

**“He Is Jealous for Me**

Exodus 20:4-6

I was recently listening to a contemporary Christian song **“Oh, How He Loves Me.”** by David Crowder and my heart was particularly captured by one line in the lyrics. **“He (God) is jealous for me?”** The lyrics say, **“He is jealous for me, Loves like a hurri-cane, I am a tree, bending beneath the weight of his wind and mercy. When all of a sudden, I am unaware of these afflictions eclipsed by glory, And I realize just how beautiful You are, And how great Your affections are for me.”**

This song refers to a passage found in Exodus 20:4-6. **“You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; (5) you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, (6) but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.”**

Exodus chapter twenty is of course Moses delivering the Ten Commandments. Verses four through six are the Second Commandment, "**Thou Shalt Make No Graven Images.**" But today I do not us to look at the second commandment per say. I want us to look beyond the mere command not to worship anyone or anything but God and look at **why** Moses tells us that one should not give our affection and worship to anyone or anything but God.

I was captured by the idea that the God of the Universe is jealous **for me**. God in His infinite power and glory is concerned about me. He is like a loving parent He cares what I do. A parent who does not care what their child does or what becomes of their child does not love that child. God is jealous of my best interest! How amazing is that?

So for just a little while this evening I want to explore the idea that God is jealous for me.

### **First, The Meaning God's Jealousy.**

So what does it mean when it says that God is jealous? Is this simply a way of God using human characteristics to describe Himself? Is He saying this to make us feel good about ourselves, when in fact He is not jealous? No! Or did the translators just get this word wrong when it should have been translated merciful or something? No! The Hebrew word

translated “*jealous*” literally means to become intensely red. It seems to refer to the changing color of the face or the rising heat of emotions which are associated with passion over something dear to us.

When we think of the characteristics of God, jealousy is not one that immediately leaps to our minds. Yet five times in the Old Testament the Hebrew word (*qannâ*) translated “*jealous*” is used to describe God. What these five verses (Exodus 20:5, 34:14, Deut 4:24, 5:9, 6:10) have in common is that they all share the same Hebrew adjective, *qannâ* קָנָא (Strong's H7067), translated with the English word “*jealous.*” The interesting thing about this word is that it is only used in reference to God. In no instance is the word *qannâ* used to describe human jealousy. But God not only accepts jealousy as a trait, He even takes it on as I His name, Exodus 34:14 states, “...*whose name is Jealous...*”

What does it mean that God is a jealous God? Wait a minute. Jealousy, isn't that a sin? Normally the word jealousy carries a negative connotation. Throughout the New Testament in places like Romans 13:3, and Galatians 5:20 it is listed as a vice not a virtue. In I Corinthians 13:4, when the Apostle Paul lists the characteristics of true love, he says, ‘*Love is **not** jealous.*’

**So how can God be jealous?** Great question. Not understanding the answer to that question was Oprah's point of departure from orthodox Christianity. Oprah

*states that “I was in my 20s, and I remember sitting in a church... (interestingly this is purported to be Rev. Jeremiah Wright’s church) the minister was preaching about— ...about how God—“the Lord thy God was a jealous God and the Lord thy God would condemn us for whatever,” and I remember I—I had a spiritual aha! There. And I was in my late 20s, and I suddenly thought, “How can this God who is all loving and all powerful, why would God be jealous of me?” [Finding Your Spiritual Path Webcast Transcript January 14, 2009 [www.oprah.com/spirit/Finding-Your-Spiritual-Path-Webcast-Transcript/6](http://www.oprah.com/spirit/Finding-Your-Spiritual-Path-Webcast-Transcript/6)]*

*Oprah states that this was as an “aha” moment for her. This was a moment that caused Oprah to turn from her childhood faith to a New Age faith in God of her own making because she could not believe that a God of love could be a jealous God. Note the specific point which caused her spiritual “aha” was in fact an utter misunderstanding of what the Bible says.*

