

# Godly Jealousy

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Good afternoon, everyone. It's nice to see you all back together this Sabbath. I'd like to give a warm greeting to all of you out there who are hearing this on the call-in line, or watching this service on a DVD or off the website later. I hope you're having a good Sabbath!

Brethren, by way of introduction today, I'd like you to imagine a scenario. Imagine that you're having a conversation with a friend, someone well-known to you, but this friend is telling you about someone they know—someone they work with, or an acquaintance they have—but it's not somebody you know. In the course of the conversation, your friend says something like this: This guy I'm telling you about, I'd have to say he's a rather jealous person; in fact, I'd say that he has so much jealousy, you could probably say his name is Jealous.

If you were to hear a phrase like that, how would you picture this individual in your mind? I'm willing to bet, if you're like me, the picture that comes to mind is someone who is consumed with envy; you're probably imagining someone who is very selfish and self-centered, or immature, and he may even be an angry or bitter kind of person. So you probably have a very negative picture of what this individual would seem like, and honestly, that's how he would seem to me as well.

Ironically, though, this same terminology the Bible uses to describe God Himself. In fact, if you look in the New King James translation of the Bible, you'll find that the word "jealous" is used particularly to describe God nine different times. It is also true that the word "jealousy" is used fifteen different times to refer directly to God. The Bible also even says, at least one time, referring directly to God, "*the LORD, whose name is Jealous*". Now, again, that's something we would normally never associate with God because when we think of the words jealous or jealousy, we have this very negative, carnal picture in our minds. Yet the Bible also uses this terminology to refer to God.

What we're going to do today is look at this particular subject and understand what the Bible means when it refers to God as being jealous or having jealousy, and understand the differences between this and what we think of as carnal envy, but also learn a very important lesson about what this tells us, not only about God's character, but about our relationship with Him. If you would like a title for this sermon it's:

## Godly Jealousy

When we think of terms such as jealous, or jealousy, we can get a very negative picture in our minds; we're picturing someone with envy—a very negative, carnal person—it's not something we would associate with God at all. So let's first of all draw a distinction

between what the Bible refers to as envy (or carnal jealousy, as we think of it) and what it means when it's referring to God with these English words, because, as we're going to find, the Hebrew and Greek words sometimes are different, so let's understand the difference in the meanings here.

Turn over to James, chapter 3; we're going to start looking at what the Bible tells us about envy. Again, the typical picture we have in our minds when we're thinking of someone being jealous or having jealousy, is we're thinking of envy.

**James 3:13** *Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom.*

14) *But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth.*

15) *This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic.*

16) *For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. (NKJV)*

As we can see, this paints a very negative picture. When it talks about envy, it directly associates it with self-seeking, with selfishness; if you think about the concept of envy (what we're normally referring to when we use that term) you might imagine a person (even oneself), who is wanting something someone else has; maybe it's a possession they have, like a nicer house, or a nicer car, or they have a better job, or maybe we're jealous of the spouse—the wife or the husband they've got—and in our mind we feel like, I deserve that more; they got it but I was more deserving of it, and that should have been mine; they shouldn't have gotten it, I should have gotten it.

So it's a selfish desire to take what that person has because I deserved it more, when, actually, it's really rightfully theirs because they rightfully have it or own it, but we feel we are more deserving. So we have this selfish, carnal desire—we want to take it away from them. Again, that's an important distinction when we start distinguishing between envy or carnal jealousy that human beings have, versus what the Bible is referring to as God being jealous.

As we see in these verses in James, this is a very negative, carnal, destructive thing, the envy being described here, and this is not only poisonous to our spiritual and mental health, it can be downright poisonous to our physical health as well. To briefly make note of that, turn over to Proverbs, chapter 14; we're going to read verse 30.

**Proverbs 14:30** *A sound heart is life to the body, but envy is rottenness to the bones. (NKJV)*

Notice, it's a very destructive thing; it's not only damaging to a person's mental and spiritual health, it would be downright damaging to their physical health as well—just a very negative thing. In fact, we'll see that the Bible describes this as literally the exact opposite of God's mind and character. This quality, what we're referring to here as envy, is not something we would associate with God at all, because it's literally on the

list of characteristics that are the exact, polar opposite of the mind of God. So if you'll turn over to Galatians, chapter 5, what we have here is the list of the works of the flesh.

**Galatians 5:19** *Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, 20) idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21) envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (NKJV)*

It makes it very clear that these are the qualities that are not going to be even acceptable in God's sight, will not be a part of His Kingdom—they are the exact opposite of His mind. We won't continue reading here, but if you read the next couple of verses, it contrasts these qualities with the characteristics of God's character, and the fruits of the Spirit, which are the polar opposite.

