

Idolatry and the Jealousy of God

Good morning, saints!

Today, we're going to finish up with chapter 24 and get into chapter 25 of the Book of Numbers that continues recounting events as Israel is camped on the Plains of Moab awaiting God's command to cross over the Jordan River into Canaan. Chapter 25 will need at least two sessions, maybe three, because in it we encounter several momentous topics, among which are:

- Why does God call Himself is a jealous God?
- What should be our approach to other religions? and
- What is proper amount of zeal for the Lord?

None of these topics is without its controversy. What happens in Numbers 25 is challenging – both for them and for us today.

I was encouraged last week during the service by a word given by Joe Skoda.

SLIDE: PROPHETIC WORD

“My Spirit jealously desires the spirit that I have placed in you.”

I don't quote this to puff Joe up – he knows very well that all glory is to be given to God alone. I quote this because *God was saying that He is jealous for us* – when I hear this last week, I was greatly encouraged because a major portion of my presentation today will be on God's jealousy. And I can't take any credit for it because it's

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just the next topic in the Book of Numbers. So, all glory goes to God Alone!

OK, let's jump back to the Book of Numbers and to the Israelites camped on the Plains of Moab. Balaam the sorcerer has just delivered a series of oracles blessing Israel in spite of the fact that he had been hired by Balak, King of Moab, specifically to *curse* them. The first two blessings were *forced on Balaam* – in other words, he was restricted by God in what he could say. Then, starting in Oracle 3, the Scripture says that *the Spirit of God came upon him* – the 'Ruach Hakodesh' – the Holy Spirit. Balaam was then able to clearly see the spiritual reality of the situation and he freely used his own words to describe God's love for Israel and God's completely trustworthy character not to change His mind or break a promise.

Now, after the 3rd attempt ends in failure, Balak is furious. Let's pick up the story in Numbers chapter 24, starting in verse 10:

"Then Balak's anger burned against Balaam, and he struck his hands together; and Balak said to Balaam, 'I called you to curse my enemies, but behold, you have persisted in blessing them these three times! 11 Therefore, **flee to your place now**. I said I would honor you greatly, but behold, the Lord has held you back from honor.' 12 Balaam said to Balak, 'Did I not tell your messengers whom you had sent to me, saying, 13 'Though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not do anything contrary to the command of the Lord, either good or

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bad, of my own accord. What the Lord speaks, that I will speak?
14 And now, behold, I am going to my people; come, and I will advise you what this people will do to your people in the days to come.' "

Well, it's obvious that, after being humiliated for the third consecutive time in front of all the leaders of Moab and Midian, King Balak is furious. He snarls at Balaam, telling him that had intended to pay handsomely but now he won't get anything, and that Balaam can blame the Lord (Yehovah) for this. Instead of a bag full of money and the title of the *world's greatest negotiator* with the gods, he will leave with nothing. Balak glares at Balaam, and with clenched lips, he tells him flee – literally '*flee for yourself*' – and go home. In other words, *I might just kill you here and now if you don't leave.*

Balak slaps his hands together in disgust. Sort of like a person in bed with the CLAPPER – clap your hands and roll over as the light turns off. *But, Balaam doesn't turn off.* He still has the Spirit of God upon him, giving him unfamiliar courage. He repeats what he has said several times before – he is helpless to say anything other than what Yehovah permits him to say. And before he leaves, he tells Balak to get ready – he comes few more oracles, and they're **ON THE HOUSE – free of charge.** Balaam then delivers the famous 4th Oracle that contains one of the greatest prophecies in the Bible about the coming Messiah:

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4th oracle, Numbers 24 starting at verse 17:

"I see him, but not now;
I behold him, but not near;
A star shall come forth from Jacob,
A scepter shall rise from Israel,
And shall crush through the forehead of Moab,
And tear down all the sons of Sheth."

OK – I stop there. Balaam says that a star will announce the birth of the King of the Jews -- a small event that went almost unnoticed but which became the turning point in world history. Balaam's prophecy was delivered about 1400 years before Christ was born, and it was what prompted the magi to come to Jerusalem seeking the newborn king. They asked...

Matt 2:2 – "Where is he who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East."

Now, I discussed this Oracle last December because of the season, so I won't do it again. However, I do want to point out that it was this prophecy was made by a pagan sorcerer – a gentile – and it resulted in the very first gentiles coming to see and worship the Savior.

After this 4th oracle, Balaam goes on to give three more oracles for a total of seven, but I won't be covering these latter

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three because they mostly relate to the fates of some localized nations. But note that the 4th oracle echoes the prophecy that the coming Messiah will crush the forehead of Moab. This *indicates that the battle between Moab and Israel isn't just a squabble between two peoples – it is an attempt of the pagan nations attempting to stop the coming Messiah*

SLIDE: BALAAM WENT HOME...

The last line in Chapter 24 says:

“Then Balaam arose and departed and returned to his place, and Balak also went his way.”

We get the impression that Balaam disappeared without accomplishing his goal. The King of Moab refused to pay and even threatens Balaam with physical harm. So, he goes home.

SLIDE: I'VE GOT ANOTHER IDEA

But, he's not happy. He realizes that his reputation as a world-famous sorcerer is shot. **This is not going to look good on a resume.** He wants the money and he wants his reputation back, and he eventually comes up with the plan that will cause Israel to

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sin and be punished by God for their idolatry.¹ Balaam goes to the Midianites with the scheme, probably because he feared to face Balak again. This plan plays out in Chapter 25.

SLIDE: Ok – let's read **Numbers Chapter 25:**

“When Israel lived in **SHI-TIM**^a (Shittim), the people began to commit sexual immorality with the daughters of Moab. 2 These women invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods; then the people ate and bowed down to their gods. 3 When Israel joined themselves to Baal-peor, the anger of the Lord flared up against Israel.

The Lord said to Moses, “Arrest all the leaders of the people, and **hang them up** before the Lord in broad daylight, so that the fierce anger of the Lord may be turned away from Israel.” 5 So Moses said to the judges of Israel, “Each of you must execute those of his men who were joined to Baal-peor.”

