

“Black & White” or “Grey Areas” - Pt 2

In my last message we explored **scriptural** principles showing how God can be seen to be:

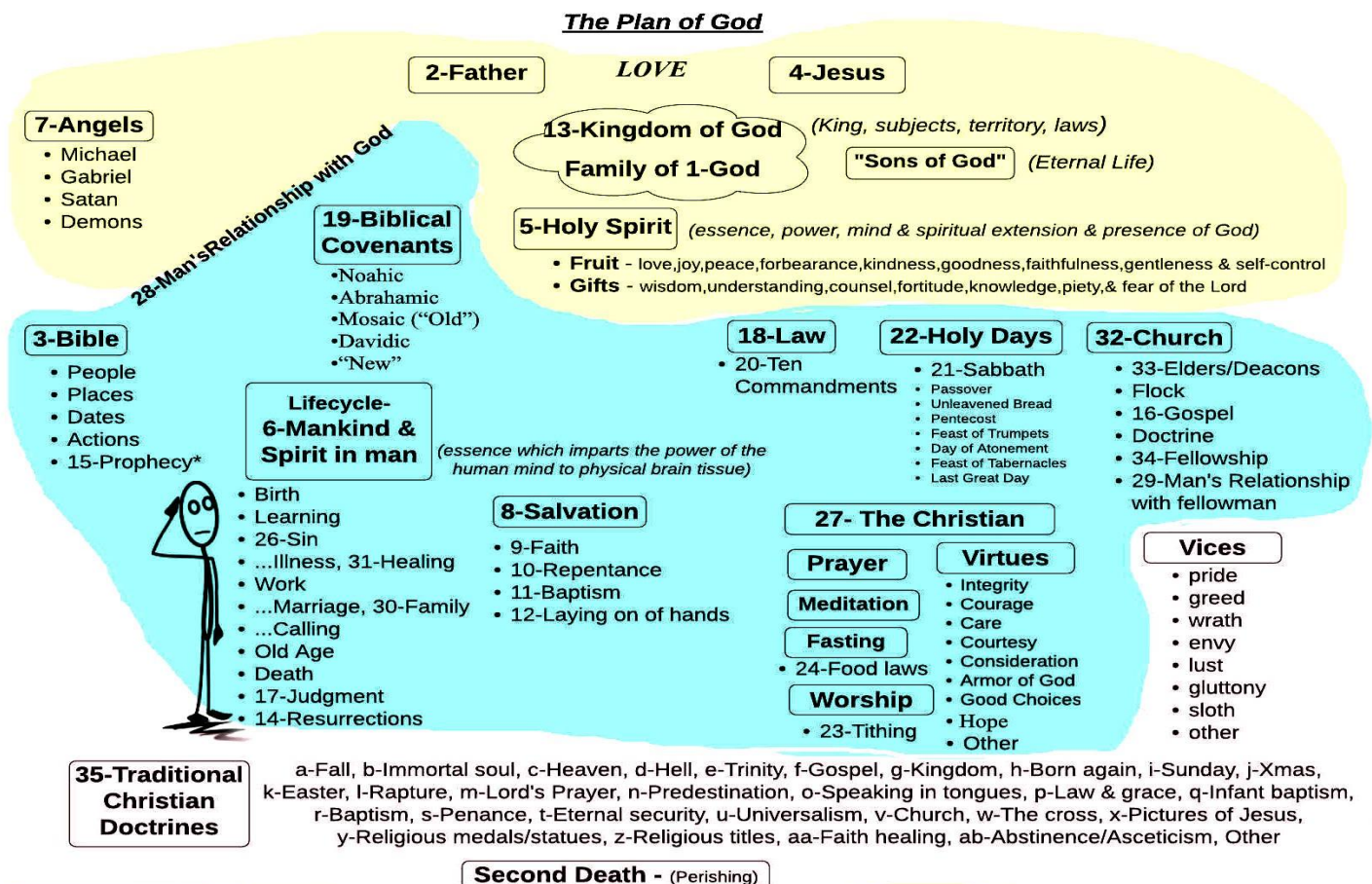
- “Black & White” ... VERY clearly expressing what is right & wrong AND
- allowing “Grey Areas” ... a **wisdom-based decision space** where God has intentionally **not** given a universal command or prohibition, requiring believers to apply unchanging truth with discernment, conscience, & love - exist within God’s moral boundaries

In this message we’ll seek to further equip Church members to defend against attacks on our beliefs & our practises before God.

