

Wisdom of the Bible ~ Deuteronomy ~ Leader's Notes

Note: As the Handout includes the scripture verses that essentially answer the questions, these Leader's Notes discuss only two somewhat sticky issues.

1. What does being a *jealous* God mean? Could it mean that the Lord demands that you serve him only? (Deut 5:9, 6:15)

God's jealousy means that He is deeply committed to guarding His own glory. Jealousy for our own glory as humans is wrong. We are not to be proud, but humble. We don't deserve the honor that belongs to God alone. But it would be wrong for God *not* to be jealous for His own glory. It would mean idolatry!

God is jealous when someone gives to another something that rightly belongs to Him. In these verses, God is speaking of people making idols and bowing down and worshiping those idols instead of giving God the worship that belongs to Him alone. God is possessive of the worship and service that belong to Him. It is a sin to worship or serve anything other than God.

It is a sin when we desire, or we are envious, or we are jealous of someone because he has something that we do not have. It is a different use of the word "jealous" when God says He is jealous. What He is jealous of belongs to Him; worship and service belong to Him alone, and are to be given to Him alone.

Perhaps a practical example will help us understand the difference. If a husband sees another man flirting with his wife, he is right to be jealous, for only he has the right to flirt with his wife. This type of jealousy is not sinful; it is entirely appropriate. Jealousy is a sin when it is a desire for something that does not belong to you. Worship, praise, honor, and adoration belong to God alone, for only He is truly worthy of it. Therefore, God is rightly jealous when worship, praise, honor, or adoration is given to idols. [www.gotquestions.org/jealous-God.html]

Another interesting view of jealousy is presented by Charles Spurgeon: "He loved you with such a love that He couldn't remain in heaven without you. He would sooner die than that you should perish. He stripped Himself with nakedness, that He might clothe you with beauty. He bowed His face to shame and spitting that He might lift you up to honor and glory. He can't endure that you should love the world. His love is as strong as death towards you. If you don't love Him with a single heart, He will take away that husband, smite that child, bring you from riches to poverty, from health to sickness, even to the gates of the grave because He loves you so much He can't endure that anything should stand between your heart's love and Him. Remember, Christian, you are married to a jealous husband!"

6. The Lord recognizes that people are not always going to obey him, are going to be "stiff necked," are going to backslide, and basically screw up. What does he say about this? Is there any sin that he will not forgive?

Deut 29:18-21 – ¹⁸ Make sure that no man, woman, family, or tribe standing here today turns from the Lord our God to worship the gods of other nations. This would be like a root that grows to be a bitter and poisonous plant. ¹⁹ Make sure that there is no one here today who hears these solemn demands and yet convinces himself that all will be well with him, even if he stubbornly goes his own way. That would destroy all of you, good and evil alike. ²⁰ The Lord will not forgive such a man. Instead, the Lord's burning anger will flame up against him, and all the disasters written in this book will fall on him until the Lord has destroyed him completely. ²¹ The Lord will make an example of him before all the tribes of Israel and will bring disaster on him in accordance with all the curses listed in the covenant that is written in this book of the Lord's teachings. [GNB/TEV]

In the above passage, God presents the truth that He is against those who assure themselves of their eternal safety while they are stubborn of heart and have idols in their lives. Moses specifically speaks of the "gods of other nations," but the meaning is broader and means any god or idol that we put ahead of the Lord. God promises to single this person out for calamity, for he is deceived and enslaved to idol worship, while professing to be a child of God.

Some say that this is merely Old Testament law, which does not apply to us today who are under New Testament grace. In so doing, they blunt the sharp edge of the sword, which is designed to cause us to examine our lives and see if we are truly "safe" (verse 19), and they deny that "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness..." (2 Timothy 3:16-17). But, for those who prefer to hear the viewpoint from the New Testament, this passage by Paul says essentially the same thing:

⁹ Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)

This passage states clearly that the "unrighteous" (and then it goes on to define who are unrighteous) will not inherit the kingdom of God. It could not be clearer that those who are habitually involved in sexual immorality, idolatry (which includes all forms of impurity, according to Colossians 3:5), homosexuality, thieves, greedy, drunkards, etc. are not saved. Those who are saved are no longer involved in this type of activity, which truth is communicated to us in the above passage by saying, "Such WERE some of you..." Some of the Corinthians *were* sexually immoral, idolatrous, homosexuals, etc. but they are not now. Something happened. They were changed, cleansed, sanctified, washed, etc. by God.