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# "Atheist-Making" Bible Verses You **Need** to **KNOW**



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# "Atheist-Making" Bible Verses You Need to Know

Eric Lyons, M.Min.

*Article In Brief...*

**No lie is more dangerous than that told by many modern atheists, agnostics, and skeptics—that the Bible is not the inspired Word of God. However, when the biblical criticisms of unbelievers are fairly considered, then the faith of Christians should only grow stronger, and honest unbelievers will see the error of their ways. Indeed, the holy, loving, just God of the Bible, and the Bible itself, stand in perfect harmony.**

**I**T might surprise some Christians to learn that a number of prominent atheists and agnostics have alleged that, of all things, the **Bible** “made them” unbelievers. According to 20<sup>th</sup>-century British playwright, A.A. Milne, author of the Winnie the Pooh books, “The Old Testament is responsible for more atheism, agnosticism, and disbelief—call it what you will—than any book ever written.”<sup>1</sup> Renowned British agnostic Bertrand Russell wrote a booklet in 1927 titled “Why I Am Not a Christian” (which eventually made its way onto the New York Public Library’s “Books of the Century” list).<sup>2</sup> In the pamphlet, Russell commented on Jesus and the gospel accounts, saying, “I do not believe one can grant either super-

lative wisdom or the superlative goodness of Christ as depicted in the Gospels.... I am concerned with Christ as He appears in the Gospels, taking the Gospel narrative as it stands, and there one does find some things that do not seem to be very wise.”<sup>3</sup>

In more recent times, the YouTube channel *BigThink* featured popular American magician, actor, and entertainer Penn Jillette in a video titled, “How Did You Become an Atheist?” The video has been viewed over 2.2 million times. In it, Jillette stated: “I read the Bible, cover to cover. And I think that anyone who is thinking about maybe being an atheist, if you read the Bible...cover to cover, I believe you will emerge from that as an atheist.... **The Bible itself**

**will turn you atheist faster than anything.”<sup>4</sup>**

What scriptures do these and other atheists contend will turn a Bible reader into an unbeliever? What, exactly, in the Bible would turn a person to atheism or agnosticism?

## #1—“LOT OFFERED HIS DAUGHTERS TO THE WICKED MEN OF SODOM”

**W**HEN Penn Jillette was asked, “Why would reading the Bible make you an atheist?” he said, “Because what we get told about the Bible is a lot of picking and choosing.” He then gave his first actual example of what will make a person an atheist, saying: “When you see Lot’s daughter gang raped and beaten and the Lord being okay with that.”<sup>5</sup>

Indeed, in an attempt to protect two guests in his house, Lot offered his two daughters to an angry mob of homosexuals in Sodom, saying, “See now, I have two daughters who have not known a man; please, let me bring them out to you, and you may do to them as you wish” (Genesis 19:8).<sup>6</sup> As incomprehensible and detestable as Lot’s actions were, there is **nothing** in Genesis 19 or anywhere in Scripture that indicates God was “okay with that” (as Jillette contends). Quite the opposite, in fact. Genesis 19 actually reveals that the two guests, who were really angels sent by God, did not allow anything to happen to Lot’s daughters. Rather, they struck the wicked men of Sodom with blindness and later safely ushered Lot’s daughters (as well as Lot and his wife) out of the repulsively sinful city prior to God destroying it (19:12-25).

Still, some find it quite troubling that in the New Testament, Peter uses the term “righteous” three times in 2 Peter 2:7-8 to describe Lot: “God...delivered **righteous** Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that **righteous** man, dwelling among them, tormented his **righteous** soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds).” Why did Peter repeatedly call Lot “righteous” when many see a different picture of Lot in Genesis? Was Lot really righteous?

