

## Our Jealous God *Deuteronomy 4:15-24*

### Introduction

Is it a good thing that our God is a jealous God?

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### **Deuteronomy 4:15-24**

<sup>15</sup> You saw no form of any kind the day the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the fire. Therefore watch yourselves very carefully, <sup>16</sup> so that you do not become corrupt and make for yourselves an idol, an image of any shape, whether formed like a man or a woman, <sup>17</sup> or like any animal on earth or any bird that flies in the air, <sup>18</sup> or like any creature that moves along the ground or any fish in the waters below. <sup>19</sup> And when you look up to the sky and see the sun, the moon and the stars—all the heavenly array—do not be enticed into bowing down to them and worshiping things the LORD your God has apportioned to all the nations under heaven. <sup>20</sup> But as for you, the LORD took you and brought you out of the iron-smelting furnace, out of Egypt, to be the people of his inheritance, as you now are.

<sup>21</sup> The LORD was angry with me because of you, and he solemnly swore that I would not cross the Jordan and enter the good land the LORD your God is giving you as your inheritance. <sup>22</sup> I will die in this land; I will not cross the Jordan; but you are about to cross over and take possession of that good land. <sup>23</sup> Be careful not to forget the covenant of the LORD your God that he made with you; do not make for yourselves an idol in the form of anything the LORD your God has forbidden. <sup>24</sup> For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.

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### Exposition

#### **I. The Evil of Idolatry (Vv. 15-20)**

As we read verses 15-20, we see that God's nature dictates how His people should worship Him. Because the God who spoke to the Israelites at Horeb did not take any form, the people were commanded to not make any idol, image, or statute that would represent Him. God's Word was sufficient to represent Him to His people. As the Creator, God spoke the world into existence. As the Creator, God sustains the world by the power of His Word. God is holy. He is not like His creation. He is distinct from His creation. God is self-sufficient. God is the redeemer of His people. He is the one who delivered His people from their captivity in Egypt.

When people attempt to depict God or replace God with created things, the result is that they will ultimately distort God. And, when our understanding of God is distorted, our lives will be corrupted. This is what the apostle Paul clearly teaches us in **Romans 1:18-32**...

Idolatry, which is what we do when we let something else take God's place in our lives, leads to our corruption. Thus, the evil of idolatry is that it distorts God and destroys us.

#### **II. The Jealousy of God (Vv. 21-24)**

In verse 21, Moses presents himself as an example of God's faithfulness to keep His Word. As the LORD swore to Moses, he would not enter the land on account of the Israelites' sin. Moses' very speech at this moment should have served as a striking reminder that God does not play around with His promises. He is jealous for the devotion of His people. He will not tolerate idolatry. Those who forget His covenant, with its blessings and curses, would not be spared.

Initially, this might seem harsh to view God as jealous, but what we must see is that God's jealous is an expression of His love for His people. On this matter, OT scholar Peter Craigie wrote,

To construct images would be to indicate that the first love of the Israelites had been forgotten, and to this the response of the Lord would be jealousy. Jealousy, however, does not represent a change in God, but is, as it were, the reverse of the coin of love; it was the people who were prone to change and forgetfulness, and from outside the relationship of love, God was indeed awesome like a *consuming fire*.

The imagery of God as a consuming fire was intended to warn the people. They should worship and serve the LORD only. They should do so in a manner that reflects His character. Worship and devotion should be filled with awe! This is part of the reason why the author of Hebrews refers to this passage in Deuteronomy when he wrote, "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire."

Our jealous, holy God is not to be trifled with! He is an all-consuming fire of holy righteousness. He demands that His people be wholly devoted to Him alone. Again, the apostle Paul teaches us in **1 Corinthians 10:14-22** that the idolatry arouses the righteous jealous of God...

Our God's jealousy is a good thing because it aims to deliver us from the fleeting pleasures of sin and restore us to the worship and joy that we were made for!

### **Conclusion**

God is not disinterested in you and your life. His jealousy is a reminder that He cares. He loves you. In fact, He doesn't just tell us that He loves us, He demonstrated His love for us in that while we were sinners, Christ Jesus died for us.

You were created to know and glorify the one true living God. And He has made a way to restore you to this purpose through the redemption that is offered in Jesus. Yet, we not only live in a world that is full of idols, as Calvin noted, "our own hearts are perpetual idol factories." We are always being tempted to look to someone or something else other than God.

But our God is jealous for us. He pursues us. He disciplines us. He restores us. He loves us. And this morning, if you have come to realize by the work of the Holy Spirit that you are guilty of idolatry, of exchanging the truth of God for a lie, then today, this very moment, you can be forgiven and reconciled to God. His jealous does not mean that He doesn't want you, but rather, He wants you to know and love Him just as He has known and loved you.

Will you turn away from the idols this morning and return to God?