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## Our God Is A Jealous God

### EXODUS 20:4-6

#### Introduction

1. Last Sunday evening I asked you to think about the characteristics you might use to describe God.
2. We considered his omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, love, majesty, wisdom.
3. We spent our time together in a study of His grace.
4. Tonight, I would like for you to consider another aspect of God's character — His jealousy.
5. You and I have often heard jealousy described as "the green-eyed monster."
6. We know that it is a cancer which can destroy our soul.
7. However, to say that God is jealous seems out of character for Him. Isn't jealousy a sin?
8. How can someone who is perfect in every way be jealous? Of whom or what is He jealous?

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9. When God brought the Israelites out of Egypt to Mount Sinai in order to give them His law and establish His covenant with them, one of the first facts He taught them about Himself is His jealousy (cf. Exodus 20:4-6).

"You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. "You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who

love Me and keep My commandments." (*Exodus 20:4-6*, NASB95)

10. Fourteen chapters later in Exodus 34:14, He again told Moses, "you shall not worship any other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God."
11. What does God mean when He speaks of Himself as being jealous?
12. Tonight, as we seek to understand more of God's character, let's focus on this aspect of God's character.

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## I. Scripture's Declaration Of God's Jealousy

### A. THE PENTATEUCH

1. In Deuteronomy 4:24, after warning the Israelites not to forget the covenant which God had made with them and to avoid making any kind of graven image, God said, "for the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God."
2. In the song which Moses taught the Israelites, specifically in Deuteronomy 32:15, after telling them that Israel "forsook God who made him, and scorned the Rock of his salvation," God added in verse 16, "They made Him jealous with strange gods; with abomination they provoked Him to anger" (Deuteronomy 32:16).
3. Five verses later, God declares, "They have made Me jealous with what is not God; they have provoked Me to anger with their idols" (Deuteronomy 32:21, NASB95).

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### B. THE BOOKS OF HISTORY

1. In Joshua's last address to the Israelites before his death, he said to them, "You will not be able to serve the Lord, for His is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions or your sins" (*Joshua 24:19*,

NASB95).

2. In 1 Kings 14:22, we find this statement concerning the people of Judah and their provocation of God:

“Judah did evil in the sight of the Lord, and they provoked Him to jealousy more than all that their fathers had done, with the sins which they committed.” (1 Kings 14:22, NASB95)

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**C. THE PSALMS**

1. In Psalm 78:58, Asaph, one of the temple singers, sang, “For they provoked Him with their high places and aroused His jealousy with their graven images.”
2. In verse 5 of the following Psalm, Asaph asked, “How long, O Lord? Will You be angry forever? Will Your jealousy burn like fire?” (Psalm 79:5, NASB95).

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**D. THE PROPHETS**

1. Through His prophet Nahum, God said of Himself, “A jealous and avenging God is the Lord; The Lord is avenging and wrathful. The Lord takes vengeance on His adversaries, And He reserves wrath for His enemies.” (Nahum 1:2, NASB95)
2. Through the prophet Zechariah, He declared, “I am exceedingly jealous for Zion, yes, with great wrath I am jealous for her” (Zechariah 8:2, NASB95)
  - When we look at all these statements concerning God’s jealousy, two questions begged to be asked? How is it that jealousy can be a virtue in God when it is a sin in us? How can we praise a God who is jealous?

To answer these questions, we must look more closely at . . .

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## II. The Nature Of God's Jealousy

### A. OUR FAILURE TO UNDERSTAND DIVINE CHARACTERISTICS THROUGH A HUMAN LENS

1. God often makes statements about Himself drawn from our own life experiences.
  - a. God's arm, hand and finger
  - b. His hearing, seeing and smelling
  - c. His tenderness, anger, repentance, laughter, joy, etc.
2. The reason God uses such terms to speak of Himself is so that you and I can understand.
  - a. How many of us have tried to describe a difficult topic to a child.
  - b. We have to explain it in terms they understand.
3. Our problem when God does this with us is that we tend to measure God by our standards.
  - a. Our own outbursts of anger are often a sign of pride and weakness.
  - b. However, God's anger is His reaction to evil in a way which upholds His righteousness and glory.
4. James somewhat explained it in James 1:20, when he said, "for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God."
5. In a similar way, our jealousy is more often than not a combination of frustration, envy and spite.
6. However, with God, it is His zeal to preserve something that is precious.

