

Exodus 34:14

God is Jealous for Our Best!

Open your Bible to...

Exo. 34:14 for you shall worship no other god, for the Lord, who name is Jealous, is a jealous God.

Pray

Intro

✓ God is jealous for our best!

At the age of 20 Oprah Winfrey began to seriously question the nature of God when she heard her pastor say that God is a jealous God.

That didn't sit well with young Oprah as she could not reconcile her conception of God with the thought that He could be jealous of her.

From that point forward, she began to build a god of her own imagination that is far from biblical.

Clearly, I would contend, Oprah misunderstood what her pastor meant when he said that "God is a jealous God."

But it's not just Oprah! Countless people, including many Christians aren't quite sure what God means when He says...

"For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God"
Exodus 20:5

In fact, I would suggest that the jealousy of God may be the most misunderstood of all His attributes!

So we're going to want to spend some time this morning investigating what the Bible means when it says that God is a jealous God so that we don't come to wrong conclusions as Oprah did...

...rather, we want a solid biblical understanding so that we can embrace God's jealousy and rejoice in the marvelous truth that God is jealous for our best!

God's Jealousy ~ a definition

✓ God's Jealousy

Let's begin by defining what God means when He calls Himself a jealous God.

Because admittedly it is difficult at first pass to get our minds around the jealousy of God because on the one hand jealousy is presented in the Bible as a sinful characteristic of people that we are to avoid...

...yet a positive moral attribute of God!

For example, as we just read in Exodus 20:5, God said...

"For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God"

Yet, the apostle Paul warns us in Galatians...

"Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are... idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies..."

Galatians 5:19-20

So which is it? Is jealousy good or bad?

The answer, like my wife likes to tease me is—yes!

Let me explain, jealousy can be good or bad depending upon how it is expressed...

Sinful jealousy, the kind that the apostle Paul warned against, is a work of the flesh and is manifested when we...

...become envious of what someone else is, or of what another person has.

By way of example...

Ex. I could be sinfully jealous of Elon Musk

Why? Because I might be jealous of one of the cars that he owns!

Specifically that sweet looking *Lotus Emira*—a car that costs way more money than I have or would ever spend...but nonetheless a car I wouldn't mind driving up Hwy. 120 to Sonora!

That kind of jealousy is sinful because it is covetous in nature, that ungodly desire for something that doesn't belong to me, which is a work of the flesh.

But the jealousy that God manifests is always good.

For He is never jealous of what anyone has, or what anyone is, because everyone and everything ultimately belongs to Him!

Therefore, there is nothing that He could be jealous of.

So then there is nothing and no one that could ever arouse an unrighteous envy within God, or some sinful desire, or work of the flesh...

...which means He can never express jealousy in a wrong or sinful way!

✓ Back to the Queen of Day Time Talk Shows

What Oprah misunderstood, and probably still misunderstands, is that God isn't jealous of her, or what she has...

Rather He is jealous for Oprah.

Specifically He is jealous for what is best for her life!

Because as her Creator, He alone knows what will produce the best possible life and eternity for her.

And all that she is, and all that she has are gifts from the God Who created her.

Thus, anyone, or anything, that would take from what is best for Oprah will arouse God's jealousy for her.

So, we might define God's jealousy as...

"His righteous zeal to protect and preserve what rightly belongs to Him."

Or as one author put it, God's jealousy is the...

"Praiseworthy zeal to preserve something supremely precious." ~ J.I. Packer

✓ That raises a question...

“What is supremely precious to God that would arouse His jealousy to preserve it?”

Well the Bible reveals a number of things that are supremely precious to God, things that when threatened will evoke His jealousy to preserve and protect. They include His...

Nature (Exodus 34:14)

Name (Ezekiel 39:25)

Land (Joel 2:18)

City (Zechariah 1:14)

People (Zechariah 8:2)

While we will touch briefly on some of these areas this morning we'll focus most of our study on God's jealousy for His people...

...including you and me!

The Biblical Foundation for God's Jealousy

✓ Biblical foundation

In addition to the scriptures that we've already looked at God's jealousy is on full display in both the Old and New Testaments. For example, in Ezekiel 39:25 God declares....

“Now I will bring back the captives of Jacob, and have mercy on the whole house of Israel; and I will be jealous for My holy name—”

To be jealous for His holy name means that God will act to preserve, promote, and protect His reputation as the God Who keeps His word!

Here in Ezekiel 39 God is reminding His people, the Jewish captives in Babylon that their hope for a better

future was secure because His jealousy for His Name ensures...

...that He will act to bring them back from Babylon so that they can inhabit their own land just as He promised through His word to Jeremiah the prophet! (ref. Jeremiah 25).

