

# Is God jealous?

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The Bible is clear that we should not be jealous. Let's read two examples:

“ Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy ” (Romans 13:13).

“ Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God ” (Galatians 5:19-21).

The Ten Commandments have a similar tone:

“ You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's ” (Exodus 20:17).

Jealousy thus is clearly disapproved of. However, in those very same Ten Commandments God states: “ I the Lord your God am a jealous God ” (Exodus 20:5 and Deuteronomy 5:9, see also Exodus 34:14, Deuteronomy 4:24 and Nahum 1:2). How can this be?

Being jealous of what?

When we are jealous, we usually want to possess something that belongs to someone else, or we want to be like them. For example, we want to have our neighbor’s beautiful house, or we want to be just as intelligent and athletic as our brother, or we are envious of our dearest friend’s school results. In all these cases, we are jealous of something that does not belong to us. This is not good.

The word “jealous” can also be used in a slightly different context, namely if you don’t want to share something that belongs just to you. More specifically, the Bible uses this word to express the feelings of a husband when his wife commits adultery (see Numbers 5:11-31).

God nowhere tells a husband that he should be willing to “share” his wife. On the contrary, a husband and wife “belong” exclusively to each other. Therefore, it is right for a husband to be “jealous” of his wife and to claim her just for himself.

God is like a jealous husband

It is in this latter sense that God is jealous. The statements about God being “ a jealous God ” are made in the context of Israel worshiping other gods. God is the only real God . Moreover, He is the Creator of all humanity. Therefore, He deserves our exclusive devotion.

This is like a fundamental law: “ Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might ” (Deuteronomy 6:4-5). “ Is not He your Father, who created you, who made you and established you? ” (Deuteronomy 32:6). But despite God’s clear commandments to serve Him alone, the Israelites “ moved Him to jealousy with their idols ” (Psalm 78:58).

In many verses throughout the Bible, God presents Himself as the husband of His people. For example, in Jeremiah 31:32, where God speaks about the covenant that He made with the people of Israel. The Israelites broke that covenant repeatedly, “though I was their husband, declares the Lord” .

Therefore, He accuses Israel of adultery: “ Surely, as a treacherous wife leaves her husband, so have you been treacherous to Me, O house of Israel, declares the Lord ” (Jeremiah 3:20). This made God very angry, and He punished the Israelites by sending them into exile . But He also promised to restore the relationship. God is indeed an extremely faithful and loving Husband!

The church is like a bride

In the same way, we read in the New Testament how the worldwide church is the bride of Christ (e.g. Revelation 19:6-8). Jesus Christ has saved them and provides for them, so He deserves their full devotion. As the apostle Paul writes to the church of Corinth: “ I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to

present you as a pure virgin to Christ ” (2 Corinthians 11:2).

Believers should never be unfaithful to their “bridegroom” by idolatry or a sinful lifestyle. They should stand firm in the faith so that they can one day stand pure and blameless before Him.

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