One must keep in mind that, though a Bible writer may have recorded specific sins and foolish acts of an individual, such revelation does not mean that the person could not also have been righteous. Christ was the only perfect man ever to live (2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:22). Though Noah, Abraham, Moses, etc. were counted faithful (Hebrews 11:7-29), they occasionally disobeyed God’s will (cf. Numbers 20:1-12), and acted foolishly or cowardly (cf. Genesis 9:21; 12:12-20; 20:1-18). God never blessed their disobedience, only their faithfulness. Similarly, just because Peter called Lot righteous does not mean that Lot was perfect. Even the apostle Peter, who also served as an elder in the Lord’s church (1 Peter 5:1), was guilty at one time or another of having a lack of faith (Matthew 14:31), denying that he knew the Lord (Matthew 26:69-75), and hypocritically withdrawing himself from Gentiles (Galatians 2:11-14).

Furthermore, Peter’s statements about Lot’s righteousness must be considered in their proper context. Similar to how Noah was

an island of righteousness surrounded by a sea of iniquity (2 Peter 2:5), Lot was surrounded by extremely “wicked,” “filthy,” “lawless” citizens of Sodom (2 Peter 2:7-8). Although Lot was **far** from perfect, he was not a wicked, lawless unrighteous citizen of Sodom; he was righteous. Lot separated himself from the unlawfulness of the inhabitants of Sodom and was even tormented “day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds” (2 Peter 2:8).

Though Lot’s offering of his daughters to the sodomites is inexcusable (as it seems were Abraham’s actions in Egypt and Gerar when he allowed his wife to be taken by kings in order to preserve his life; see Genesis 12:10-20; 20:1-18), Genesis 19 clearly indicates the distinction between the righteousness of Lot and the wickedness of the inhabitants of Sodom. The sodomites even hinted at such when they declared that Lot “keeps acting as a judge” (Genesis 19:9). This was the distinction Peter made—not

that Lot was perfect, but that he remained uncontaminated by the level of intense iniquity prevalent throughout Sodom. Like Christians today who strive to walk in the light, though they are imperfect (1 John 1:5-10), Lot was a righteous man, who also made some memorable mistakes.

## #2—“GOD TOLD ABRAHAM TO KILL HIS SON”

**G**ENESIS 19:8 is only the proverbial tip of the iceberg of verses atheists contend will make a person an unbeliever. The very next example Penn Jillette gave in his popular six-minute video was “Abraham being willing to kill his son.”<sup>7</sup> Not only was Abraham willing to kill his son Isaac, God actually instructed him to do so, saying, “Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you” (Genesis 22:2). *The Telegraph* of London highlighted this verse as “No. 8”

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in its article, “Top 10 **Worst** Bible Passages.”<sup>8</sup> In his 2009 debate with Kyle Butt, American atheist Dan Barker asked the audience to “remember the thing about when Abraham—he [God] asked Abraham to sacrifice his son, Isaac. By the way, Abraham should have said, ‘No way, I’m better than you, I’m not going to kill my son.’”<sup>9</sup>

Are Penn Jillette, Dan Barker, and other atheists right? Is this a good Bible verse to use to spread atheism? Should this passage of Scripture logically lead people away from the Bible and the God of Abraham to atheism?

Prior to a discussion of Genesis 22, one is compelled to ask the atheist upon what basis he deems the killing of a child as wrong or evil? As leading unbelievers have admitted, atheism logically implies, “**Everything** is permitted,”<sup>10</sup> **including murder**. Do atheists not frequently justify the murder of unborn children? Renowned atheist Peter Singer indicated in 2000 that it would not even be wrong to kill a disabled child **who had already been born**. He wrote: “[K]illing a disabled infant is not morally equivalent to killing a person. **Very often it is not wrong at all.**”<sup>11</sup> Thus, some of the world’s leading atheists have justified murdering human beings, even when doing so means the taking of the **only life** that a child will have (according to naturalistic atheism, which implies that there is no eternal afterlife). So how, exactly, can atheists objectively and non-hypocritically condemn God and Abraham in Genesis 22?