6 Just then one of the Israelites came and brought to his brothers a Midianite woman in the plain view of Moses and of the whole community of the Israelites, while they were weeping at the entrance of the tent of meeting. 7 When Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he got up from among the assembly, took a javelin in his hand, 8 and went after the Israelite man into the tent and thrust through the Israelite man

¹ Numbers 31:16

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and into the woman's abdomen. So the plague was stopped from the Israelites. 9 Those that died in the plague were 24,000.

10 The Lord spoke to Moses: 11 "Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned my anger away from the Israelites, when he manifested such zeal for my sake among them, so that I did not consume the Israelites in my zeal. 12 Therefore, announce: 'I am going to give to him my covenant of peace. 13 So it will be to him and his descendants after him a covenant of a permanent priesthood, because he has been zealous for his God, and has made atonement for the Israelites.'"

Wow – what a story.

SLIDE: SHI-TIMa (SHITTIM)

Chapter 25 opens up with Israel still poised to go into Canaan at a place called (SHI-TIMa) 'Shittim' which literally means '*Acacia tree*'.²

The Israelites (including Moses) are *still* blissfully unaware of the King of Moab's ongoing intention to destroy them. He has been unsuccessful in his attempts to bribe Yehovah to abandon Israel; the new strategy is to help create a situation whereby YAHWEH by His Own choice will come against Israel, and Idolatry was the key.

² *Shittim* is called *Abel-ha-Shittim* in Joshua 2:1b.

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Now, as I said, it was Balaam who actually came up with the plan. When previously under the Holy Spirit, he had probably seen that this was the only vulnerable point of the relationship – spiritual adultery. So, as they camped the Plain, here come attractive Moabite and Midianite women. The plan is to have them seduce the Israelite men into worshipping their god Baal, and their tactic is to invite them to sacred banquets where sacrifices are offered to the god Baal accompanied by ritual prostitution.

Ironically, this mountaintop shrine to Baal where this will take place is on Mt. Peor – which is likely the same place at which Balaam delivered his 3rd Oracle³. It was there that the Holy Spirit came upon him and he proclaimed that El Shaddai was completely in charge of this and every other mountain. **So, the test that is coming upon Israel was not a surprise to God – He was allowing it.**

- But – like Balaam himself was when in the company of his donkey – the Israelites could not see the angel right in front of them. The difference now is that the angel is a demonic one.

So, the fall of Israel here is NOT credited to Balaam's demonic power of cursing – which had been completely muted by Yehovah. Rather – the success comes from **Balaam's ADVICE** that plays on the

³ Numbers 23:28

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human vulnerability to fleshly temptation, indulging our immoral desires, which eventually leads people away from Him and to worshipping a *false god* and to *sexual immorality*.⁴ In the Book of Revelation, Jesus criticizes the Church at Pergamum for allowing “the doctrine of Balaam” in its midst. (Rev. 2:14) – I’ll get to this more next time.

MOAB AND LICENSE

Some wonder how Balak could stoop so low as to prostitute his subjects in such a way. Well – it’s all in the family. You may recall that the nation of Moab was named after the son of one of the daughters of LOT – Abraham’s nephew. Lot and his two daughters escaped the destruction of the city of Sodom, and the two daughters got their father drunk and committed incest with him for the purpose of having children.⁵ The younger daughter named her son “Ben-Ami”, which means “*son of my people*.” She evidently felt uncomfortable about the incest and modestly concealed the baby’s lineage.

The older daughter dealt with the situation in a much different way – she brazenly named her son “*Moav*”, which means “*from my father*.”⁶ She made “incest” the child’s name!⁷

⁴ Romans 1:25

⁵ Genesis 19:36-37

⁶ Secrets of Shavuot <http://www.aish.com/h/sh/t/48967246.html>

⁷ Pinchas (Numbers 25:10-30:1) Human Degradation <http://www.aish.com/tp/b/sw/48943151.html>

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- By presenting what would previously have been a deviant practice as a *valid alternative* lifestyle, she could totally justify her behavior and have nothing to feel guilty about!
– SOUND FAMILIAR?

ECUMENISM IN MOAB

It is often difficult for us to relate to what was going on in scenes like this where Israelites start to go after other gods. How can someone start out on this path, when it is obvious that Yahweh is real, that He is mightier than other gods, and when He specifically says “*don’t do it*”?

- We think: “*these must be very strange and primitive people*” – but, were they?

The interaction between Israel and Moabite deities is not all that mystifying when put into context of *how* this might happen – even today! This is very well described by Tom Bradford in his TorahClass study on this incident, so, I will quote him⁸.

“I want to draw a parallel for you that I hope cause us all a little discomfort. Sometimes we get the wrong mental picture of what was

⁸ <http://www.torahclass.com/old-testament-studies/37-old-testament-studies-numbers/223-lesson-29-chapter25-26>

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happening in the bible, as thus it can be hard for us to relate to it on a personal level.

(H)ere in Moab, the actions of the people of Israel in interacting with the Moabites would have at first seemed welcome and natural. It would have seemed peaceful, respectful, and neighborly on both sides. Moab was not the home of savages who sought to do terrible things to all who came near to them; they were just pretty much regular folks. For the young men of Israel to spy some pretty girls from another and different (probably appealing) culture was something to be humanly expected.

*The... deadly spiral of apostasy and idolatry began subtly and unnoticed with Hebrew men merely forming acquaintanceships with Moabite women. Pretty soon, as says verse 2, the Moabite women did what was natural: they invited their new Hebrew friends to join them at some of their national festive occasions... And of course, just as it was for Israel, all of Moab's festive occasions revolved around one of their gods or another. Many within Israel had no qualms with this, and in attending some of Moab's religious celebrations saw no conflict with (it)... For them, they were but forging a peaceful relationship with the Moabites... So, people being people, Israel showed some respect for the Moabites' beliefs even if they didn't agree with them; *how else would they be able to get along in a civil manner?*"*

Wow – it makes a little more sense now. The women of Moab and Midian lured Israelite men to participate in the pagan festivals and ceremonies – and it likely started out like the

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1960's during the Vietnam War – many of the guys were there protesting because it was a good way to meet girls.

But, as Israel had closer and closer relationships with people whose culture was all about honoring *other* gods, they started embracing practices that Yehovah forbid. Israel was being unfaithful to their covenant with Yehovah.

