

# Dartmouth

## Bible Notes



Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: Who is God/Who God Is Lesson 11

Scripture: Exodus 20:5 etc.

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### ***A Jealous God***

**Exodus 20:1-6** (ESV) And God spoke all these words, saying, “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. “You shall have no other gods before me. “You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, **for I the Lord your God am a jealous God**, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

**Introduction** I was in the coffee shop on Thursday and I stepped outside to take a phone call, and I when I came back in and saw on my laptop what I had just cut-and-pasted into my *Powerpoint* for this morning, the words of our Scripture reading—and I looked around at the ten or so other customers all looking at laptop or cell phone screens, with whatever vague, nebulous, mundane things were ON those screens, I was a little embarrassed. Here on the screen I was looking at were the words of almighty God, relevant to all humankind, written thousands of years ago but timeless, powerful and reflective of the one, Living God...what He said, what He wants, relentless, unopposed, eternal, good, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, unchangeable, full of love, sovereign, holy, beautiful... And His words are just on one screen here right now. I was embarrassed.

The God we talk about is an awesome God. He is the only God, and I am sorry if that is offensive to some people. I can't help it. He is who He is. He never apologizes for being the One God. Jesus never apologized for it either, and in fact it wasn't until Jesus said ([John 10:30,31](#)) ***I and the Father are one*** that ***the Jews picked up stones to stone Him!***

We are asking in this series, “Who is God?” and that is a deeply profound question. I myself have probably two hundred friends who cannot answer that question hardly at all—I cannot imagine that if I have that many people who do not know God, how many you have... And we are answering the question, “The God Who is...” We are suggesting a long list of knowable, understandable attributes of God. Some of those attributes are “incommunicable”—He does not share them with anyone else. Others are “communicable” and He does share, or offer to share them with others. We are doing these pretty much one at a time. I

hope they intrigue you. This subject and inquiry isn't just one screen among many in the Starbucks...

Today I am attempting one of the most enigmatic attributes, to discuss and consider. Do you know that word? “Enigmatic”? It means *difficult to interpret or understand; mysterious*. (Oh, well why didn't you just say “difficult to interpret or understand or mysterious, Pastor Neil?”) Because it's cooler and quicker to just say “enigmatic”. And this is one of the most difficult to understand, or interpret, or mysterious attributes of the one, Living God. Like Tim Keller, whose 2011 message on this subject I listened to three times, I am nervous to attempt to articulate this topic in one message. It is awesome because *He* is awesome and this attribute, in particular, is hard to grasp. Today we want to approach the subject of THE JEALOUSY OF GOD. We approach it though, because it is an attribute which comes up so often in Scripture—God says He is a jealous God. In our reading today in Exodus 20:5a, right in the middle of the Ten Commandments we have ***You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God...*** In Hebrew the words for “jealous God” are El qanah, or literally “God-jealous.” The root of the word qanah means “red” or “zealous.”<sup>1</sup>

Exodus 34:14 ***for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God,***

Deuteronomy 4:24 ***For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.***

Deuteronomy 6:15 ***...for the LORD your God in your midst is a jealous God—lest the anger of the LORD your God be kindled against you, and he destroy you from off the face of the earth.***

Joshua 24:19b ***...but he is a holy God. He is a jealous God.***

Nahum 1:2a ***The LORD is a jealous and avenging God; the LORD is avenging and wrathful...***

But, frankly, I am not sure we want a jealous God, because mostly in the Bible “jealousy” is talked about as being a bad thing, especially when humans feel jealousy. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 3:3 ***for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way?*** Galatians 5:19–20 ***Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, <sup>20</sup> idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions,*** Romans 13:13 ***Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and***

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<sup>1</sup> קָנָה qanah This verb expresses a very strong emotion whereby some quality or possession of the object is desired by the subject. This root occurs eighty-seven times... It may prove helpful to think of “zeal” as the original sense from which derived the notions “zeal for another's property” =“envy” and “zeal for one's own property.” God is depicted as Israel's husband; he is a jealous God (Ex 20:5). Idolatry is spiritual adultery and merits death. God expects man to return his love. Love, however, is not simply an emotion. It is a structured relationship. To love God is to obey him. So the word is used to denote a passionate, consuming “zeal” focused on God that results in the doing of his will and the maintaining of his honor in the face of the ungodly acts of men and nations. *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* Harris, Archer, Waltke 1999 Moody Press.

**sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy.** And what better example of how destructive human jealousy can be than to study King Saul (1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 18) in whom his jealousy of David ruined his life? Jealousy is something that the Bible basically condemns, and so we find it confusing for God to say that HE is a jealous God. This doesn't seem to bother Moses or Joshua or Nahum, and so we ask "how can God be jealous in a righteous way?" And that is our pursuit today. Because we want to know who God is, AS He is. We want to understand God accurately, precisely and fully.

But this discomfort we might feel is documented by something written twelve years ago about American teenagers by a guy named Christian Smith, a Notre Dame and one-time University of North Carolina sociology professor, who suggested twelve years ago (in 2005)<sup>2</sup> that the "de facto dominant religion among contemporary teenagers" in the United States is "**moralistic therapeutic deism**" which, Smith says, looks like this:

- 1) A God exists who created and orders the world and watches over human life on earth.
- 2) God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions.
- 3) The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself
- 4) God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life except when he is needed to resolve a problem
- 5) Good people go to heaven when they die.

Further, Smith postulates that "Such a de facto creed is particularly evident among mainline Protestant and Catholic youth but is also more than a little visible among black and conservative Protestants, Jewish teens, other religious types of teenagers, and even many 'nonreligious' teenagers in the United States."<sup>3</sup>

--The heart of this more modern theology of life, is this: If I do my part, a pretty moral life, then it's God's job to meet my needs. He is there to help me out. He exists, to help me have a pretty happy life. He isn't hovering, helicoptering, watchdogging me—but He is available when I need Him and the rest of the time He leaves me alone...

The problem of seeking God out for Who He really is, goes deeper though. We say that we want a loving Father. Do we really? Tim Keller suggests, referring to C.S. Lewis (in *The Problem of Pain*, 1940), that instead of a loving Father—who is watching us, calling us to account for our behavior, holding us responsible—what we really want is a loving grandfather who is just there, lavishing kindness and *slack* and gifts and affection on us. Even less than a loving Father, do we want a loving LOVER. And yet in this is do we come to understand the jealousy of God.

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<sup>2</sup> Christian Smith, BA Gordon College, MA, PhD Harvard Univ., *The 2005 Princeton Lectures on Youth, Church, and Culture*

<sup>3</sup> Smith, *Ibid.*

This is how, as Tim Keller lays it out, we should understand this attribute of God—of the TRUE God, of the ONE TRUE God. He has said over and over, first to His people Israel and then to His wider people, the Church that she is His bride. That’s how He looks at her. We may not really be all that comfortable with that vision of who we are, even though I find that many of our songs.

A true lover expects even demands to be the **PRIORITY** in his or her lover’s life. This is a thing you hear complaints about a lot: a husband complains that his wife’s PARENTS are the real priority. A wife complains that her husband’s FRIENDS of fishing or cars or boats are the husband’s real priority. Either might complain, “You’re married to your job more than you are to me.”

A true lover is utterly **FAITHFUL** to his or her spouse. Fidelity is never negotiable and when it is violated it is very hard, almost impossible to heal. If it is violated, what happens? Jealousy and understandably. There IS a righteous kind of jealousy but with God, it is attached to an *angry* kind of love. But with God it is a love that doesn’t mutate into ENVY which is basically what human jealousy is doomed to become. God demands a full faithfulness to Himself, since He views us as more than just the Redeemed—the people that He bought and paid for. With Israel and then with the Church, the Bible describes God’s heart to His people as that between a husband and a wife. It tolerates no competition!

A true lover will feel jealousy from his or her lover if there is a loss of **INTIMACY**. In Exodus 20:5 God says to Moses, ***I am YOUR God***. It is “covenant language”—like we might craft into a wedding ceremony. That’s how God feels about His people and God feels jealousy if we drift. If we become distant from Him and drift over to just going to church, just doing our religious duties, He grieves because He is a jealous God and He does not want to lose His closeness to His people. As Keller says, in life—at the most foundational level—there are only three possibilities;

- To be God
- To be like God
- To be miserable

God expects to be our PRIORITY, from us to receive FIDELITY and with whom to be INTIMATE. In fact, anything short of these three things incites in Him an angry love but a love which remains love.

