

## **Responding to the New Atheists' attacks on the God of the Old Testament-8: "God is Jealous"(part 2, God's Love and Zeal)**

It is important to understand the concepts that words convey instead of reacting in an emotional or superficial manner to a word itself (like the New Atheists do). The main concept in the Hebrew and Greek words for jealousy (כַּיְלּוּז, ζήλος: where we get our word "zeal") is zeal. This zeal or jealousy can be wicked and evil or righteous and good. If jealousy is rooted in the sin of selfishness and self-centeredness it is evil. If jealousy springs from concern for another's well-being, it is actually a good or righteous thing. If its source is from the old sin nature, it is sinful (Gal. 5:20). However, all jealousy is not a product of the old sin nature. The Apostle Paul expresses a righteous jealousy that was in accordance with godly jealousy.

2 Corinthians 11:2 For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin.

Paul's jealousy was not some self-centered, selfish, or petty attitude. Rather, it was a concern for the well-being of the Corinthians. His jealousy was not petty; it did not spring from hurt, pride or self-concern. His jealousy was for their best interest.

Throughout the Bible, we see that God is a very concerned Lover who seeks a reciprocal love in His people. Because He loves His people so much (1 John 3:1), He is full of anguish and dismay when His people do not reciprocate with love and instead pursue non-gods, which will only corrupt and destroy them and their relationship with God. This jealousy stems from the fantastic love He has for His people. In Hosea, God is pictured as a loving husband who *gets choked up* when His wife, Israel, continually cheats on Him, "My heart is turned over within Me, All My compassions are kindled" (11:8). In Jeremiah, God laments over Israel, "For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of the living waters, to hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water" (2:13). God's jealousy is a natural result of His enormous love and desire to be closer to His people.

Consider the marriage analogy. A wife who does not get jealous and angry when another woman is flirting with her husband isn't really all that committed to the marriage relationship. A marriage without the potential for jealousy when an intruder threatens it is not much of a marriage. Outrage, pain, anguish—these are the appropriate responses to such a deep violation. When women who really do love their husbands are asked what they would do if they found out that their husbands were cheating on them, it is not uncommon to hear something like: "I would kill him!" The look on their face does not indicate that they are kidding either. They would be very upset. They would not be upset for self-serving or petty reasons. The reason is love: the love, closeness, and intimacy was violated and damaged with evil. For a wife to be indifferent to

her husband's adultery would indicate that she really did not love him or value their special relationship.

God is not some abstract entity or impersonal principle, as the New Atheists seem to think He must be. He is an engaging, relational God who is always seeking the good of all men and their union with Himself. It is because He loves them so much that He desires their love in return. What one wants more than anything else from the object of one's love is their returning love. God desires to be the loving Father and wise ruler of believers' lives.

God's love is depicted (analogous language) as that of a passionate husband. We should be amazed that the Creator of the universe would so deeply connect Himself to human beings that He would open Himself to sorrow and anguish in the face of human betrayal and rejection. God opened Himself up to repeated rejection from His people. Speaking in analogous language, God expresses His exasperation with and injury by His people—how they hurt Him:

Ezekiel 6:9 "Then those of you who escape will remember Me among the nations to which they will be carried captive, how I have been hurt by their adulterous hearts which turned away from Me, and by their eyes, which played the harlot after their idols; and they will loathe themselves in their own sight for the evils which they have committed, for all their abominations.

Spiritual adultery is no petty matter (as the New Atheists must think). God endured much rejection and defiance, despite His matchless grace and unending *loving zeal* for His people:

Isaiah 65:2 "I have spread out My hands all day long to a rebellious people, Who walk in the way which is not good, following their own thoughts, 3 A people who continually provoke Me to My face, Offering sacrifices in gardens and burning incense on bricks;

Matthew 23:37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling.

Ezekiel (chapter 16): 1 Then the word of the LORD came to me saying, 2 "Son of man, make known to Jerusalem her abominations, 3 and say, 'Thus says the Lord God to Jerusalem, "Your origin and your birth are from the land of the Canaanite, your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite. 4 "As for your birth, on the day you were born your navel cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water for cleansing; you were not rubbed with salt or even wrapped in cloths. 5 "No eye looked with pity on you to do any of these things for you, to have compassion on you. Rather you were thrown out into the open field, for you were abhorred on the day you were born. 6 "When I passed by you and saw you squirming in your blood, I said to you while you were in your blood, 'Live!' I said to you while you were in your blood, 'Live!' 7 "I made you numerous like plants of the field. Then you grew up, became tall, and reached the age for fine ornaments; your breasts were formed and your hair had grown. Yet you were naked and bare. 8 "Then I passed by you and saw you, and behold, you were at the time for love; so I spread My skirt over you and covered your nakedness. I also swore to you and entered into a covenant with you so that you

