

A Jealous God – Deuteronomy 4:24

I. INTRODUCTION •

A. Read Deut. 4:15-24

B. Rehearsing Their History

1. 40 years have passed since the Exodus & Israel now stands poised on the eastern side of the Jordan River, waiting to cross over & take possession of the Promised Land.
2. This is a new generation. Anyone who'd been 20 or older when Israel left bondage in Egypt 40 years before has now passed away.
3. Their leader Moses will not be taking them across the river and into the land. That task will fall to *Joshua*, Moses' faithful assistant.
4. So as this new generation prepares to enter Canaan, Moses knows it's important to rehearse their history for the last 4 decades & remind them of all the lessons they've learned so far.
5. They must be warned by the mistakes their fathers made so they won't repeat them.

II. TEXT

A. Vs. 15-23

1. In these vs. Moses reminds them that when God spoke to them at Mt. Sinai & gave them the 10 Commandments, He didn't appear to them in a form they could identify with a shape.
2. All the people saw was a fiery cloud that sat on the summit of the mount.
3. Then they heard God's voice speaking the words of the Commandments.
4. Because God took no form, & because the 2nd commandment explicitly *forbids* it, they must make sure they never stoop to fashioning an image as a representative of God.
 - a. in vs. 16-18 Moses tells them to never make an image of a human or animal to represent God.
 - b. in v. 19 he tells them to never associate God with one of the celestial bodies; the stars, sun, or moon.
5. Then in vs. 20-23 Moses reminds them of the most important thing – that they are in a *special covenant* with God, a sacred promise *binds* them together.
 - a. God took them out of bondage in Egypt, brought them to Mt. Sinai & made them an offer they couldn't refuse:
 - b. if they would embrace Him as their God & walk in His ways, then they would be more blessed than any nation on Earth,
 - c. and He would work *through* them to bring Redemption from the Fall to the *entire world*.
6. Moses knew how important it was this *new generation* realize what made them unique, what set them apart from all the other nations & peoples of the world, *WAS their covenant with God*.
 - a. they needed to *identify* themselves in *light* of that covenant.
 - b. *it had to be their main thing, their distinctive*.
7. The reason why it needed to be so important to them, is because it was that

important to God.

8. That's what Moses makes clear in v. 24.

B. V. 24

For the LORD your God *is* a consuming fire, a jealous God.

1. When God *first spoke* to Moses in the wilderness of Midian, He appeared in the form of a burning bush.
 - a. Moses was out tending his father in law's flock one day when he saw a sight that perked his interest.
 - b. now, the wilderness can be a pretty monotonous & boring place & any new thing is worth checking out.
 - c. so when Moses saw a bush on fire, he went over to investigate.
 - d. the closer he got the more obvious it became that something unusual was afoot.
 - e. the dry desert brush *ought* to have burned up quickly, but this one kept burning intensely.
 - f. as he drew near, he realized this was no natural flame, for the bush itself was not consumed.
 - g. then God spoke to Him from the midst of the flame & commissioned him with his call to lead Israel to freedom.
2. This image left a lasting impression on Moses.
3. And it was to this same place, Mt. Sinai, he led the nation once they'd been liberated from bondage in Egypt.
4. They camped at the foot of the mount for an entire year & God appeared to them in a fiery cloud that settled on the top of the hill.
5. Just as He'd spoken to Moses from the midst of the *burning bush*, He spoke to the entire nation from the midst of the *burning cloud*, & declared to them His Word.
6. It was then, while speaking the words of the 2nd commandment that He told them He is a *jealous* God.
7. Exodus 20:4-5

“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* . . .

C. A Jealous God

1. This self-professed description of God *bothers* many people.
 - a. to them, the word “jealous” carries a *strong negative* connotation.
 - b. jealousy seems a quality *unworthy* of God.
2. But the kind of jealousy God possesses is not the selfish & clutching thing we're accustomed to.
3. God's jealousy is a *necessary part* of His love for His people & the *covenant* He's entered with them.
4. Does a husband have a right to expect his wife to be faithful to him and their marriage covenant?
5. How about a wife; does she have the right to expect her husband to keep his

- affection and devotion for *her alone*?
6. The marriage covenant places a circle of exclusivity around a husband & wife no other affection is to compete with.
 7. This is the proper domain of jealousy, the realm in which it belongs – between covenant partners who have pledged their lives & love to one another.
 8. We can *understand* when a husband or wife who's been abused & neglected by their mate *strays in their thoughts* from their marriage covenant – but even then we don't *excuse* such thoughts.
 9. What's *totally inexcusable* is when a man or woman is *disloyal* to their mate who's a *great* spouse; loyal, loving, selfless, tender, & considerate.
 10. All of us would agree that the more perfectly a husband or wife fulfills their part of the marriage covenant, the more right they have to expect the faithfulness of their mate.
 10. God was the PERFECT covenant partner to Israel, and He had EVERY right to expect Israel's faithfulness and loyalty.
 11. That's what it means when Moses says He is a jealous God.
 - a. Israel had entered into covenant with Him.
 - b. because God had been utterly faithful in blessing & protecting them, He had every right to expect their whole-hearted devotion & loyalty.
 12. His warning here was against *idolatry*; that Israel would stray from Him to devotion to other gods.
 12. Until this point, Israel had not really had much of a problem with idolatry.
 - a. oh sure, there'd been that golden calf thing early on but God had dealt with it radically & quickly.
 - b. they'd learned their lesson & for the next 38 years while they wandered the wilderness, they'd not had much occasion to encounter idolatry.
 13. All of that was about to change when they entered Canaan.
 - a. the Canaanites worshipped *many* different gods, each represented by an idol.
 - b. and the worship of their gods was incredibly immoral & brutal.
 - c. many of their religious practices were enticing to the flesh.
 - d. the children of Israel would find themselves face to face with the temptation to join in their perverted practices.
 14. So Moses issues an urgent warning – “Don't yield to the temptation to worship idols.
 - a. “You're in covenant with God.”
 - b. “And He takes that covenant very, very seriously.”
 - c. “He will guard it.”
 - d. “If you turn from Him to worship idols, well, then you will discover that He is a consuming fire.”