As I mentioned, one of the things to notice here is the selfish quality of it. Let me share with you the meaning of the Greek word that is translated as *envy* in the verses we just read. It's transliterated into English as *phthonos*; it's Strong's #5355, and according to The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament, by Spiros Zodhiates, here is how it's defined: *envy, jealousy, pain-filled malignity, conceived at the sight of excellence or happiness; it is incapable of good and always is used in an evil meaning.* In other words, there's nothing good or positive about this definition, and notice how it talks about pain at the sight of seeing excellence or success, because what it is, again, is a selfish desire to take; we see someone else who's been successful, who's been blessed with some possession or job or honor—something good—and we feel that it should have been ours—I deserved it better than they did and I should have received it, not them. So it's this selfish desire to take what they have. That's why it can be painful to see excellence or good because the other got the good, and I should have had the good, so we want to selfishly take it.

The reason I'm pointing this out is we need to understand, when we think of the difference between what the Bible refers to as jealousy or envy, in regards to carnal human beings, versus the jealousy, or being jealous, as it refers to as God, there is an important distinction here. This whole concept of selfishly desiring what is rightfully someone else's and wanting to take it—this is not a concept that would even really apply to God, by definition. The reason is, there's nothing that's not rightfully God's. He owns everything. He is the supreme power in the universe, He's the source of everything, so He can rightfully say everything is His. So the every idea, that, well, they have something, and they shouldn't have gotten it, and I want to take it—this, by definition, wouldn't even apply to God. So just notice, in Exodus 19, that God is rightfully the owner of literally everything. The context of the story here is when God is telling Moses that He wants to make a covenant with Israel and make them His chosen nation. In discussing this, in verse 5, He makes this comment:

**Exodus 19:5** *Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine.* (NKJV)

Notice that He's promising in this covenant, if you obey Me, and you follow the rules that I lay out for you, I'm going to bless you; I'm going to rain down blessing on you and make life very good for you and give you all these wonderful things. He's basically saying, I can give you all this because it's Mine—because I own it all and I can rightfully give it to whoever I want to, because all the earth is Mine. He's saying He owns everything. Now realize, when we understand this concept, this isn't just about the natural resources, you might say, of the earth; this includes the people, this includes everything. Turn over to Psalm, chapter 24, and we'll see this.

**Psalm 24:1** *The earth is the LORD's, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein [the people as well].*

2) *For He has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the waters.*  
(NKJV)

So again, it's not just an issue of the wealth, you might say, or the physical resources of the earth; it says, we are His as well—the people—everything belongs to Him. And not just the physical creation, but the spirit realm as well. Of course, God and Jesus Christ have always existed, They are eternal, They had no beginning, They'll have no end, but They then created all the angelic world and everything else, so He can say He's the originator of all of this. Even if you look at positions, in terms of authority, God and Jesus Christ are, as Christ told us, one; They are one in mind and in nature and in character; as Christ said, if you've seen Me, you've seen the Father. They act and think the same. They are not equal in authority. As Christ said Himself, My Father is greater than I, and that didn't just apply because He was a physical human being; even after He is resurrected and back to being a God being, He says numerous times that the Father is His God.

You never see the Bible refer to the idea that God the Father looks at Christ as His God—Christ is His servant, so you see this superior-subordinate relationship that you can demonstrate, from Genesis all the way to Revelation. Sometimes people want to debate that issue, but that is something you can clearly prove from Genesis to Revelation. That has always been the case and that will always be the case. My point in this is, even though Jesus Christ has unique roles, that are separate from the Father, how did He receive those roles? As Christ even said, the Father appointed Him to sit at His right hand—He has given all authority to Me—the Father delegated this to Him.

My point is there is nothing that the Father could inappropriately want to take from someone else that is not rightly His. That concept just simply wouldn't exist because, again, He is the ultimate authority in the universe; He's responsible for the creation of most everything, and even in the case of Christ, He still delegates authority to Him, so Christ has the roles that the Father has appointed to Him, so, again, the concept just wouldn't even apply, of Him wanting to selfishly take from someone else. That's an

important distinction when we look at jealousy as it applies to God, versus jealousy or envy, which is a carnal quality that applies to human beings.

As I mentioned before, when we typically think of someone being jealous or having jealousy, we're thinking of a very negative, carnal quality, and we generally don't ever, even in our minds, tend to associate God with that because of the negative context. However, the Bible does directly refer to godly jealousy. The title I gave you I took right out of one of Paul's writings, so let's turn there, to 2 Corinthians, chapter 11, and you'll see I lifted my title right from Paul's own statements.

