


# END-TIMES ISSUES



**#59** Commandment #2 – Why should God be "jealous"?

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## THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

"You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a **jealous God**, **punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me**, but **showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.**"

Exodus 20:4-6 (NIV); also Deuteronomy 5:8-10.

Verses like this go against the opinions that many people have about God, justice and morality. *They don't like what these verses say, and will often skip over them. They may go so far as to condemn God, or reject the authority of Scripture.*

### "RULE #1," WHEN READING SCRIPTURE.

If you come across a passage that offends you...

- ✓ **First, find out if that's what it really says.** It might say that. But make sure that you didn't misunderstand it within its context. Also, you might want to check another Bible translation, to see how it translates the passage.
- ✓ **Second, if it really does say that, remind yourself:** The problem *isn't* God or the Bible. The problem is: ① we live in a world that constantly presents a distorted view of reality, and ② our minds have been influenced by the sinful nature we were born with.
- ✓ **Third, look in Scripture for other passages** that say something similar. They might help you to understand the passage better.
- ✓ **Finally, it's OK to admit we don't understand everything in the Bible.** Some things are difficult to understand (compare to 2 Peter 3:15-16). In eternity, anything we need to know will become clear to us.

### Today: Looking at the "JEALOUSY" issue.

"... for I, the LORD your God, am a **jealous God**, ..."

Exodus 20:5b (NIV)

**The problem:** Most of us have been taught that it is *not good* to be jealous. Yet here we read about *God* claiming to be jealous!

- ✓ If we look in a Bible concordance, we will discover that there are *many* passages that describe God as being jealous. In fact, God says that "Jealous" is one of his names!

"Do not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose **name is Jealous**, is a **jealous God**."

Exodus 34:14 (NIV)

In Scripture, when God is described by a "name," that name tells us something about him. This verse tells us that *jealousy* is part of *who God is!*

### ⇒ Looking deeper at the word "jealous."

- **Many Bible resources are available\*** that tell us about the Bible words and their definitions. They connect the English words to the original Hebrew or Greek that Scripture was written in, and in a way that does NOT require learning of the original languages.
- If we look up the word "**jealous**," we may be surprised to discover that the same Hebrew and Greek words are also translated as "**zealous**"!
- In other words, these *two* concepts, "**jealousy**" and "**zeal**," are referring to *the same thing*! Translators have the option of choosing which English word to use – based on the original context and the ways we (today) tend to use the English words.
- **Knowing this fact**, we can expand our research to include the word "**zeal**" – a concept that we might find more acceptable, when applied to God. We can also compare how this concept is used of *God* vs. how it is used of *people*.

\* (Available in printed books and often free online.)

### What do we discover?

⇒ **Idolatry is often the reason for God's jealousy/zeal.**

- ✓ Most passages that mention God's jealousy/zeal are connected to situations where the people have rejected God and turned to idols.
- ✓ Typical examples:

"You must not worship any of the gods of neighboring nations, for the LORD your God, who lives among you, is a **jealous God**. His anger will flare up against you, and he will wipe you from the face of the earth."

Deuteronomy 6:14–15 (NLT)

... they aroused his **jealousy** with their idols.

Psalms 78:58b (NIV)

- ✓ **Why does idolatry make God jealous?** One reason is because his relationship to the people is comparable to a *marriage*. It's a matter of spurned love.
- **In some O.T. passages**, God describes his relationship to Israel as being like a marriage. Idolatry is like committing *adultery* (Ezekiel 6:9; 23:37) and *prostitution* (Ezekiel 23:25; Hosea 4:12).
  - **This is also a N.T. concept.** The relationship of Christ to the church is like a *husband-wife relationship*. If we choose to go after the *world*, we become *adulteresses* (James 4:4).
- ✓ The actual situation is even *worse* than that. It's not only a rejection of God's love, but it's an expression of loyalty to *false gods* – to *demons* and the like! (Compare to 1 Corinthians 10:18-22.)
- ✓ It's even *worse* than that. It's not just that we *ought* to love God, but we *owe* God 100% of our loyalty. He *owns* us! (More about this later.)

BUT THERE ARE OTHER TYPES OF SITUATIONS, WHERE GOD IS ALSO DESCRIBED AS "JEALOUS/ZEALOUS."

7

⇒ **God jealously maintains his honor. This means:**

- ✓ There is a coming *judgment* for people and their sin.
  - He will not allow evil to have the final victory.
  - People will not get away with smearing or discrediting his name (= his reputation, or "who he is").
- ✓ At the same time, there is *mercy*, which God will eagerly pour out on all who are willing to repent of their sin.
  - God has made *promises* to Israel's ancestors. In his *jealousy/zeal* for his own reputation, *he will not go back on those promises*. *EXAMPLE: Because of these promises...*

... I will have mercy on all Israel,  
for I **jealously** guard **my holy reputation!**  
Ezekiel 39:25b (NLT)

God's jealousy/zeal affects both *judgment* and *mercy*!  
HOW DOES THIS WORK?