D. Consuming Fire

1. His fire *devours* all that which moves *outside* the covenant & leaves only that which is *faithful* to it.
2. Fire *purifies* by *devouring*;
 - a. it consumes that which is *temporary*
 - b. and makes more pure that which *lasts*.

4. That's what God does with those who have entered into covenant with Him.
 - a. He *strips away* all that which only clutters up our lives, to leave only that which is eternal.
 - b. He *consumes* the chaff to yield the wheat.
 - c. He *devours* the vain to reveal the real.
 - d. He *incinerates* the worthless to increase the precious.
5. He is so jealous for His covenant with us that He ever works to remove the *petty & pointless* to increase the *relevant & useful*.

E. Our Covenant

1. You and I are in *covenant* with God.
2. It's a *different* covenant than the one we read about here in Deuteronomy,
3. But it's still a *covenant* with God.
4. Theirs was a *national* covenant. Its terms were – Keep the Law & be blessed with *earthly* blessing.
5. Ours is a *spiritual* covenant. Its terms are – Keep the Faith & enjoy *eternal life*.
6. Theirs was based on the blood of bulls & goats.
7. Ours is based on something better; the blood of Jesus Christ.
8. And our covenant brings us into a something theirs could not – genuine intimacy with God.
9. And **THAT'S** the whole point of the covenant God made with us through Christ . . .
 - a. it's not just a ticket to heaven,
 - b. our covenant is a relationship of *intimate communion* & fellowship with a Perfect Lover.
 - c. this is why the covenant is so often likened to *marriage* – because marriage is the closest human relationship we can use to picture our relationship with God.
 - d. listen to what Paul says in Ephesians 5:32; after detailing the roles of the husband & the wife in marriage, he turns the tables & says -
This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.
 - e. he draws a parallel between the covenant of a husband & wife, & that which exists between Jesus & His bride, the Church, you & I.
 - f. Paul is even *more* clear in 2 Corinthians 11:2 when he says –
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.
10. If God was jealous for *Israel* under the *Old* Covenant, how much more do suppose He is for *us* under the *New*?
11. What He's jealous for is our hearts, our *affection & devotion* –
 - a. not to a *religion* or *church*,
 - b. not to a *denomination* or *movement*;
 - c. but to **HIM!**
12. Our *loyalty* isn't to a creed, a statement of faith, or a theology – it's to God.
13. Our *covenant* isn't with a philosophy or moral ethic – It's to a living Person whose name is Jesus.

III. CONCLUSION

A. He Sees Our Hearts

1. Now here's the thing – this One with whom we're in covenant sees what in these hearts of ours.
2. He knows what affections compete with our desire for Him.
3. He knows all about our struggle with loyalties that compete with our loyalty to Him.
4. And He's pledged Himself in this covenant of ours to *purify* our hearts and make them wholly His.

B. What's Happening

1. Do you want to know what your life is about today, what's been going on lately?
2. Here it is – God is at work as a consuming fire, purifying you & laying claim to every corner of your heart.
3. He's keeping His end of the covenant while at the same time, *U you keep yours!*
4. That's what the fire is all about – God is at work in you to enable you to give Him *everything*.
5. Both the trials & the blessings you're experiencing are His *gifts* to devour the worthless & purify the eternal in you.
6. You are His fiancé – and He's preparing you for the day when you will walk the aisle of the clouds to His altar & enter into the of eternal companionship with Him.
7. One of the greatest joys of a Bride to be is shopping for a wedding gown.
 - a. it is so much fun to look through magazines & catalogs
 - b. friends & relatives get involved, & it's just a great time.\
 - c. but once the gown is selected, then comes the difficult part – getting fitted.
 - d. suddenly the joy of shopping is forgotten in the tiring routine of measurements & tailoring.
 - e. some gowns require multiple fittings to get it just right.
 - f. but finally, it's all done – & that gown looks awesome.
 - g. the bride looks like she was born to wear that gown.
 - h. what bride doesn't absolutely stunning on her wedding day?!?!
8. This life, today, is but the *fitting room of God's Spirit* as He tailors your heart for that day when the trumpet sounds it's time to rise to walk the aisle to your Heavenly Groom.
9. When you're faced with a trial, don't resist or doubt the goodness of God.
10. He's just tailoring your heart, fitting it for heaven. Let God's fire do it's work.