**2 Corinthians 11:1** *Oh, that you would bear with me in a little folly—and indeed you do bear with me.*

2) *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.* (NKJV)

Again, we normally don't think of jealousy as a godly quality. We normally think of that as the opposite, and carnal envy is, but we have to understand what's being referred to here. Notice here that Paul says there is such a thing as godly jealousy. In fact, Paul also makes the comment that God Himself can be provoked to jealousy. So let's turn over to 1 Corinthians, chapter 10, and notice that. We'll start reading in verse 20.

**1 Corinthian 10:20** *... the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons.*

21) *You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons.*

22) *Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?* (NKJV)

Notice he's directly talking about God being provoked to jealousy, and again, what we typically associate with the English word, jealousy, we think, no, God wouldn't be jealous, that wouldn't be something He would do. So we have to understand what He's referring to here. As I mentioned, the whole concept of selfishly desiring what is rightly someone else's and wanting to take it away, this is not a concept that would even, by definition, apply to God.

When the Bible refers to God being jealous or having jealousy, it's specifically in the context of violations of the first and second commandments. The first commandment, you shall have no other gods before Me, and the second commandment, you shall have no graven images nor bow down to them—both of these are getting at a similar concept; it's basically not giving God the Father the respect and the deference that He deserves, not putting Him as number one, as a priority, and it's basically looking to something else, like replacing him, in one way or another, with some kind of substitute, and honoring something else more than Him—that is basically what this gets down to. And Him having a problem with that is not Him selfishly wanting to take what belongs to someone else—no, He rightfully deserves that respect and that honor. One of the big lessons in all of this is that it is extremely important to Him that He be honored in that role; He does not consider this negotiable. He absolutely demands that He be first in

our lives, and that we show Him that proper respect. You'll notice in the context when we're going to look at a few examples in just a moment, when we look at God being referred to as jealous, or having jealousy, you're going to notice it's always in the context of violations of the first and second commandment. It's basically taking away the respect and honor that He deserves and giving it to someone or something else. To notice some examples of this, turn over to Deuteronomy, chapter 6, and we'll start in verse 10.

**Deuteronomy 6:10** *“So it shall be, when the LORD your God brings you into the land of which He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give you large and beautiful cities which you did not build,*

*11) houses full of all good things, which you did not fill, hewn-out wells which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant—when you have eaten and are full—*

*12) then beware, lest you forget the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.*

*13) You shall fear the LORD your God and serve Him, and shall take oaths in His name.*

*14) You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are all around you*

*15) (for the LORD your God is a jealous God among you), lest the anger of the LORD your God be aroused against you and destroy you from the face of the earth. (NKJV)*

Notice we're talking about direct violations of the first commandment. He's saying, when you go in and take over the other nations, don't be looking to their gods; don't be giving them credit for what God the Father did for them. He's saying, I did all this, I brought you out of Egypt, I gave you all of this, and don't get in here and get comfortable, and then start getting distracted and looking at other gods and giving them honor for what I did for you. So you can see it's very important to Him that He be honored in His rightful role. There is nothing selfish or envious about this, He's simply demanding that we show Him the proper respect, and, as we're going to see as we go through this sermon, this is one of the big takeaways in this whole concept. As I like to put it in colloquial language, rule number one is not negotiable, in other words, the first commandment—you shall have no other gods before Me—He is very serious about that and He does not negotiate it, in fact, He absolutely insists on it, and we're going to see a lot of examples of that. But notice, this is an example, as I said earlier, where jealous is mentioned in context of violations of the first commandment. You also see it specifically mentioned in violations of the second commandment. Turn over to Exodus, chapter 20, and we'll start reading in verse 4.

**Exodus 20:4** *You shall not make for yourself a carved image—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;*

5) *you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me,*  
6) *but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. (NKJV)*

Here we're talking about the second commandment, which, again, is specifically about idolatry or making images to worship, but again, we're getting at the same core concept of not showing God the proper respect and honor that He deserves, and funneling that in some other direction, taking something else and placing that honor and devotion to that rather than to Him. I want you to notice just how serious He is about this. There's an interesting example we're going to look at here in Deuteronomy 4 that tells you just how strongly He feels about this issue of idolatry. In the context of Deuteronomy, chapters 4 and 5, you'll see a lot of this is Moses recounting the story of the Mount Sinai covenant and all the events that took place there.

**Deuteronomy 4:15** *"Take careful heed to yourselves, for you saw no form when the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire, (NKJV)*

Now take note of this verse; we're going to come back to this concept. He's talking about when God spoke the ten commandments from Mount Sinai. Moses is making a big point here that Israel saw nothing—you saw the flames of the fire, you heard a loud voice, but you saw no kind of visual representation. Verse 16 tells us why.