*When we typically think of jealousy, we tend to think of it as something negative. The husband who will not trust his wife regardless of her years of faithfulness is one image that comes to mind. Another image that comes to mind is that of a neighbor, friend, family member or coworker who fumes over the successes of others and barely contains their joy at the failures of others because he is jealous. In either case, the true object of the jealous person’s concerns is themselves –*

*they find themselves lacking in comparison to others or cannot tolerate the thought of someone having something they don't – and they become jealous. Such jealousy is rooted in envy – a self-serving hatred of someone because you want what they have.*

*Perhaps this would be a good point to make the distinction between jealousy and envy. Jealousy can be good or bad dependent on the object of the jealousy and the reason for the jealousy. Envy which is a completely different word in the Greek language is nearly always bad. Envy is a feeling of displeasure over the blessings someone else is enjoying. Jealousy make want what others are enjoying but envy makes us want to deprive them of that enjoyment.*

*Oprah seems to think that God is envious of her. But that is not what the Bible means when it says, “**God is a jealous God?**” There's a big difference between being jealous **OF** someone and being jealous **FOR** someone. True love is never jealous **OF** someone you love, but it is always jealous **FOR** the person you love. That's what the Bible says. God says, “**I'm jealous for you.**” In other words, he doesn't want you worshipping anything else or anyone else. He says, “**I'm a jealous God.**”*

## ***Second, The Basis of God's Jealousy - Love.***

*So if God is not jealous in the sense we have just described how is He jealous? Let me try to give an illustration to help us get the idea of what I mean. Men let's say you come home one day to find a stranger in your living room talking to your teenage daughter. He informs you that he and your daughter met in an online chat room and this man who looks to be about forty, says that he and your fourteen year-old daughter have determined that they are madly in love. He says that he and your daughter have decided to elope to somewhere that permits girls her age to marry without the consent of parents and that he is there to pick her up.*

*Now assuming that you would be able to restrain yourself long enough to figure out what you are feeling, what you would find is that you have become jealous for your daughter – jealous for the affection does that not rightfully belong to this man, jealous for her safety and jealous of the her future happiness. You would act swiftly, and by God's restraining hand legally, to remove this stranger from your daughter's life and to recalibrate her sense of proper relationships and affections.*

*C. S. Lewis: Christ says "Give me All. I don't want so much of your time and so much of your money and so much of your work: I want You. I have not come to torment your natural self, but to kill it. No half-*

*measures are any good. I don't want to cut off a branch here and a branch there, I want to have the whole tree down. I don't want to drill the tooth, or crown it, or stop it, but to have it out. Hand over the whole natural self, all the desires which you think innocent as well as the ones you think wicked—the whole outfit."*

*In a marriage, a wife has the right to expect faithfulness by her husband. So she would be would be well within her rights to be jealous if her husband was unfaithful with another woman because their marriage vows made their relationship exclusive of all others. But how would she feel if she found out the other woman, was not a woman at all, but a store dummy? This is sample of why God was angry with Israel. They give worship that belonged to Him to things (idols) that weren't even real!*

*John Kenneth Gailbraith, in his autobiography, "**A Life In Our Times**," illustrates the devotion of Emily Gloria Wilson, his family's housekeeper. It had been an exhausting day, and he asked Emily to hold all telephone calls while I had a nap. Shortly thereafter the phone rang. President Lyndon Johnson was calling from the White House. **"Get me Ken Gailbraith. This is Lyndon Johnson."** She replied, **"He's sleeping, Mr. President. He said not to disturb him."** **"Well, wake him up. I want to talk to him."** **"No, Mr. President, I can't do that. I work for him, not you."** When*

Galbraith called the President later, he could scarcely believe what the President said: **"Tell that woman I want her here in the White House!"** In the same way before we were ever born we belonged to God. He gave us life, He shaped us in our mother's womb. We are His creation, and we belong to Him. But wonder of all wonders God allows us to choose whether to worship Him.

### **Third, The Centrality of God's Jealousy**

Perhaps you're still not entirely comfortable ascribing jealousy to God, I've got to make things worse before I make them better. Jealousy is not merely a passing mood of God. Jealousy is not a minor trait in the Lord, but is at the heart of who He is. It is the essence of His person. He cannot be other than jealous!

