

CONFUSING AND/OR OBJECTIONABLE PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE

This is taken directly out of the exegesis of 1Chronicles 13.

The several passages which I have listed and summarized below confuse some. However, there are a number of incidents in Scripture which have a simple explanation, even though, at the first, they are confusing and/or objectionable. Sometimes, God seems too harsh in what He does; or God asks someone to do something which just does not fit into our understanding of Scripture. Unbelievers, immature believers, and sometimes even exegetes, read these passages and are nonplused. My intention here is to un-confuse you.

Confusing and/or Objectionable Passages of Scripture

Incident	Objection/Explanation
<p>Adam and Eve clothe themselves with fig leaves. God clothes them, instead, with leather (Gen. 3:7, 21).</p>	<p>Most casual readers ignore this, although most commentators catch this. God was not putting together some better clothes for Adam and Eve, but, in order for there to be animal skins, there must be the death of an animal. In the garden, animals were not eaten for food (although God later—after the flood, if memory serves—gave us permission to eat animals for food). Up until the fall of Adam and Eve, there is no indication that anyone or anything died. This would have been the first death after the fall. The death of this animal (or animals) represented the death of Jesus Christ on the cross and the animal skins were used to <i>cover over</i> their sins. God covered sins until Jesus Christ came into the world and paid for them.</p>
<p>God respects the animal sacrifice of Abel; He does not respect Cain's offering (Gen. 4:3-4).</p>	<p>One might reasonably argue that Cain worked hard in his garden to get these vegetables to grow, and that he offers up to God the best from his garden. Abel just killed some animal, so why does God disrespect Cain's gift but honor Abel's?</p> <p>Now that you understand the passage above, this is simple: Abel brought God an animal sacrifice, to atone for (<i>to cover over</i>) his sins. Cain brought to God the works of his own hands. We are <i>never</i> saved by the works of our hands; God saves us by means of the death of His Son, which is symbolized in the animal sacrifices.</p>
<p>God asks Abraham to offer up his only son as a human sacrifice, when Scripture clearly forbids such a practice (Gen. 22).</p>	<p>God both condemns human sacrifice and tells Israel to destroy whole nations which practice human sacrifice; so, why does God tell Abraham to sacrifice his only son? Did God <i>only</i> want to see how far Abraham would go in his obedience? Was this nothing more than a test?</p> <p>This, obviously, is a picture of God sacrificing His Son, Jesus Christ, on our behalf. Abraham told his servants "<i>we will return to you</i>" (the <i>we</i> is obscured in some translations), so Abraham knew that, no matter what happened on that mountain, <i>both he and his son Isaac</i> were coming back down that mountain. The parallel was completed when a <i>substitutionary</i> animal sacrifice was supplied by God.</p>

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<p>Moses is not allowed to enter the Land of Promise simply because, instead of speaking to the rock to get water, he hits the rock twice (Num. 20).</p>	<p>This bothers some people no end; Moses, who has been faithful and patient and unbelievable in his taking the children of Israel out of Egypt and into the land, makes a minor mistake here, and simply as a result of being (reasonably) pissed off. If you read through Moses taking the children of Israel from Egypt to the Land of Promise, it is aggravating to see how lame the Jews are, and how patient Moses is. He even, on several occasions, pleads on their behalf. So, it seems harsh that, Moses makes one mistake, and God says, "Sorry, M, but you are not going to take My people into the Land of Promise."</p> <p>There were two <i>no water</i> incidents. The first time, Moses was to strike the rock one time, and water would flow from the rock (Ex. 17). This was a picture of God striking Jesus Christ, the Rock, and from Him would flow living waters (John 4:10–11). Jesus Christ is only offered up one time for all mankind (Rom. 6:10). Therefore, the second time that the Israelites confront the Rock, they need only speak to Him. God does not sacrifice His son many times (Heb. 7:27 9:12). What God does throughout the Old Testament is present Jesus Christ in shadow form, and Moses, through his anger and disobedience, confused this analogy. For several generations, until the Old Testament became available more widely, Jews might recall Moses striking the rock once the first time and twice the second time in order to produce water. This confuses the issue.</p>
<p>Saul goes to a medium and asks her to bring Samuel back from the dead. God allows Samuel to be brought back from the dead, even though Samuel says nothing new to Saul (1Sam. 29).</p>	<p>This is objectionable on many levels, and I don't know of a single commentator who understands this passage. King Saul, on the eve of his death, goes to a spirit medium and asks for her to bring Samuel, his spiritual confident, back from the dead. This goes against the Law of Moses; and, furthermore, mediums cannot bring people back from the dead. However, God not only brings Samuel back from the dead, but, to add to the confusion, what Samuel says is Saul is not new information; it is not some blinding revelation; it is not something that Saul couldn't have figured out on his own. So, why on earth would God allow any of this to occur? Why would God allow a medium, whose death is called for in the Law, to bring back a man like Samuel from the dead?</p> <p>The explanations here vary, but one of the most common is, <i>this was not Samuel, but an apparition or an hallucination or a bit of fakery</i>. And this is sort of an obvious solution, given all the objections. However, this explanation is <i>incorrect!</i> God allowed Samuel to return from the dead to speak to Saul. The reason God allowed this is, Samuel is a picture of Jesus Christ. Up until this point in time, no man on earth more paralleled Jesus Christ than Samuel. In the book of Samuel, I think that I offer about 20 parallels between Samuel and Jesus Christ. Therefore, it is only fitting that Samuel also foreshadow our Lord's <i>resurrection</i>.</p>