Next we read that God's jealousy moves Him to purge the wicked desires from the hearts of His people. Moses said...

*"They (the people of Israel) provoked Him to jealousy
with foreign gods;
With abominations they provoked Him to anger.
They sacrificed to demons, not to God,
To gods they did not know,
To new gods, new arrivals
That your fathers did not fear.
Of the Rock who begot you, you are unmindful,
And have forgotten the God who fathered you."
Deuteronomy 32:16-18*

In the sad history of Israel from the Exodus through the time of the Judges, later during the days of the kings, and to this present day...

We find that Israel and Judah gave themselves over to the vilest and most contemptible behavior in the worship of their false gods and goddesses.

Including tossing their own babies into the fire to satisfy the insatiable lust of their idols!

Here in Deuteronomy Moses tells Israel that God's jealousy moves Him to discipline His people, the people He loves, for the purpose of purging the wicked desires out of their hearts.

Why?

Because God's jealousy will not allow Him to sit by ideally and watch His people destroy their lives through the worship of demons...

...demons whose only desire was, and is, to rob His people of the life and blessings that God intended them to experience!

The point is that the expression of God's jealousy is always for the benefit of His people, which includes His promise to purge them of their evil desires that were incited by...

...the schemes of the enemy who would steal their affections by promising to satisfy the lust of their flesh, the lust of their eyes, and their pride of life, but in the end delivering only death!

✓ Jealous is His Name

Next, and perhaps most thought provoking is the revelation in God's word that jealousy is not just a behavior exhibited by God, it is His irreducible character.

That is, jealousy isn't just something that God feels, it is something that God is.

That truth is revealed by the fact that six times in the Old Testament we are told that God's Name is Jealous.

His Name is synonymous with His character.

Ex. Let me illustrate.

Most of us are probably familiar with Abraham's experience on Mt. Moriah where the Lord provided a substitutionary sacrifice so that Abraham did not have to sacrifice his son Isaac. In response Abraham...

"...called the name of the place, Jehovah Jireh, as it is said to this day, "In the Mount of the Lord it shall be provided." ~ Genesis 22:14

Here in Genesis we are informed that one of the Names by which God's is known is Jehovah Jireh, which means...

"The LORD will provide."

That Name reminds us that ultimately God's nature is that He is the Provider for all that we need for life and godliness...

...most especially that He will provide Himself as the substitute for our sins just as He provided a substitute for Isaac.

✓ God is Jealous

What many believers may not realize is that God's Name is also recorded in scripture as Jehovah Kannah, which literally means...

"The LORD is jealous"

For example, in our opening scripture, Exodus 34:14 we read...

"for you shall worship no other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God."

Here God's Name communicates to us that part of His nature is that He is zealously committed to an exclusive relationship with you and me...

A relationship that He will not share with another god...

...or anyone and anything that would divide our affection for Him.

So jealousy is that part of His character that moves Him to restore, protect, and preserve His relationship with us.

The Implications of God's Jealousy

√ The implications of God's jealousy

Before we look at the blessings and the benefits of God's jealousy for us we need to consider the implications of that jealousy.

Specifically there are some biblical admonitions and warnings that we should heed lest we provoke God's jealousy in our lives.

Jealousy that would be manifest as discipline in our lives!

- 1) God's jealousy demands that we love Him with an undivided heart.

As God's children by faith in Jesus and the glad recipients of His perfect love we are now called to respond to His love by turning away from anything and anyone that would defile our body, mind, or soul.

You'll remember that Jesus said...

"If you love Me, keep My commandments."

John 14:15

His point is that in our relationship with Him we express our love for God by walking in obedience to His commandments.

When we choose to disobey the Lord we break the fellowship and intimacy of our relationship with Jesus.

In a sense when we disobey God we are embracing another lover.

That's why all through the Old Testament God called the worship of anything other than Himself spiritual "adultery".

God's jealousy for our best moves Him to protect our relationship with Him.

But if we ignore God's commands and continue in sin then we run the risk of provoking His jealousy!

Jealousy that will be manifest as His discipline in our lives.

Ex. God desires our spiritual purity

That was the apostle Paul's point when he warned his friends at Corinth who were toying with sin...

"Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?"

1Corinthians 10:22

Paul's sober reminder to them, and to us, is that God isn't a push-over, or a genie, who will ignore our willful sinful behavior.

He is the sovereign, all-powerful, Creator of the universe,
Who holds our next breath in His hands!

And to whom we owe our affection and obedience.

Therefore, as Christians who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ we have to be careful not to involve ourselves in any sinful activity that would provoke God's discipline in our lives.