First of all, God has no minor traits, for all of His qualities are infinite, eternal, and unchangeable. He is not big on love, let's say, and small on holiness; or really merciful and somewhat jealous. He is every bit as holy as He is loving—and, more to the point—He is as jealous as He is merciful!

Where does the Bible place God's jealousy? Exodus 34:14 leaves no doubt—**"You shall worship no other god, for the Lord, whose Name is Jealous, is a jealous God."**

*The Name of God not merely a label but is a description, in which one will do as well as another. We named our daughter Nicole, but we could have named her, Susan, or Brittany and it would not have made a difference in who she became. (Actually I told Debbie I thought Bambi was a good name Bambi Hamby – but I was outvoted) But **for God, He is names are revelations and reflections of His character.** So just any name will not do. But the name Jealous fits Him very well because—as the verse puts it—He **is** a jealous God!*

*To support this, remember where our text is--and what this means. Exodus 20:4-6 is part of the Ten Commandments, which is the centerpiece and the sign of God's Covenant with Israel. Two copies were made—one to be kept by the people, read often, and meditated upon. The other copy went to God Himself, and placed in the Ark of the Covenant.*

*In the center of this central document, the Lord reveals Himself as—**“The Lord your God, is a jealous God.”** The jealousy of God, therefore, is not tucked away in obscure place; it's not in a line regulating priestly garments. It's at the heart of covenant with His people.*

#### ***Fourth , The Permanence of God's Jealousy***

*But what about now, what about New Testament days? Is the Lord still a jealous God? Or has He changed with time? Or, if He hasn't changed, have circumstances*

been altered in such a way as to allow Him to either drop or minimize the quality He once made so much of? This is a fair question. Of course the Lord hasn't changed, in the Old Testament we read in Malachi 3:6, "*I am the Lord, I change not; therefore, you sons of Jacob are not consumed.*" In the New Testament we read in Hebrews 13:8, "*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.*"

Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever. But what about us? Perhaps, therefore, the Lord no longer needs to be jealous, and so He isn't. The problem with this view is that the New Testament says otherwise. In 1 Corinthians 10:22, Paul says - "*Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?*" The implied answer is: Yes we do. How? In the same way Israel did way back when: by honoring the Lord on day of the week and giving their affection and attention to something else – the rest of the week. By coming to the Lord's House on Sunday and living like the world the rest of the week, they were cheating on the Lord, like a wife who has another man on the side.

Jealousy, therefore, was not a mask He wore to scare Israel into steering clear of the local gods, but is a permanent attribute of God. As long as the Lord is God, He will be A jealous God.

## Conclusion

*So what can we conclude about the jealousy of God?*

*First, The jealousy of God is a good thing. For His jealousy—unlike ours—is not mixed up with weakness or sin. What we call ‘jealousy’ is mostly something else: insecurity, selfishness, and suspicion. The Lord’s jealousy, however, has none of these impurities. Yes, He’s possessive; yes He wants us for Himself; He wants us all and always. But here is where Divine jealousy differs from human:*

- 1. He is worthy of it.*
- 2. We will never be happy until we give it to Him.*

*When we give our lives to Him, we don’t lose them, we find them. To say The Lord is a jealous God, therefore, is another way of saying God is love. How can He not want us for Himself when our highest happiness is found in Him?*

*Secondly, The jealousy of God is to be valued. Because it means He loves us, He will protect us from other suitors, and He—as incredible as it sounds—it means, **“I am my Beloved’s and my Beloved is mine.”** (Song of Solomon 6:3)*

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*(Exodus 20:5, 34:14, Deut 4:24, 5:9, 6:10)*

**Second, The \_\_\_\_\_ of God's Jealousy - Love.**

**Third, The \_\_\_\_\_ of God's Jealousy**

**Fourth, The \_\_\_\_\_ of God's Jealousy**

*(Malachi 3:6, Hebrews 13:8)*