### It Was a “Test”

Even still, Genesis 22 poses no real problem. Why? Because God did not actually intend for Abraham to kill his son as a burnt offering; God’s command was only a “test” (22:1). When a mother asks her young son (whom she watched from a distance make a mess), “Who did this?” the question is not asked for informational purposes. She is testing her son to see if he will tell the truth and take responsibility for his actions. When a teacher gives her class what appears to be an impossible-to-pass, closed-book test (the contents of which have never been covered in class), the students may initially think their teacher is being terribly unfair. However, the students later learn that the test was actually “a test” of their character: who all would be honest and take their “F” versus who would dishonestly cheat on the test in order to get an “A”? In the end, those who “failed” were actually given a “100,” while those who “passed” were given a “0.” At first, before all the facts were known, the teacher seemed quite unfair; but in the end, the students learned an important life-lesson, while also discovering that their teacher was actually very just and wise.

Scripture reveals that God has occasionally asked questions and made statements that were meant, not in the more normal ways, but as “teaching moments” or “tests.” In John 6, Jesus asked Philip about the great multitude who followed Him, saying, “Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?” (John 6:5). But Jesus asked the question **“to test him**, for He Himself knew

what He would do” (6:6). Would Philip and the apostles recall that Jesus miraculously had furnished more than 100 gallons of a tasty beverage at the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee (in John 2) and conclude that Jesus alone could just as easily miraculously feed thousands of people on this occasion if He so desired? Or, would the disciples worry themselves with the large number of people and the limited natural resources? Jesus knew they were not going to purchase food for the multitude, but He still asked the question—because it was a test of their faith. He made it a growing moment.

On another occasion, Jesus tested a Gentile woman (Matthew 15:21-28). Initially (and superficially), one might conclude that Jesus was rude and unloving to the woman who asked Him, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed” (15:22-27). However, many people miss the fact that Jesus was testing this Canaanite woman, while at the same time teaching His disciples (who earlier claimed that the Pharisees were offended at His preaching—15:12) how the tenderhearted respond to potential offensive truths. Unlike the hypocritical **Jewish** scribes and Pharisees who, earlier in the chapter, responded to Jesus’ “hard preaching” with hard-heartedness (Matthew 15:1-12), a **Gentile** woman seeking assistance from Jesus acknowledged her unworthiness and persistently pursued the Holy One for help, even in the face of a difficult, divinely orchestrated test. In the end, Jesus did what He knew He was going to do all

along—He healed the humble woman’s demon-possessed daughter.<sup>12</sup>

So what does all of this have to do with Abraham in Genesis 22? Simply that God never actually wanted Abraham to sacrifice his son—any more than Jesus wanted His disciples to purchase bread to feed thousands of people, or than He wanted to withhold healing from a Gentile woman’s daughter. Abraham’s faith was tested, and He passed the test without ever killing Isaac (Hebrews 11:17).

In fact, had Abraham actually killed Isaac, he would have disobeyed God, since at the moment when Abraham was about to slay his son, “The Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, and said, ‘Abraham, Abraham!... Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him’” (Genesis 22:11-12).

Admittedly, God’s test of Abraham was a deep and difficult experience for the patriarch. But keep in mind that God knew all along (1) it was a test, and (2) that the passing of the test did not actually include Abraham killing Isaac. The patriarch demonstrated such great, trusting commitment to God that he would be **willing** not to withhold (22:12) even his most precious, promised son, if that is what his Master asked of him.<sup>13</sup> Such complete trust is what God wants from anyone who seeks after Him (Matthew 16:24-25; Philipians 1:21).<sup>14</sup>

### #3—“GOD ACCEPTED JEPHTHAH’S DAUGHTER AS A HUMAN SACRIFICE”

**I**N “The 10 Worst Old Testament Verses by Dan Barker,” the co-president of the Freedom From

Religion Foundation listed Judges 11:30-39 as #5—Jephthah burning his daughter “as an acceptable sacrifice to God.”<sup>15</sup> This Bible passage also made *The Telegraph’s* top 10 list, coming in at #7.