Remember, Jesus isn't just the Lamb of God, He is also the Lion of Judah!

And lions aren't a push-over! They have claws and sharp teeth!

To ignore that is to bring harm to ourselves!

This aspect of God's character reminds me of the scene from *The Lion, the Witch & the Wardrobe* when Susan first learns that Aslan the King is a lion. She said to Mr. Beaver...

"I'd thought he was a man. Is he-quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion"?

To which Mr. Beaver responded...

"Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King...."

That thought captures the attribute of God's jealousy perfectly! That is, while God is perfect in His goodness nonetheless it isn't safe to provoke God's jealousy...

...for He is stronger than we are as Paul reminded the Corinthians and if needed will use His power to purge us from anyone or anything that would interfere with our relationship with Him.

Ex. Ananias & Sapphira ~ willfully lying to the Holy Spirit

God's jealousy moved Him to purge hypocrisy from the church.

Ex. Pastor Dan

Ap. If you're involved in willful disobedience, today is the day to stop!

2) God's jealousy demands that we use His gifts for His glory

The Bible tells us that God is the giver of every natural and spiritual gift that we possess. For example, James tells us...

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning."

James 1:17

Paul reminds the Corinthians...

"And what do you have that you did not receive?"

1Corinthians 4:7b

The point is that the gifts that God has given to each of us are not primarily for our personal benefit and entertainment.,,

Rather, God's gifts are given to us that we might serve Him and bless others.

Therefore, in view of the jealousy of God, we should be intentional about using the gifts He has given us for His glory and His Kingdom.

Because if we misuse the gifts for our own aggrandizement and profit, or worse to advance Satan's rebellion against God...

...then we run the risk of stirring up God's jealousy to bring quick and decisive discipline into our lives.

Ex. Craig

I remember a good friend of mine and a very gifted musician who once cautioned young worship leaders to be careful how they used their gifts because he told them...

“People don’t worship plumbers.”

That’s not a dig against plumbers, we all need a good one!

His point was that people don’t hang posters of plumbers in their bedrooms or scream themselves into hysteria when a leaking toilet gets fixed!

But people do worship musicians, actors, and athletes and will make fools of themselves in the expression of their adoration of those people—think “Beatlemania.”

The point is that if God has gifted you as a musician, actor, or athlete you need to be very careful about how you use those gifts.

By the way, that doesn’t mean that all gifted musicians are called to be worship leaders, or that all Christian actors are limited to only doing “Christian” movies.

But it does mean that we should not use our gifts in a way that would dishonor God or tarnish our witness for Him.

Ex. Rene Russo doing a nude scene in The Thomas Crown Affair

A vocal “born-again” Christian who attended a well-known church in SoCal said...

“I don’t know where in the Bible it says, ‘Don’t be nude in a motion picture,’”

Well Rene, I can show you a lot of scriptures in which God exhorts us to dress modesty and not to bare anything other than our soul lest we cause a brother or sister to be stumbled in their walk!

A better, and more biblical example would be someone like Nicole Weider who gave up being a Victoria Secret model so as to honor God with her life...

...and to encourage young women to see their value in Christ rather than in their body.

My point is that we must remember that the same God who gave us our gifts can just as quickly remove them if we willfully misuse them...

...so let's use the gifts that God has given us in a way that pleases Him and blesses others.

Objections to God's Jealousy

✓ Objections

The only real objection against the jealousy of God is that some people claim that it is inconsistent to say that God's jealousy is right and good, but man's jealousy is wrong and bad.

Afterall the Bible calls us to imitate the other moral attributes of God like His love and holiness.

So the critic would ask...

If we're supposed to be loving because God is love, and to be holy because God is holy...

...then why is it wrong for us to be jealous?

That's a false narrative!

The answer of course as we've already seen is that jealousy isn't the problem, rather it's how we as humans express jealousy that make it wrong or right.

It all comes down to motive!

Jealousy that is good and right is always motivated by love (agape love) for others, while jealousy that is bad and wrong is always motivated by envy of what other people are, or what other people have.

Ex. Right and wrong jealousy

For example, the apostle Paul's jealousy for the Christians at Corinth to have a pure and undefiled faith is good and right because he was jealous for what rightly belongs to God...

The lives, love, and devotion of the Corinthian believers to Jesus.

Contrasted with plain Ole Paul's (my) jealousy of Elon Musk's *Lotus Emira*, which is bad and wrong because...

It's an unrighteous expression of envious resentment of what rightly belongs to Mr. Musk.

So, it's not inconsistent to say that God is jealous, rather the inconsistency is found in how jealousy is expressed by people.

