

Make God Bigger – Day 14

El Kanna – Jealous God

I have been sharing a study of the names of God with the goal of making Him bigger in our eyes, but in Exodus 20:5, God declares Himself to be jealous. Isn't that the mark of a small person? And in the very same chapter, aren't we warned against coveting? What's up with that?

I have been stumped by this characteristic of God for a while, wondering if it shows a tendency toward egomania and domination—characteristics the term evokes in our time. A little study cleared this up. I went to several online discussions of this question, but again gotquestions.org made the most sense to me. They explained that “jealous” and “covetous,” though used interchangeably in our parlance, are not synonymous.

When I am jealous or envious, I want something I do not have. If I don't watch out, this sense of lack could drive me to do something I will regret. Cain was envious of the approval God showed to Abel when He accepted his brother's offering but not his own. God came to Cain and explained what he needed to do to win His approval, but he wasn't willing to do that. God warned him, “If you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it (Genesis 4:7 NIV).” Wanting something he was not willing to wait and work for led Cain to commit the first murder. Covetousness has been the catalyst for many sins.

That is not the kind of jealousy spoken of in Exodus 20:5. God is our creator. He has given us every good thing. Everything belongs to Him. God is jealous when we take what belongs to Him and give it to another. In our time, we have made an idol of money, power, even food among other things. El Kanna has made a 100% commitment to us, and He asks that from us in return.

God often uses earthly relationships to clarify spiritual things. He had His prophet, Hosea, marry a prostitute (Hosea 1:2) to show just how unfaithful the Israelites had been to the One who loved and cared for them. It is this picture of a jealous husband, whose wife has given away her body and her affections that expresses God's view of our disloyalty. Holy and justified.

Because He has given everything to me, He deserves my everything in return.

Exodus 20:5

Deuteronomy 6:4-5

Deuteronomy 30:19-20

Other Scriptures

What do these verses show you about the nature of God?

Other Insights