

Troubling Images of God In the Old Testament





The God I Don't Understand...

- ✦ Introduction and Feedback from You
- ✦ The “Strange” Laws of the Old Testament and their Application to Christians Today
- ✦ **The “Harsh” Laws of the Old Testament**
- ✦ Patriarchy, Women, Polygamy and Concubinage
- ✦ Slavery and Human Trafficking
- ✦ Massacres and Ethnic Cleansing



Tonight...

You Could Be Put To Death For:

Striking your father or mother (Exodus 21:15)

Kidnapping a person (Exodus 21:16)

Cursing your father or mother (Exodus 21:17)

Doing work on the sabbath (Exodus 31:15b)

Committing adultery (both parties killed) (Lev. 20:10)

Being a medium or a wizard (Lev. 20:27)

Blaspheming the Lord (Lev. 24:16)



Why Take On This Series?

How do we understand God's character when we read that He would order the killing of someone who broke the Sabbath?

How do we relate to God today when we see this characterization of God, and when we ourselves do such a poor job of keeping the Sabbath?



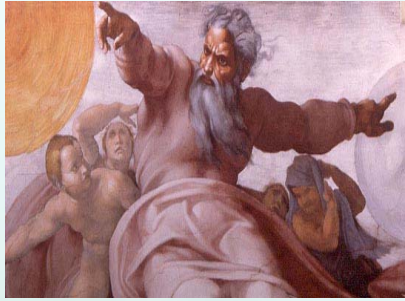
Starting Point: *The Improvements of the Law*

Slaves in Israel had radical, unprecedented legal/human rights, such as the command to treat them as humans and for their own sakes, not just in the interest of the master.

Condemnation of kidnapping or trafficking in human slavery was punishable by death (compare that to our own times or even the American South of the 19th Century).

The Law commanded safe harbor to slaves, while nearby codes demanded the death penalty for helping runaways.

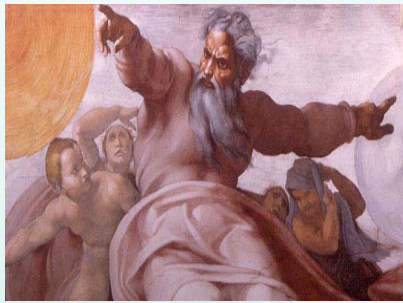
Debt slaves were to be released in the seventh year, while American slaves were bought and sold as property, and kept indefinitely.



Starting Point: The Improvements of the Law

The Law introduces *lex talionis* – “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” – and except for life for life situations, were not taken literally, but required *compensation*.

Commandments that introduced “manslaughter” rules and distinguished them from intentionally killing, while creating room for “cities of refuge” all were radical advances in moral codes.



God as Executioner

Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, contrary to his command. So fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD.

- Leviticus 9:23 – 10:2

While the Israelites were in the wilderness, a man was found gathering wood on the Sabbath day. Those who found him gathering wood brought him to Moses and Aaron and the whole assembly, and they kept him in custody, because it was not clear what should be done to him. Then the LORD said to Moses, "The man must die. The whole assembly must stone him outside the camp." So the assembly took him outside the camp and stoned him to death, as the LORD commanded Moses.

- Numbers 15:32-36

Troubling Images Part 4



God as Executioner

2 Samuel 6:1-7

David again brought together all the able young men of Israel—thirty thousand. He and all his men went to Baalah in Judah to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the Name, the name of the LORD Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim on the ark. They set the ark of God on a new cart and brought it from the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio, sons of Abinadab, were guiding the new cart with the ark of God on it, and Ahio was walking in front of it. David and all Israel were celebrating with all their might before the LORD, with castanets, harps, lyres, timbrels, sistrums and cymbals.

When they came to the threshing floor of Nakon, Uzzah reached out and took hold of the ark of God, because the oxen stumbled. The LORD's anger burned against Uzzah because of his irreverent act; therefore God struck him down, and he died there beside the ark of God.

Troubling Images Part 4



God as Executioner

General Principle:

[First-time] violations were punished harshly, in strict accordance with the Law, to establish the point.



