

## **Names of God from the Bible**

### **50 – Jealous God**

*All God's Names are eternal names – so He is still Jealous God for us today.*

#### **Reading: Exodus 20:1-21**

A young boy was reported to have exclaimed, “*God, how come the Bible says you are a jealous God; I thought you owned everything?*”

However, how can the word ‘*jealous*’ be related to God? We use the term to equate with the words, ‘*envy*’ and ‘*covet*’. Even in this passage from Exodus, we have the tenth commandment that says, “*you shall not covet your neighbour’s house. You shall not covet your neighbour’s wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour.*” Don’t be jealous of other people: their jobs, their salary, their wealth, their possessions, their looks, their spouse, their children or their lifestyle.

As the boy said, God has everything; there is nothing for Him to be jealous about, so how can that relate to His character?

Is there such a thing as good or justifiable jealousy? As we can have good or bad anger, indignation or righteous anger? Is there such a thing as righteous jealousy?

Since we know that God is a good and righteous God, we have to look carefully into what “*I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God*” means and its implications for us.

God actually seems to make matters worse by adding, “*punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me.*”

In our world of pluralism, tolerance, compromise and multiple religions, this seems very draconian, legalistic and also fundamentalist bigotry. Something that would be a barrier to people coming to faith in Yahweh. It is! It is a huge barrier for people in Western nations. They don’t want to believe in Yahweh because He is a jealous God. They don’t want to believe in Jesus Christ because He said, “*I am the Way, the Truth and the Life, NO-ONE comes to the Father except through Me.*”

These people start from the premise that God wants them to worship Him so He should allow them to worship Him any way they want. *If God were that good and loving, He would allow me to worship Him any way I like. If there are many religions, there must be a good reason for them all. Each has its good points and not so good points. I’ll pick and choose what suits me best for the moment and God should be very grateful for whatever worship or allegiance I give Him. After all, I am in charge of my life and gods are there for my benefit, to serve me.*

There is, of course, a fundamental flaw with that reasoning. God created me in His image and therefore I cannot create God in my image! Yes, I can create gods but not God. The created cannot instruct the Creator.

So why is God a jealous God? Is it because He is afraid of competition? Is it because He is on an eternal ego trip? Is it because He cannot stand opposition to His reign and rule out of His insecurity? Is it because He ‘*knows*’ that we will always go against what He wants and He has some vindictive streak within His character that actually enjoys striking out at our independence, initiative and inventiveness? Does He actually now regret making us creative, like Himself?

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“No” has got to be the obvious answer to each of those questions. God was ‘complete’ for eternity past. He didn’t need us at all. It was out of His generous love that He decided to create human beings to share His glory and power. His desire has always been for a vibrant relationship with His creation – people. That relationship is called worship.

God is jealous because He knows that anything other than an intimate relationship with Him is disastrous in the long term. We will self-destruct. We will be envious of others and create wars and harm. Left to ourselves, even our ‘human’ relationships fail, let alone our relationship with God. God also knows that the enemy is out to steal, kill and destroy all of God’s creation and, in particular, His people.

### **What does that name mean for us today**

To compromise our faith is to sell ourselves short. We are the ones who lose out, as well as God our Father. So keep in close relationship with God and enjoy life to the full.

### **Prayer**

*Father, please help me to keep faithful to You and Your plans for my life. Amen.*

### **Additional Readings**

- Nehemiah 13:1-31
- Malachi 2:1-17
- Revelation 2:18-29

### **Questions**

1. How would you describe ‘righteous jealousy’?
2. Has God revealed Himself in this way to you? How and when?
3. How does Jesus fulfil that Name?