Is it possible that Jephthah literally sacrificed his daughter as a “burnt offering” (Judges 11:29-40)? Yes, it’s possible. Sadly, many children in ancient history were sacrificed at the hands of powerful leaders, including some evil kings of Judah (2 Chronicles 28:1-3; 33:6-9). But if Jephthah actually sacrificed his daughter, he committed a grave sin, since literal human burnt offerings were condemned by God under the Law of Moses (Deuteronomy 12:31; 18:10).

Despite what Barker and others contend, there simply is no indication in the book of Judges (or anywhere else in Scripture) that God sanctioned Jephthah’s actions (and such silence on God’s part cannot reasonably be interpreted as approval). Admittedly, Judges 11:29 indicates that “the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah,” but this occurred prior to his journey through Gilead, Manasseh, and Mizpah, and prior to his battle with the Ammonites, which included conquering 20 of their cities (11:33). Thus, the statement of Judges 11:29 references to a moment in time at least several weeks or months prior to Jephthah carrying out his rash vow. What’s more, having “the Spirit of the Lord” does not mean a person could never sin and do foolish things (e.g., Samson). This phrase is found seven times in Judges. It can indicate God’s consecration of a judge, such as in Othniel’s case,

when “the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he judged Israel” (Judges 3:10). At other times, it refers more to the courage and superhuman strength that the Lord provided them, such as in Samson’s case (Judges 14:6; 14:19; 15:14). Jephthah was a courageous leader, but he was not without sin (Judges 11:3; Romans 3:23). If he literally sacrificed his daughter, he did so without God’s authorization.

In light of some of the statements later in Judges 11, it is quite reasonable to conclude that Jephthah actually only “sacrificed” his daughter in a **figurative sense**, similar to how the Levites (Numbers 3:12-13; 8:10-18) were **symbolically** offered before the Lord (cf. Exodus 13:2,12-16; 22:29-30). Consider that, upon learning of Jephthah’s vow, his daughter and her friends mourned for two months—though the text never indicates they mourned her death. What was their sorrow? They “bewailed her **virginity**” (Judges 11:38). In fact, three times her virginity is mentioned (11:37-39), the last of which is noted immediately following the revelation that Jephthah “carried out his vow with her which he had vowed. **She knew no man**” (11:39). These statements seem to indicate Jephthah’s daughter was likely “sacrificed” as a “burnt offering” at the tabernacle **in the sense** that she became one of the “serving women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle” (Exodus 38:8; cf. 1 Samuel 2:22). Perhaps like Anna centuries later, Jephthah’s daughter was “offered” to serve God “with fastings and prayers night and day,” never again

(cont. on p. 140)



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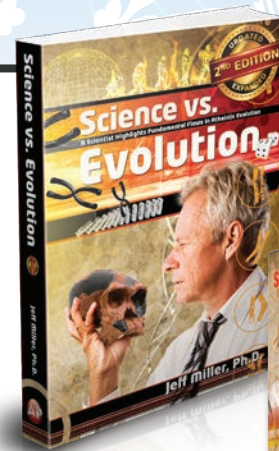
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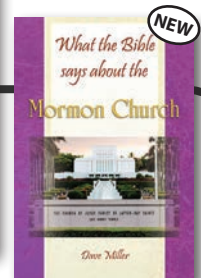
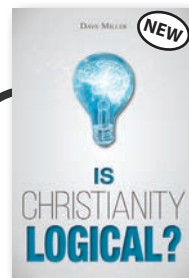
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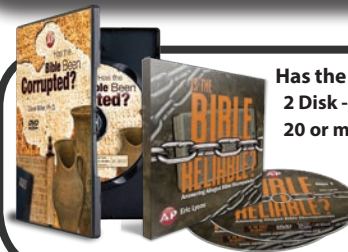
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to leave the area of the tabernacle (cf. Luke 2:36-38).