Question: Is something similar happening today **for the same reasons?**

To answer this, I want to revisit the foundational principle that underpins our walk as believers – the Greatest Commandment. When Jesus was asked the question (Matthew 22) regarding '*what is the greatest commandment*', He responded by citing a verse from the Book of Deuteronomy:

SLIDE: **Shema**

"Hear O Israel: the Lord our God, The Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." Deuteronomy 6:4-5

This passage is known as the 'Shema' – a Hebrew word which means to "*listen*" or to "*hear*".

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SLIDE: Shema – the *New Ghent translation*

There are TWO parts to this commandment – and I'm using the *Ghent New York* translation to illustrate them:

- (1) “Listen up, Israel! You must FIRST believe that the Lord is the One & Only God.
- (2) Then – you are to love Him with your everything.”

When Christians today are asked “*what is the greatest commandment*”, most tend to recite the 2nd half of what Jesus said – “*Love your God with all your heart, etc.*” **But is this enough?**

Evidently JESUS did not think so. You see...

- The Greeks and Romans could meet the 2nd part.
- Buddhists and Hindus could meet the 2nd part.
- Muslims could meet it, JWs could meet it.
- Even the pagan people of Moab and Midian could meet it – as they were demonstrating by sacrificing their virginity and self-respect.

But, it is the FIRST part of the commandment that is the *CRUCIAL CONDITION* – you must love the **TRUE GOD AND HIM ALONE**. **Unless you do that, the rest is futile.**

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- Our goal is NOT to make Muslims better Muslims, or Hindus better Hindus, or Jews better Jews! Our goal is to introduce them to the One True God.

Q: So, the question: Is something similar to what happened at back there at Peor also happening today and **for the same reasons?**

Let's first consider the issue of compromising Scriptural values.

SLIDE: THEOLOGY VIA BUMPER STICKERS

People who put stickers on their cars evidently have a great motto: **WALK SOFTLY AND CARRY A BIG STICKER!**

Today we have the phenomenon of Theology by way of bumper stickers. We all have seen the bumper stickers that say "Coexist." The crescent and star stands for Islam; the peace symbol in the Circle stands for peace, although it is sometimes replaced by the pentagram standing for Wicca; the Star of David for Judaism, the Karma Wheel dotting the "I" for Buddhism; the Tao symbol for Taoism; and the cross for Christianity. The sticker implies, "let's just all get along".

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The Tolerance bumper sticker adds male/female symbol, the relativity formula standing for science, and the peace pipe represents an American Indian fertility god (Kokopelli). Let's all get along; let's all tolerate our differences.

The third sticker I found on... well, I won't say whose car it was on, Gary.

“Coexistence” and “tolerance” *seem* harmless, even agreeable slogans. But, in today's politically-correct culture, these words carry a subtle but insidious message: religions and religions ideas are the cause of the trouble in the world – let's put aside our differences and *all will be well*.

Put aside violence – **sure**. Allow a Mormon plumber into my house to fix my sink – sure. But, are we to keep silent about the crucial differences in our faiths? One of these is the extreme fact that Christ is the One and ONLY way to the Father.

In the letter to the Romans, Paul wrote: “Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone”⁹ However, Paul was NOT talking about what these bumper stickers imply: that Christians should be silent about Christ and about the Biblical understanding of truth. Paul was saying that we should be peaceful neighbors – but without compromising the Faith.

⁹ Romans 12:18

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ECUMENISM WITH ISLAM

I believe that the greatest parallel today to Israel's compromise with idolatry at Peor is on the ecumenical front with Islam. Many Christians and Jews are seeking – at all costs – to find a way to forge a relationship with an enormous group of people who *openly worship a false god*. Why now but not 20 years ago? Because of 9/11.

Now, obviously, we are to **love and respect** THE INDIVIDUAL PERSON because he/she is made in the image of God, BUT...

- Does this mean that we must also show **respect for the god of Islam** because that is what Muslims demand?
- Is it OK that Christians attend – and the White House even hosts – **Muslim festivals that celebrate the Quran as a holy document from God?**¹⁰

If you think so, you should realize that the Quran denies the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ, it denies Jesus as the Son of God, and it proclaims salvation thru works and faith in Allah, not by grace alone from Yehovah.

¹⁰ Eid-ul-Fitr dinners, <http://aaiil.org/fiji/articles/jalaluddean/MentionofEid-ul-FitrinQur'an&Hadith.pdf>

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Is acquiescing in these matters similar to the *process* that led to the idolatry and sexual immorality at Peor?

- Many would disagree, but the fact is that such compromises **lead to deeper forms of compromise, as it did at Peor.**

To help illustrate this, I want to mention an incident that happened while I was still working. I was having a series of conversations with a Muslim co-worker about Scripture and Christianity. This individual, by the way, was a very likeable and friendly person in whom I found no guile. He mentioned that Christianity and Islam disagree on some issues but they have a lot of things in common. So, shouldn't Christians and Muslims can have much closer ties?

I was tempted to say "yes", but I resisted because it just didn't feel right. True, Christianity and Islam do have things in common, but they also have significant disagreements, specifically over the Person and Work of Christ and God's love for the Jewish people. So, I responded by saying that I didn't think he understand what Christianity is. If the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus did NOT happen – and Islam believes that they did not – *then there IS no Christianity.*

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The initial compromise that I was being offered was to underplay the differences about Christ in the name of ecumenism. If I kept my faith to myself and keep smiling, friendships would blossom. Don't share the Gospel, and certainly don't state your believe that Jesus is God's Son.

Inevitably, when you get further down this yellow brick road of compromise, you are asked to downplay other Scriptural issues in order to maintain the relationship. One such issue that ALWAYS surfaces is over God's continuing love of the Jewish people. Judaism was obviously being left out of the theoretical pact between Islam and Christianity being advanced by my coworker. We see this anti-Israel bias playing out with many Christian denominations that have muted their doctrinal differences with Islam; they now give preferential support to the Palestinians and condemn and disinvest in Israel.¹¹

But, you might say, we're *not* bowing down to idols with these compromises, so it is *different* than at Peor. Well, I ask the question: **"Who is God?"** The major push to draw closed to Muslims in the U.S. started under President Bush after 911 and has radically sped up under President Obama.

