

OUR JEALOUS GOD

HEART OF THE MATTER - A WORD FROM KEN

EXODUS 34:14; EXODUS 20: 3-7; DEUTERONOMY 5:9; 2 CORINTHIANS 11:2

The Bible is unambiguous. It's more than a single reference. God himself declares it. He is a jealous God.

Of all the attributes, on the surface at least, this one may be the toughest one to digest. And there's good reason. The word, as we use it in ordinary language, usually seems more a vice than a virtue.

A jealous person is possessive; suspicious; eager to retaliate. Jealousy races to expose secrets and bring them to the light. Jealousy triggers powerful fears. Jealousy hits the start button on all sorts of emotion: anger, resentment, bitterness and an obsession with revenge. The rival becomes a target – right there in the crosshairs of rage.

But when we learn the mitigating circumstances, we may well appreciate the jealousy. Let's face it - it's the stuff of fiction. It keeps the story moving. But we also know there's something deeply troubling about jealousy. It can be a dark and destructive force. It's a motive for murder, a cause for divorce and a precursor to violence. Therapy is often prescribed.

So in polite conversation, we gloss over jealousy. We ignore it. We gloss over it. We pretend its not there.

All that said, how do we understand the *biblical notion* of a jealous God? First of all, jealousy is not necessarily a vice. It certainly can lead to destructive behaviors and emotions, but it is not in and of itself an offence. In reality, there are occasions when jealous is a perfectly appropriate response. It can be clear evidence that our values are in order. It's an indicator that we are passionate about the right things. It's the way we act on jealousy that makes it either constructive or destructive.

When a marriage is under threat, a jealous spouse will call foul. It simply means this: we aren't going to let anything rob us of the joy of life together. Jealousy is a legitimate defense mechanism as we work to protect the things we truly value. A teacher jealously guards the learning environment. A doctor jealously provides patients with proper care. A pastor jealously protects his people from corrupting influences. A parent jealously keeps those children safe from whatever might bring harm.

And this is **the heart of the matter**. God makes a profound promise to his people. It's a covenant. He is prepared to perform and make it good. There is only one God. He reveals his name – *el kanno*. Jealous. Worship of other gods is a direct threat to the fulfillment of that promise. Idolatry will destroy the most important relationship we can have. This is not a casual

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matter. God will protect his glory and honor. He will guard his uniqueness as the God of the universe. He will protect his people. He will do whatever it takes.

God is not burdened with envy. Our unfaithfulness does not cause God to wallow in a pool of self-pity or second-guessing. Jealousy effects us humans that way; but not God. The human side effects of jealousy are not a risk for God. He is holy and just and righteous. He is not subject to the distractions of the human condition.

He is purposefully, jealously preparing his bride, the church, for the wedding feast.

And what a party it will be.

BACKGROUND – There is a human quality to this attribute of God. But God's jealousy is not like ours. In order to understand, we need to look to the text. When we do, we find that God is serious about his relationship to his people. He is holy and just, and righteous in his wrath. God will ultimately make everything right – every injustice, all unfairness, every theft, all violence and prejudice, every exploitation, every evil abuse will meet with final, comprehensive justice. God is jealous to protect his glory, his honor and his people.

Review Scripture: Exodus 34:14; Exodus 20: 3-7; Deuteronomy 5:9; 2 Corinthians 11:2

Think it over...

1. How does jealousy relate to idolatry? (*Exodus 34:14*)
2. Review the Ten Commandments. (How many can you name from memory?) Why did idolatry make the top of the top ten? (*Exodus 20: 3-7*)
3. We know that Jesus bore the wrath of God on our behalf. We also know that judgment is coming at the end of time. What does *Deuteronomy 5:9* tell us?
4. According to Drew – God is jealous for our love, our trust and our company. Explain.
5. If we are to learn about jealousy from God, what is the lesson? (2 *Corinthians 11:2*)

Bring it home...

1. We have a clear picture of the idols created by Israel in the wilderness. What are some contemporary idols of our making?
2. Is God as serious about idolatry today as he was in Moses' time? Why?
3. How does it help to know that our holy and righteous God will make everything right?
4. What are you jealous for? ... on a human level? ... on a spiritual level?
5. How can our jealousy better reflect God's?

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