became Mine," declares the Lord God. 9 "Then I bathed you with water, washed off your blood from you, and anointed you with oil. 10 "I also clothed you with embroidered cloth, and put sandals of porpoise skin on your feet; and I wrapped you with fine linen and covered you with silk. 11 "And I adorned you with ornaments, put bracelets on your hands, and a necklace around your neck. 12 "I also put a ring in your nostril, earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown on your head. 13 "Thus you were adorned with gold and silver, and your dress was of fine linen, silk, and embroidered cloth. You ate fine flour, honey, and oil; so you were exceedingly beautiful and advanced to royalty. 14 "Then your fame went forth among the nations on account of your beauty, for it was perfect because of My splendor which I bestowed on you," declares the Lord God. 15 "But you trusted in your beauty and played the harlot because of your fame, and you poured out your harlotries on every passer-by who might be willing. 16 "And you took some of your clothes, made for yourself high places of various colors, and played the harlot on them, which should never come about nor happen. 17 "You also took your beautiful jewels made of My gold and of My silver, which I had given you, and made for yourself male images that you might play the harlot with them. 18 "Then you took your embroidered cloth and covered them, and offered My oil and My incense before them. 19 "Also My bread which I gave you, fine flour, oil, and honey with which I fed you, you would offer before them for a soothing aroma; so it happened," declares the Lord God. 20 "Moreover, you took your sons and daughters whom you had borne to Me, and you sacrificed them to idols to be devoured. Were your harlotries so small a matter? 21 "You slaughtered My children, and offered them up to idols by causing them to pass through the fire. 22 "And besides all your abominations and harlotries you did not remember the days of your youth, when you were naked and bare and squirming in your blood. 23 "Then it came about after all your wickedness ('Woe, woe to you!' declares the Lord God), 24 that you built yourself a shrine and made yourself a high place in every square. 25 "You built yourself a high place at the top of every street, and made your beauty abominable; and you spread your legs to every passer-by to multiply your harlotry. 26 "You also played the harlot with the Egyptians, your lustful neighbors, and multiplied your harlotry to make Me angry. 27 "Behold now, I have stretched out My hand against you and diminished your rations. And I delivered you up to the desire of those who hate you, the daughters of the Philistines, who are ashamed of your lewd conduct. 28 "Moreover, you played the harlot with the Assyrians because you were not satisfied; you even played the harlot with them and still were not satisfied. 29 "You also multiplied your harlotry with the land of merchants, Chaldea, yet even with this you were not satisfied." 30 "How languishing is your heart," declares the Lord God, "while you do all these things, the actions of a bold-faced harlot. 31 "When you built your shrine at the beginning of every street and made your high place in every square, in disdain of money, you were not like a harlot. 32 "You adulteress wife, who takes strangers instead of her husband! 33 "Men give gifts to all harlots, but you give your gifts to all your lovers to bribe them to come to you from every direction for your harlotries. 34 "Thus you are different from those women in your harlotries, in that no one plays the harlot as you do, because you give money and no money is given you; thus you are different." 35 Therefore, O harlot, hear the word of the LORD. 36 Thus says the Lord God,