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### B. AS HUMANS WE DISPLAY TWO TYPES OF JEALOUSY — ONE IS SINFUL, THE OTHER IS NOT

1. The jealousy which is sinful might be labeled *vicious* jealousy.
  - a. Such an attitude of jealousy rears its head when we think or say something like, "I want what you have and I hate you because I don't have it."
  - b. We would consider such an attitude as childish resentment.
  - c. It is the result of covetousness on our part.
  - d. It often expresses itself in envy, malice or both.
  - e. Not only does it feed our pride, but it is in turn fed by our pride.

**8a**

- f. It is so obsessive that it works to destroy our character (Proverbs 27:4).

"Wrath is fierce and anger is a flood, But who can stand before jealousy?" (Proverbs 27:4, NASB95)

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2. The other type of jealousy works to protect a love relationship, or to avenge it when broken.
  - a. It is the jealousy we see in a husband or wife who finds an adulterer having intruded into his or her marriage.
    - 1) In Proverbs 6, Solomon gives us an example of such jealousy when he asks two questions:

"Can a man take fire in his bosom and his clothes not be burned?" (v. 27).

"Or can a man walk on hot coals and his feet not be scorched?" (v. 28).
    - 2) He then answers in verse 29, "So is the one who goes in to his neighbor's wife; whoever touches her will not go unpunished."
  - b. This sort of jealousy is a positive virtue because it understands the true meaning of the husband-wife relationship.

- c. The goal of jealousy in such a situation is to keep the marriage intact.

**9a**

- d. In verse 34, Solomon, in referring to the wronged husband's jealousy does not give us any hint that such jealousy is wrong:

"For jealousy enrages a man, and he will not spare in the day of vengeance" (*Proverbs 6:34*).

- 3. The Bible often views God's jealousy as being of this kind:

- a. It is a part of His covenant love for His people.
- b. As a matter of fact, the O.T. often compares of God's covenant with Israel to a marriage in which there is to be both love and loyalty.
- c. If we were to go back and examine all of the references by Moses to God's jealousy we would find they have to do with idol worship in one form or another.
- d. When God told Moses that His name was 'Jealous', He meant that He demands from those He has loved and redeemed absolute loyalty.

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- e. It is as He said through His prophet Isaiah (*Isaiah 42:8; 48:11*):

"I am the Lord, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, Nor My praise to graven images." (*Isaiah 42:8, NASB95*)

"For My own sake, for My own sake, I will act; For how can My name be profaned? And My glory I will not give to another." (*Isaiah 48:11, NASB95*)

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### **III. What Does This Mean For Those Of Us Who Are Christians?**

#### **A. GOD'S JEALOUSY REQUIRES US TO BE ZEALOUS FOR HIM**

- 1. Our right response to God's love for us is love for Him.

2. Our right response to His jealousy is zeal for Him.
3. Just as His concern for us is great, so must be our concern for Him.
4. If we are going to be His people, we must be positively and passionately devoted to Him, His cause and His honor.
5. The Bible's word for such devotion is *zeal*.
  - a. Zeal is a burning desire to please God, to do His will, to advance His glory throughout the world in every way.
  - b. As Christians we are to be "zealous for good deeds" (Titus 2:14).
  - c. The apostle Paul was a zealous man:
    - 1) In Acts 20, as Paul was determined to go back to Jerusalem, he had been told by the Holy Spirit that "bonds and afflictions" awaited him (Acts 20:23).
    - 2) In spite of this, he said, "I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God." (Acts 20:24, NASB95)
  - d. Jesus was the supreme example of zeal:
    - 1) His disciples watched Him as he cleansed the temple.
    - 2) The apostle John records for us in John 2:17 their reaction, "His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house will consume me."
6. The real question tonight is for us. Does zeal for God and His cause consume us?

[Not only does God's jealousy require us to be zealous for Him,]

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**B. GOD'S JEALOUSY THREATENS THOSE WHO, THOUGH CLAIMING TO BE HIS,**

## **ARE NOT ZEALOUS FOR HIM**

1. Our glorified Lord once sent a message to a church that was complacent — the church of Laodicea.
2. He told them that their lack of zeal was a source of supreme offense to Him (Revelation 3:15-16, 19)

“I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.” (Revelation 3:15–16, NASB95)

“Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent.” (Revelation 3:19, NASB95)

3. What is our Lord’s view of us as a congregation?
4. What would be His word to us?
5. If we are complacent, let us repent, and ask God . . .
  - a. to revive us and fill our hearts with His love
  - b. to rekindle each soul with fire from above.

## **Conclusion**

1. Our God is a jealous God.
2. He will not accept second place.
3. Do you have a zeal for God?
4. If not, please let us pray for you and encourage you.