

Broomfield



# PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH MINISTRY OF THE WORD

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## Our God Reigneth, Part 4

### God is Jealous

One of the more difficult attributes of God to explain or grasp is His jealousy. I recall years ago leading a Bible study and teaching this characteristic about God. Then during Christmas break one of the members of the study went home and explained to his mom what he was learning. When she heard him mention that God was a jealous God, in shock she denied it saying, “God could never be jealous! Your teacher's wrong.”

Well brothers and sisters, God is a jealous God.

Exodus 34:14, “For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.”

Nahum 1:2, “God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies.”

Zechariah 8:1-2, “Again the word of the LORD of hosts came to me, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I was jealous for her with great fury.”

Indeed, indeed, God is jealous! Yet what does that mean?

The word *jealous* simply denotes a strong desire to possess something. When used of man, it most often is a bad thing.<sup>1</sup> Jealousy occurs in our lives when we act as if we deserve that which we desire. Then when someone else has what we want, the resulting emotion is jealousy.

When it comes to God, the Lord never desires anything that He doesn't deserve!

Revelation 4:11, “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”

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<sup>1</sup> The term is often confused with envy and covetousness. *Jealous* is from the term *zealous*. The Bible instructs us to be zealous in good things. God is always zealous for good, whereas man often zealously covets. Compare also 2 Corinthians 11:2.

This passage addresses what theologians call, "Creator rights!" Because God created us, He alone has the right to receive our worship. When we fail to give Him what He deserves, He rightly acts with the strong desire to receive it. This is what is meant in Scripture when it says that God is jealous.

Isaiah 42:8, "I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images."

Because God is the creator and Lord, He will not share His glory with another. And thus we read this:

Deuteronomy 32:15-16, "But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation. They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they him to anger."

Here God's redeemed people are offering their worship to a false god. Now because God alone deserves their worship, the text says that "...they made Him jealous with strange gods..." Notice further:

Ezekiel 39:25," 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."

Ezekiel 39:27-28, "**When I have brought them again from the people, and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations; Then shall they know that I am the LORD their God,** which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there."

In other words, God's desire is that His name be holy among the nations. And God would bring back the exiles on account of His strong desire to have His name honored.

From these passages I hope you see that God's glory and honor are always at stake in everything we do. How we live and what we allow our minds to think on will either glorify God or dishonor Him. There is no neutral ground. And what occurs in our lives always relates NOT necessarily to our happiness or fulfillment, well-being, or success as business men and women, BUT always to the honor and glory of God. And thus not surprisingly in and through all things, God is working to manifest His glory, demonstrate His love and compassion, and exalt His Christ. For "our God, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God" (Exodus 34:14)!

## **The Philistines Vacillate**

Our passage evidences this jealousy.

On account of Israel's refusal to follow the Lord, God disciplined His people by allowing the Philistines not only to conquer Israel but also to capture the most important religious article in Judaism at the time, the symbol of His love for His people, the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord our God!

Now the Philistines concluded from this that Yahweh was weak! They believed that the God of the Jews was no god at all! And that Dagon and Baal truly were the most powerful gods!

Accordingly as the King of kings and Lord of lords<sup>2</sup>, a glorious<sup>3</sup> and victorious warrior<sup>4</sup> God so orchestrated the events of our passage to show that He alone is God!

1 Samuel 6:6, “Wherefore then do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? when he had wrought wonderfully among them, did they not let the people go, and they departed?”

Here the local Canaanite priests speak to the Philistines. From this narrative we see that it is clear that the Philistines have had enough. And that they have suffered seven long months under the wrath of God such that they are brought here to their knees. After all they asked these same priests this: “Tell us how we shall send it to its place?” (1 Samuel 6:2).

So in verse 3-5 these priests explain to them the importance of a guilt offering when it comes to violating the word of Yahweh. And just when you think that the Philistine trek of the Ark of the Covenant is over, we read that they chide the Philistines for hardening their hearts “as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts” (1 Samuel 6:6).