If Jephthah killed his daughter as a literal burnt offering, the repeated bewailing of her virginity makes no sense. (If someone was about to kill your unmarried daughter, would you feel the need to mourn her virginity—or her imminent death?) On the other hand, if Jephthah's daughter was about to be "offered" to God to serve perpetually at the tabernacle, and to live the rest of her life as a single, childless servant of the Lord, it makes perfect sense that she and her friends would lament her lasting virginity. When we allow the Bible to explain the Bible, the symbolic offering of Jephthah's daughter makes perfect sense. But regardless, there was no wrongdoing by God in the events of Judges 11.

#### #4—"GOD KILLED ALL SORTS OF PEOPLE IN THE BIBLE"

**O**N virtually every extensive list of Bible verses that should supposedly produce unbelievers is a reference to the God of the Bible being a blood thirsty murderer. In his *New York Times* best-selling book *The God Delusion*, Richard Dawkins (arguably the most famous atheist in the world today), called God, a "racist, infanticidal, genocidal... capriciously malevolent bully."<sup>16</sup> Both *The Telegraph's* and Dan Barker's list of "worst Bible passages" included examples of God instructing the Israelites to destroy various Canaanite nations. So how could a loving God instruct one group of people to kill and conquer other groups?

In truth, God's actions in Israel's conquest of Canaan were in perfect harmony with His supremely loving, merciful, righteous, just, and holy nature. How? **First**, because punishing evildoers is not unloving. Similar to how **merciful** parents, principals, policemen, and judges can **justly** administer punishment to rule-breakers and evildoers, so, too, can the all-knowing, all-loving Creator of the Universe (cf. Hebrews 12:3-11). Loving-kindness and corporal or capital punishment are not antithetical. Prior to conquering Canaan, God commanded the Israelites, saying,

You shall not hate your brother in your heart.... You shall not take vengeance nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself.... And if a stranger dwells with you in your land, you shall not mistreat him. The stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself (Leviticus 19:17-18,33-34; cf. Romans 13:9).

The faithful Jew was expected, as are Christians, to "not resist an evil person" (Matthew 5:39) but rather "go the extra mile" (Matthew 5:41) and "turn the other cheek" (Matthew 5:39). "Love," after all, "is the fulfillment of the law" (Romans 13:10; cf. Matthew 22:36-40). Interestingly, however, the Israelite was commanded to punish (even kill) lawbreakers, **including (and especially) fellow Israelites**. Just five chapters after commanding the individual Israelite to "not take vengeance," but "love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18), God twice said

that murderers would receive the death penalty (Leviticus 24:21,17).

**Second**, the Canaanite nations were punished because of their **extreme wickedness**. God did not cast out the Canaanites for being a particular race or ethnic group. God did not send the Israelites into the land of Canaan to destroy a number of **righteous** nations. On the contrary, the Canaanite nations were **horribly depraved**. They practiced "abominable customs" (Leviticus 18:30) and did "detestable things" (Deuteronomy 18:9, NASB). They practiced idolatry, witchcraft, soothsaying, and sorcery. They attempted to cast spells upon people and call up the dead (Deuteronomy 18:10-11). The inhabitants of Canaan would "burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods" (Deuteronomy 12:30). The Canaanite nations were anything but "innocent." They were so nefarious that God said they defiled the land and the land could stomach them no longer—"the land vomited out its inhabitants" (Leviticus 18:25). [Keep in mind that God warned Israel before ever entering Canaan, that if they forsook His law, they, too, would be severely punished (Deuteronomy 28:15ff.). Sure enough, similar to how God used the Israelites to bring judgment upon the inhabitants of Canaan in the time of Joshua, He used the pagan nations of Babylon and Assyria to judge and conquer Israel hundreds of years later.]