¹¹ Presbyterian Church, World Council of Churches, United Church of Christ, United Methodist Church, and the Episcopal Church have made such divestment decisions. In June 2015, the Vatican signed a treaty with the State of Palestine' the treaty concerns the activities of the Church in areas controlled by the Palestinian Authority. The treaty is de facto recognition of the state. A similar treaty with Israel is still unsigned as of June 2015.

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- I'm not talking politics here because one president is a republican and one is a democrat.

Now, some of the dialogue and associations that developed have been good. However, it is painful to me to step back and realize how gradually Christians and Jews have been led to compromises that we are forbidden to make. For example: both President Bush and President Obama have stated – either directly or by inference – their belief that Allah is the same as Yehovah of the Scriptures.¹² And, 40% of evangelical Christians now agree that Christians and Muslims worship the same God.¹³

- **This is an Untruth of the highest order.**

Allah is NOT the God of the Bible.¹⁴ Compromises made out of emotionalism have led to elevating a false god to the level of the True God. That's exactly what happened in the Golden Calf incident, and it is to a large degree similar to what happened at Peor. The Biblical pattern continues to play out.

¹² President Bush, <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/story?id=193746&page=1>

¹³ <http://ivarfjeld.wordpress.com/2011/04/22/apostasy-40-born-again-christians-believe-christians-and-muslims-worship-the-same-god/>

¹⁴ The simple fact that Allah endorses lying absolutely eliminates him from being the God of the Bible. Yehovah says He does NOT lie! See Session 27 *God does not lie* for a more detailed discussion.

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SLIDE: Tool Time¹⁵

But, ecumenism asks, even though it IS untrue that Allah and Yehovah are the same, shouldn't we pretend that it is true for the sake of peace? After all, didn't Jesus preach peace at any price?

CLICK: *I don't think so, Tim.*

We can respect the *person* and the common *values* in other religious faiths (e.g.; charity), but we can NEVER concede – either directly or by implication – on the fact that Christ is the Only way to the Father.

“... NEVER in the Holy Scriptures are God's followers EVER taught to show respect to false gods of other cultures, not even as a means to peaceful co-existence. And the reason why is demonstrated right ... in the ... Numbers chapter 25. Invariably the respect and tolerance of pagan ways and their gods turns to the adopting of some of those ways and the watering down or perversion of the ways of God Almighty.”¹⁶

If Paul is correct when he said that the events of Scripture were written down for our benefit¹⁷, then the fact that 24,000 people died on the Plains of Moab because of spiritual adultery with another god **would seem to imply that the God of**

¹⁵ *Home Improvement* was an American television sitcom that aired from September 17, 1991 to May 25, 1999. Two of the stars - Tim Allen (aka Tim Taylor) and Richard Karn (aka Al Borlan) - are pictured on the presentation's slide. The dialogue portrayed on the slide is fictional.

¹⁶ Bradford *TorahClass* *ibid.*

¹⁷ 1 Corinthians 10:11

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Scripture does not agree with our modern definition of ecumenism.

OK – moving on...

SLIDE: HANG THE LEADERS?

In response to the “whoring after other gods” – which, by the way, refers to the *idolatry itself*, not to sexual practices often associated with it – God tells Moses how he must to deal with this spiritual disaster:

“And the LORD said to Moses, “**Arrest all the leaders of the people, and hang them up** before the LORD in sun [i.e., “in broad daylight“], that the fierce anger of the LORD may be turned away from Israel.”

Pretty drastic order by God: “*Arrest the leaders... and hand them up in broad daylight.*” What’s going on here?

SLIDE: IMPALING

Well – “hanging” by the neck, as we think of it from Western movies, was NOT what God is saying. The term “hanging” in Scripture meant that a person’s body was **IMPALED** on a pole or a tree; the person was not hung with a rope around the neck. OFTEN – but not always – this was done *after* the person was executed by some other means.

The purpose of “hanging on a tree” was to **identify you as a criminal, someone who committed a capital offense against God**

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that deserved death. And, Scripture required that a dead body could NOT remain hanging there overnight:

“If a man has committed a sin worthy of death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his corpse shall not hang all night on the tree, but you shall surely bury him on the same day (for he who is hanged is accursed of God), so that you do not defile your land which the Lord your God gives you as an inheritance.” Deut. 21:22-23

This command was the reason why Jesus was taken down from the cross before sundown. Jesus was nailed (impaled) on the wooden cross in our place about noontime and died at 3:00pm. His body hung there for several hours, thus being *publically identified as a criminal who was under God's curse*.¹⁸ But, even those Jews who instigated His death could not allow His lifeless body to remain there on the cross during the night.

- How ironic – it was the Jewish leaders who insisted that Jesus die at the hands of the Romans, which would reveal the *true* reason behind this command: being impaled on a wooden “tree” and His lifeless body hanging would indicate that He was there under the curse of the law. They had their Messiah executed but then followed Torah law regarding His body.

¹⁸ “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us-- for it is written, “CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE ”-- Galatians 3:13

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SLIDE: LEADERS = ?

Now – there is some confusion as to whom God is referring when He mentions that “leaders” are to be arrested and killed. Are the “leaders” the leaders and heads of the tribes, or is God referring to the “leaders” of the people who are engaged in the idolatry?

<click> Most rabbis and Jewish scholars have said that God WAS indeed ordering the execution of the leaders of the tribes themselves.

But notice that Moses doesn't do it. Instead, he gives a different instruction to the tribal judges of the nation:

“Each of you must slay those of his men who were joined to Baal-peor.”

The problem is *not* that God's words were *unclear* to Moses, but rather that they were *so difficult to accept* – and he backed away.

- Why would God require such severe action? Surely *every* leader has not committed this sin of idolatry.
- Why would God command Moses to put all of the leaders to death *publicly*?
- And why does Moses disregard God's instruction and *revise* the order so that only the *offenders* be put to death.

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Well... Scripture does not tell us WHY Moses did what he did. Indeed, I found some commentaries that argue that Moses did not depart from God's command – that God *was* talking about the leaders of the REBELLION. However, their explanations are a stretch, as almost all of Jewish scholars – ancient and today – disagree with them.