16) *lest you act corruptly and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of any figure: the likeness of male or female,*  
17) *the likeness of any animal that is on the earth or the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the air,*  
18) *the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground or the likeness of any fish that is in the water beneath the earth.*  
19) *And take heed, lest you lift your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven, you feel driven to worship them and serve them, which the LORD your God has given to all the peoples under the whole heaven as a heritage.*  
20) *But the LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be His people, an inheritance, as you are this day.*  
21) *Furthermore the LORD was angry with me for your sakes, and swore that I would not cross over the Jordan, and that I would not enter the good land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance.*  
22) *But I must die in this land, I must not cross over the Jordan; but you shall cross over and possess that good land.*  
23) *Take heed to yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of the LORD your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of anything which the LORD your God has forbidden you.*  
24) *For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God. (NKJV)*

Now notice here we're talking about God being jealous, and once again it's in the context of violations of the first and second commandment. I think this really states just how strongly He feels about the whole issue of idolatry. When God spoke the ten commandments at Mount Sinai, what the Israelites saw was fire at the top of a mountain, they heard a booming voice, and they saw no form—no visual representation at all of God. The Bible states in numerous places, very dogmatically, that no human being can see the face of God the Father and live to tell the story. That's very well documented in multiple scriptures. However, we also have to consider the example we see in Acts chapter 7. I'm not going to turn there; it's a very famous story, the stoning of Stephen. At the end of Stephen's life, when he's about to die because they're actively killing him, he makes the statement, "I see God and Jesus Christ standing next to Him." The narrative that Luke writes there makes a similar statement, and then Stephen makes the same statement as well. We can't debate who he's saying he sees; we can't ask, is it one or the other; it clearly says, "I see God and Christ next to Him." The narrative and Stephen's statements agree exactly. He's saying he sees both of Them.

Obviously, as I just mentioned, there are numerous scriptures that tell us no human being can see the face of God the Father and live to tell the story. So we know whatever Stephen saw, he's not seeing the face and detail of God the Father; again, that's not possible, and the Bible clearly says that. Obviously this has to mean, though, he saw some kind of visionary image, some kind of visual representation, of God the Father. We don't know exactly what he saw here, but it's the only way you can reconcile those scriptures. He obviously saw something and was inspired to understand that it was a representation of God the Father.

Now, think about this in this context, of what we just read in Deuteronomy 4, because he specifically says, God didn't allow you to see anything, because you would have made an image out of it. Well, let's just follow the scenario of what if He had allowed them to see something similar to what He allowed Stephen to see, and they see some sort of visual representation, and they make an image out of it. Now, understand this in the context—they're not making an image of Buddha, or Dagon, or a calf, or the sun and the moon, they're making an image of whatever it is that God Himself would choose to let them see, and He forbids even that. He knows what they would have done with this, because, from their idolatrous background, they would have made this image, and it would have become a replacement.

If you look at their history of how they handled the Ark of the Covenant, you can see the mindset of what can happen here; God did tell them exactly how to make the Ark of the Covenant—He gave them specific instructions and they made it. He told them how to use it. But there were also times in Israel's history, where they got it into their heads, hey, as long as we've got the Ark with us, we can't lose the battle! It doesn't matter whether or not we're exactly following God's instructions and doing what He tells us, because we've got this great Ark with us, and as long as we've got this we just can't lose. Well, the Ark got captured, and they had to learn it didn't work that way because they'd made an idol out of it. That's what this would have led to, why God said, no, I'm not going to allow them to see anything. I think it teaches us an important lesson of how



He looks at idolatry and how strongly He feels about it, because, again, if they had made an image of what He could have shown them as a representation of Him, they would have essentially made an image of Him, which would have become a replacement, and the honor and respect that should have come to Him, well, they would have started treating him like a trinket, like they did the Ark. He didn't want that, and He forbade that. He demands that the respect and honor belong to Him, in relationship with Him. This tells you how important this is to Him.

To further distinguish this, I'd like to share with you the meaning of the Hebrew word for jealous that has been in all the scriptures that we've read so far, and the one we're about to go to here in a minute. Now understand this is not the only Hebrew word that is translated as jealous in English; there is more than one, but the meaning here gives you a good picture of what this is referring to when the Bible refers to God as being jealous. The word used here in all the examples I've mentioned so far in the Old Testament (including in Deuteronomy 4) is transliterated as *qanna* and is Strong's #7067, and, according to The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the Old Testament, by Warren Baker and Eugene Carpenter, here's how it's defined: *An attitude meaning jealous; in every instance of this word, it is used to describe the character of the LORD. He is a jealous God who will not tolerate the worship of other gods. This word is always used to describe God's attitude towards the worship of false gods, which arouses His jealousy and anger in judgment against the idol worshippers. So closely is this characteristic associated with God that His name is Jealous.*

This is a reference to the scripture we're about to turn to. As I mentioned in the introduction, there is one scripture in which the Bible specifically tells us, His name is Jealous, and it's referring to God. The Hebrew word in that scripture is the one I just defined. Turn over to Exodus 34 and we'll take a look at this.