By understanding **scriptural** examples & principles ... we will provide a foundation to explore ways to defend (or explain) ways to approach some **“difficult” questions or challenges:**

- If God Changes the rules, how can we trust Him?
- God changes his mind. **That’s** a contradiction!
- How do you justify changes ... where the Old Testament says one thing & we do something different? ie “God allowed slavery, then Christians oppose it. That’s moral flip-flopping!”
- Christians pick & choose which OT laws to follow!

The Bible doesn’t hide that practices change. It explains **why** they change—while God’s character & morality will remain constant.



Time: (Past - History - Creation, 25-Hebrew Calendar ... Present -(World events) ... (Future - 15-Prophecy*) ... Eternity ...)

Key scriptures in this discussion ...

Heb. 13:8 Jesus Christ is the **same** yesterday, today, and forever.

Mal 3:6 For I am the LORD, **I do not change** ...

Jas 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is **no variation or shadow of turning**.

Scriptural Reasons for Changes in Practise

1. Progressive Revelation

Definition: God reveals His will in stages as His redemptive plan unfolds. Later revelation clarifies, expands, or fulfills earlier instruction.

For example ... **God's Holy Days** were often seen as just "agricultural festivals" ... but scripture (through time) makes clear each Holy Day points to Jesus ... and each holy day reveals elements of God's Plan of Salvation.

1Cor_5:7 Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed **Christ, our Passover**, was sacrificed for us.

Example 2 ... **Priesthood**

Then:

The priests shall come near, for the LORD your God is holy. (**Lev. 21:8**)

Later:

You also, as living stones... a holy priesthood. (**1 Pet. 2:5**)

Reason for change: Christ creates a priesthood of all believers.

2. Fulfillment in Christ (Shadow → Substance)

Definition: Some practices were "typological shadows" pointing to Christ and may cease when the reality arrives.

For example ... the **Sacrificial System**

Then:

This is the law of the burnt offering... (**Lev. 6:9**)

Later:

We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. (**Heb. 10:10**)



Reason for change: Repeated sacrifices are fulfilled by Christ's once-for-all sacrifice

Example 2 ... **Temple-Centered Worship**

Then:

There I will meet with the children of Israel." (**Exod. 29:43**)

Later:

Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up ... He was speaking of the temple of His body." (**John 2:19-21**)

Reason for change: The locus of God's presence moves from building → Christ → His people.

3. Covenant Transition (Old Covenant → New Covenant)

Definition: Some practices belong specifically to the Mosaic covenant and are transformed under the New Covenant.

Example ... The **Old Covenant Package** → the New (/ Renewed) Covenant

Then:

All that the LORD has spoken we will do. (**Exod. 19:8**)

Later:

Jer 31:31-34 "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—

Jer 31:32 not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD.

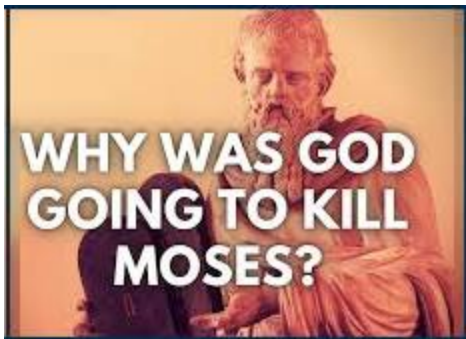
Jer 31:33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

Jer 31:34 No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

Heb 8:13 In that He says, "A NEW COVENANT," He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

Reason for change: Covenant administration changes, not God's character.

Example 2 ... **Circumcision**



Then:

Every male child among you shall be circumcised. (**Gen. 17:10**)

Exo 4:24-26 And it came to pass on the way, at the encampment, that the LORD met him (*Moses*) and **sought to kill him.**

Exo 4:25 Then Zipporah took a sharp stone and cut off the foreskin of her son and cast it at Moses' feet, and said, "Surely you are a husband of blood to me!"

Exo 4:26 So He let him go. Then she said, "You are a husband of blood!"—because of the circumcision.

Later:

Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation (**Gal. 6:15**)

Reason for change: Physical sign replaced by spiritual reality (Circumcision of the heart) Rom 2:29

“Moses’ near-death over uncircumcision proves how covenant-specific commands work in Scripture: they are binding within their covenant context, and Scripture itself later shows when and why those covenant signs are transformed.”