"Because your lewdness was poured out and your nakedness uncovered through your harlotries with your lovers and with all your detestable idols, and because of the blood of your sons which you gave to idols, 37 therefore, behold, I shall gather all your lovers with whom you took pleasure, even all those whom you loved and all those whom you hated. So I shall gather them against you from every direction and expose your nakedness to them that they may see all your nakedness. 38 "Thus I shall judge you, like women who commit adultery or shed blood are judged; and I shall bring on you the blood of wrath and jealousy. 39 "I shall also give you into the hands of your lovers, and they will tear down your shrines, demolish your high places, strip you of your clothing, take away your jewels, and will leave you naked and bare. 40 "They will incite a crowd against you, and they will stone you and cut you to pieces with their swords. 41 "And they will burn your houses with fire and execute judgments on you in the sight of many women. Then I shall stop you from playing the harlot, and you will also no longer pay your lovers. 42 "So I shall calm My fury against you, and My jealousy will depart from you, and I shall be pacified and angry no more. 43 "Because you have not remembered the days of your youth but have enraged Me by all these things, behold, I in turn will bring your conduct down on your own head," declares the Lord God, "so that you will not commit this lewdness on top of all your other abominations. 44 "Behold, everyone who quotes proverbs will quote this proverb concerning you, saying, 'Like mother, like daughter.' 45 "You are the daughter of your mother, who loathed her husband and children. You are also the sister of your sisters, who loathed their husbands and children. Your mother was a Hittite and your father an Amorite. 46 "Now your older sister is Samaria, who lives north of you with her daughters; and your younger sister, who lives south of you, is Sodom with her daughters. 47 "Yet you have not merely walked in their ways or done according to their abominations; but, as if that were too little, you acted more corruptly in all your conduct than they. 48 "As I live," declares the Lord God, "Sodom, your sister, and her daughters, have not done as you and your daughters have done. 49 "Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had arrogance, abundant food, and careless ease, but she did not help the poor and needy. 50 "Thus they were haughty and committed abominations before Me. Therefore I removed them when I saw it. 51 "Furthermore, Samaria did not commit half of your sins, for you have multiplied your abominations more than they. Thus you have made your sisters appear righteous by all your abominations which you have committed. 52 "Also bear your disgrace in that you have made judgment favorable for your sisters. Because of your sins in which you acted more abominably than they, they are more in the right than you. Yes, be also ashamed and bear your disgrace, in that you made your sisters appear righteous. 53 "Nevertheless, I will restore their captivity, the captivity of Sodom and her daughters, the captivity of Samaria and her daughters, and along with them your own captivity, 54 in order that you may bear your humiliation, and feel ashamed for all that you have done when you become a consolation to them. 55 "And your sisters, Sodom with her daughters and Samaria with her daughters, will return to their former state, and you with your daughters will also return to your former state. 56 "As the name of your sister Sodom was not heard from your lips in your day of pride, 57 before your wickedness was uncovered, so now you have become the reproach of the daughters of Edom, and of

all who are around her, of the daughters of the Philistines-- those surrounding you who despise you. 58 "You have borne the penalty of your lewdness and abominations," the LORD declares. 59 For thus says the Lord God, "I will also do with you as you have done, you who have despised the oath by breaking the covenant. 60 "Nevertheless, I will remember My covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you. 61 "Then you will remember your ways and be ashamed when you receive your sisters, both your older and your younger; and I will give them to you as daughters, but not because of your covenant. 62 "Thus I will establish My covenant with you, and you shall know that I am the LORD, 63 in order that you may remember and be ashamed, and never open your mouth anymore because of your humiliation, when I have forgiven you for all that you have done," the Lord God declares.

Ezekiel (chapter 23): 1 The word of the LORD came to me again saying, 2 "Son of man, there were two women, the daughters of one mother; 3 and they played the harlot in Egypt. They played the harlot in their youth; there their breasts were pressed, and there their virgin bosom was handled. 4 "And their names were Oholah the elder and Oholibah her sister. And they became Mine, and they bore sons and daughters. And as for their names, Samaria is Oholah, and Jerusalem is Oholibah. 5 "And Oholah played the harlot while she was Mine; and she lusted after her lovers, after the Assyrians, her neighbors, 6 who were clothed in purple, governors and officials, all of them desirable young men, horsemen riding on horses. 7 "And she bestowed her harlotries on them, all of whom were the choicest men of Assyria; and with all whom she lusted after, with all their idols she defiled herself. 8 "And she did not forsake her harlotries from the time in Egypt; for in her youth men had lain with her, and they handled her virgin bosom and poured out their lust on her. 9 "Therefore, I gave her into the hand of her lovers, into the hand of the Assyrians, after whom she lusted. 10 "They uncovered her nakedness; they took her sons and her daughters, but they slew her with the sword. Thus she became a byword among women, and they executed judgments on her. 11 "Now her sister Oholibah saw this, yet she was more corrupt in her lust than she, and her harlotries were more than the harlotries of her sister. 12 "She lusted after the Assyrians, governors and officials, the ones near, magnificently dressed, horsemen riding on horses, all of them desirable young men. 13 "And I saw that she had defiled herself; they both took the same way. 14 "So she increased her harlotries. And she saw men portrayed on the wall, images of the Chaldeans portrayed with vermilion, 15 girded with belts on their loins, with flowing turbans on their heads, all of them looking like officers, like the Babylonians in Chaldea, the land of their birth. 16 "And when she saw them she lusted after them and sent messengers to them in Chaldea. 17 "And the Babylonians came to her to the bed of love, and they defiled her with their harlotry. And when she had been defiled by them, she became disgusted with them. 18 "And she uncovered her harlotries and uncovered her nakedness; then I became disgusted with her, as I had become disgusted with her sister. 19 "Yet she multiplied her harlotries, remembering the days of her youth, when she played the harlot in the land of Egypt. 20 "And she lusted after their paramours, whose flesh is like the flesh of donkeys and whose issue is like the issue of horses. 21 "Thus you longed for the lewdness of your youth, when the