**Third**, unlike the impulsive, quick-tempered reactions of many men (Proverbs 14:29), the Lord is "slow to anger and great in mercy" (Psalm 145:8). He is "longsuffering..., not willing that any should



perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). Immediately following a reminder to the Christians in Rome that the Old Testament was “written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope,” the apostle Paul referred to God as “the God of patience” (Romans 15:4-5). Throughout the Old Testament, the Bible writers portrayed God as longsuffering. When “the wickedness of man was great in the earth” in Noah’s day, and “every intent of the thoughts” of man’s “heart was only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5), “the Divine longsuffering waited” (1 Peter 3:20). It appears that God delayed flooding the Earth for 120 years as His Spirit’s message of righteousness was preached to a wicked world (Genesis 6:3 and 2 Peter 2:5). In the days of Abraham, God ultimately decided to spare the iniquitous city of Sodom, not if 50 righteous people were found living therein, but only **10** righteous individuals.

And what about prior to God’s destruction of the Canaanite nations? Did He respond to the peoples’ wickedness like an impulsive, reckless mad-man? Or was He, as the Bible repeatedly states and exemplifies, longsuffering? Indeed, God waited. **He waited more than four centuries to bring judgment upon the inhabitants of Canaan.** Although the Amorites were already a sinful people in Abraham’s day, God delayed in giving the descendants of the patriarch the Promised Land. He would wait until the Israelites had been in Egypt for hundreds of years, because at the time that God spoke with Abra-

ham “the iniquity of the Amorites” was “not yet complete” (Genesis 15:16).<sup>17</sup> In Abraham’s day, the inhabitants of Canaan were not so degenerate that God would bring judgment upon them. However, by the time of Joshua (more than 400 years later), the Canaanites’ iniquity was full, and God used the army of Israel to destroy them.

Yes, God is longsuffering, but His **longsuffering** is **not** an “eternal” suffering. His patience with impenitent sinners eventually ends. It ended for a wicked world in the days of Noah. It ended for Sodom and Gomorrah in the days of Abraham. And it eventually ended for the inhabitants of Canaan, whom God **justly** destroyed.

#### “But What About the Innocent Children in Canaan?”

The children of Canaan were certainly not guilty of their parents’ sins (cf. Ezekiel 18:20); they were sinless, innocent, precious human beings (cf. Matthew 18:3-5). So how could God justly take the lives of children “who have no knowledge of good and evil” (Deuteronomy 1:39)? In truth, as Dave Miller properly noted, “Including the children in the destruction of such populations actually spared them from a worse condition—that of being reared to be as wicked as their parents and thus face eternal punishment. All persons who die in childhood, according to the Bible, are ushered to Paradise and will ultimately reside in Heaven. Children who have parents who are evil must naturally suffer innocently while on Earth.”<sup>18</sup> God, the Giver of life (Acts 17:25; Ecclesiastes 12:7), and

only God has the right to take the life of His creation whenever He chooses (for the righteous purposes that He has). At times in history, God took the life of men out of righteous judgment. At other times (as in the case of children), it was for merciful reasons.<sup>19</sup>

#### #5—“GOD IS JEALOUS AND INSECURE”

**R**ICHARD Dawkins has alleged that “[t]he God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant actor in all fiction: **jealous** and proud of it.”<sup>20</sup> Penn Jillette listed God being “jealous and insecure” seventh in his list of reasons for becoming an atheist.<sup>21</sup> Dan Barker went so far as to say:

If we were forced to reduce the entire Old Testament to a single word, what would it be? It would not be “love.” There is not enough love there to fill a communion cup.... The one word that sums up the scenario between Genesis and Malachi is “jealousy.” Almost every page, every story, every act, every psalm, every prophecy, every command, every threat in those 39 ancient books points back to the possessiveness of one particular god who wanted to own and control his chosen lover by demanding total devotion. “Love me! I am better than the others! Don’t look at them—look at me!”<sup>22</sup>

Indeed, the Bible reveals in no uncertain terms that God is a “jealous God” (Exodus 20:5; Deuteronomy 4:24). The truth is, however, sometimes “jealously” is a good thing. The word “jealous” is translated in the Old Testament from the Hebrew word *qin’ah*, and in the New Testament from the Greek word *zelos*. The root idea behind both words is that of