8

⇒ **God's jealousy/zeal, as pertaining to ISRAEL:**

- ✓ When Israel rejected God and turned to idols, they had to be punished. (This happened on several occasions; and God used other nations to accomplish it.)

... they aroused his **jealousy** with their idols. ...

He gave his people over to the sword;  
he was furious with his inheritance.

Psalms 78:58b, 62 (NIV); see vs. 56-64.

- ✓ The prophets tell us that the nation of Israel will someday repent and become loyal to their God. And according to God's promises to their ancestors, the nation will be blessed and will prosper.

GOD INVITES THEM TO REPENT!

"Even now," declares the LORD,  
"return to me with all your heart,  
with fasting and weeping and mourning."

Joel 2:12 (NIV)

9

- Israel will someday repent. However, their focus won't be on *their deliverance*, but on *God's reputation*.

"Spare your people, LORD.  
Do not make your inheritance an object of scorn,  
a byword among the nations.

**Why should they say among the peoples,  
'Where is their God?'**"

Joel 2:17 (NIV)

= "Why should others claim that you've abandoned us,  
and that *you don't have the power to keep your promises!*"

When Israel is concerned about God's honor... What happens?

THE END RESULT!

Then the LORD was **jealous** for his land  
and took pity on his people.

Joel 2:18 (NIV)

10

⇒ **What about God's jealousy/zeal, as it pertains to THE NATIONS?**

- ✓ God used the nations to judge Israel. But when their destruction of Israel went too far, *They* were judged ... *because of their excesses*.

"This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'I am very **jealous** for Jerusalem and Zion, and I am very angry with the nations that feel secure. I was only a little angry, but **they went too far with the punishment**.'"

Zechariah 1:14b-15 (NIV)

- ✓ IN THE FUTURE: *All* nations will be judged.

"The great Day of the LORD is near —  
... **The whole earth** will be consumed  
by the fire of His **jealousy**."

For indeed, He will make a sudden end  
of all who dwell on the earth.

Zephaniah 1:14a, 18b (BSB)

11

- ✓ Ultimately, *judgment* isn't the *only* thing that will occur. God is also going to have *mercy* on people!

**People will be saved!**

THE NEW TESTAMENT TELLS US THE FINAL OUTCOME!

For My decision is to gather nations,  
to assemble kingdoms,  
to pour out upon them My indignation—  
all My burning anger.

For **all the earth will be consumed**  
by the fire of My **jealousy**.

**For then I will restore  
pure lips to the peoples,  
that all may call upon the name of the LORD  
and serve Him shoulder to shoulder.**

Zechariah 3:8b-9 (BSB)

After this I looked, and there before me was **a great multitude** that no one could count, **from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb** [=Jesus].

Revelation 7:9a (NIV)

12

This salvation is made possible by:

⇒ **The greatest expression of God's jealousy/zeal!**

THIS IS THE MOST WONDERFUL EXPRESSION OF **GOD'S JEALOUSY/ZEAL!**

For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given,  
and the government will be on his shoulders.

And he will be called  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Of the greatness of his government and peace  
there will be no end.

He will reign on David's throne  
and over his kingdom,  
establishing and upholding it  
with justice and righteousness  
from that time on and forever.

**The zeal of the LORD Almighty  
will accomplish this.**

Isaiah 9:6-7 (NIV)

**God's jealousy/zeal in the New Testament.**

⇒ **The nature of God's jealousy/zeal remains the same.** Here are two passages to illustrate this.

- ✓ God's jealousy is *still* connected to people's idolatrous practices – especially when it involves *spiritual compromise*.

You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons. Are we trying to arouse the Lord's **jealousy**? Are we stronger than he?

1 Corinthians 10:21-22 (NIV)

- ✓ Jesus demonstrated this, when he cleared out the temple – removing those who had turned the sacred place into a market.

**"Zeal for your house will consume me."**

John 2:17b (NIV); a quote from Psalm 69:9.

**What about people's jealousy/zeal?**

⇒ **Human jealousy/zeal is often described as *sinful*.**

- ✓ Jealousy/zeal – as a sin to be avoided.

Let us behave decently, ... not in ... **jealousy**.

Romans 13:13 (BSB)

- ✓ Even "religious" zeal can be sinful.

- Paul, before he was saved:

I was just as **zealous** for God as any of you are today.