It is conceivable that Moses thought that God's order might have been almost impossible to carry out. For example, we can see today that the members of a Middle Eastern clans **will do anything to protect their leaders. And the leaders will sacrifice any amount of their people to maintain their own position and power.** This is the essence of the tribal system. It's unlikely that a Hebrew tribal leader, the head of an entire tribe of people, would have willingly submitted to his own execution.¹⁹

So from a human government sense, Moses took an easier path – get the tribal judges to instead execute some of the less important people as punishment for this apostasy.

- **Anyone who's ever been in a government bureaucracy or a large business understands this principle very well.**

What I want to draw attention to is that **God was not playing patty-cake with leadership.** Leaders have a higher level of

¹⁹ Tom Bradford's reasonable conjecture

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responsibility because they have been given more authority, and because they serve as examples to those who follow them:

“From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, even more will be asked” (Luke 12:48b). and...

Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters, because you know that we will be judged more strictly (James 3:1).

Ok – how did the leaders handle the ongoing immorality and idolatry? Well, from the text, it would appear that the **leaders did little or nothing to deal with it**. Even Moses seems to have done nothing more than to order the judges to locate the guilty and see to it that they were punished. But the text does not say that even this watered-down order was carried out.

It is interesting to note that Scripture states that the leaders' lack of control was part of – but NOT THE PRIMARY REASON WHY THEY SHOULD DIE. It was mostly to be a matter of **atonement** for their people sinning. It says that these men should die in order that "the Lord's wrath may turn away from Israel." Death of the leadership to atone for the sins of the people that they failed to properly guide? God definitely wasn't playing patty-cake.

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The PLAGUE

However, whether God was referring to the death of the leaders of the tribes or just the leaders of the rebellion, **as far as our text indicates, NO ONE was put to death either by Moses or by any of the judges. The idolatry continued and no one did anything to stop it!**

- So, God takes action Himself and introduces a plague.

Thousands of people are dying, and amazingly – *STILL – no one takes action*. Even when a prominent Israelite – within the sight of Moses & the others leaders – brazenly walks into the camp with a Midianite woman and takes her into his tent to have sexual relations – **Moses and the leadership do nothing!**²⁰

That's when Phineas takes action; he goes into the tent and impales the man and woman with his spear. God then stops the plague.

I want to mention an **often overlooked point**. The incident of the Golden Calf is frequently viewed as Israel's greatest episode of idolatry. However, after that incident, only 3,000 people died – and they were all offenders. But here on the Plains of Moab, 24,000

²⁰ *Sanhedrin 82a*) suggests that Moses' inaction at this point because Moses himself had married a Midianite woman (Zipporah, daughter of Jethro, a Midianite priest).

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people died in the plague after the idolatry, and it is doubtful that *all* of them were guilty of the transgression. God's punishment here in Moab is **much more severe** than that for the Golden Calf.²¹ Why???

- Well, at Mt. Sinai, the people made an idol to represent both Yehovah²² and other gods²³. They were in the infancy state of monotheism and wanted something tangible to follow after they believed Moses had died. It was wrong, but all this was new and they may not have completely understood what they were doing.
- But at Peor, after almost 40 years of God's provision, they intentionally worshipped Baal – that's why it was more serious.

Was Phineas he a hero or a vigilante who somehow received God's endorsement for his zeal? And what does this say for us today? We'll get into the topic of Phineas and his actions next time. But for today, I want to concentrate on a topic that may be unnerving when we first hear it. It deals with the answer to a question:

➤ Q: WHY DOES GOD PRAISE PHINEAS?

²¹ Samson Raphael Hirsch in his commentary to this chapter of the Torah

²² Exodus 32:5 – Aaron said, "Tomorrow will be a feast to the Lord."

²³ Exodus 32:4 - "Then they said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.' "

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SLIDE: PHINEAS' JEALOUSY²⁴

In verse 10, God tells us: “Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Phinehas... the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned away My wrath from the sons of Israel in that he was jealous with **My jealousy** among them, so that I did not destroy the sons of Israel in **My jealousy**.’ ”

Click: God says – “Phineas... was jealous with MY jealousy”. **God has jealousy!**

This is easy to read and miss this! Think of what this is saying here:

- God is **EQUATING** Phineas' jealousy that motivated him to kill two individuals with how He Himself – Yehovah – feels and acts in the face of certain types of evil. –
YEHOVAH HAS JEALOUSY!

What's going on here?

²⁴ Can be spelled as “Phinehas” or “Phineas”; Hebrew is “Pinchas”

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SLIDE: THE JEALOUSY OF GOD

- "The Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God"
Deut. 4:24

"The Lord your God is a... jealousy God", and the implication here is that His fire will consume those who provoke His jealousy. I'd be willing to wager that even when I mentioned this at the beginning of this presentation, many didn't react to my stating that God has jealousy.

But, here it is, and – Wow – it just doesn't sound right, does it? **God has jealousy? Why would God be jealous of anyone or anything?**

Jealousy is one of the **many of the characteristics that God reveals to us about Himself that we would NOT have assumed.** It doesn't seem to fit with how we **"imagine"** God to be.²⁵

SLIDE: JOE RICH – ON STAGE.

Joe Rich on Broadway – The Musical, starring John Wayne. A hurdle that we all face to better understanding God is that all of us like to consider ourselves as both the author, director and the main character in the musical play that is our lives. God, of course, is

²⁵ This insightful train of thought is from J. I. Packer's book, "Knowing God", 1973, Hodder & Stoughton, pages 169-175

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part of the play to one extent or another. And, we imagine Him as being – *for the most part* – like us, although much *better*. We naturally assign to Him *only* those characteristics that we admire – and thus jealousy would *never* enter the picture.

- “*Nobody would imagine that Yehovah is a jealous God – oh yes, the gods of the Greeks and Romans and Babylonians were jealous, but not Yehovah.*”

Why? Because we know jealousy to be ‘the green-eyed monster’ that sometimes exists within ourselves. Our understanding of jealousy is usually based on our experience of it in our own lives, and it is often unwarranted or sinfully expressed, and destructive. It is a vice, one of the most cancerous and soul-destroying vices that there is. Since God is perfectly good, it’s almost *impossible* for us to ever imagine that jealousy is found in Him because *we hate it in ourselves*.

But, then we discover the *Original* script of the musical, and we find that the Real Author and Director is God, and even more surprising, He tells us that He is NOT like us.

- He is not just a larger version of us (which is the way pagans saw the gods). Yehovah is so completely different and holy that we have a difficult time even describing Him.