“warmth” or “heat.”<sup>23</sup> The Hebrew word for jealousy carries with it the idea of “redness of the face that accompanies strong emotion”<sup>24</sup>—whether right or wrong. Depending upon the usage of the word, it can be used to represent both a good and an evil passion. In 1 Corinthians 13:4, Paul noted the negative side of jealousy when he wrote that “love is not jealous.”<sup>25</sup> Interestingly, however, three times in this same context (1 Corinthians 12-14), Paul used this word in a good sense to encourage his brethren to “earnestly desire (*zeeloute*)” spiritual gifts (12:31; 14:1,39). He obviously was not commanding the Corinthians to sin, but to do something that was good and worthwhile. Later, when writing to the church at Corinth, the apostle Paul was even more direct in showing how there was such a thing as “godly jealousy.” He stated: “I am jealous for you with godly jealousy” (2 Corinthians 11:2). Paul’s burning desire was for the church at Corinth to abide in the love of God. As a friend of the bridegroom (Christ), Paul used some of the strongest language possible to encourage the “bride” of Christ at Corinth to be pure and faithful.

In a similar way, Jehovah expressed His love for Israel in the Old Testament by proclaiming to be “a jealous God” (Exodus 20:5; Deuteronomy 4:24). He was not envious of the Israelites’ accomplishments or possessions, but was communicating His strong love for them. The Scriptures depict a spiritual marriage between Jehovah and His people. Sadly, during the period of the divided kingdom, both Israel and Judah were guilty

of “playing the harlot” (Jeremiah 3:6-10). God called Israel’s idolatrous practice “adultery,” and for this reason He had “put her away and given her a certificate of divorce” (3:8).

The fact is, **love has a virtuous jealous side**. What atheist would not be “jealous” (in a good sense) of a wife, whom he loved with all of his heart, flirting with others in public and committing adultery with them in private? Most everyone understands there is a sense in which one can be “justly jealous.” Such is especially true in the marriage relationship. Israel was God’s chosen people. He had begun to set them apart as a special nation by blessing their “father” Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3). He blessed the Israelites with much numerical growth while living in Egypt. He delivered them from Egyptian bondage. And, among other things, He gave them written revelation, which, if obeyed, would bring them spiritually closer to Jehovah, and even would make them physically superior to other nations, in that they would be spared from various diseases (see Exodus 15:26). Like a bird that watches over her eggs and young with jealousy, preventing other birds from entering her nest, God watched over the Israelites with “righteous” jealousy, unwilling to tolerate the presence of false gods among his people (Exodus 20:3-6).

In addition, the Bible reveals that God is **every person’s** Maker (or Father by creation), Sustainer, Savior, and Judge. He was (and is) jealous, not only for Israel’s love, but for **everyone’s**—and for everyone’s **own benefit**. It is in everyone’s best interest to have

a loving, submissive relationship with our heavenly Father (Ecclesiastes 12:7; Hebrews 12:9), even as it is in every child’s best interest to humbly submit to wise, loving, earthly fathers—who have the best interest of their own children in mind. What loving, protective father is not “angry” and “jealous” of his wayward son’s drug dealer, who keeps his son’s deadly addiction continuously supplied? Does a father not have a right to be jealous for his son’s best interest and overall life? If so, why does God not have a right to be jealous for the souls of His children?

God “desires **all men** to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). He has a perfectly truthful and loving plan intended to save the world from punishment and to give us eternal happiness. For these reasons, He is “jealous” for our love, “not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

[to be continued]

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> As quoted in James A. Haught (1996), *2,000 Years of Disbelief: Famous People with Courage to Doubt* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus), p. 251.
- <sup>2</sup> New York Public Library, <https://www.nypl.org/voices/print-publications/books-of-the-century>.
- <sup>3</sup> Bertrand Russell (1927), “Why I Am Not a Christian,” <https://users.drew.edu/~jlenz/whynot.html>, emp. added.
- <sup>4</sup> Penn Jillette (2010), “How Did You Become an Atheist?” *BigThink*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E3rGev6OZ3w>, emp. added.
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>6</sup> He also later became drunk and impregnated his daughters, albeit unknowingly (Genesis 19:30-36).
- <sup>7</sup> Jillette.
- <sup>8</sup> “Top 10 Worst Bible Passages” (2009),



*The Telegraph*, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/6120373/Top-10-worst-Bible-passages.html>, emp. added.