For believers this means that His jealousy means that He is after your holiness. He is after a unique and special and always loving relationship with you and with me. Just as with your spouse, if you are married, you want—I would say more, you insist on a relationship of priority, of fidelity, of intimacy<sup>4</sup>. In fact, we are supposed to look at the ten commandments romantically! And so we might say that the jealousy of God is ANGRY LOVE, but that stays love. Love

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<sup>4</sup> Tim Keller on-line sermon, March 27 2011 *The Jealousy of God*

is “*your wish is my command.*” He says, “I’m giving myself to you—give yourself to me.”<sup>5</sup>

I don’t know—how does this make you feel about God? Does it scare you? Or does it warm your heart? When we look at the persecutions of Christians in the world today—as we did the last two Sundays, or in church history doesn’t it warm your heart to know that since God knows everything, and since He loves His people, and since He is sovereign, that if He is also a jealous God those persecutions won’t go unrewarded? Psalm 116:15 says ***Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.*** He notices. He takes note. Who knows, what angels He might dispatch and we don’t even see them?

Does it warm your heart to know that God is serious about a vibrant daily relationship with you? If you have not suffered at all yet in life this may be a little less exciting for you. But if you have seen a few setbacks, endured some hardship, suffered something being taken away from you then it warms your heart to know God cares—just as even as, and even MORE than a husband and wife feel for each other. LOVE means wanting the best for that person—it is, as Keller says “Your wish is my command”. And it means exposing yourself to high risk. You might get your heart broken in love, and God has been willing to expose Himself to that risk. And so, He feels a holy jealousy.

I’m glad we have a God who is absolutely, unapologetically, uncompromisingly, with joy excited about loving His people. Are you among His people yet? It isn’t a visible change. When you become a child of God and come to know the Lord Jesus Christ Who is God’s only Son. God’s love has gone all the way for you. Don’t you love that our faith isn’t just “moralistic therapeutic deism.” His love captures us, it rescues us, it puts up with us, it never lets us go and it never leaves us alone. He is jealous. He gets angry and insists on our perfection. He demands that He be our highest priority, that we be totally faithful to Him and that we become intimate with Him—that we let Him into every area of our lives. That is a loving God. He is the only God.

1. When I survey the wondrous cross  
On which the Prince of glory died,  
My richest gain I count but loss,  
And pour contempt on all my pride.

2. Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were a present far too small;  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

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<sup>5</sup> Keller, *Ibid.*

You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I, the Lord your God, am a **jealous** God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

El Qanah **RED,**  
**ZEALOUS**

Exodus 20:5 a



# THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

COMMUNICABLE

- BEING
- PURPOSE
- MENTAL
- MORAL
- SUMMARY

INCOMMUNICABLE

To study God's attributes is to study his character, to answer questions like, who is God? and what is God like? A typical classification of God's attributes divides them into those that are incommunicable (those that he does not share or "communicate" to anyone or anything else) and communicable (those that he shares with other beings). Like most theological classifications, this one is imperfect but still helpful as we seek to understand what is so far beyond ourselves.

God's communicable attributes can be further categorized into: attributes of God's being, mental attributes, moral attributes, attributes of purpose and "summary" attributes (attributes that, in a more particular way, modify each of the others).

It is important to consider that God is not simply the sum of his attributes. His attributes are not separate from one another, but each one modifies or qualifies each of the others.

