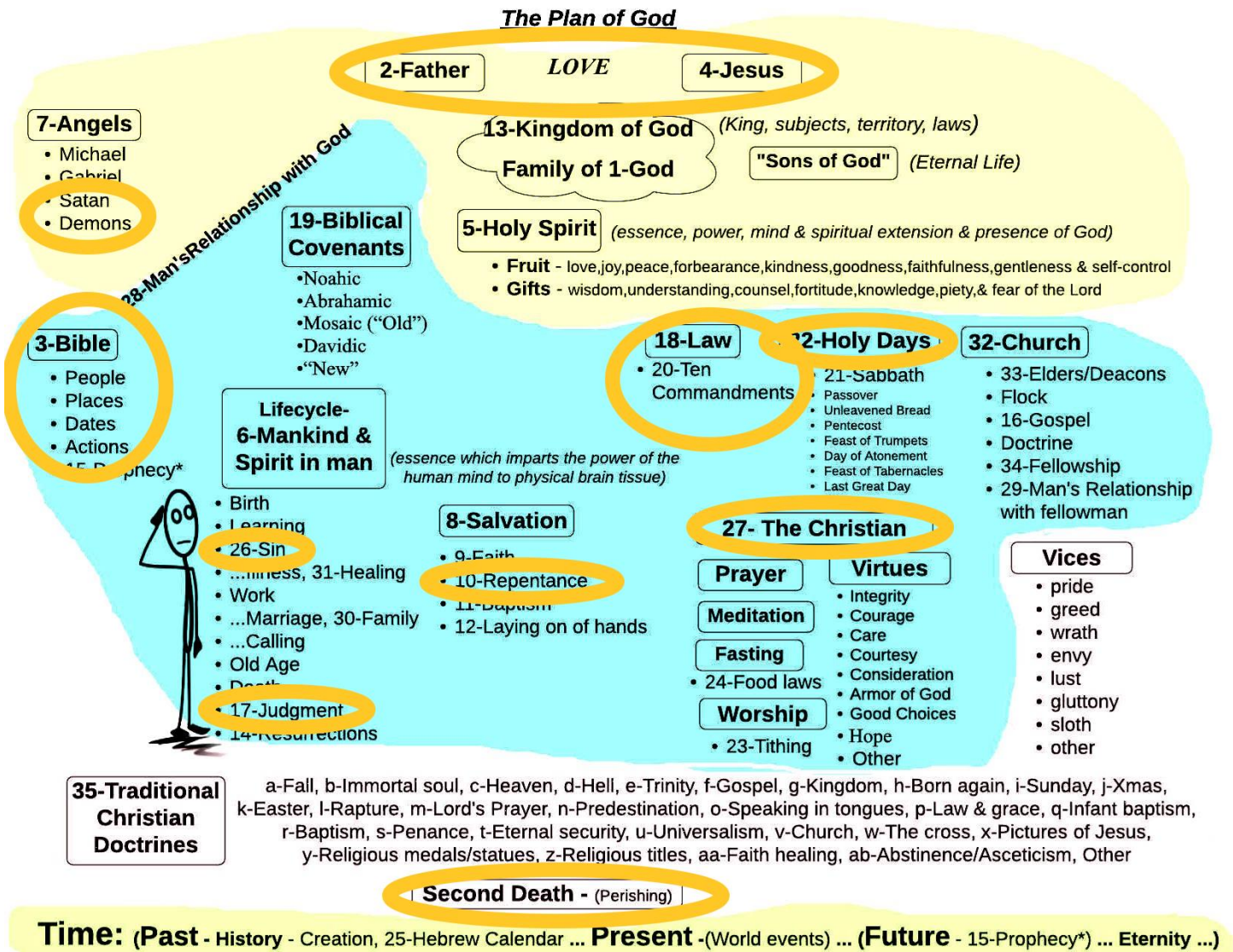


Defending ... God the Father & our Lord Jesus Christ Pt2

As worshippers of God... in the Church built by Jesus Christ ... one of our obligations & responsibilities is to use ...

2 Corinthians 10:4-5 ... the **weapons of our warfare** are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, **casting down arguments** and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God...