**Exodus 34:10** *And He said: "Behold, I make a covenant. Before all your people I will do marvels such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation; and all the people among whom you are shall see the work of the LORD. For it is an awesome thing that I will do with you.*

11) *Observe what I command you this day. Behold, I am driving out from before you the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite.*

12) *Take heed to yourself, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land where you are going, lest it be a snare in your midst.*

13) *But you shall destroy their altars, break their sacred pillars, and cut down their wooden images ...*

14) *(for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God) ... (NKJV)*

Now notice it's saying, God's name is Jealous.

15) *lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they play the harlot with their gods and make sacrifice to their gods, and one of them invites you and you eat of his sacrifice,*

16) *and you take of his daughters for your sons, and his daughters play the harlot with their gods and make your sons play the harlot with their gods.*

17) *“You shall make no molded gods for yourselves. (NKJV)*

Again, we’re talking about violations of the first and second commandments here. This tells us not only is He a jealous God, it goes so far as to say, His name is Jealous. Now again, that’s not something we would typically ever associate with God, so we have to keep in mind that what is meant here is the meaning I just read to you; this is not talking about selfish envy or wanting to take what is someone else’s, this is God demanding the proper honor and respect that He rightfully deserves. This is very, very important to Him; He absolutely insists on being number one in our lives, being honored as the top priority, where He should be, and He is not willing to negotiate that. I would like to further explain the comment, “His name is Jealous.” I don’t think this is saying His proper name is Jealous, in the same way that I would say “My name is James” (my legal, given name); when we refer to a name in English, we can be referring to someone’s proper legal name, or it can be a figurative statement. Sometimes people will joke, “My middle name is Trouble”, and they’re not trying to say that legally their middle name is Trouble, they’re just trying to say they have a mischievous personality, and they’re making a joke—it’s used figuratively. So we have to understand that the Hebrew name can be used figuratively as well.

Let me share with you this word; it’s transliterated into English as *sem*. It’s [Strong’s #8034](#), and, according to [The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the Old Testament](#), by Warren Baker and Eugene Carpenter, here’s how it’s defined: *A masculine noun meaning a name; fame; it is what specifically identifies a person, or anything; a person’s name. To make a name for oneself means to obtain a renowned reputation, as when God made Abraham’s name great. To become famous is to have one’s name spread through the land, and to have a good name is to have a good character, a good reputation.* What you can see here is the Hebrew word for name can be used very similarly to how we use the English word for the same. Again, we can be referring to someone’s literal, legal name, or we can be using it in a figurative sense. I think this example is better understood in a figurative sense, and let me explain why I say that. If you do a search through a Bible search program (the one I always use is PC Study Bible, but there are a lot of similar programs), and do key word searches, to look at various scriptures throughout the Bible and study a subject, if you look at phrases like, “His name is”, or “My name is”, or simply “name is”, and start looking at all the different verses throughout the Old Testament, and you look for the ones that are specifically referring to God, you are going to see a very, very clear trend; in almost every case, with very few exceptions, when it gives you a definition for His name, you will see in English, “the LORD” (in all caps) and it’s the Hebrew word, YHVH. You’ll see either YHVH used, or an extended version of it, and what I mean by an extended version is “the LORD of Hosts” or “the LORD God of your fathers”, the name with additional words—but you’re going to see that in almost every case.

The verse that I just read is one of the exceptions, but otherwise you see this very, very clear trend. If you've ever looked up the Hebrew word YHVH or Jehovah (personally, I don't think the pronunciation is a big deal) whenever you are transliterating between two different languages that don't share the same alphabet, you're going to have guesses and variations in spelling; if you pay attention to lexicons and such, and how they handle words in Hebrew or even in Greek, you're going to see variations in spelling—they don't all spell it exactly the same way because they are making some guesses here, and that's kind of inherent, so understand, I'm not one to make a big deal out of pronunciation or exact spelling—I don't think these matter. But what it comes down to is you'll typically see this as YHVH, also referred to as the tetragrammaton.