Acts 22:3b (NIV)

- This happens when the jealousy/zeal is *not* based on knowledge of the truth of Scripture.

For I can testify about them that they are **zealous** for God, but their **zeal** is not based on knowledge.

Romans 10:2 (NIV)

⇒ **The issue:** It seems that *most* human jealousy is *sin* – that's because we are sinners. But sometimes it can be God-honoring!

- ✓ When the devil was trying to steal-away the Corinthians' devotion to Christ, note what Paul said. (Note also the husband-wife comparison – just like we've seen elsewhere.)

I am **jealous** for you with a godly **jealousy**. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him.

2 Corinthians 11:2 (NIV)

- ✓ Here, Paul explains *when* jealousy/zeal is good:

It is fine to be **zealous**, **provided the purpose is good**, and to be so always, not just when I am with you.

Galatians 4:18 (NIV)

- ✓ Some additional examples of *good* jealousy/zeal are: Phinehas (a priest, Numbers 25:11, 13); David (Psalm 69:9); Elijah (1 Kings 19:10, 14); and one of the psalmists (Psalm 119:139).

**THE BIG ISSUE: WHY should God be jealous if we don't give him *all* of our worship?**

★ **Simply stated, we owe him undivided worship.** ★  
(This is why our sin is so serious.)

**HE DESERVES IT... HE IS WORTHY.**

- ✓ God is **worthy** of it – because he is the **Creator**. He made us.

"**Worthy** are You, our Lord and God,  
to receive glory and honor and power,  
for **You created all things**;  
by Your will they exist and came to be."

Revelation 4:11 (BSB)

- ✓ Jesus, who is described as both "Lion" and "Lamb," is **worthy** of it. He is the **Judge** of all people. He also is the **Savior** of many.

- He is the only one **worthy** to open the "scroll," wherein is sealed the events that will bring these "last days" to their conclusion.

"Who is **worthy** to break the seals and open the scroll?"

... no one was found **worthy** to open the scroll or look inside it.

[EXCEPT...]

"Behold, the **Lion** of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, **has triumphed** to open the scroll and its seven seals."

Then I saw a **Lamb** who appeared to have been slain, standing in the center of the throne, ...

"**Worthy** are You to take the scroll and open its seals,  
because **You were slain**,  
and **by Your blood You purchased for God**  
**those from every tribe and tongue and people and nation** ..."

"**Worthy** is the Lamb, who was slain,  
to receive power and riches  
and wisdom and strength  
and honor and glory and blessing!"

Revelation 5:2a, 4b, 5b-6a, 9b, 12b (BSB); see the entire chapter.

**JESUS, the Lion and the Lamb.**  
ALL will confess that he is worthy.

HE **OWNS** US. We **owe** our lives to him.

✓ **FURTHERMORE:** God **owns** all things, including us.

Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the splendor and the majesty, for **everything in heaven and on earth belongs to You.**

Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom, and You are exalted as head over all. Both riches and honor come from You, and **You are the ruler over all.** In Your hands are power and might to exalt and give strength to all.

1 Chronicles 29:11-12 (BSB)

- This passage continues with the **only** legitimate response to this fact:

Now therefore, our God, we give You **thanks**, and we **praise** Your glorious name.

1 Chronicles 29:13 (BSB)

- When we give our loyalty and worship to **anything** other than God, we are **stealing** what is *rightfully* God's, and giving it to the devil/demons.

19

**So, what should we conclude?**

★ **God's jealousy/zeal is good; ours can be good or bad.** ★

- ✓ **For GOD** – It describes his desire to receive worship and devotion from his people – a worship and devotion that *rightfully belongs to him*.
  - His jealousy/zeal will protect and bring about good for those who have this devotion; but it will result in wrath and vengeance for those who take what is *rightfully* God's, and give it to another.
- ✓ **For PEOPLE** – Because of sin, *our* jealousy is often the sinful kind.
  - When sinful... It is an emotion that controls our actions, and destroys right relationships with others. It is self-centered and possessive, a desire for that which rightfully belongs (or should belong) to someone else.
  - When *not* sinful... It is an eager concern for protecting right relationships, and for the well-being of others (and what rightfully belongs to them). This will be directed toward God and righteous causes, and may also include a desire for us to receive what is *rightfully* ours.

20

## Your MISSION

**REJOICE** that God, in love, has directed his jealousy/zeal in such a way that **salvation is now possible** for **all** who are willing to repent and trust him!

For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given, ...

**The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.**

Isaiah 9:6a, 7b (NIV)

**LEARN** what *God-honoring* jealousy/zeal is like!

Be jealous/zealous for the things of God!

When possible, turn your jealousy/zeal into a *blessing* for others!

21

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22