

Jesus Wept: The Bible and Human Emotions

Jealousy

Lesson #10 for March 5, 2011

Scriptures: Isaiah 14:12-14; James 3:16,17; Exodus 20:17; Genesis 37; 1 Samuel 18; Matthew 12:24.

1. Jealousy was the first sin. (*Early Writings*, p. 145; Isaiah 14:13) Paul suggested that it is the root of almost all other sin. (Romans 7:7-13) Jealousy, closely related to covetousness, is discussed in the tenth commandment. (Exodus 20:17) Is all sin emotionally-based?
2. Satan was jealous of Jesus. He wished to be consulted concerning the formation of man, and because he was not, he was filled with envy, jealousy, and hatred. He desired to receive the highest honors in heaven next to God.—Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, p. 145.
3. Lucifer was in the most enviable position that a creature could possibly be in. His Creator had promoted him to a position almost equal with Himself. But, he became jealous because he wanted to be not just a creature but a creator. How could Lucifer—so privileged and in such a perfect environment—allow himself to become jealous? Should God have made jealousy impossible? Did God intend this earth to be the solution to the war in heaven?
4. Jealousy is a kind of poison that began in the very sanctuary in heaven (Isaiah 14:14) and which can damage us not only spiritually but physically as well. (Proverbs 14:30)
5. Jealousy is particularly damaging because it tends to focus on another person or other persons, often one of our closest associates or even family members. That individual or those individuals are perceived as threats or rivals. Somehow, we erroneously believe that by tearing down that person or those people, we can raise ourselves up. Why is God described as being a jealous God? (Exodus 20:5; Deuteronomy 4:24)
6. This lesson will focus on two individuals and on two groups who were overcome by jealousy: Lucifer/Satan, King Saul, the brothers of Joseph, and the Pharisees versus Jesus.
7. Why did Satan become jealous of Jesus? We could suggest a number of theoretical reasons. However, on more careful evaluation, there really is no rational reason.
8. Read Isaiah 14:12-14; Ezekiel 28:12-15. Jealousy is at the root of what the Bible calls “the mystery of iniquity.” (2 Thessalonians 2:7) God’s response is described in Philippians 2:5-11 and is called “the mystery of godliness.” (1 Timothy 3:16)
9. The Scripture makes it clear that God’s antidote for jealousy is principled love—called *agape* in the New Testament: doing the loving thing because it is the right thing to do.
10. Read James 3:16,17. Jealousy, selfishness, disorder, and evil, are contrasted with the “wisdom from above” which is peaceful, gentle, friendly, compassionate, doing good, without prejudice or hypocrisy.
11. Solomon—sometimes described as the wisest person who ever lived—said in Proverbs 27:4 (GNB), “Anger is cruel and destructive, but it is nothing compared to jealousy.” If we allow jealousy to develop in our minds and hearts, it is like an evil disease eating out everything that is valuable in us. Unfortunately, jealousy seems to breed more jealousy.
12. Read Genesis 37. It is not hard for us to understand why Jacob favored Joseph. After all, he was the firstborn son of his favorite wife. But, why did God give Joseph those dreams? Certainly, He knew what the consequences would be. It is hard for any of us to imagine how the brothers could have been so cruel to Joseph. But, as the story worked out, with God’s

help Joseph overcame the consequences of their jealousy with his love. Even after their father was dead, the brothers lived in fear that Joseph might retaliate because of what they had done in their jealousy. (Genesis 50:15-19)