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So, if we want to know His is really like, we MUST believe Him when He tells us Who He is and what He is like. We need to give up our own ideas and listen to the words of Scripture. **God is Truth, and He tells us the Truth about Himself.**

- And, one of those truths is that He has jealousy.

SLIDE: ISN'T JEALOUSY A SIN?

But, I don't understand – Isn't jealousy a sin? I can recall an old joke by Rodney Dangerfield: *“My wife's jealousy is getting ridiculous. The other day she looked at my calendar and wanted to know who May was.”* But Yes – jealousy can be a sin. Jealousy is an UGLY word. It implies selfishness, suspicion, and distrust; it is seen as possessive, demanding, and overbearing. It stifles individuality, it degrades and demeans, and it can destroy friendships and marriages.

We view jealousy as a horrible trait and we hate it. **But – Scripture says God HAS jealousy.**

Now, I want to make a distinction at this point – Scripture does **NOT** say that God has ENVY; it says that He has JEALOUSY. The words “Envy” and “Jealousy” are often used interchangeably today, but there is a significant *difference* between them that helps to better understand God's jealousy.

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SLIDE: ENVY VS JEALOUSY

- **Envy** involves wanting something which belongs to *another* person and despise them for it.] When you envy, you think you need something that belongs to someone else. Scripture uses the word “covet” as a synonym for envy.
- **Jealousy**, on the other hand, involves something that is *ours* that is in the process of being taken away by another.

Can you see the difference? **Envy** is when you want some thing or some advantage that *another person* has but you don't, and you feel bitter about them for having it. Envy caused the fall of Adam and the fall of Satan – they both envied what God had but they did not.

On the other hand, **jealousy** involves *something or someone* that IS ours– like our spouse. We suspect that our spouse is being lured away by some other person who, in their eyes, seems to be more attractive, capable and successful, and we are afraid of losing them.

- “Envy” is always a sin because it involves **coveting** something that is NOT ours – it is essentially saying that God is not doing right by me.
- “Jealousy” has to do with something that IS ours that we want to protect. With humans, it *may* be a sin depending on circumstances.

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Jealousy crosses over into sin when it becomes an ongoing paranoia that needs continuing reassurance from our spouse because of our own insecurity, and it often destroys relationships.

Now – concerning God, it should be obvious that He CANNOT be ‘*envious*’ of anyone because He doesn’t need anything. He is not insecure. **Scripture NEVER says that God has envy** – “love does not envy.”²⁶ But it DOES say that He has jealousy. And, since God is all-knowing, there is no ambiguity in the situation – **something He holds dear IS being drawn away.**

The fact that God says that He has jealousy occurs in more places in Scripture that you might suspect. For example...

SLIDE: 2ND COMMANDMENT

Right in the 2nd Commandment, we hear God saying:

“You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, **am a jealous God**” (Exodus 20:4–5).

²⁶ 1 Corinthians 13

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In the 2nd Commandment, God says that He didn't want Israel worshipping false gods. He doesn't always tell us the *WHY* of something – He expects obedience *because* He said it, even though we don't know “why”. But here, He tells us WHY we should not worship idols:

- 'Because I, the LORD your God, am **a jealous God**'

Because He is jealous, and the implication is that giving away allegiance that belongs to Him ALONE will provoke a response from Him that we are not going to like.

If you're like me, growing up Catholic, I learn an *abbreviated* version of the Ten Commandments – the Cliff Notes version – so the fact that God's jealousy is in the text came as a surprise to me many years ago. **Here, He is unashamedly trying to teach Israel that He IS jealous!**

Remember how we read **the Shema** earlier. Jesus, when quoting it, command us to believe in the One True God and to love Him with '**ALL** your heart, and with **ALL** your soul, and with **ALL** your mind.'

- Jesus repeated the word 'ALL' **three times** for a reason: **God is jealous of idols** – whether they be REAL IDOLS made of wood or stone, or whether they be idols fashioned from a self-centered allegiance to materialism, science, pride or ego. **God is jealous of ALL our allegiances.**

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GOLDEN CALF INCIDENT

Another surprise I had about the Ten Commandments was learning the fact that the Israelites, standing at the foot of Mt. Sinai, HEARD God speak the Ten Commandments. **The Words were AUDIBLE – and very LOUD!**²⁷ That's why the people said to Moses: "you talk to Him; He scares us."

Moses then goes up the mountain and God Himself writes the commandments on stone tablets. But, after 40 days, many Israelites fear Moses is dead, so they get Aaron to build a golden calf to represent God (gods) and go before them in the wilderness. Moses, coming down the mountain, sees this violation of the 2nd Commandment and breaks the two tablets in horror. 3,000 people die at the hand of the Levites on Moses orders and thus God's wrath is stayed.

God then orders Moses *back up the mountain* – this guy is about 81 years old and must be getting tired – and God gives him a second set of tablets. And God then reveals some *additional* information about His character:

²⁷ Judaism refers to them as the *Words* of the covenant – 'Aseret ha-D'varim' (Ex. 34:28, Deut. 4:13 and Deut. 10:4).

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SLIDE: HIS NAME IS JEALOUS

“...for you shall not worship any other god, for ADONAI, whose very Name is Jealous, is a jealous God” Ex. 34:14 (CJB)

This is amazingly to me – it is a most significant text – and a COMPLETELY UNEXPECTED ONE. *God's very name is jealous.* This doesn't mean that we call Him 'Jealous' instead of 'Yehovah' – it means that Jealousy is BASIC to Who He is. Not only is He jealous – He actually WANTS to be known as a Jealous God.

So, here we see that Jealousy is not only NOT inconsistent with His character (His Name), it is in some sense an EMBODIMENT OF IT.

And this was crucially important that His people realize this!

I believe that this is part of what Proverbs 9 means when it states, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”²⁸ One of the explanations I have read as to the 'Fear of the Lord' is, “*the continual awareness that our loving heavenly Father is watching and evaluating everything we think, say, and do.*”²⁹

²⁸ Proverbs 9:10

²⁹ <http://www.gotquestions.org/fear-Lord-beginning-wisdom.html>

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Jesus told each of the seven churches in Revelation 1—2, “I know your works.” Proverbs is telling us that we cannot grow in wisdom if we try to remake Who the Lord is, to “tame” Him into a *non-threatening, non-jealous* nobody. When we imagine the Lord as a permissive deity who exists simply to bless us and let us do whatever we want, we will not fear Him in the way He deserves to be feared. And we will remain foolish.