In part 1 of this Sermon ... I answered Ernie's request to speak about the last 3 chapters of the Book of Judges (**The Levite and His Concubine**) where we addressed **10 points of scripture** that people OFTEN use to criticise the Bible, or God, or the people of God. As 1Peter 3 instructs ... "be ready always to give an answer" ... so in Part 2 of the sermon today, we will address some other "Difficult scriptures" to build upon the list of **approaches** we can use, to help people understand God, God's ways & His Word (we call the Holy Bible ... "**Books**")



Examples of Difficult scriptures ... We can help people to Understand

A) Exodus 12:29 And it came to pass at midnight that **the Lord struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt**, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of livestock."

- ie Is this an example of “**divine cruelty**”?
- 0 - God is **just** - The Egyptians had been killing the firstborn males ...
- 00 - Tragedy booklet - Death is not the end (resurrections) & It is the response that counts
- 1 - God is sovereign
- 6 - God is Working out a plan for Mankind as seen in the Holy Days
Egypt was an **example** of Sin/Evil & God **provided** an example of His Salvation



B) Deuteronomy 7:2 & when the Lord your God delivers them over to you, you shall conquer them & utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them nor show mercy to them.

Numbers 31:17-18 Now therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman who has known a man intimately. But keep alive for yourselves all the young girls

who have not known a man intimately.

Deuteronomy 20:16-17 But of the cities of these peoples which the Lord your God gives you as an inheritance, you shall let nothing that breathes remain alive, but you shall utterly destroy them: the Hittite and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite, just as the Lord your God has commanded you.

- ie Is God **harsh & merciless**? ... providing divine endorsement of violence & exploitation? ... or genocide?
- 0 - God is **just** - **Gen 15:16** But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.
The inhabitants of the Promised land had to attain a degree of wickedness before God had Israel take possession
- 00 - Tragedy booklet - Death is not the end (resurrections) & It is the response that counts
- 1 - God is sovereign
- 7 - God is pragmatic - “what works” in a situation - If you don’t kill everyone, there are later problems of people wanting revenge, reparations, etc

C) Deuteronomy 22:28-29 If a man finds a young woman who is a virgin, who is not betrothed, and he seizes her and lies with her, and they are found out, then the man who lay with her shall give to the young woman's father fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife because he has humbled her; he shall not be permitted to divorce her all his days.

- The requirement for a rapist to marry his victim seems **deeply problematic & unjust**.
- 4 - **Relativism - Judging by today's standards**. This passage from Deuteronomy discusses the cultural and legal practices of ancient Israel. The verse reflects the historical context in which it was written, **where marriage was often viewed in terms of family honour & financial transactions**. However, this practice is not an endorsement or instruction for modern relationships, and the biblical text does not suggest this as a model for dealing with such situations today.

Actually, this strict practice would have *also* served as a deterrent to rape

D) 2 Kings 2:23-24 Then he (*Elisha*) went up from there to Bethel; and as he was going up the road, some youths came from the city and mocked him, and said to him, 'Go up, you baldhead! Go up, you baldhead!' So he turned around and looked at them, and pronounced a curse on them in the name of the Lord. And two female bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the youths.



- The story of Elisha cursing the mocking youths & their subsequent mauling by bears is seen by some as an **excessive punishment**.
- 00 - Tragedy booklet - Death is not the end (resurrections) & It is the response that counts
- 0 - **God is Just** - The persons *really* punished were, not so much the youth, as the wicked parents, whose mouth-pieces the youth were, and who may have justly lost the gift of offspring of which they had shown themselves unworthy.
- 1 - **God is sovereign** - an insult to God's messenger is an insult to God. Perhaps it was necessary to show, at the outset of Elisha's career as a prophet, that he too, so mild and peaceful could, like Elijah, wield the terrors of God's judgments

E) Matthew 10:34-36: "Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.

Luke 14:26 If anyone comes to Me & does not hate his father & mother, wife & children, brothers & sisters, yes, & his own life also, he cannot be My disciple."

- Jesus' words seem **to contradict the message of love & peace** often associated with Him
- Christ did not here mean to say that the object of his coming was to produce discord and contention, for he was the Prince of Peace, **Isa_9:6; Isa_11:6; Luk_2:14**; but he means to say that such would be one of the effects of his coming. One part of a family that was opposed to Him would set themselves against those who believed in him. The wickedness of men... & not the religion of the gospel... is the cause of this hostility.