If you look into the history of how the Jews handled this word, YHVH, in my opinion they overreacted by saying it was just too sacred to be pronounced, in fact, oftentimes in their writings they would replace it with *Hashem*, which means “the name”, and there's a reason they would do that. It's the personal name of the God of Israel. If you start studying and looking at all the different scriptures, that talk about His name is, or My name is, in almost every case, you're going to see YHVH utilized. And again, it's the most used name to refer to God throughout the Bible, and you'll see it used literally over 6,000 times. As a result of that, it's oftentimes debated as to whether this name is specific to God the Father or whether it's a generic name, shared between Him and Christ. I have to admit that for much of my life, I was one who would debate that subject as well. However, I then came across, when studying this subject, what I think is the *defining* scripture, that just really nails this subject down. Turn over to Psalm 83; we're going to look at verse 18:

**Psalm 83:18** *That they may know that You, whose name alone is the LORD,*

Now if you look at that again in a lexicon, you're going to see it say, *whose name alone is YHVH*—that's what it's saying. Now notice it says, *whose name alone*; it's saying there is only one individual, and there is one individual who alone has this name. Notice the next phrase:

18 continued) *are the Most High over all the earth.*

It says there is one individual, alone, who has the name YHVH, and He is also known as the Most High. That pretty well nails it down, because, if you look at the title “the Most High”, you'll see Christ described in the New Testament as “the son of the Most High”. As Melchizedek in the Old Testament, He is described as the “Priest of the Most High”. So obviously the scriptures are referring to the Father as the Most High. Look up the Hebrew words for Most High, and the Greek, and look at their meanings. What you're going to see is that they both make it very clear that the individual being referred to here is the one in the very highest position. If you think about that, you've got two God beings, and Christ made it very clear when He said, *My Father is greater than I*, and even after He went back to being a God being, He states repeatedly, He is my God and I am in submission to Him. You have a superior-subordinate relationship. If we're

talking about the individual at the very top, there is only one of those; by definition, you can't have two—it just wouldn't work.

So if you've only got one individual, named YHVH, and He is also the Most High, then God the Father is YHVH. Something that helped me when I was studying this subject and conceptualizing it (and I'm just going to share and hopefully it will be helpful to those hearing this), I'll first give a little background to explain some of the context so this will make sense. In my job, I work as a corporate recruiter for a large hospital system, the biggest one in Texas, and we have a dedicated research institute, and the majority of my job is doing all the staffing for the research institute; I find staff and personnel who will work on research projects, and oftentimes these research projects are headed by either a physician or a PhD scientist who is overseeing a particular area of research; these people have diverse careers, are very accomplished individuals, and frequently have several titles.

Sometimes when I'm e-mailing some of them, they will typically have a signature at the bottom of their e-mails, which identifies who they are. I'm just going to make up a name for illustrative purposes; I'll call this particular individual Dr. Robert Jones. What you'll see in his e-mail signature is his proper name (Robert Jones) and a list of titles below his name that describe him; if he's the head of a particular research organization, he's oftentimes referred to as a "principal investigator" of that organization, but he may also have a department, so he is a director of that particular department. He may also be listed as a chairman of committees or professional organizations with which he's involved, or boards on which he sits; he may also teach at a university nearby, so he may also have the title of Professor. So you have this one name and a handful of titles that follow it, indicating the offices and roles fulfilled by this individual. Again, from an analogy standpoint, if God the Father has an e-mail signature, I think it would look like this: [personal name] YHVH, the LORD; but then there's a big list of titles and offices He holds—the Most High, the Almighty, the Living God, the Ancient of Days; you could list a great number of them, but again, the personal name of the God of Israel is YHVH, the LORD; again, that's why it's used 6,000 times.

The point I'm getting at in all of this is that's His personal name, but again, a name can be used figuratively, so you'll see there's only one time in the Bible you'll see it listed as "His name is Jealous"; it's not telling us that His literal, legal name is Jealous, this is such a major part of His character that you could refer to Him like this; this is a very important descriptor of who He is. This tells us a lot about not only God's character but it teaches us some important lessons about our relationship with Him. If this is so important to Him that you could say His name is this, and you see how seriously He takes violations of the first and second commandments, it is very important to Him that He be honored as first in our lives, that He receives the proper respect.

Oftentimes we think of breaking the first and second commandments as literally worshipping Buddha or Dagon or some completely false god, or bowing down to an image or a golden calf, or something of that nature; no, violations of the first and second commandment for us can be putting anything else as a greater priority than God, and

that can be disrespecting or replacing Him, not just in our words but in our actions, in whether we show proper respect to Him. It's very important to understand that God has a well-documented record of testing people on this issue.

Those of you who know me well know that I'm a kind of broken record, so to speak, in saying that the best predictor of future behavior is past behavior. The reason is because I'm a recruiter; when you are interviewing people, the primary thing you're looking at is their past performance in decisions they've made—that's the best predictor of what they'll do in the future. If we apply this to God, and He says, I am the LORD and I do not change—in other words, He's extremely consistent—that means His past behavior is an extremely good predictor of His future behavior, and we're going to see, He is very well-documented on this subject of absolutely insisting that we put Him first in our lives, and of putting people to the test to make sure that when the pressure is on, and when it gets hot and uncomfortable for us, that that is the decision we're going to make. So let's understand that this is a well-known part of His character in what He expects from us and how we should live our lives.

