

Insights No. 10
First Quarter 2011 Adult Sabbath School Lessons
“Jealousy”
For the week of February 27 – March 5, 2011
(Produced by the Editorial Board of the 1888 Message Study Committee)

Many biblical terms are used in more than one way. *Indignation*, for instance, is used two ways: as righteous and as unrighteous. So it is with jealousy. There is a jealousy that is right, and one that is evil. Evil jealousy is motivated by selfishness; the good jealousy is motivated by love. Consider first example of righteous jealousy. God is a jealous God. That is His name (Exodus 34:15). His name is what He is. In the Bible the term “jealous” is used 12 times in reference to God. The first time Jealousy is used in Scripture is in the second commandment. Here God’s jealousy is exhibited two ways. First it warns about “visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me” (Exodus 20:5). In the second use God shows mercy to thousands of generations who love and obey Him (v. 6).

Some feel that God is unjust. They think He arbitrarily punishes children for the sins of their fathers. This notion is based on ignorance of the true meaning of the commandment. God says that if a father “begets a son who sees all the sins which his father has done, and considers but does not do likewise ... he shall not die for the iniquity of his father; he shall surely live!”.... The son shall “not bear the guilt of the father” (Ezekiel 18:14, 17,19).

The “visitation” for sins does include punishment, but only upon those who commit the same sins as their fathers. Those who will receive God’s grace will be delivered, even in this present life, from sinful tendencies inherited from their fathers. The question we should ask is this: Why does the second commandment extend only to a limited third and fourth generational number of those who hate God? It is because sin is self-destructive. Haters of God in the fullest sense of the term, would entirely run out in three or four generations. God says “All those who hate Me love death” (Proverbs 8:36). Our world may very well be approaching this condition.

The wicked generation living when Jesus returns will be as violent as was the last antediluvian generation of Noah’s day who in “every imagination of the thoughts of (the) heart (did) only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5). These were the descendants of Cain who in his wicked jealousy toward his brother, killed Abel because of his faith based righteousness (Hebrews 11:4; 1 John 3:12). Cain’s jealousy was that which he received from the one in whom the evil form of jealousy originated – that old serpent, the devil.

The evil spirit of jealousy and envy, along with pride and the desire to seek great things for oneself, came from within the heart of Lucifer. He proudly boasted, “I will exalt my throne above the stars of God” (Isaiah 14:13). He coveted a higher place than anyone else, including God. Lucifer longed to rule the angels of God. His jealousy and envy led him to covet that which was not his own. He was cast out of heaven, but his jealousy only increased.

“When God said to His Son, ‘Let us make man in our image,’ 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).

Through the centuries, the devil has inspired his own insane envy and jealousy in human hearts. These emotions caused the chief priests to deliver Jesus up to Pilate for death (Matthew 27:18). Envy and jealousy are still killers. Women can look daggers at other women because of better homes, smarter clothes, or superior cooking. A man can praise another fellow's new car or speedboat while thinking, "I'll show him. I'll get something better." Even little children become envious of playmate's toys and games.

In past history Saul was jealous of David. Earlier in time, Joseph's brothers were jealous of him. Joseph was born into a family where envy and strife, "confusion and every evil work" prevailed. Jacob's two wives were naturally jealous of each other. Two concubines did not contribute to the happiness of the family. The sons from those unnatural and unequal unions were jealous, selfish, envious, quarrelsome, cruel, revengeful, and vicious with each other. Joseph, early deprived of his mother's loving care, might naturally have been expected to grow up like his brothers. Instead, his life from first to last presents a direct contrast to theirs in almost every particular. Joseph's brothers grew more and more jealous and angry with him, until they were ready to take his life. Why did Joseph's brothers hate him so? It was because they were jealous of the favor shown him by their father. Also, his pure life was a rebuke to their evil ways. Their jealousy toward Joseph led them first to conspire to kill him, then to get rid of him by selling him into slavery.

Some twenty years after Joseph was sold into slavery, there came a severe famine in Canaan. Joseph's brothers were compelled twice to travel to Egypt, where Joseph was now chief administrator, to obtain food. On the first trip, Joseph, whom they did not recognize, commanded them to bring Benjamin with them on their return. After avoiding a return for as long as possible, the brothers were forced to make a second journey. Upon reaching Egypt, they were sent by Joseph to a banquet. When the food served, Benjamin received five times as much as any of the other brothers (Genesis 43:34). Joseph waited to see if they were still motivated by jealousy. Because they thought no one understood their language they talked freely together. Their conversation showed no signs of envy or jealousy. Joseph was pleased. Overcome with emotion, he wept. What a family reunion ensued!

For years those older brothers of Joseph had gone through hard times, especially as they saw their father suffer keenly from the loss of his son Joseph. In their times of darkness, despair and hopelessness, God worked on their jealous hearts. They surrendered to Him, and He delivered them from their inherited and cultivated tendencies to envy and evil jealousy.

God was jealous also, but it was for Joseph's brother's salvation. In fact, his jealousy was their salvation. And it is ours too. Paul wrote of this godly jealousy: "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" (2 Corinthians 11:2). God is jealous for the glory and welfare of His people. He desires their minds to be clear, their souls purified, and their lives prolonged eternally. God's jealousy is a consuming love that hates everything which hurts or destroys His people. He is jealous for you!

--Jerry Finneman