F) Job 1:21: "And he said: 'Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord.'"

- The **suffering of Job**, despite being a righteous man, leads some to question the **fairness & compassion of God**
- 00 - Tragedy booklet - Death is not the end (resurrections) & It is the response that counts
- **0 - God is good & fair**
- **2 - Foolish argument**-Because Job *ultimately* learned & appreciated the lesson from God (Read the book!)



G) Judges 11:30-31, 34-35 & Jephthah made a vow to the Lord, & said, 'If You will indeed deliver the people of Ammon into my hands, then it will be that whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the people of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's, & I will offer it up as a burnt offering.' ... When Jephthah came to his house at Mizpah, there was his daughter, coming out to meet him with timbrels & dancing; & she was his only child. Besides her he had neither son nor daughter. & it came to pass, when he saw her, that he tore his clothes, & said, 'Alas, my daughter! You have brought me very low! You are among those who trouble me! For I have given my word to the Lord, & I cannot go back on it.'"

- Jephthah's vow and its tragic fulfillment, leading to the sacrifice of his daughter, is troubling and raises questions about the **nature of vows & divine expectations**.
- **0 - God is good** - Deu 18:9-10 God calls child sacrifice an abomination
- **3 - God made man with Freewill** - even to make foolish vows - Scripture does not spare telling us of the sins of heroes or kings
- In Scripture, Saul was **not compelled to enforce** his foolish vow (ie to fast until sunset) **1Sa 14:45** But the people said to Saul, "Shall Jonathan die, who has accomplished this great deliverance in Israel? Certainly not! As the LORD lives, not one hair of his head shall fall to the ground, for he has worked with God this day." So the people rescued Jonathan, and he did not die.

H) John 14:6 Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.'

Act 4:12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

- This exclusivity claim can be seen as **intolerant or divisive**, in our pluralistic society
- **1 - God is sovereign** - & truth is truth - God as creator "makes the rules". Society is permitted to be pluralistic now, but the time is coming when mankind will know God is the true God

Eze 37:13 Then you shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves,
O My people, and brought you up from your graves.

Php 2:9-11 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus **every knee should bow**, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

I) Jeremiah 18:7-10: "The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy it, if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, **I will relent of the disaster** that I thought to bring upon it. And the instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it, if it does evil in My sight so that it does not obey My voice, then **I will relent concerning the good** with which I said I would benefit it."

- This passage raises questions about the **nature of divine promises & threats & God's changing intentions**.
- **0 - God is good & fair & Just** - Book of Jonah shows God's mercy to Ninevah - Yet about 150 years later, Assyria did fall to the Medes (612 BC)
- **2 - Foolish argument**- Attacking God because of *this* conduct is silly!?!

J) Isaiah 45:7: "I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity; I, the Lord, do all these things."

Amos 3:6 If a trumpet is blown in a city, will not the people be afraid? If there is calamity in a city, will not the Lord have done it?

- The idea **that God creates calamity or disaster** can be troubling to some, as it conflicts with the perception of God as wholly good
- **0 - God is Just** - Blessings & Cursings ... God is clear that Bad things will happen in this world **ESPECIALLY** to the lawless
- **1- God is sovereign** - These scriptures emphasizes the idea that nothing happens without God's knowledge, involvement or permission, including disasters. It reflects the belief in God's sovereignty over all events, including those that may be seen as negative or disastrous.



K) The Faith of a Canaanite Woman

Mat 15:21-28 Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon.

Mat 15:22 And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed."

Mat 15:23 But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, "Send her away, for she cries out after us."

Mat 15:24 But He answered & said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel

Mat 15:25 Then she came & worshiped Him, saying, "Lord, help me!"

Mat 15:26 But He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread & throw it to the little dogs.

Mat 15:27 And she said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table."



