

## **Cheating on a Jealous Jesus**

*James 4:1-6*

*The Book of James #8*

*Be careful not to forget the covenant of the Lord your God that he made with you. And do not make for yourselves an idol in the form of anything the Lord your God has forbidden. For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.*

I once heard a story about two business owners who were bitter rivals. Their stores were directly across the street from each other, and they would spend the day keeping track of each other's businesses. If one of them got a customer, he would let the other one know by flicking his lights on three times for the other one to see. One night an angel appeared to one of the business owners in a dream, saying: "I will give you anything you ask, but whatever you receive, your rival will receive twice as much. You want wealth? You'll get it. But your rival will be twice as wealthy. You want a longer life? You'll get it. But your rival will live twice as longer. For whatever you ask for, you'll get. But your rival will receive a double portion. So what is your request." The fellow frowned, thought for a moment, and then said to the angel: "Here is my request: strike me blind in one eye."

I must confess to you this morning, church, that I can be addicted to jealousy. When I watch a chef take a knife and start "marathon" chopping vegetables as his fingers remain in the danger zone, I get jealous. Why? Because I've cut my hands so many times that Cleveland Clinic saw fit to give me a personal hotline to the Emergency Room. I can even, on occasion, be found in the Health and Beauty sections at Target and Walmart just staring at combs and hairbrushes. To this day, I'm the only one the employee passes by at those stores in those sections without saying: "may I help you?" Why? Because that person already knows I'm not going to buy anything. So why bother? That's why.

But have you ever exercised the privilege of asking God why he gets jealous? Have you ever exercised the privilege of asking the Lord why He likes to orchestrate things in your life in such a way to communicate to you that he is jealous and resentful that you are not paying Him very much attention? If you have, then I'm sure you have learned that God gets jealous of what and who competes for our affections and attention because He loves us. If he didn't love us, he wouldn't be jealous. And when we slip away from the arms of the God of the covenant and into the arms of the world, the downward spiritual spiral – seen most clearly in life circumstances – is there to remind us that He's jealous. It's there to show us what happens when we cheat on a jealous Jesus. For He will have no other Gods before Him. He will have no idols.

My aim today is to simply teach you from the Word of God what life looks like when God's people cheat on Him. What life looks like for Christians when they move away from the confession: "just give me Jesus" by adding "just give me Jesus plus something else." There are signs from the Word of God that exist to remind us of God's jealousy. To see them, please turn with me to James 4:1-6.

*What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? <sup>2</sup>You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. <sup>3</sup>When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. <sup>4</sup>You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. <sup>5</sup>Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us? <sup>6</sup>But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble."*

### **Signs of Cheating on a Jealous Jesus:**

#### **1. The Blocked Desire Sign (1-2a)**

- **Superman Don't Need No Seatbelt:** (1) One of the, if not the, greatest boxers in history was Mohammad Ali. (2) He not only "floated like a butterfly and stung like a bee," he was also prone to anger if he didn't get what he wanted. (3) On one such occasion, the airline stewardess got the best of him. (4) When asked to put his seatbelt on, Ali refused, saying "Superman don't need no seatbelt. (5) To which the stewardess responded wittingly, "Superman don't need no airline, either."
- **Main Idea of the Point:** The root of all anger and its synonyms (jealousy, envy, etc.) is a blocked desire of some kind. When you want but don't have, you get angry about what/is blocking you from getting what you don't have. That's what the Bible calls coveting.
- **Main Textual Teaching Point:** (1) The verses are a theological explanation of the story of Cain and Abel. It's called the Cain Paradigm. (2) Cain and Abel bring their offerings to God. (3) God accepts Abel's but rejects Cain's. (3) The battle rages within Cain at that point because the sacrifice he wanted God to accept was blocked. (4) The result is fight and quarrel (military language used). (5) That resulted in jealousy and then murder.
- **App:** Someone cheating on Jesus can't take a situation like this as a lesson from God that this isn't what He wants for them. When their desire is blocked, anger is the result. It wouldn't have been had they recognized that sometimes God just says "no."

## 2. The Asking With the Wrong Motives Sign (2b-3)

- **Siblings Sharing Toys Through Their Own Plan of Action:** (1) If you ever see siblings sharing toys through their own plan of action, not at the command of their parents, record it so that the rest of the world can study it. It isn't natural. (2) What is natural is this: children will offer a toy to his/her sibling, but that doesn't mean the child has good motives. It's usually because of what toy the sibling has in the other hand.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** Self-centered motives when you pray and ask God for something guarantee that those prayers will go unanswered. God wants us to have the interests of His kingdom at heart. Just like Jesus.
- **Main Textual Teaching Point:** (1) James ties asking and receiving directly to the motives for asking and receiving here. (2) If you ask, but do not receive from God, you can be sure that it is directly related to motives 100 percent of the time. (3) If you do receive according to what you've asked, it is directly related to motives 100 percent of the time. (4) For example, Solomon prayed for discernment and the Lord said to him "because you have not asked for a long life, riches, or the lives of your enemies, etc., I'll not only grant it...but will also give you what you've not asked for..riches and honor (1 Kgs 3:11-14). (5) Why did God grant his request? What he asked for reflected the qualities of the Kingdom of God.
- **App:** God doesn't relax the qualities of His Kingdom in order to benefit our Kingdom in our prayers. Motivations for asking God determine the outcome.

## 3. The Hanging Out With the Wrong Crowd Sign (4)

- **No Spiritual Switzerland** – In WW2, there were two sides. The Allied Powers: Britain, France, the United States, and others. And the Axis Powers: Germany, Japan, and Italy. However, some countries, like Spain, Ireland, and Switzerland, declared themselves as neutrals because they didn't want to be part of the fight. That attitude doesn't work when it comes to Jesus, though. There's no spiritual Switzerland.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** Jesus said he who is not with me is against me. And he who does not gather with me scatters. You cannot be friends with Jesus or the world. You can't sit on the fence. You're either against him or with him. There's no spiritual Switzerland.
- **Main Textual Teaching Point:** (1) We make ourselves enemies with God when we choose what is antithetical to His character (2) It has the feel of an Old Testament Prophet; (2) "You adulterous people" = those who love the world do so in a way that precludes love and fidelity to God. You can't have two masters. (3) "Don't you know...friendship with world means enmity against God" = loving the ways of the fallen world is to the

very place the dominion and realm of Satan rules (Col 1:13). (4). Not possible to love what is anti-God and God.

- **App:** The enmity with God starts when Jesus suddenly stops becoming enough for us.

#### **4. The Provident Pointing Sign (5-6)**

- **The New Portable Ultraviolet Disinfection Lamp at the West Household:** (1) We own a lot of cleaning supplies; (2) But this week we are the proud owners of something that I've never even remotely heard of: a portable ultraviolet disinfection lamp. (3) Shine the UV light on a pair of pants, it will not only point out the spots that need attention, but it will also zap any bacteria.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** Jesus points out the places we have left him for another in our lives because He caused the Spirit to dwell in our hearts by faith. When something else competes for the place Jesus deserves to be in our lives, that spiritual union between the Son, Spirit, and the Temple (you) is broken and needs to be repaired.
- **Main Textual Teaching Point:** (1) The statement "he jealousy longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us" is an important one. (2) It implies that when we have gotten caught up in the ways of the world, the Spirit within us and the God in heaven are not in intended harmony. (3) So His character demands he move jealousy to restore it. (4) And He will orchestrate events to make it so.
- **App:** Whenever we show signs of cheating on a jealous Jesus, the only way is to humble ourselves and agree with God. If we draw near, he will to. And give us the grace needed to sustain us. Praise be to God!