**SUGGESTED RESOURCES:**  
*Systematic Theology* by Wayne Grudem  
*The Attributes of God* by A. W. Pink

- TRANSCENDENCE** — GOD TRANSCENDS ALL CREATION AND IS UNKNOWABLE APART FROM HIS SELF-INITIATED REVELATION.
- IMMANENCE** — GOD IS ACTIVE IN THIS WORLD AND IN OUR DAILY LIVES. GOD CARES ABOUT EVERY ASPECT OF OUR EXISTENCE AND INVITES US TO WELCOME HIS SACRIFICE, GRACE, AND LOVE.
- ASEITY** — GOD IS SELF-SUPPORTING AND SELF-SUFFICIENT AND HAS NO NEED OF HUMAN BEINGS OR THE REST OF CREATION.
- OMNIPRESENCE** — GOD HAS NO SIZE OR SHAPE AND IS PRESENT IN ALL PLACES WITH HIS ENTIRE BEING.
- UNITY** — GOD'S WHOLE BEING INCLUDES ALL OF HIS ATTRIBUTES AT ALL TIMES. THESE ATTRIBUTES ARE WITHOUT OPPOSITION.
- ETERNALITY** — GOD HAS ALWAYS EXISTED, HAVING NO BEGINNING AND NO END, AND EXPERIENCES NO SUCCESSION OF MOMENTS.
- IMMUTABILITY** — GOD CANNOT CHANGE IN HIS BEING, PERFECTIONS, PURPOSES, AND PROCESSES.
- GLORY** — THE CREATED BRIGHTNESS THAT SURROUNDS GOD'S REVELATION OF HIMSELF.
- BEAUTY** — GOD IS THE POSSESSOR AND THE SUM OF ALL DESIRABLE QUALITIES.
- BLESSEDNESS** — GOD DELIGHTS FULLY IN HIMSELF AND IN ALL THAT REFLECTS HIS CHARACTER.
- PERFECTION** — GOD FULLY POSSESSES ALL EXCELLENT QUALITIES AND LACKS NO QUALITIES THAT WOULD BE DESIRABLE FOR HIM.
- JEALOUSY** — GOD ALWAYS WANTS TO PROTECT HIS OWN HONOR.
- GOODNESS** — GOD IS THE FINAL STANDARD OF ALL GOOD, AND ALL HE IS AND DOES IS WORTHY OF APPROVAL.
- PEACE** — GOD, IN HIS BEING AND ACTIONS, IS SEPARATE FROM ALL CONFUSION AND DISORDER.
- HOLINESS** — GOD IS SEPARATED FROM SIN AND HE IS COMMITTED TO SEEKING HIS OWN HONOR.
- LOVE** — GOD ETERNALLY GIVES OF HIMSELF TO OTHERS.
- MERCY** — GOD IS GOOD TO THOSE IN MERRY AND DISTRESS AND HE IS GOOD TO THOSE WHO DESERVE PUNISHMENT.
- RIGHTEOUSNESS** — GOD IS THE FINAL STANDARD OF WHAT IS RIGHT AND HE ALWAYS ACTS IN ACCORDANCE WITH WHAT IS RIGHT. (THIS IS ALSO KNOWN AS GOD'S JUSTICE)
- WRATH** — GOD INTENSELY HATES ALL SIN.
- TRUTHFULNESS** — GOD IS THE TRUE GOD WHOSE KNOWLEDGE AND WORDS ARE BOTH TRUE AND THE FINAL STANDARD OF TRUTH.
- KNOWLEDGE** — GOD FULLY KNOWS HIMSELF AND ALL ACTUAL AND POSSIBLE THINGS. (THIS IS ALSO KNOWN AS GOD'S OMNISCIENCE)
- WISDOM** — GOD ALWAYS CHOOSES THE BEST GOALS AND THE BEST MEANS TO THOSE GOALS.
- WILL** — GOD APPROVES AND DETERMINES TO BRING ABOUT EVERY ACTION NECESSARY FOR THE EXISTENCE AND ACTIVITY OF ALL THAT EXISTS.
- FREEDOM** — GOD DOES WHATEVER HE PLEASES.
- OMNIPOTENCE** — GOD IS ABLE TO DO ALL. HIS HOLY WILL, GOD EXERCISES COMPLETE POWER OVER HIS CREATION AND RULES AS SOVEREIGN.
- INVISIBILITY** — GOD'S TOTAL ESSENCE, ALL OF HIS BEING, WILL NEVER BE VISIBLE TO US.
- SPIRITUALITY** — GOD IS A BEING WHO IS NOT MADE UP OF MATTER AND WHO CANNOT BE PERCEIVED BY OUR BODILY EYES.