As I mentioned, He is well-documented on this, so let's just look at a couple examples. Turn over to Genesis, chapter 22, and we'll start in verse 1. This is the story of Abraham and Isaac. I'm sure you're probably familiar with Abraham in the Bible; he's a very popular biblical figure. At the time that this event happens, Abraham has had a long track record with God; he packed up and moved when God told him to; he's been described as the friend of God; he has shown a lot of faithfulness, but God is still testing him to make sure that Abraham is willing to forsake everything and put Him first.

**Genesis 22:1** *Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."*

2) *Then He said, "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."*

3) *So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.*

4) *Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off.*

5) *And Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you."*

6) *So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together.*

7) *But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." Then he said, "Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?"*

8) *And Abraham said, "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering." So the two of them went together.*

9) *Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood.*

- 10) *And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.*  
11) *But the Angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" So he said, "Here I am."*  
12) *And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me." (NKJV)*

Notice that this was a test—He was putting him to the test as verse 1 told us. God is testing Abraham, and He wants to see, are you going to do this? It's easy for us to academically look at this story, because we know how it all ends; we know he goes through the motions and no one ever really gets hurt, and everybody goes home, fine, afterwards, but stop and put yourself in Abraham's shoes. He waits twenty-five years to have a son, he finally has him, his son grows up, then God says, take that boy up the mountain and kill him for Me. Imagine the emotional turmoil that Abraham was going through, dealing with this, and what a test this was for him. Once God realizes, yes, he is really going to do it, okay, stop—I didn't really want you to kill him, but I wanted to see that you will put Me first, even when it's painful for you, even when it's difficult and it's traumatic, and it's hard for you, that you're going to put Me first. You see, He insists on being first. That is His record.

The reason I point this out is because in our culture today, we have a society that very much thinks that we should never have to be uncomfortable, or face anything too difficult, or have our feelings hurt or be offended, and it's easy to put God in that context and think, well, look, He would never do anything that would offend somebody—that wouldn't be loving. Think about this. Let me just offer another example with regard to Abraham. We can only speculate about this because the Bible is completely silent about Sarah's reaction to this test, but imagine the typical mom; most women who are mothers, even if they are very mild-mannered, if you want to watch them come unglued, threaten one of their children. My mom was like that; if you threatened one of us, as little children, you would see the mama bear come out to defend us. Just imagine that conversation, that one day God tells Abraham to do this, and Abraham talks to Sarah and says, Honey, the son that you waited twenty-five years for, and you'd finally given up on the idea of having, to the point that you sarcastically laughed at the idea, well, God has told me to take him out and kill him, and I'm going to do it.

Imagine the reaction that this would bring about, the emotional turmoil that they would go through having to deal with this decision. My point is, in realizing that God insists on us putting Him first in our lives, He absolutely demands it, and again, that can be when it's uncomfortable for us, that can be when our own lives are on the line, when our jobs are on the line, when we could lose friends, or have our names slandered, and many similar trials, but again, we have to keep in mind, rule number one is not negotiable. God didn't say, put Me first as long as it doesn't become too difficult for you, as long as you don't lose any friends, and you don't hurt anyone's feelings, and it doesn't become painful, and I certainly wouldn't want you to lose your life—He doesn't say any of that. In fact, His track record is the exact opposite. We can see many examples here of people who went through very harsh trials because God was testing them to see if they

would put Him first, even when it was painful and they were going through very difficult situations—were they going to choose to put God first, in spite of the ramifications to their lives? God demands that kind of commitment, and this Book is full of examples that document that very thing.

Just think of it in terms of my favorite statement, the best predictor of future behavior is past behavior, and God's past behavior is very well-documented on this one; we don't have to speculate—we know what He thinks because it's very clearly stated. Jesus Christ gave us examples, saying this very thing, in making it very clear how important this principle is. Turn over to Luke, chapter 14, and we'll start reading in verse 25. These are the familiar, counting-the-cost scriptures that we probably all covered when going through baptismal counseling.