God as Executioner

Unauthorized Fire - Leviticus 9:23 – 10:2

Moses and Aaron then went into the tent of meeting. When they came out, they blessed the people; and the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people. Fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the fat portions on the altar. And when all the people saw it, they shouted for joy and fell facedown.

Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, contrary to his command. So fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD.



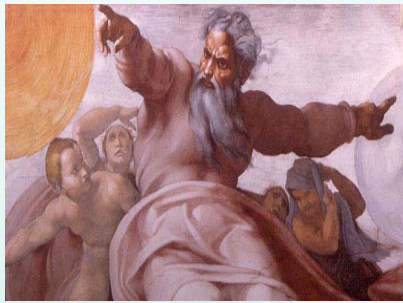
God as Executioner

Unauthorized Fire - Leviticus 10:3

Moses then said to Aaron,

*“This is what the LORD spoke of when he said:
‘Among those who approach me
I will be proved holy;
In the sight of all the people
I will be honored.’”*

Aaron remained silent.



God as Executioner

Uzzah & The Ark - 2 Samuel 6:1-7

David again brought together all the able young men of Israel—thirty thousand. He and all his men went to Baalah in Judah to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the Name, the name of the LORD Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim on the ark. They set the ark of God on a new cart and brought it from the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio, sons of Abinadab, were guiding the new cart with the ark of God on it, and Ahio was walking in front of it. David and all Israel were celebrating with all their might before the LORD, with castanets, harps, lyres, timbrels, sistrums and cymbals.

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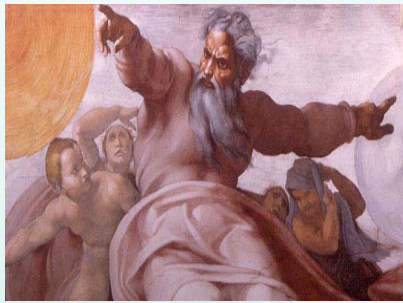
God as Executioner

Uzzah & The Ark - 2 Samuel 9-15

David was afraid of the LORD that day and said, “How can the ark of the LORD ever come to me?” He was not willing to take the ark of the LORD to be with him in the City of David. Instead, he took it to the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite. The ark of the LORD remained in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite for three months, and the LORD blessed him and his entire household.

Now King David was told, “The LORD has blessed the household of Obed-Edom and everything he has, because of the ark of God.” So David went to bring up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David with rejoicing. When those who were carrying the ark of the LORD had taken six steps, he sacrificed a bull and a fattened calf. Wearing a linen ephod, David was dancing before the LORD with all his might, while he and all Israel were bringing up the ark of the LORD with shouts and the sound of trumpets.

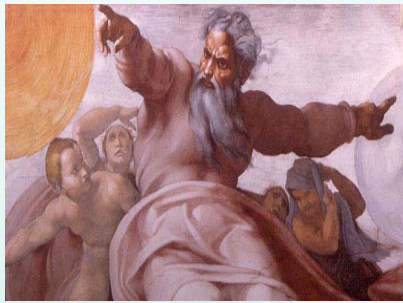
Troubling Images Part 4



God as Executioner

Breaking the Sabbath - Numbers 15:32-36

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God as Executioner

Lying to God – Acts 5:1-5

Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. With his wife's full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles' feet.

Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied just to human beings but to God."

When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened.

Troubling Images Part 4



Next Week...

Treatment of Women

More on Slaves

Making Apologies for God

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INTERACTIVE



Participate, ask questions, talk back...

What if we listened to what everyone had to say — and discovered that God can speak through us all? After all, we all learn better when we talk things out, hear different points of view, and give room for the Spirit to speak through our deliberation.

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THOUGHTFUL



Test everything, hold on to what is good...

Many hours of research are dedicated to prepare each one of our series. We explore the scriptures, the breadth of Christian scholarship, contemporary authors, and consider a wide range of sources outside of our faith.

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FAITHFUL



Set apart Christ as Lord...

We all have questions. But we learn together in a way that tackles the deepest part of our doubts while making sure that our purpose is clear: to always know the reason for the hope that we have in Jesus Christ, and to be prepared to share that answer with everyone who asks us about that hope.

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