THE NATURE OF GOD’S JEALOUSY

But *still* – the word may make us a bit uneasy. What is the nature of this divine jealousy? How can jealousy be a *virtue* in God when it is a *vice* in humans? **HOW CAN WE PRAISE GOD FOR BEING JEALOUS?**

Well – when trying to answer this question, we need to remember that Biblical statements about God’s characteristics – like jealousy or wrath – are **anthropomorphisms** – *that is, describing God in the closest human terms we can relate to in order that we might better understand Him.*

A text that reads “the finger of God” is an example of this. The Bible is not really asserting that God has physical parts like human beings. It is only describing things in ways to which we can best relate. The Bible speaks of God coming down to earth to see what’s going on – but, does an Omnipresent God really need to do this? It says that His eyes are running to and fro across the earth – image

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that sight if it were literal! That's all anthropomorphic language. The Bible uses this and other types of literary language because the only language the Holy Spirit has by which to speak to us about Himself is our human language.

Augustine recognized the frailty of human words when he said, *'nothing is able to be said that is worthy of God.'*

Anthropomorphisms are just devices – like the tools to help us short people reach that package of cookies on the top shelf.

- But, the thing with anthropomorphisms is that we can easily end up *holding the wrong end of the stick*, so to speak.

We have to remember that WE are NOT the criteria by which to measure Him. 'God is not a man', as we saw Him declare in Numbers 23. The Creator has NONE of the LIMITATIONS that we have – His knowledge is *not* limited, *nor* His power, *nor* His wisdom, *nor* His strength. God has none of the limitations that we have due to our fallen nature.

This means that God also does not have a Jealousy that is sinful. His jealousy does not arise because of envy and spite, as human jealousy so often does. God's jealousy is PURE – He has **a holy zeal to preserve something that is supremely precious to Him**.

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So, what is God's jealousy aimed at?

SLIDE: GOD'S JEALOUSY

PROTECT WHAT IS RIGHTFULLY HIS ALONE

- HIS SOVEREIGNTY
- HIS GLORY
- HIS NAME
- HIS BRIDE

For me, the best way of understanding God's jealousy is to think in terms of His **ZEAL to PROTECT that which rightfully is His Alone**.

- You protect your reputation, you protect your wife, you protect your children.
- Why? Because these things are part of your heart.

And Scripture makes it both painfully but wonderfully clear that He **WILL protect that which is exclusively His**.

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➤ FIRST: THE LORD IS JEALOUS OVER HIS SOVEREIGNTY.

God is sovereign and supreme over all. As Creator, that means that God is sovereign over us. He has a right to rule events here on earth as He wants to so that His will be accomplished. – ‘Father, may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.’

The Shema that we read earlier *demand*s that we recognize that He is the one true God. Who men *choose* to identify as God (god) is ultimately up to them, but that doesn't change the reality of Who is the True God and what His reaction will be to challenges to His sovereignty.

Joshua addressed the people when they entered the Promised Land as follows: “If you have no desire to worship the Lord, choose today whom you will worship, whether it be **the gods** whom your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; **but as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.**”³⁰

- **Who is God in my life?** – that's also an issue of sovereignty. **If the God of Scripture is not sovereign in ALL parts of my life, then those parts that do not bow to Him are controlled by our rebellious nature.**³¹

³⁰ Joshua 24:15

³¹ *Right Now Counts Forever - For the Glory of God*, R.C. Sproul

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God is jealous over His Sovereignty in the world AND IN US.

➤ **SECOND: THE LORD IS JEALOUS OVER HIS GLORY**

He is the highest and greatest Being there is, infinitely holy and glorious. He therefore zealously desires exclusive devotion and worship – anything less would make Him less than the God of the whole earth.

“I am the LORD, that is My name;
I will not give My glory to another,
Nor My praise to graven images” Isaiah 42:8

God will not share His glory with other so-called gods because He would be elevating them to a position that would not be consistent with their true nature, and He would also be untrue to His Own nature. He MUST be faithful to Himself because He IS Truth. God WILL act to preserve His Holy and Sovereign position, and He demands that His creatures acknowledge the reality of the situation.

This is where we must be careful in our efforts both to reach out to people of different faiths and even in our everyday conversations with our neighbors.

- If 'Allah' is just another name for Yehovah, that's not the God of the Scriptures.

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- And if they're talking about Jesus – if it is Jesus of the JW's or Jesus of the Mormons, they're following a *different* Jesus.³²

This matters! There is Only One God, and He is passionate about His Glory not being given to others.

The Israelites at Peor bowed down to a stone statue representing a false god. That's rare today. Instead, we see people engage in an *intellectual* type of idolatry. That's when we *imagine God* to be a God without those uncomfortable attributes or holiness, wrath, and justice – a God Who would *never* be as *narrow-minded* as to restrict salvation to only One Way. This is happening both outside and inside churches. With this mental makeover, people fashion an idol in their own minds and are as guilty of idolatry as a person who is worshiping a stone image. Christians can fall into this practice as well as non-Christians.

We as **Christians also face an *additional vulnerability*** regarding God's Glory. It is the temptation to make *ourselves* and our talents the center of attention. There can be only one Center of the universe. We have to be careful to walk humbly before Him; the moment we allow ourselves to receive the glory, we set ourselves up as rivals to the Most High.

³² II Corinthians 11:14

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“God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong...”³³

God will assuredly disabuse us of our pride, so why think we will get away with it?

Penitent souls are always accepted, because they are not in God's way; proud souls are always rejected, because they are in God's way.³⁴

➤ THIRD: THE LORD IS JEALOUS OVER HIS NAME

Name = Reputation. God's Name is the epitome of Who He is. God WILL protect His reputation. The Lord is very careful that all creation should see that He is a good, and gracious, and a just and almighty God Who keeps all His promises. Moses argued this very point back to God when He threatened to wipe out the whole bunch and start over:

“Now if You slay this people as one man, **then the nations** who have heard of Your fame **will say**, '(It was) Because **the Lord**

³³ I Corinthians.1:27

³⁴ Charles Spurgeon, *A Jealous God*, sermon delivered March 29th, 1863
<http://www.spurgeon.org/sermons/0502.htm>

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could not bring this people into the land which He promised them by oath, therefore He slaughtered them in the wilderness."³⁵

God takes His reputation seriously, to the point of wiping out the Nation. He doesn't slay them, but they do not get off scot-free: they will wander in the wilderness until they all die, and they will not enter the land.