13. The life of Joseph has been compared to the life of Jesus Christ. Jealousy moved his brothers to sell him as a slave; some priests and elders were jealous of Jesus, and that jealousy fueled their actions against Him. Joseph was sold to the heathen; Jesus was sold to His enemies. Joseph was falsely accused and sent to prison because of his virtue; Jesus was falsely accused and rejected because of His righteousness. Joseph displayed noble benevolence toward his brothers; Jesus, too, forgave His enemies. The evil actions against Joseph ultimately led to good; the same thing happened with Jesus, in that the evil done against Him was turned to good, as well. (*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Monday, February 28)
14. If we allow jealousy to find a place in our minds and hearts, it will become so evil that we will find ourselves comparing ourselves to almost everyone we associate with. It will poison almost every relationship. Jealousy and true love cannot coexist.
15. Read 1 Samuel 18:1-12. God had given Saul a new “heart”—or in today’s language, a new mind. (1 Samuel 10:9) But, that did not prevent him from allowing jealousy to destroy his spirituality. At first, Saul was very happy to have David as a part of his royal household. Jonathan, Saul’s eldest son, became David’s closest friend. But, Saul allowed David’s successes in battle, celebrated by the songs of the women, to spur his jealousy. Who was the evil spirit from the Lord? Soon, Saul was ready to kill David because the Lord was obviously with David and was blessing him while the Lord had left Saul. Why couldn’t Saul have looked upon David’s successes as a blessing for himself and his country? If he recognized that God was blessing David, couldn’t he recognize that fighting against David would be equivalent to opposing God? Gamaliel recognized that possibility. (Acts 5:38,39)
16. How do we respond when an associate at work receives a promotion that we think should have been ours? Given what we know about human nature, it is almost always possible to find someone of whom we can be jealous! Lucifer was a covering cherub. He stood next to the throne of God. Apparently, he was head of the angelic choir. He led out in the worship of God. Because of envy and jealousy, he allowed all of that to be destroyed.
17. Lucifer demonstrated another characteristic of jealousy: jealousy often seeks support from other individuals against the object of our jealousy. When he was cast out of heaven, Lucifer took down one third of the angels. (Revelation 12:1-3) Then, he was not happy to see Adam and Eve enjoying such a wonderful relationship with God. Therefore, he was determined to destroy that relationship as well. Couldn’t God have prevented all that?
18. In order to allow Adam and Eve freedom and the possibility of love, God allowed Satan to inhabit one tree in the midst of the Garden of Eden. It was not hidden in some corner in an inaccessible place where Adam and Eve would never discover it. It was located in the center of the garden next to the tree of life where they would have to go every day to eat of the fruit of the tree of life. (Genesis 2:8,9) But, Satan could not follow the couple around the garden. His access to the couple was limited to the tree of knowledge.
19. 1 John 4:8,16 says, “...God is love....” It sounds so profound and yet so simple! Love is probably the word that has come to be associated with Christianity more than any other. But is it really that simple? Follow me as we consider it for a few minutes.

(For more on this point see: <https://www.theox.org/index.cfm/PageID/737/index.html>)

What God wants most of all in His universe is loving, understanding friends. (John 15:15) But, love is much more than just a warm, fuzzy emotional response. Think of the implications of this simple concept! In order to be able to love, one must also be able to hate. Otherwise love has no meaning. God wants much more than mere robots. So, in order for God to have creatures that truly love Him, He had to create them with freedom of choice. That in turn implies a lot of other things. Let us consider that.

If God wants real love and at the same time grants real freedom, then He must give us a basis on which to build that love. In essence, He must truly love us if He wants a love response in return. He will, in effect, have to win our love. But how does He do that if someone is truly free? To be *really free*, one must have *choices*. Choices are not the same as chances. If salvation were based on chance, then we are truly dealing with an arbitrary God who just enjoys entertaining Himself with our foolish activities.

In order for God to give us real freedom, He must give us *real choices*. That means that we not only must be able to see what we are choosing; but more than that, we must have some idea of the implications of that choice down the line. If you make a choice because something looks good or feels good, but you have no idea whether you are getting a deadly weapon or a child's toy, it is really nothing more than chance. In order to have a real choice, you must know what the item is and have some idea about the future implications of choosing it. Furthermore, if we lived in a universe that was completely chaotic so that a choice that appeared good today would turn out to be deadly tomorrow, again, any real freedom would be gone.

So, in order to make real love possible, God had to create an *orderly* universe in which choices that are good today are still good tomorrow. One would have to be able to study reality at least long enough during one's lifetime so that he could get a pretty good idea what the results of each of his regular choices was going to be. But, think of the implications of this! We would need to have a universe that is orderly enough so that science would be possible. "Laws" would describe the way things work.