Evidently not all the Philistines were convinced. There still were some who refused to bow the knee to Yahweh! And so while the text doesn't say it, it reveals that there was much confusion/debate in the camp of the Philistines as to the source of the current plague. A growing number believed it was of Yahweh.<sup>5</sup> But there obviously remained enough skeptics to warrant the rebuke of verse 6.<sup>6</sup>

In fact we might ask “Why? Why would any doubt the source of the plague? Isn't it obvious from the movement of the Ark and the thousands who have died?”

Now we could provide a number of answers to this. First, to give the Ark back to Israel would be a moral victory for the people of God. Regardless of how many Jews died on the field of battle in 1 Samuel 4 and how superior the Philistines fought to hand back the Ark was to assert the dominance of Israel's God and thus Israel — and this was something that no Philistine would want to do! And so some Philistines hesitate. They ask if it is possible that this plague has hit us by chance!

Perhaps another reason revolved around National Pride. There is no question that the victory at Ebenezer aroused the thought that the Philistines did that which the Egyptians could not- they conquered the God of the Jews. This is significant. Recall, when the Philistines migrated from Crete, their first attempt at conquest was against the Egyptians. Yet they were beaten back. And so with tails tucked they came to Canaan. And thus on the eve of the Massacre of Ebenezer the Philistines rightly quaked. “Woe to us! Who shall deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods? These are the gods who smote the Egyptians with all kinds of plagues in the wilderness” (1 Samuel 4:8 NASB). But then they proved victorious, and the thought no doubt was circulated: We are indeed more powerful than the Egyptians! The God of the Jews conquered Egypt; yet we have massacred His people and captured the closest thing to His image — the Ark of the Covenant! And thus to give the Ark back in this context would be to proclaim the

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<sup>2</sup> Compare 1 Samuel 5:1-5

<sup>3</sup> Compare 1 Samuel 5:6-12

<sup>4</sup> Compare 1 Samuel 6:1-5

<sup>5</sup> This is obvious for in 1 Sam. 5:6-10 different Philistine lords attribute the plague to the ark- yet they obviously were not the majority. Then in 5:11 the suggestion is made to send the ark away; but the majority obviously didn't concede. Then in 6:1 the suggestion is made to give the ark back, and this time an apparent majority ruled- otherwise they wouldn't have had the conversation of 1 Sam. 6:1-5.

<sup>6</sup> Josephus references the argument that occurred among the Philistines (*The Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 5, Chapter 10, 2).

superiority of Egypt over the Philistines — again something no Philistine would ever want.

And yet I realize that all of this is conjecture. We do not know the specific reason why some doubted and so resisted the returning of the Ark! However, as our passage references Pharaoh and the Egyptians<sup>7</sup> there is no doubt as to the ultimate cause. While Pharaoh indeed hardened his own heart<sup>8</sup> nevertheless we also know that God was sovereign over this “hardening.”

Exodus 9:12, “And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had spoken unto Moses.”

Why did God do this?

He did it so that God alone might be shown to be God.<sup>9</sup>

Exodus 9:14, “For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth.”

Exodus 14:17-18, “And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them: and I will get me honour upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gotten me honour upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen.”

And so based on this text's allusion to the Exodus, we conclude here that in His providence, God set another stage/created another platform on which to be vindicated! And that leads to the test.

## The Test

1 Samuel 6:7, “Now therefore make a new cart, and take two milch kine, on which there hath come no yoke, and tie the kine to the cart, and bring their calves home from them.”

Let's understand the elements here. First they were to “prepare a new cart” — i.e., one that had never been defiled by common use or a profane purpose. They indeed must treat the Ark as holy!

Second they were to take “two milch cows”- i.e., ones that had just calved and were nursing the calves. In other words we have new mother cows.