**Luke 14:25** *Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them,*

26) *"If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.*

27) *And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.*

28) *For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it—*

29) *lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him,*

30) *saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish'?*

31) *Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand?*

32) *Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace.*

33) *So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple. (NKJV)*

Notice how serious He is about this. He's saying you have to put this above your own life, your friends, your spouse. God has to be the first priority over everything, and there can be nothing else in our life that is more important than Him. Taking an example I'm sure you're familiar with, that of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, when Nebuchadnezzar put up an image, and said, when you hear the music I want you to bow down to it. And he's literally telling them to physically bow down to an idol. But they refused, even though their lives were threatened. Their response was, O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter; our God is able to save us from this, but just for the record, even if He doesn't, we still will not bow down to this image. We are willing to burn before we'll be willing to bow down to your idol.

They had the faith that even if God didn't save them from the furnace, they would come up in the first resurrection, and they would ultimately be rewarded for their faithfulness

to God. They understood where their priorities had to be, even in the face of the threat to their own lives. See, we have to understand the implications of such tests, even in our own, day-to-day lives. We tend to think of idolatry as how it was illustrated in Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's case—physically bowing down to a physical idol, but the same thing can happen simply because we put something else in our lives, someone, some thing, whether it's a relationship, whether it's our possessions, whatever it is, and we make it more important than God, and we think, well, this is something we must put as a greater priority, and it comes out in our actions, and not just in our words or what we say. We have to realize how important this is to God.

Let's look at a couple more examples before we wrap up. Let's turn to Matthew, chapter 19. Christ makes it clear, in several examples, just how important this is.

**Matt 19:16** *Now behold, one came and said to Him, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?"*

17) *So He said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments."*

18) *He said to Him, "Which ones?" Jesus said, "'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,'*

19) *'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'*"

20) *The young man said to Him, "All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?"*

21) *Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."*

22) *But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. (NKJV)*

Notice this isn't a person who is being derelict and totally abandoning everything that God has to say and what He commands, because his response to Christ is, well, I've been keeping these commands my whole life—I'm committed to them. And Christ didn't say, oh no, you're a liar and you're not really doing any of that; no, Christ said, okay, what about your possessions? You are a wealthy man. Give that up. And notice this man's reaction; from his behavior, he likes his possessions very much; in modern-day terminology we would joke that it was kind of like he was saying to Christ, you've gone from preaching to meddling because I'm being asked to give up my nice stuff and that's too much. That's how we tend to think: You can ask all these other things but don't ask me to give that up! That is important to me!

You see, God looks at it from the standpoint that you can't put anything else above Him. This is what the whole concept of Him being jealous teaches us. He is not willing to accept us making Him a second priority; we can't rationalize around it and say, that would be too uncomfortable, so I can't give that up—I can't lose friends or my job because of this—be reasonable! That's not how He looks at it. He looks at it from the standpoint that we put Him first, even if we lose our own lives. Christ even tells us, if



we're not willing to do this, we can't be in the Kingdom of God—it's that big of an issue for God. Turn over to Luke, chapter 9.

**Luke 9:57** *Now it happened as they journeyed on the road, that someone said to Him, "Lord, I will follow You wherever You go."*

58) *And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."*

59) *Then He said to another, "Follow Me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father."*

60) *Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God."*

61) *And another also said, "Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house."*

62) *But Jesus said to him, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." (NKJV)*

Notice the examples. These are not situations where people are saying, forget that, God!—I don't want anything to do with that; I'm just going to live, I'm going to have sex, drugs, and rock and roll, and turn my back on this! This is not what's happening here. These are people who are saying, no, I've got something more important to do; this sounds good, but I have something urgent to do. So they're basically making God the second priority. God is not okay with that. That's the whole issue of Him saying He is a jealous God. We need to understand that God has a very well-documented track record; He absolutely insists on us putting Him as top priority, and He will absolutely test us on that, coming down to punching whatever is the button of something that we put before Him, whether that's our job, whether that's our spouse, or appeasing others or being popular in the sight of others—whatever it is that gets to us, that's the very thing about which God will say, you've got to give that up. That's why with Abraham, God tested him: you waited twenty-five years for this son, kill this son for Me—it was to make sure that God was number one to him above everything else.

Realize that God knows we're human, and we're going to make mistakes, and we're never going to be perfect, but again, He is going to test us to make sure that that's our desire and that's what we're striving to do, and the evidence is going to be in our behavior, not just in the words that we say. So when you look at the subject of God being jealous, let's understand that this is not at all referring to the carnal envy that we think of when we think of human beings being jealous—that's a very negative, carnal, sinful thing, and it has nothing to do with what God means when He says He is jealous.

The lesson in realizing that God is a jealous God, that His name is Jealous—it's such a part of His character that He describes it figuratively as His name—is because of how important the first commandment is to Him. We must put Him first, as top priority in our lives, and there can be nothing else in our lives, not our family, not our job, not anything else that we're willing to put before Him. So just think of it like this: The lesson is the LORD our God is a jealous God, and He absolutely insists on being first in our lives.