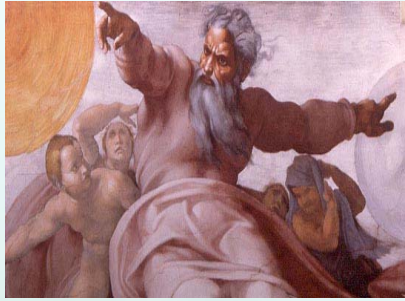


# *Troubling Images of God In the Old Testament*





# ***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
- ✦ Massacres and Ethnic Cleansing



# *Last Week . . .*

## *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)

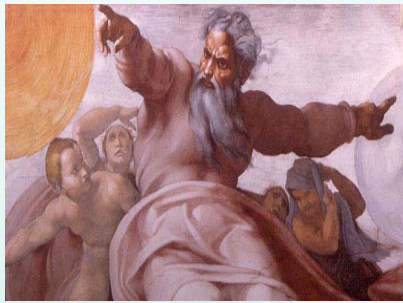
Doing work on the sabbath (Exodus 31:15b)

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

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

Blaspheming the Lord (Lev. 24:16)





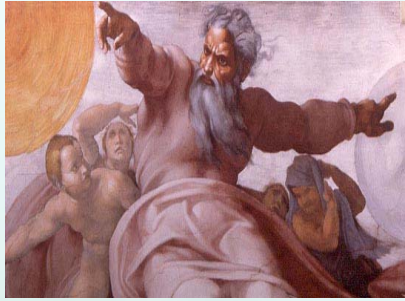
## *Last Week . . .*

### *Someone Was Put To Death For:*

Gathering wood on the Sabbath (Numbers 15:32-36)

Offering “unauthorized fire” in the Tabernacle (Leviticus 10:1-3)

Touching the Ark of the Covenant to keep it from falling (2 Samuel 6:1-7)



*Tonight . . .*

How do we deal with troubling  
images of God found in  
the Old Testament?



# *Troubling Images*

## Step One:

Make sure you understand what it is that you are troubled by, and that you are aware of all the facts and circumstances.





# *Troubling Images*

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Make sure you understand what it is that you are troubled by, and that you are aware of all the facts and circumstances.

### Flash Back to Week 1:

We are not troubled that God is repeatedly described as “jealous” because we have taken the time to understand this description of God and its use in context.



# *Troubling Images*

## Example – Death for Gathering Wood on the Sabbath:

*Does it make a difference that:*

- God had twice made this commandment clear, as well as its consequences?
- this story comes very close after Israel disobeyed God and refused to enter into the Promised Land?
- this story immediately follows several instances where Israel was grumbling about God not providing, and the people complained that they longed to return to Egypt?
- this story follows a rebellion by Israel, in which Moses has to plead with God to restrain the Lord's anger, while the Lord asks how long Israel will refuse to trust Him?





# *Troubling Images*

## Example – Death for Gathering Wood on the Sabbath:

*Does it make a difference that:*

- this story appears to be the first instance of violation?
- this story appears to be the only one of its kind?
- no other story records an execution for breaking the Sabbath, even though scripture tells us that Israel repeatedly broke this commandment?



# *Troubling Images*

## Example – Death for “Unauthorized Fire”

*Does it make a difference that:*

- God had very, very specific instructions for how He was to be worshipped, and had warned that His holiness would consume those who did not approach Him as instructed?
- this story comes immediately after the priests are commissioned before all the people, and the glory of the LORD has just appeared to them at the dedication?
- “unauthorized fire” was associated with a pagan ritual to celebrate one’s appointment to the priesthood?



# *Troubling Images*

## Example – Death for Touching the Ark of the Covenant

*Does it make a difference that:*

- God had specifically commanded that it was to be carried with poles, which were built into the Ark as part of His instructions, and that the poles were not even to be removed?
- that Israel had lost the Ark in battle, and that it was the Philistines that had come up with the idea of sending it back to Israel on a cart?
- the next story about the Ark shows it being carried exactly as commanded by the Lord, with sacrifices being offered as it was being carried by the priests with poles?





# *Troubling Images*

## Step One:

Make sure you understand what it is that you are troubled by, and that you are aware of all the facts and circumstances.

## Step Two:

After better understanding why a passage is less troubling than it appears on its face, consider how you will deal with those things that remaining troubling to you.



# *Troubling Images*

## *Defending God's Behavior*

### God Has Divine Immunity:

Everything God does is good and right because God can do no wrong. God's acts are righteous by virtue of the fact that God is the one doing them.

### God Has a Just Cause for His Actions:

God has a necessary or righteous reason for all of His actions. Many times this cause might be supplied by the writer of the text, or it can be supplied through reason or theology (beliefs about God).



# *Troubling Images*

## *Defending God's Behavior*

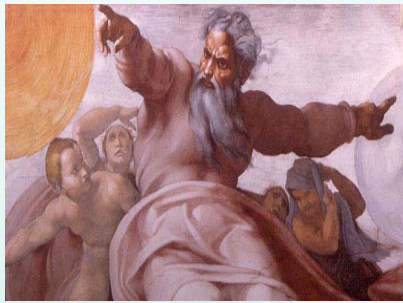
### God Is Acting for a Greater Good:

Part of the “Just Cause” approach, this view asserts that God uses death, destruction or other troubling passages to accomplish a higher purpose.

### God Acted Differently in the Old Testament:

God slowly unveiled His standard and revealed more of Himself, His will and His character over time. This was to ensure that people could comprehend His will and have the ability to obey it. [Progressive Revelation view.]





# *Troubling Images*

## *Defending God's Behavior*

### God Works Through Sinful Humanity:

For God's will to be accomplished, God necessarily must work through sinful humans, who cannot act in a manner other than one that is terrible because of their sin.

### The Bible Improperly Attributes Actions to God:

The writers of the Old Testament lived in a world where everything was attributed to God – both good and evil. The texts were composed to reflect this understanding. Old Testament narratives were never meant to be historical or accurate, but were instead meant to convey a point. God's appearance in the story (as an actor or speaker) is only intended to support the narrative or point.



# *Troubling Images*

## *Defending God's Behavior*

God Has Divine Immunity

God Has a Just Cause for His Actions

God Is Acting for a Greater Good

God Acted Differently in the Old Testament

God Works Through Sinful Humanity

The Bible Improperly Attributes Actions to God



# *Troubling Images*

## Step One:

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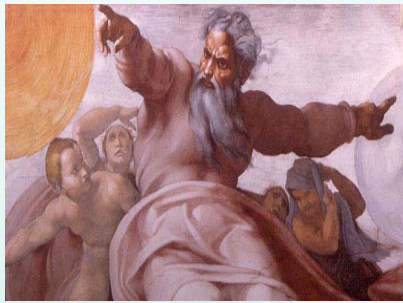
## Step Two:

After better understanding why a passage is less troubling than it appears on its face, consider how you will deal with those things that remaining troubling to you.

## Step Three:

Appreciate what it means to be saved by faith.





# *Troubling Images*

Hebrews 11:1 -

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

2 Corinthians 5:7 -

For we live by faith, not by sight.

John 20:29 -

Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

*Troubling Images Part 5*

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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.

[Read more](#)

## 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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