Third the two cows were to be ones “which... had never been yoked [before]” — i.e., they were to be completely unfamiliar with a yoke and its purpose — that of plowing. See, the priests didn't want cows which, regardless of instinct, had been trained to pull a plow in a straight line. They wanted “wild” cows when it came to the field — ones who had been free from human interference.<sup>10</sup>

Finally, they were to “hitch the cows to the cart and take their calves home, away from them.”

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<sup>7</sup> Compare 1 Samuel 6:6

<sup>8</sup> Compare Exodus 8:15, 32; 9:34

<sup>9</sup> Compare also Exodus 10:1-2; Exodus 14:8

<sup>10</sup> Some commentators suggest that having never known a yoke, the animals also would be qualified in a Jewish context for sacrifice (cf. Numbers 19:2; Deuteronomy 21:3). The problem is that if this was the rationale, the moment the Philistines placed the yoke on the cows they would have been disqualified for sacrifice.

What a test!

It is bad enough to place a yoke upon a cow that has never known one — this reputedly would be a difficult thing. But then to take two new mothers, yoke them up, and then take their young from them — this has the makings for war in the animal kingdom!

But that's the point! See, the priests here are stacking the deck. They have devised a scenario where two impossible situations would be fused into one. Walter Brueggemann would add this:

“This final test of Yahweh's free initiative is intensified and made more difficult by the Philistines, because the cows that draw the cart, presumably in obedience to Yahweh, must leave their calves (v. 7). The text thus requires Yahweh to preempt the more 'natural' attachment of the cows to their calves and lead them away from their calves toward Israel. The planning of the Philistines is indeed careful and cunning and sets very long odds...”<sup>11</sup>

One can just imagine the approving smiles of the Philistine doubters.

1 Samuel 6:8, “And take the ark of the LORD, and lay it upon the cart; and put the jewels of gold, which ye return him for a trespass offering, in a coffer by the side thereof; and send it away, that it may go.”

The offering was not to go inside the ark, but fastened to its side in a 'pouch' or 'box'. And the phrase, “send it away” is reminiscent of the Exodus where the Pharaoh “sent God's people away.” So on this new and no doubt shaking cart — as it was being moved, pulled, and tugged this way and that as the mother cows were protesting both the yoke and the removal of their calves — the Ark and the offerings were to be placed! And then we read this, “that it may go.” In other words, don't lead or push the cart; just let the animals go where they will!

Now brothers and sisters there is no doubt as to what these “dumb” cows would do outside of divine intervention. They would make a bee-line to their young! For they do not know about plowing, the goad — the large spear with a metal tip which would be thrust into their hind-quarters if they did not walk straight way — or the yoke which restricts movement and direction. They are frightened and driven by the instinct to protect their young — which brings us to the formal test.

1 Samuel 6:9, “And see, if it goeth up by the way of his own coast to Bethshemesh, then he [Yahweh] hath done us this great evil: but if not, then we shall know that it is not his hand that smote us: it was a chance that happened to us.”

Here we see the parameters of the test. Before the mother cows is, to them, the unknown land of Israel — specifically the territory of Bethshemesh.<sup>12</sup>

Behind the cows are their young — bawling for help. If these beasts tuck tail and run toward their young, then the conclusion is that the arrival of the plague — which occurred at the same time as the capturing of the ark — was simply a coincidence. But if on the other hand, the cows do the unthinkable — if they go

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<sup>11</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, page 41.

<sup>12</sup> This city was 12 to 14 miles west of Jerusalem (depending on the commentary) and was a boarder city on the edge of Israel right next to the land of the Philistines. It was listed among the priestly cities (cf. Joshua 21:13-16; 1 Chronicles 6:57-59) and so was an appropriate place for the Ark.

straight away to the land of Israel without arguing and without second guessing, if they ignore the lowing of their young and their own maternal instincts — then it will be obvious that not only the course of these cows, but the plague had a divine source — for the Yahweh obviously wanted back His ark. Robert Gordon explains it this way:

“Since natural instinct would incline the cows to head back home to their offspring, the logic of this scheme was that only a strong impulse from a superior power would send them off in the direction of Bethshemesh... If that happened the Philistines' miseries could confidently be attributed to the Israelites' God.”<sup>13</sup>

Such was the purpose of the test in our passage! <sup>14</sup> God in His jealousy wanted the worship of NOT just the majority of the Philistines BUT the entire population — all doubters must bow the knee before Yahweh!

