo, Texas, met Dr. Charlie Arehart, Pastor of the Metropolitan Community church of the Rockies in Denver, Colorado, in two oral debates this spring on the subject of the morality of the homosexual lifestyle. Both men were unusually well prepared for the discussions and were capable in their presentation. This subject is one brethren need to be informed about. Issues that affect the world and denominations eventually affect us. There are already the first signs among the extreme left wing of institutional brethren of a willingness to fellowship practicing homosexuals. Liberal theologians are trying to achieve biblical justification for homosexuality, claiming that anti-homosexual bias led to mistranslation of the Scriptures. Thus, it is the purpose of this review to present an overview of the debates to give readers a brief introduction to the evidence for and against divine approval of homosexuality.

Qualifications of Disputants

Dr. Charlie Arehart: Dr. Arehart is a practicing homosexual and says he has been gay as long as he can remember. He was formerly a Methodist pastor and honorably transferred to the MCC. Charlie has a Master of Divinity from Asbury Theological Seminary and a Doctor of Ministry from Iliff School of Theology. He is a member of the national Board of Elders of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, a denomination that exists for the gay/lesbian community and their supporters.

Jeff Asher: Jeff Asher engaged Robert Williams, the first openly gay Episcopal priest, in a radio exchange on homosexuality on Amarillo radio in 1989 (Williams is now dead of AIDS). Jeff's debate notes, prepared for this discussion, have been printed as a booklet entitled *Out of the Closet*, published by Faith & Facts. Jeff recorded a series of television exchanges with Dr. Arehart for the program of the Highlands Ranch Church of Christ in Denver. The two debates grew out of these TV discussions.

Debates and Propositions

The disputants first met for debate in the MCC building in downtown Denver, April 4-7. The follow-up debate was in Amarillo, May 9, 10, 12, and 13. I moderated for Jeff, and since Dr. Arehart elected not to have a moderator, I, in effect, presided over the two discussions. Both men maintained perfect order and stuck with the task of presenting the evidence each believes upholds his position. Jeff Asher affirmed: “The Scriptures teach that all sexual intercourse between human beings of the same sex is sinful.” Charlie Arehart affirmed: “The

Scriptures do not teach that sexual intercourse between all human beings of the same sex is sinful since they refer positively to gay persons.”

Procedure for Review

I shall simply present the major, affirmative arguments each disputant made in the two debates to give the readers a synopsis of the issue. Since I am writing only a capsule summary of the debates, I will not present the replies each disputant made to the other’s arguments, but both debaters paid careful attention to the other’s speeches. Since Jeff was in the affirmative first, the review will begin with a summary of his affirmative arguments.

I intend to be objective in presenting the material. To help achieve this goal, both Jeff and Charlie have had the opportunity to read the review and to offer suggestions for changes.

Asher’s Affirmative

Jeff Asher presented five affirmative arguments. We will examine them in order.

First Argument: Homosexuality is sinful because it violates the divine plan for the home (Matt. 19:1-9). Jesus affirmed that human sexuality is under divine authority. This authority over man inheres in the creation (Matt. 19:4-5; cf. Rom. 9:20-21). God is the one who determines who shall be joined (cf. I Cor. 6:13-18; Gen. 2:23-25), and Jesus exercises this authority under the New Covenant (Matt. 19:9; cf. Heb. 1:2). Men have not been granted the prerogative of setting the terms of their marriage covenants (Matt. 19:6).

Jesus restricts the expression of human sexuality to biblical marriage. The order of creation is lifetime, monogamous, heterosexual marriage (Matt. 19:5; Rom. 7:1-4; Matt. 19:8). God did not ordain any other kind of sexual relationship involving either humans or animals (Gen. 2:18-25). There is no place here for same gender sexual relationships.

Second Argument: Homosexuality is sinful because it is fornication for the unmarried (I Cor. 7:1-9). The apostle Paul reveals that marriage is a matter of liberty (vv. 1, 6), he restricts sexual intercourse to biblical marriage (vv. 2-3), and he does not offer same gender sexual relationships as an option to the unmarried (v. 2). The argument concludes that Paul condemns all sexual relationships, as fornication and, therefore, sinful (I Cor. 6:9; 7:2, 9).

Third Argument: Homosexuality is sinful because it is adultery for the married (Heb. 13:4). Marriage is precious, i.e., to be held in honor (*Ibid.*). One holds his marriage in honor by keeping himself pure, being set apart to his wife (or husband) only (I Thess. 4:3-7). It is marriage that is to be held in honor; and this, by definition, is a man/woman relationship (Gen. 2:24-25; Matt. 19:1-9), monogamous (Matt. 19:5), and for life (Matt. 19:6, 9). Since the Hebrew writer says all marriage is to be held in honor, this is universally applicable. The conclusion is, when married men leave their wives to have sexual relations with men, or when women leave their husbands to have sexual relations with women, they commit adultery (Heb. 13:4).

to be continued

News and Notes:

Remember to check the prayer list for those with ongoing spiritual weaknesses and physical illnesses.

“...Pray for one another...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” James 5:16