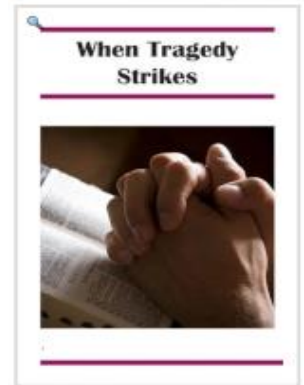
Mat 15:28 Then Jesus answered and said to her, "O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire." And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

- Jesus' response to the Canaanite woman can be perceived as **harsh** and **unkind**, raising questions about His **compassion**.
- **0 - God & Jesus are loving & fair**
- **2 - Fake outrage** - This account CONFIRMS Jesus' compassion!?!)
- **6 - God & Jesus are working on a plan for all mankind** - (Via the nation of Israel as the model nation). There is no harm when the King of the Kingdom of God recognises the request of an exceptional, humble woman (asking for crumbs!) with sound reasoning!
- **7 - God & Jesus are pragmatic** - Jesus was here to do the will of the Father - there were millions of "other things" He could have done - but they were "off mission".

L) Leviticus 21:17-23 Speak to Aaron, saying: 'No man of your descendants in succeeding generations, who has any defect, may approach to offer the bread of his God. For any man who has a defect shall not approach: a man blind or lame, who has a marred face or any limb too long, a man who has a broken foot or broken hand, or is a hunchback or a dwarf, or a man who has a defect in his eye, or eczema or scab, or is a eunuch. No man of the descendants of Aaron the priest, who has a defect, shall come near to offer the offerings made by fire to the Lord. He has a defect; he shall not come near to offer the bread of his God. He may eat the bread of his God, both the most holy and the holy; only he shall not go near the veil or approach the altar, because he has a defect, lest he profane My sanctuaries; for I the Lord sanctify them.'

- These verses concerning the exclusion of individuals with physical defects from certain religious duties have been criticized as **discriminatory**.
- King David (a man after God's own heart - **1Sam 13:14**) was forbidden to build God's house ... because he was a "bloody man" (of war)
1Ch 22:8 but the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 'You have shed much blood and have made great wars; you shall not build a house for My name, because you have shed much blood on the earth in My sight.
- **0 - God is fair & loving**
- **00 - Tragedy booklet - Death (this life) is not the end** (resurrections)
- **1- God is sovereign & He makes the rules**
- **4 - Relativism - Judging by today's standards** - The priests who offered the sacrifices must be without defect because they portrayed Christ as our **unblemished** High Priest.

Important Points about God & Jesus (& their followers) that can help explain difficult questions



00. Cgi Booklet - When Tragedy Strikes - lists 7 Truths to consider... that we forget in tragedy

- i. **Death is certain** (We all know that ... & we put off death as long as we can)
- ii. **Life is short** (No one has a guarantee of life so we *make the most* of our time)
- iii. **Accidents happen** (God doesn't cause them & doesn't micromanage life)
- iv. **God put man at risk** (We pray ... & do the best we can for ourselves)
- v. **Flesh is cheap - Character is dear** (God knows suffering can strengthen us)
- vi. **Death is not the end** (God's plan involves resurrections)
- vii. **It is the response that counts** (We show character with our response to tragedy)

0. God is... **just & fair & loving... Merciful & compassionate**

- **Exodus 34:6-7:** "And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, **merciful** and **gracious**, **longsuffering**, and abounding in **goodness** and **truth**, keeping mercy for thousands, **forgiving** iniquity and transgression and sin ...
- **Psalms 103:8-13:** "The Lord is **merciful** and **gracious**, slow to anger, and abounding in **mercy**. He will not always strive with us, nor will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father pities his children, so the Lord **pities** those who fear Him."
- **Jer 9:24** But let him who glories glory in this, That he understands and knows Me, That I am the LORD, exercising **lovingkindness**, **judgment**, and **righteousness** in the earth. For in these I **delight**," says the LORD.

1. God (through Jesus) is Creator & Designer & Sovereign over His Creation. With His wisdom & Law of Love **He makes the rules** leading to life, true joy & fulfilment

- **John 1:1-5:** "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. **All things were made through Him**, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it."
- **Rom 9:20-23** But indeed, O man, **who are you** to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?" Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor? What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory?

- **Isa 55:8-9** For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.



2. You can't *win* trying to bamboozle with fake outrage & foolish "logic" & argument RE: sin

- Gal 6:7 Do not be deceived, **God is not mocked**; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.
- Mic_2:1 Woe to those who devise iniquity, & work out evil on their beds!