## The Vindication

And that brings us to the vindication.

1 Samuel 6:10-11, “And the men did so; and took two milch kine, and tied them to the cart, and shut up their calves at home: And they laid the ark of the LORD upon the cart, and the coffer with the mice of gold and the images of their emerods.”

The idea here is that wherever the farm was from which they got the cows, the young were “imprisoned” in the stable while their mothers were yoked and sent away. And the Philistines did exactly what was suggested by the priests.

- The mother cows were hooked up to a cart.
- Their calves were removed from them and “imprisoned” in a stable.
- And upon the cart were placed the Ark, and the golden mice and the golden tumors.

Now again we must see this account as the audience of a play. Can you imagine the situation? [Narrate

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<sup>13</sup> Robert L. Gordon, *I & II Samuel*, page 101.

<sup>14</sup> This passage reminds us of other times in redemptive history when God made an impossible situation even harder in order that all might know that He is God. For example, recall the competition between Elijah and the 450 prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18:20ff. Both were to present a sacrifice to their god/God, and whichever god/God consumed the offering with fire from heaven, that would be hailed as the true God. If you read the account you know that the odds were stacked against Yahweh...

a. Not only was Baal the god of lightning and therefore the god of fire- which meant that this challenge was in the realm of his specialty.

b. But listen to what Elijah does...

1 Kings 18:33-35: “Then he arranged the wood and cut the ox in pieces and laid it on the wood. And he said, 'Fill four pitchers with water and pour it on the burnt offering and on the wood.' And he said, 'Do it a second time,' and they did it a second time. And he said, 'Do it a third time,' and they did it a third time. And the water flowed around the altar, and he also filled the trench with water.”

Why did Elijah add water? To impede the lighting of the sacrifice! And so, not only would Baal have dry wood to light, but Yahweh would have to light wet wood! Truly if Yahweh could do this, He alone is God!

the scene and include the following]

- Two cows no doubt frightened by a yoke.
- Two calves lowing for help as they have been severed from their mothers.
- Two milch cows burdened by the separation and therefore impassioned to protect their young.
- And yet in the midst of this chaos when all had been set in place we read this:

1 Samuel 6:12, “And the kine took the straight way to the way of Bethshemesh, and went along the highway, lowing as they went, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left; and the lords of the Philistines went after them unto the border of Bethshemesh.”

: Against their own nature, even in the midst of their own protests (the mother cows are said to be lowing), and no doubt frightened and bewildered at the yoke, amazingly the cows did not turn aside to the right or to the left but they walked straight away from their offspring and from their home into the heart of Bethshemesh!

You can just imagine the awe that must have been felt by all watching... Indeed, GOD HAD VINDICATED HIS NAME! One man put it this way:

“The lowing... indicates that the cows themselves seemed to be under an unnatural force. They are being driven, in distress, on a journey they cannot resist. They were lowing for their calves, but not heading toward them!”<sup>15</sup>

And so just like at the time of the Exodus and the Pharaoh, God orchestrated the events in our text to demonstrate that He alone is God — that He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. He is Glorious. He is Victorious. And He alone Reigneth!

And why?

Because He is a Jealous God!

### **To the non-believer**

When the question was raised, “To whom ought we to attribute the plague: God or chance?” The Lord answered definitively in this passage, “I will not give my glory to another!” Not to Baal, Dagon, the gods of the Egyptians, chance or any other thing in this world!