Egyptians handled your bosom because of the breasts of your youth. 22 "Therefore, O Oholibah, thus says the Lord God, 'Behold I will arouse your lovers against you, from whom you were alienated, and I will bring them against you from every side: 23 the Babylonians and all the Chaldeans, Pekod and Shoa and Koa, and all the Assyrians with them; desirable young men, governors and officials all of them, officers and men of renown, all of them riding on horses. 24 'And they will come against you with weapons, chariots, and wagons, and with a company of peoples. They will set themselves against you on every side with buckler and shield and helmet; and I shall commit the judgment to them, and they will judge you according to their customs. 25 'And I will set My jealousy against you, that they may deal with you in wrath. They will remove your nose and your ears; and your survivors will fall by the sword. They will take your sons and your daughters; and your survivors will be consumed by the fire. 26 'They will also strip you of your clothes and take away your beautiful jewels. 27 'Thus I shall make your lewdness and your harlotry brought from the land of Egypt to cease from you, so that you will not lift up your eyes to them or remember Egypt anymore.' 28 "For thus says the Lord God, 'Behold, I will give you into the hand of those whom you hate, into the hand of those from whom you were alienated. 29 'And they will deal with you in hatred, take all your property, and leave you naked and bare. And the nakedness of your harlotries shall be uncovered, both your lewdness and your harlotries. 30 'These things will be done to you because you have played the harlot with the nations, because you have defiled yourself with their idols. 31 'You have walked in the way of your sister; therefore I will give her cup into your hand.' 32 "Thus says the Lord God, 'You will drink your sister's cup, Which is deep and wide. You will be laughed at and held in derision; It contains much. 33 'You will be filled with drunkenness and sorrow, The cup of horror and desolation, The cup of your sister Samaria. 34 'And you will drink it and drain it. Then you will gnaw its fragments And tear your breasts; for I have spoken,' declares the Lord God. 35 "Therefore, thus says the Lord God, 'Because you have forgotten Me and cast Me behind your back, bear now the punishment of your lewdness and your harlotries.'" 36 Moreover, the LORD said to me, "Son of man, will you judge Oholah and Oholibah? Then declare to them their abominations. 37 "For they have committed adultery, and blood is on their hands. Thus they have committed adultery with their idols and even caused their sons, whom they bore to Me, to pass through the fire to them as food. 38 "Again, they have done this to Me: they have defiled My sanctuary on the same day and have profaned My sabbaths. 39 "For when they had slaughtered their children for their idols, they entered My sanctuary on the same day to profane it; and lo, thus they did within My house. 40 "Furthermore, they have even sent for men who come from afar, to whom a messenger was sent; and lo, they came-- for whom you bathed, painted your eyes, and decorated yourselves with ornaments; 41 and you sat on a splendid couch with a table arranged before it, on which you had set My incense and My oil. 42 "And the sound of a carefree multitude was with her; and drunkards were brought from the wilderness with men of the common sort. And they put bracelets on the hands of the women and beautiful crowns on their heads. 43 "Then I said concerning her who was worn out by adulteries, 'Will they now commit adultery with her when she is thus?' 44 "But they went in to her as they would go in to a harlot. Thus they went in to Oholah and to Oholibah, the lewd women. 45 "But they,

righteous men, will judge them with the judgment of adulteresses, and with the judgment of women who shed blood, because they are adulteresses and blood is on their hands. 46 "For thus says the Lord God, 'Bring up a company against them, and give them over to terror and plunder. 47 'And the company will stone them with stones and cut them down with their swords; they will slay their sons and their daughters and burn their houses with fire. 48 'Thus I shall make lewdness cease from the land, that all women may be admonished and not commit lewdness as you have done. 49 'And your lewdness will be requited upon you, and you will bear the penalty of worshiping your idols; thus you will know that I am the Lord God.'"

In His Matchless Love,

*Pastor Don*

1 John 4:10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.