

A Jealous God

Adoring God Chapter 18

Exodus 20:5

I. The Text Opened

A. Exodus 20:5

1. "Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;" (Exo. 20:5).
 - a) The first command concerned the worship of God as it affects the heart, soul and mind, and the second is outward, where the last 3 of this table deal with outward works.
 - b) The exclusion is in the words not to make images, or to worship them.
 - c) The sanction is, "for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God."

II. The Doctrine from the Text

A. Doctrine: God as jealous means that He is fiercely protective of His nature, His rights, and His possessions.

1. Scripture repeatedly teaches that God is jealous.
 - a) As a matter of fact, this word 'jealous' in certain instances in the Bible only refers to God and is usually set in the midst of His commandments to His people.
 - (1) *"For I the LORD thy God am a jealous God," (Exod. 20:5).*
 - (2) *It means that God is fiercely protective of His nature, His rights, and His possessions.*
 - b) Jealousy is not an attribute of God per se, but rather an adapted expression of a change in relationship, or an explanation of His desire to see a specific act fulfilled by His children.
 - (1) *God's jealousy flows from the attributes of His goodness and righteousness, as well as His acts of justice.*
 - (2) *Throughout Scripture God reveals Himself to men in a way they can comprehend, given their limited capabilities of thought.*
 - (3) *So where they read that God is jealous, this truth is being communicated to them in a way they can understand.*
 - c) In other words, God does not react like a jealous husband (as in the example of Hosea) who rightly experiences righteous anger when his wife (Gomer) cheats on him.
 - (1) *He is not happy at one point, and suddenly jealous for righteousness at another, because He is always content.*
 - (2) *What changes is man's relationship with Him, and that change demonstrates from their point of view.*
 - (3) *It expresses a certain disposition they ought to have to God if they are thinking rightly.*
 - (a) *If men sin, God "gets mad" (Num. 32:13) and He is "grieved," (Eph. 4:30).*
 - (b) *If men do well, He is "pleased."*
 - (c) *In all these examples God remains unchanged, but these written accounts show men how they should act and serve Him.*

2. The Worship of God

- a) The jealousy of God particularly arises in the context of man's worship of Him.
 b) Worship of God must be accomplished in a specific manner according to God's directives.

(1) *For you shall not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God. (Exod. 34:14, NASB)*

- c) If people worship according to their own inventions or their fallen nature, it is false, marred worship.

(1) *When they change the worship of God's holy name to anything else, God calls that idolatry.*

(2) *In this type of false worship, He is jealous that His name is being trampled, and that people are straying in their devotion to Him, "And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them," (Ps. 106:36).*

- d) Why is God jealous for His own name and His own glory?

(1) *Because He is perfect.*

(2) *In His perfection, He desires to see Himself imitated perfectly by His people.*

(3) *A perfect God desires to see and enjoy that which is perfect.*

(4) *God sees this in Himself when the Father, Son, and Spirit coexist in holy perfection together.*

(5) *But fallen humanity, tainted by sin, is imperfect.*

(a) *Christ says, "Be perfect just as your Father in heaven is perfect," (Matt. 5:48, NKJV).*

- e) Men can't do that on their own.

(1) *God's reflection in us is marred.*

(2) *So, when men do not give God due worship, and they worship Him wrongly, irreverently, or in a distracted fashion, God becomes jealous for His name and His glory which He always sees as utter perfection.*

(3) *As men adore God's glory, they should ask themselves, "How well do I worship my God?"*

(a) *Therefore, thus saith the Lord GOD; Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for my holy name. (Ezek. 39:25)*

(b) *I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images. (Isa. 42:8)*

(c) *For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it: for how should my name be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another. (Isa. 48:11)*

3. Christ's Zeal for His Father

- a) Zeal is the human equivalent of God's jealousy, and men should be as zealous for God's glory as God is.

(1) *Why?*

(2) *Because being zealous for God demonstrates that Christians love Him with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength.*

(3) *All things belong to God, including men. Therefore, all their love and devotion should, in turn, belong to Him and Him alone.*

(a) *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.*

(Matt. 22:37-38)

- b) Virtuous jealousy, as demonstrated by God, is a consuming single-minded pursuit toward a right end.