One of the leading ways that we provoke His jealousy regarding His Reputation is when we **misrepresent Him and thereby bring dishonor to the Name**. When people see us, knowing that we're Christians and acting in a way that dishonors Him, it's an assault on His reputation. God will be patient with us – hoping for repentance – but He will eventually protect His name by acting to correct us.

This is actually part of the mandate of the **3rd Commandment**:

"You shall not take the **name of the Lord your God in vain**, for the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain."³⁶

We represent Him to the world. One of the greatest sins for a Christian is to forget Who we represent.³⁷

³⁵ Numbers 14:15-16

³⁶ Exodus 20:7

³⁷ Taken from "The greatest sin for a Jew is to forget what he represents." Abraham Joshua Heschel

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In previous presentations, I have voiced my **concern with some of the teachings and actions of people in the prophetic movement** today. How often do we hear someone say, “*The Lord told me...*” or, “*I had a vision and went to heaven and Jesus said to me...*” – and then they recount things that God obviously did NOT say. This is a form of false prophecy, and anyone who does this is guilty of violating the 3rd Commandment **because it attaches God’s Name and Reputation to a falsehood.**

- **This is taking the Lord’s Name IN VAIN as much as in a curse word or in a falsely sworn oath.**

The thing about false prophecy is that we *think* that if the person is “sincere”, God overlooks it – we get a “mulligan”, a “do-over”. But according to Scripture **unintentional sin ALSO required a sacrifice to atone for it.** Sincerity does NOT matter in determining whether or not you violate this commandment.

- *Unintentionally* spilling red paint on a white rug is just as much a violation of the rug’s whiteness as if it had been done *intentionally*.

We violate this commandment thru presumptuously assuming that God is the Source of *almost everything of a spiritual nature* that pops into our heads.

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- We forget that the world, the flesh and the devil are also actors in the stage play of our lives.

This nonchalant approach to prophecy is a danger to the Church and an insult to God's Reputation as the God Who is Truth and Who does not lie. But, like Moses and the other leaders on the Plain of Moab, most of today's church leadership sits quietly by and smiles.

God is long-suffering, but He WILL eventually act to **chastise both the individual and an entire movement, if necessary.** Perhaps you may now better understand my passion for His Name.

I CAN IDENTIFY WITH PHINEAS.

- And finally: THE LORD IS JEALOUS OVER HIS BRIDE.

A key to understanding God's jealousy is to realize that all the references to it in the Torah concern idol-worship in one form or another by Israel. It was not so much about other nations doing it – it was about ISRAEL doing it. Why? Because God's covenant with Israel was like a MARRIAGE, which requires unqualified love and loyalty.

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God made a statement on marriage in Genesis chapter 2. He said: "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and **they become one flesh.**"³⁸

In God's eyes, when a person is joined to another – be it a person or an idol – they **become one flesh** – intentionally or not.³⁹

God WILL protect His covenant–marriage. **And His Jealousy is not merely a passing mood limited to the Old Testament!** In 1st Corinthians chapter 10, Paul wrote:

"... I say that the things which the *Gentiles* sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons." **Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?**"⁴⁰

So, even believers can provoke God's jealousy. Our covenant of grace with God is a marriage covenant. He will not tolerate us giving our love to another.

- And *because* of this, God's jealousy is very likely to **flame up** over things going on in our lives.

³⁸ Genesis 2:24

³⁹ I Corinthians 1:16

⁴⁰ 1 Corinthians 10:22

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He overlooks things in others that He will not overlook in us. Just as a husband is jealous for bride's honor, so Christ is jealous for the purity of his Church. We cannot be His favorites and at the same time escape His watchfulness.

But – and it's a good but – God's Jealousy is GOOD NEWS for us. It is what protects us from being plucked out of His hand.

- **The intensity of God's anger at threats to our relationship with Him is directly proportionate to the depths of His love for us!**

CLOSING

How to wrap up a presentation on the Jealousy of God? I had to think and pray a long time about this because the word "Jealousy" still carries with it an uneasy connotation. But then I realized that God's Jealousy for His beloved – for you and I – is a guarantee that He WILL act to keep me close to Christ. That is a security to me, knowing that He will act devotedly and decisively to keep me in the palm of His hand. It's part of His rest that He promised.

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SLIDE: I would like to close by briefly reading from a sermon by Charles Spurgeon which he delivered in 1863 – I realize that some might think that I was actually there to hear it – but I was not (I missed the train). I have updated some of the language to make it clearer.

“Your Lord is very jealous of your love, O believer. He choose you – He cannot bear that you should choose another. He brought you with His own blood – He cannot endure that you should think that you are your own, or that you belong to this world. He loved you with such a love that He would not stop in heaven without you; He would sooner die than you should perish, and He cannot endure that anything should stand between your heart’s love and Himself.

He is very jealous of your trust. He will not permit you to trust in an arm of flesh. He cannot bear that you should hew out broken cisterns, when the overflowing fountain is always free to you. When we lean upon Him, He is glad, but when we transfer our dependence to another, when we rely upon our own wisdom, or the wisdom of a friend—worst of all, when we trust in any works of our own, He is displeased, and will chasten us that He may bring us [back] to Himself.

Let this jealousy which would keep us near to Christ be also a comfort to us, for if He loves us so much as to care thus about

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our love we may be sure that he will allow (suffer) nothing to harm us, and will protect us from all our enemies.”⁴¹

Great message. **God's jealousy for us is great news!** Think of it: “No natural force, no spiritual being, absolutely nothing can overcome God. **God is our refuge**, NOT because we, like some Superstar Magician (like Balaam), can command Him to help us, **but because He wants to.**”⁴²

But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:37–39

Amen.

⁴¹ Charles Spurgeon. *Ibid.*

⁴² James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, InterVarsity Press, 1976, p. 207