4 Change in Historical Context (Nomadic → Temple → Diaspora Church)

Definition: God's people lived under radically different social structures

Example ... Centralized Worship Location

Then:

Deut. 12:5–6 You shall seek the place where the LORD your God chooses... there you shall bring your burnt offerings.

Psa 132:13-14 For the LORD has chosen **Zion**; He has desired it for His dwelling place: This is My resting place forever; Here I will dwell, for I have desired it.

1Ki 8:27-29 "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built! Yet regard the prayer of Your servant and his supplication, O LORD my God, and listen to the cry and the prayer which Your servant is praying before You today: that Your eyes may be open toward **this temple** night and day, toward the place of which You said, 'My name shall be there,' that You may hear the prayer which Your servant makes toward this place.

Later:

Joh 4:20-23 Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship. Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will **neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem**, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.

Act 20:6 But we sailed away from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days joined them at Troas, where we stayed seven days.

Reason for change: Worship moves from a geographic center to a spiritual reality.



Example 2 ... **Israel as Nation** → **Church as Scattered People**

Then:

You shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. (**Exod. 19:6**)

Later:

Once you were not a people but are now the people of God. (**1 Pet. 2:10**)

Reason for change: God's people no longer defined by nation-state boundaries. This does not eliminate God's Covenant promises to Israel.

5 Moral Law vs. Ceremonial / Civil Law

Definition: Scripture itself treats moral commands as enduring, while ceremonial and civil regulations are time-bound

Example ... **Moral Law Continues**

Then:

"You shall not commit adultery." (**Exod. 20:14**)

Later:

"You have heard... but I say to you..." (**Matt. 5:27-28**)

Moral law is **deepened**, not **abolished**.

Example 2 ... **Puzzling Ceremonial / Civil Laws**

Then:

Lev 19:27 You shall not shave around the sides of your head, nor shall you disfigure the edges of your beard.

Exo 23:19 ... You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk.

Deu 22:8 When you build a new house, then you shall make a parapet (*NLT-railing*) for your roof, that you may not bring guilt of bloodshed on your household if anyone falls from it.



From the CGI Article: **Which OT Laws Apply Today?**

... Then which Old Testament laws apply today? *All of them*. We keep - retain - every stroke of the pen of God's law, and we study that law to discern the meaning & intent of that law.

6 Apostolic Clarification for the Church

Definition: The apostles, under the Spirit's guidance, clarify which OT practices apply to Gentile believers.

Example ... **Gentiles Not Required to Keep Mosaic Law**

Then:

"Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." (**Acts 15:1**)

Decision:

It seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden... (**Acts 15:28**)

Reason for change: Spirit-guided clarification of covenant boundaries.

7 Explicit Divine Permission to Change

Definition: God at times directly authorizes a change in practice.

Example ...

The priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law (**Heb 7:12**)

You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. (**Ps 110:4; Heb 7:17**)

God openly announces that a priesthood change requires law change -- It is an *administrative change*, not a moral contradiction.

The Bible itself teaches that God sometimes changes practices while keeping His character constant. Change is not contradiction—it is covenantal progression.

8 Hardness of Heart Concessions

Definition: Some practices were allowed temporarily due to human sinfulness, not because they reflected God's ideal.

Example ... **Divorce**

Then (concession):

“When a man takes a wife... and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes... he writes her a certificate of divorce.” (**Deut. 24:1**)

Later (Jesus' clarification):

“Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.” (**Matt. 19:8**)



Reason for change: Moral concession corrected by Christ.

Other examples: **Polygamy, Slavery**

9 Authority of Church leaders to make decisions

Definition: The New Testament authorizes church leaders, under Christ and the Spirit, to make binding doctrinal, disciplinary, and practical decisions—while remaining constrained by Scripture and the gospel.

Examples ...

- Acts 15 **Ministerial Council** - The church is shown formally deciding disputed issues and binding those decisions on congregations.
- Christ Grants “**Binding and Loosing**” Authority
Matt 16:19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven...
Jesus authorizes the church to make real rulings with covenant weight
- **Elders Are Appointed to Govern and Oversee**
Acts 20:28 Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock... to shepherd the church of God
Scripture authorizes structured leadership with real governing responsibility.
- **Yet ... Limits on Church Authority (So It's Not Absolute)**
Acts 5:29 We ought to obey God rather than men.
Church authority is real ... but ... bounded by fidelity to the gospel & Scripture

The church does not invent morality... but has authority to administer and apply God's commands in changing covenantal circumstances.