- (1) *Christ, in upholding true spiritual zeal and a righteous jealousy for His Father, was the perfect example of holy jealousy.*
- (2) *It is interesting that Christ's zeal for God was also centered around the abuses of worship in the temple.*
- (3) *And the Jews' Passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem and found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise. And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up. (John 2:13-17)*
- (a) *Christ defended his Father's church against man-centered hypocrisy.*
- (b) *In this way Jesus began his public ministry.*
- (c) *He drove these 'money' men out of the temple with a whip!*
- (d) *Why? Because Christ had an unmitigated zeal for truth and a desire to see true worship instituted.*

4. God's Jealousy and His Church

- a) God is jealous for His honor and glory, but He is also unapologetically jealous for His chosen people.
- b) True born-again believers, forming God's church, are His prized possession, His bride whom He loves.
- c) He declares this throughout Scripture again and again of His church in every age:
- (1) *You are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth ... Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that He might present the church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. (Eph. 5:25-32, ESV)*
- d) God has a legitimate, righteous claim on Christians.
- (1) *He is their sovereign Lord by creation and redemption, and He is their loving Father by adoption.*
- (2) *That makes us, as Christians, an ultimate priority for Him and something special in His sight, and as such, He will defend us jealously.*
- e) The cross of Christ serves as the greatest illustration of God's jealousy for His children in His death and resurrection.
- (1) *Christ defeated death and hell when it had a hold on His people.*
- (2) *He delivered His own from God's kindled anger and jealousy.*
- (3) *And because He is jealous for His people, He is sure to watch over them, so they need not fear being forgotten or neglected.*
- (a) *They are cared for tenderly and protectively by God's jealousy.*
- (b) *He will not share His honor or His glory with anyone, and He will not share His prized possession once He takes them as His own.*
- (c) *They can take tremendous comfort in knowing that the Lord will suffer no rivals and will watch over, protect, keep, and defend them as His chosen people until the end.*
- (d) *Praise Him for His death and resurrection!*
- (e) *Praise Him for His steadfast love and care!*
- (f) *Praise Him for being jealous of His people and His name!*

(i) *Then the LORD became jealous for His land and had pity on His people. (Joel 2:18, ESV)*

5. But if God's people behave as if they answer to no one but themselves, He is justly displeased.

a) But my people have forgotten me; they make offerings to false gods; they made them stumble in their ways, in the ancient roads, and to walk into side roads, not the highway. (Jer. 18:15, ESV)

b) And His displeasure can turn to righteous anger when Christians give their love and devotion to another, to some god of their own making.

(1) *Any such challenge to God's rightful claim provokes His wrath and kindles His jealousy for His name.*

(a) *Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for His wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in Him. (Ps. 2:12, ESV)*

c) God alone is the Creator of all things seen and unseen.

(1) *He alone is all-powerful, all-knowing, ever-present.*

(2) *He alone is the definition of goodness, truth, beauty and holiness.*

(3) *And He alone is worthy of our devotion and worship.*

(4) *So when His children give their love to another and rob Him of His glory, God is justly jealous and has the inherent right to be incensed.*

(5) *Humanly speaking, of all the things men do in their day-to-day lives, what are they jealous for?*

(6) *If they are jealous for the wrong things, they will not be jealous for the right thing.*

III. The Text Applied

A. The Imitation of God's Jealousy

1. If we are in Christ and guided by His Holy Spirit, there is an entirely appropriate way in which we should imitate God's jealousy.

a) We must be jealous (zealous) for the same things He is.

b) We can long for His kingdom, and we can be zealous for His character to be manifest in our lives and relationships.

(1) *I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. (2 Cor. 11:2, ESV)*

c) We should also be jealous for God's honor.

(1) *For instance, how can Christians hear the Lord they love being maligned, blasphemed, or disrespected and remain indifferent?*

(2) *Jealousy is not an option in such instances; it is the beginning of a right response that turns into holy zeal.*

(3) *Moses was the meekest man on earth, yet his meekness turned to anger when wrong was done to the God of his life and the God of his love.*

(4) *When Aaron led the people to commit idolatry, Moses was so upset that he broke the tables of the Law at the feet of the idolatrous Israelites (Exod. 32:19).*

d) Christians, likewise, ought to bear true love to God, filled with a zeal for our Lord and His glory.

(1) *As the Westminster Puritan William Strong said: Christian love is provoked when anything becomes contrary to Christ and His truth. I would have zeal to be turned into fire, and so it will be (where love is) for God and His glory. We should, then, examine what it is that makes you zealous on every occasion. Where your zeal is, there your love will be, for love is zealous.*