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<p>Uzzah, a caretaker of the Ark, reaches out to steady the Ark and to keep it from falling; and God kills him for this sin (2Sam. 6 1Chron. 13).</p>	<p>Uzzah, no doubt, was a devout Levite who took over as caretaker of the Ark, along with his brother Ahio. There is nothing in either historical account which casts aspersions on his character. Yet, the Ark appears to be unsteady, as if it might fall, and Uzzah, like anyone else, reaches out to steady it. It was a reflex action, not an act of disobedience. Why does he deserve death?</p> <p>As has been explained, sinful man cannot have direct contact with a holy and righteous God. We might as well jump into the sun. Uzzah, even as a believer, at this time, had his sins covered over, as Jesus had not come in time to die on his behalf. So, Uzzah, no matter how well intentioned, could not have direct contact with the Ark of God. This simply illustrated a sinful man coming into direct contact with a perfect God.</p> <p>Now, with regards to Uzzah's death, it was quick, probably painless, and happened in a split second. There was no anticipation of death or concern on his part. My point in all this is, Uzzah's death was even better than the famed <i>dying in one's sleep</i>.</p>

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<p>A general observation: the gospel is perspicuous in, say, the gospel of John. However, in all of the Old Testament, it is more difficult to understand the gospel of Jesus Christ.</p>	<p>First of all, we must understand how the gospel is made real to us. We are born in sin, with a soul and body, but without a human spirit. With our souls, we fellowship with other men; but, with our human spirits, we are to have fellowship with God—but we do not have a human spirit, so man is unable, from birth, to have fellowship with God.</p> <p>When we are on positive signals and we hear the gospel for the first time, God the Holy Spirit acts as our human spirit, so that the gospel makes sense to us. Personally, I recall going to a Baptist Sunday school one summer and have absolutely no recollection of hearing the gospel. Whether I did or not, is a whole other thing. The first time I recall actually hearing the gospel was a very confused testimony given to me by a friend, that, quite frankly, made little sense—except that I understood that I needed to make a decision of some sort (that decision came much later when I understood the issue at hand).</p> <p>My point in all of this is, in the Old Testament, men were also born dichotomous (a soul and body only) and God the Holy Spirit had to make the gospel clear to them. They may have watched hours upon hours of animals being sacrificed, but this did not really sink in until, one day, when on positive signals, God the Holy Spirit made the gospel understandable enough to where they would believe in Jehovah Elohim, the God of Israel. So, they became believers just as we do, and via the same mechanics (Old Testament people believed in Jehovah Elohim, we believe in Jesus Christ; He is the same person).</p> <p>Now, <i>why</i> is the gospel less perspicuous in the Old Testament? I've explained how God deals with that fact, but <i>why</i> is the gospel so unbearable clear in the book of John, but not quite as clear in, say, the book of Genesis? God knew from the beginning what was going to happen. His Son would come into the world and give Himself as an offering for our sins. As a part of the angelic conflict, God allowed Satan to vent his anger and hatred toward Jesus Christ, almost without reservation, and yet, at the same time, Satan was preparing the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, where He would die for our sins and break Satan's back. God, at the cross, reveals Satan, more clearly than ever before, and all of his hatred, all of his rage. God reveals that Satan cannot simply go off to some part of the universe and keep to himself. Satan has to interfere with mankind and he has to vent his hatred and anger; it is who he is. So, God's plan call for Satan to vent his rage and vitriol, and yet, allow Jesus Christ to die for our sins. God did this in such a way that, the gospel would become clear to anyone in the Old Testament who desired a relationship with Him; and yet, the gospel was hid from Satan; Satan, the most brilliant creature to come from the hand of God—a being who knows the Bible inside and out—could not foresee that Jesus Christ going to the cross is our salvation. Satan did not know that his anger and rage would result in our Lord dying for our sins, despite the fact that God telegraphed what would happen over and over and over again in the Old Testament.</p>

In many cases, Old Testament Scripture is best understood in the light of the offering of Jesus Christ. God chose to teach our Lord's suffering in shadow form.