Scripture **does** change practices - But it does so intentionally, consistently, & theologically -
The changes follow identifiable categories, not random contradiction

Scripture allows for disagreements ... “diversity of practice” ... without breaking fellowship

Rom. 14:5 Let each be fully convinced in his own mind.

Rom. 14:1 Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things
(*AFV- divisive arguments*)

Allows diversity of conscience ... Unity prioritized over uniformity ... Judging discouraged

Lenses to view if change may be scripturally appropriate

1. Covenant-bound?
2. Shadow/typology?
3. Apostolic reinterpretation?
4. Temple/priesthood dependent?
5. Pre-Sinai universal?
6. Moral vs ceremonial framing?
7. Apostolic ruling (Acts 15 / epistles)?
8. Treated as disputable -Hardness of Heart concessions (Rom 14)?
9. Authority of Church leaders to make decisions

Sample questions to explore ...

Q - If God changes the rules, how can we trust Him?

A - God doesn't change His character; He moves history toward its intended goal in Christ.
The practices change ...to adapt appropriately to changing conditions

Q - God changes his mind. That's a contradiction!

A - God's character doesn't change; His administration of covenant practices does as His redemptive plan unfolds.

Different stages of the same plan aren't contradictions—they're development.

Q - How do you justify changes ... where the Old Testament says one thing & we do something different? ie “God allowed slavery, then Christians oppose it. That's moral flip-flopping!”

A - The Bible regulates fallen social structures (slavery, polygamy, “quickie”-divorce) while planting the moral seeds that undermine them.

Col. 4:1 Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair...

Gal. 3:28 There is neither slave nor free... for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

The gospel dismantles injustice from the inside out.



Q - Christians pick & choose which OT laws to follow!

A - The NT itself draws the lines—Christians follow scripture, scriptural example & the apostolic framework, **not** personal preference.

Acts 15:28 It seemed good to the Holy Spirit, & to us, to lay upon you no greater burden

Christians aren't cherry-picking; we're following the apostles' instructions & examples

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So... What about ...?

... **Holy Day “pilgrim festivals”** ... Are we required to go to Jerusalem (3 times per year) for 7 days of Unleavened Bread, 1 day of Pentecost & 7 or 8 days of Tabernacles?

- Per point **4 - Change in Historical Context** (Nomadic → Temple → Diaspora Church) we see scriptural support for **changing** Holy Day observance
ie The temple is gone, Jesus replaces sacrifices, etc. The world does not live in Israel (so that we can more easily travel to a central place)
- By Apostolic example ... **Act 20:6** Paul was hundreds of miles from Jerusalem in Philippi during the days of Unleavened bread
- We understand the Apostles still taught & kept the Holy days, & Tabernacles will be kept in the Kingdom of God (or no Rain!) **Zech 14:16** (Past-Present-Future example of observance). Clearly God's “appointed times” have a significant role in educating God's faithful with annual reminders of key events in God's plan. (For example, learning about sin is something humans need every year ... not just “once” when you are baptised - for me that was 1976 = 50 years ago!)
- Per point **9 Authority of Church leaders to make decisions** ... the church “does”... make changes where deemed appropriate (Choosing Feast locations, no sacrifices, re-interpreting Tabernacles as “temporary dwellings” - like “hotel rooms” in 2026 - rather than **REQUIRING** a booth made of leaves & branches).

This is a clear, formal, Spirit-led policy change made by church leadership—without accusing Scripture of contradiction.



What about ... ?

Sabbath observance ... Sunday observance ... Christmas Observance

Clean & Unclean food laws, Women in Leadership, Music & Worship, Tithing, ... etc, etc

The Church is not a human invention. Its authority comes from Christ, exercised with the Spirit, and its purpose is to glorify God through worship, teaching, discipleship, holiness, evangelism, and the manifestation of His kingdom. Sometimes God gives “**Black & White**” directions - that never change - and other times God gives us “**Grey Areas**” where individuals & the church are given a wisdom-based decision space where God has intentionally not given a universal command.