God's jealousy is always and only an expression of His love for what rightly belongs to Him while the jealousy that you and I express can be either right or wrong depending on our motive.

The Blessings & Benefits of God's Jealousy

✓ Blessings & Benefits of God's Jealousy

In our continuing study of the attributes of God we never want to walk away with only an academic understanding that tickles our intellect.

Rather, we want stop and look at how each attribute of God is a practical blessing in our own lives.

That's when it becomes personal and relational moving us from just an intellectual concept of God to a personal experience with God!

An experience that leads us to love God more!

So let's look at a few benefits and blessings of God's jealousy for you!

1) God's jealousy ensures that He will fight for you!

Recently our fellowship viewed the film, Jesus Revolution, which in part tells the story of how Calvary Chapel began through the eyes of a young Greg Laurie—a new convert to Christ.

In one very emotional scene Greg breaks up with his girlfriend, Kathy, even though he loves her because he had come to believe that his mother's narrative of life was correct...

...that eventually everyone leaves.

So Greg decided that it would be better just to break up with Kathy sooner rather than prolonging the pain believing that she would eventually leave him anyway.

But Kathy, who was sure that they're supposed to be together begs him...

“Won’t you fight for me?”

Kathy expressed what we all feel at one time or another!

That all of us desperately want someone to love us enough that they would slay any giant, traverse any distance, and fight through Hell itself to protect and preserve a relationship with us!

Well friends, God’s jealousy ensures that He will fight to restore and to preserve the relationship He created us to have with Him!

Ex. In the Garden of Eden

We read in the same chapter where sin broke the relationship between God and Man that God served the Devil notice that He was going to fight for us!

*“And I will put enmity (war!)
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her Seed;
He shall bruise your head,
And you shall bruise His heel.”
Genesis 3:15*

It was God’s jealousy, that inextinguishable blaze of infinite love that was not willing to leave us in our lost condition that moved Him to send His only Son to fight for us!

How?

As we just read in Genesis 3 God promised to save us by delivering a knockout blow to Satan's head through the Cross of Christ...

...by which the way might be restored for us to once again enjoy the relationship that God created us to have with Him!

So God's jealousy ensures us that He will fight to restore, protect, and preserve a relationship with us!

2) God's jealousy moves Him to protect you!

For example, God's jealousy moves Him to protect you from people who would try to seduce you from your pure faith in Christ. That's what the apostle Paul communicated when he wrote to his friends at Corinth...

"For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ."

Paul's desire, motivated by a godly jealousy, was to protect his friends at Corinth from the destructive nature of the false teaching that was creeping into their church, which taught a...

Different Jesus who is not divine
Different gospel that cannot save
Different spirit that cannot transform

Paul knew that if the Corinthian believers weren't quick to purge these false doctrines from their church and their hearts that they would...

Soon lose their passion for the real Jesus and the power of the Spirit to live for Him.

Reducing their faith to nothing more than a religion without a relationship...a form of godliness but without the power of Christ.

An anemic religion that would be Christian in name only.

It's God's jealousy for our pure devotion to Him and the truth that moves Him to protect His people from the counterfeits offered by Satan.

Ex. A parents jealousy for their child

Any of us who are parents can understand God's jealousy for His children by considering how we would respond if one of our children was seduced by a cult.

Someone like Charles Manson who seduced numerous young men and women to commit some of the vilest murders ever recorded.

Our jealousy for the lives and well-being of our child would move us to act on their behalf...even if it meant making our child angry with us!

We would act because it would be in our child's best interest.

And, I might add, we would think a parent negligent and unloving who didn't act to rescue their child from a cult!

How much more does God's jealousy move Him to protect His children from anyone or anything that would harm their spiritual vitality...

...often times He works through the agency of someone like the apostle Paul or through someone like you and me!

Ex. Hospital visitation ~ Shepherds Chapel cult member

Just as God used Paul so too He will arouse a godly jealousy in people like you and me to step in and protect believers today from the cultists who would try to seduce them from a pure faith in Christ alone.

Close

√ God is jealous for our best!

In closing let me remind you that foundational premise for all of our studies on the attributes of God is my contention that...

“To know Him is to love Him, and to know Him better is to love Him more.

Friends, how can we not love a God who fought to restore us to a right relationship with Him so that we can experience all of the blessings and benefits of that relationship...

...including eternal life!

And a God who continues to work in our lives to protect us from anyone or anything that would try to rob us of the blessings of that relationship.

So God’s jealousy isn’t some ugly characteristic of a petty insecure being as Oprah wrongly believes...

...rather, it is a magnificent attribute of the God who loves us so much that He is jealous for our best!