And brothers and sisters, this helps to explain the workings of God in this world. When it comes to God's dealings with the non-Christian we read this:

Romans 9:17, “For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.”

Do you see it? From this we extrapolate that everything that God is doing in this fallen world from tsunamis and terrorist attacks, to wars, famine, sickness, and disease, all that is occurring has been ordained that God's invisible attributes might be manifested to the entire earth!

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<sup>15</sup> Robert Rayburn's unpublished work on 1 Samuel.

How much more must you witness before you bow the knee?

Either you can bow the knee this day willingly. Or you can bow the knee someday being forced to do so. Choose for yourselves today whom you will serve?

## **To the Christian**

Why does God do the things that He does in our lives? Why do we suffer hardship and trial? Why did God allow His people to suffer so greatly under the Philistines?

1 Timothy 1:16-17, “Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

All that God is doing in your life is for the purpose of manifesting His grace in Christ!

- The failed dreams.
- Our struggle for holiness.
- The lost job.
- The difficult marriage.
- The trial.
- The tragedy.

All of it is designed to proclaim one thing: The beauty and majesty of God!

You question, “How do the struggles in my life grant me a greater glimpse of God's grace?”

We could answer this from a variety of angles, but let me give you just one.

When the trials and difficulties come in our life on account of this sinful world in which we live. We reach the breaking point, clench our fists, and look up to God and demand to know why. We want to know where God's mercy is. We think that we would be better off without God.

However, after a season we come to realize that we have received what we deserve on account of our sin. Evil is not a substance that God created but the willful act of rebellion on the part of free moral agents against God. The fallen world in which we live exists because of our rebellion. We see that though we have been saved by grace, nevertheless we still can be found attacking God. We see that through it all He still responds in perfect patience! We are brought to our knees in love and appreciation for a God who has loved us so greatly!

This is why we read of the holy angels watching us and learning about God's grace. Speaking as to why God has left His people in this world — speaking of one of the goals of the gospel ministry — Paul said that it was “To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God” (Ephesians 3:10).

And thus in and through all things we see that God is working toward one end: The Exaltation of Christ!

Romans 9:22-24, “What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?”

Truly, as man's chief end is “to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever” so also is God's chief end: TO GLORIFY AND ENJOY HIMSELF FOREVER!

And because He is jealous for this glory, He has ordained all things in your life and this fallen world that it might serve this end!

Now in this form I realize that some of you may not like this. It truly is a chunk of meat very difficult to chew! So let me shift gears and speak about God's Jealousy from another angle.

I want you to imagine that the Lord who died for you approached you in a vision (which of course He never would on account of the finished word, 2 Pet. 1:16-19). After touching you and so strengthening you that you might stand in His presence, He says, “Child of God whom I love, I have a special calling for you. In fact, no one in all the world has been so equipped. From the choice of your parents to that time in 2nd grade when you were caught for stealing I have prepared you for this sole purpose. Will you allow Me — for the sake of my glory and your relationship with Me — this day to have a red light prevent you from getting to work on time? Will you allow me to have your car break down when you just paid it off? Will you allow me to have your health, such that you are bed-ridden for years and unable to go where you please? Will you give one of your children that they might sing and dance in my presence? Will you give your spouse or parent? Will you give your marriage?”

Now, I dare say that with Isaiah you'd respond with, “Here am I! Send me!” You would say with Paul, “I pour my life out to you as a drink offering!” With Isaac you'd say, “Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?” With Christ you'd say, “Not as I will, but Thy will be done!”

Because God is a Jealous God He is going to orchestrate all things in our lives that we might come to a greater appreciation for Him. He is working to release our feeble claims on life. He is drawing us to fall in love with His grace. He desires that each of us bow down in each and every circumstance of life and kiss His hand!

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## **About the Preacher**

Greg Thurston preached this sermon on December 11, 2005. Greg is the Preacher at Broomfield Presbyterian Church.