3. God made **Mankind with freewill** - faulty & able to make mistakes, make bad choices, & sin - even to be thoughtless & wicked! Some feel the Bible or God is "faulty" to not have all of the characters of scripture be flawless & perfect ... Others feel the Bible is more *trustworthy & REAL* because it shows the flaws (even of our Bible heroes!) Some things mankind "gets right" ... and other times we sin, or deal with the consequences of poor choices.

- **Jdg 21:25** In those days there was no king in Israel; **everyone did what was right in his own eyes.**
- **Jer_10:23** O LORD, I know the **way of man is not in himself**; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.
- Jer 17:9-10 The **heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked**; Who can know it? I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings.
- **Rom 3:23** for **all have sinned** and fall short of the glory of God

4. **Social relativism** holds that each person is morally subject to (and only to) the *morality practised in his or her society*. It might be considered foolish & wrong to egocentrically judge another time & culture by the standards of "today". **Sin is sin, & in matters of sin, God does not change** ... but ... in matters of culture & behaviour, we might need to read scripture with more understanding of the societal norms of the time. For example ... Women's swimwear today would be considered scandalous in early societies ... or interracial marriage is accepted today when there were times (in the past) when it was not. Critics often will "blame God" for poor choices made by a society.

- **Mal 3:6** "For **I am the LORD, I do not change**; Therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob
- **Proverbs 14:12** - There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death
- **Isaiah 5:20** - Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!
- **John 17:17** Sanctify them by Your truth. **Your word is truth**
- **2 Timothy 4:3-4** - For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; & they will turn their ears away from the truth, & be turned aside to fables

5. God is All-knowing (where we are limited)

Rom 11:33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!

- Foolish men (leaders) can make horrible decisions -- thinking it is doing good -- and *millions of people* have been killed by such men ... imposing *their will* on others ... because they do not have the **mind of God**, the ability to see the consequences

6. God is working out His Plan for Mankind (ie as seen in the Holy Days)

Heb 11:24-27 By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in **Egypt**; for he looked to the reward. By faith he **forsook Egypt**, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.

- The lessons of Passover & Unleavened Bread **required** an Egypt (an antagonist)

God's festivals are full of meaning!

Festival	Observed	Meaning	Scriptures
Passover	14th day of first month after sunset	A memorial of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, "our Passover" which made possible the forgiveness of our sins	Lev. 23:5, Luke 22:15-20, John 13:1-5, 14-15, 1 Cor 5:7
Feast of Unleavened Bread	15th - 21st of first month	Pictures God's people - the Church - putting away sin and seeking to obey God's commandments.	Lev. 23:6-8, Ex 12:15-20, 42, 1 Cor. 5:6-8
Pentecost	"50th day" - 3rd month	Depicts the Church as the first fruits of salvation, 1st spiritually begotten in God's family.	Lev 23:15-21, Acts 2:1-4, Rom 8:23
Feast of Trumpets	First day of 7th month	Looks ahead to the 2nd coming of Christ, resurrection of first fruits, and establishment of Kingdom of God on Earth.	Lev 23:23-25, Matt 24:30-31, 1 Thess 4:16-17, Rev 11:15
Day of Atonement	10th day of 7th month	Portrays the coming binding of Satan for 1,000 yrs. so that humanity may be at peace with God.	Lev 23:26-32, Lev 16:7-31, Rev 20:1-3
Feast of Tabernacles	15th - 21st days of 7th month	Portrays the 1,000 yr. rule of Christ along with resurrected first fruits.	Lev 23:34-35, 39-42, Zech 14:16-19, Isaiah 2:1-4, Rev 20:4
Last Great Day	22nd day of 7th month	Looks ahead to the resurrection of the "rest of the dead" to mortal life and true instruction in salvation.	Lev 23:6, Ezek 37:1-14, Matt 12:41-42, Rev 20:5,11-12

7. God can be pragmatic - sensible, realistic, promoting "what works" in a situation - even when it is not His will. Knowing with free will, man will make some bad choices

- The direction to destroy all living in a situation (...because only destroying "some" would cause problems of revenge, hate)
- **Mal 2:16** God HATES **divorce** ...
... but He allowed it and regulated it
- **Psalm 9:9** The Lord also will be a stronghold for the oppressed
... yet... God regulated **slavery** ... knowing it has existed in every society