In allowing us freedom, God recognized that sooner or later, someone might choose to work against His plan. God certainly has and had the power to step in at any moment and prevent anyone from sinning or even prevent the consequences of anyone's sins. But, if He did that, He would have to overrule our freedom.

Our little planet is and will forever be the lesson book of the universe. God has declared that love is the best—even the only—way to run a universe. The Devil and this earth are in the midst of an experiment to try to prove that God is wrong. We may choose which side of this whole "great controversy" we are going to be on. But, as we decide, let us remember that the consequences and implications of each choice are far from simple!

20. Read 1 Samuel 19. What was happening in 1 Samuel 19:9? Can an evil spirit come from the Lord? We know that in the story, at first, Saul worked subtly to destroy David. But in time, his hatred and jealousy became very open. We know of at least eight times when he tried to kill David. 1 Samuel 22:17-19 tells of the awful story of his order to kill almost the entire population of the city of Nob including 85 priests because he perceived them as friendly to David. His jealousy ultimately led Saul to a place where God could not communicate with him, and Saul believed it was necessary to approach the witch of Endor and get advice from the Devil himself. How could the leader of God's people on earth allow himself to degenerate to that level?

21. We know that jealousy led to the first murder. (Genesis 4:1-15) In turn, that ultimately led to the flood. In our day, we do not literally murder people. However, if we destroy their reputation or make their lives miserable, even hating them, how much different is that? (Matthew 5:21,22)
22. The story of the relationship between the Pharisees and Jesus is an incredibly sad one. Repeatedly, we are told that because Jesus was performing miracles and getting more and more people to believe in Him and His message, they became more determined to kill Him.
23. Jesus' ministry began in the fall of A.D. 27. At the first Passover of His ministry in the spring of A.D. 28 when He cleansed the Temple, they were ready to kill Him. (*Desire of Ages*, p. 164) A year later in the spring of A.D. 29 after Jesus had performed some miracles and exposed some of their errors in thinking, they renewed their determination to kill Him. (John 5:18) In the summer of A.D. 29 in Galilee, that determination was mentioned again in Matthew 12:14. The next year, Jesus stayed away from the Passover, but the Pharisees followed Him into Galilee and wanted to kill Him there in the spring of A.D. 30. (John 7:1) About six months before crucifixion week, we read in Luke 13:31 that they wanted to kill Him in Perea. Finally, they accomplished their task during passion week in the spring of A.D. 31. (John 11:53; Luke 19:47) What were they thinking? With all the evidence that Jesus provided, how could they have continued to work against Him?
24. The Pharisees pictured themselves as being the ultimate authorities in all things religious. They had multiplied rules for observing the Sabbath and almost every other detail of behavior in a person's life. It had become almost a full-time job just to practice the Jewish religion and follow all the rules. But, when Jesus showed up and began to show logically how foolish many of their requirements were, it was a challenge to their positions.
25. In our day, what are the major factors that influence us to become jealous? The media focus on the people they perceive as stars. Even the advertisements try to convince us that others using various products are better looking, thinner, more athletic, even live longer than we do. Politicians also are constantly in the spotlight. They exercise a great deal of power and influence, and it is very easy for us to become jealous of some aspect of their lives or positions.
26. What is the relationship between jealousy and the love of money? (1 Timothy 6:10) Jealousy blinds our eyes and distorts our perceptions. It magnifies the virtues or privileges of another while it destroys our own self-esteem. The best antidote to jealousy is Christian love. We should praise God for the accomplishments of others. And if we continue to walk in a true Christian pathway, God will bless us and we will not need to be jealous.
27. If we think carefully, every one of us can make a long list of things for which we should be thankful. In light of all those things, do we really need to be jealous?
28. Unfortunately, given the selfishness of the natural human heart, it is often the case that the more we have the more we want. Jealousy is often the result. But, if we are wise enough to follow God's plan for our lives, we will root out jealousy and replace it with *agape*-principled love. That is the only way in which we will be able to live harmoniously with God and with our fellow human beings and the angels for the rest eternity.

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