<sup>9</sup> *Debate: Does the God of the Bible Exist? Dan Barker vs. Kyle Butt* (2009), Apologetics Press, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lnk4UCvY89U>.

<sup>10</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre (1989), "Existentialism is Humanism," in *Existentialism from Dostoyevsky to Sartre*, ed. Walter Kaufman, trans. Philip Mairet (Meridian Publishing Company), <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/sartre/works/exist/sartre.htm>, emp. added.

<sup>11</sup> Peter Singer (2000), *Writings on an Ethical Life* (New York: Harper Collins), p. 193, emp. added.

<sup>12</sup> For more discussion on this test, see Eric Lyons and Kyle Butt (2011), "Was Jesus Unkind to the Syrophenician Woman?" Apologetics Press, <http://www.apologeticspress.org/AllegedDiscrepancies.aspx?article=3797&cb=Matthew>.

<sup>13</sup> Although Abraham did not know that God was testing him (anymore than the disciples and the Gentile woman mentioned earlier knew that Jesus was testing them), **Abraham stood firmly upon the promises of God**. The Lord had guaranteed him saying, "Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and **with his descendants after him....** My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear.... At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son" (Genesis 17:19,21; 18:14). "And the Lord visited Sarah as He had said, and the Lord did for Sarah as He had spoken. For Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. And Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him—whom Sarah bore to him—Isaac" (21:1-3). Once more God reminded Abraham that "**in Isaac** your seed shall be called" (21:12). The same God who tested Abraham's faithfulness only a few verses later (in Genesis 22), is the same God Who had recently promised him that Isaac would have many

offspring (Genesis 12:1-3; 13:16; 17:2,4-6,16). Thus, Abraham concluded that, though he might kill his son at God's trying command, God would virtually immediately raise him from the dead.

Abraham's insight and confidence is exhibited when he said to the young men who accompanied him and Isaac on part of their journey: "Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and **we** will come back to you" (Genesis 22:5). Notice that Abraham did not say that "I" will come back to you, but "**we**" (Abraham **and** Isaac) "will come back to you." As the Hebrews writer notes, Abraham was willing to offer up Isaac, "concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead" (11:19).

<sup>14</sup> For further insight into Genesis 22, see Dave Miller (2018), "God, Abraham, & Child Sacrifice," Apologetics Press, <http://apologeticspress.org/APContent.aspx?category=12&article=5570>.

<sup>15</sup> Dan Barker (2016), "The 10 Worst Old Testament Verses by Dan Barker," *Freethought Today*, April, <https://ffrf.org/publications/freethought-today/item/26141-the-10-worst-old-testament-verses>.

<sup>16</sup> Richard Dawkins (2006), *The God Delusion* (New York: Houghton Mifflin), p. 248.

<sup>17</sup> "The Amorites were so numerous and powerful a tribe in Canaan that they are sometimes named for the whole of

the ancient inhabitants, as they are here" [Robert Jamieson, et al. (1997), *Jamieson, Fausset, Brown Bible Commentary* (Electronic Database: Biblesoft)].

<sup>18</sup> Dave Miller (2009), "Did God Order the Killing of Babies?" Apologetics Press, <http://www.apologeticspress.org/apcontent.aspx?category=13&article=2810>.

<sup>19</sup> For an excellent, extensive discussion on the relationship between (a) the goodness of God, (b) the contradictory, hideousness of atheism, and (c) God bringing about the death of various infants throughout history, see Kyle Butt's article "Is God Immoral for Killing Innocent Children?" (2009), Apologetics Press, <http://www.apologeticspress.org/apcontent.aspx?category=11&article=260>.

<sup>20</sup> Dawkins, p. 31, emp. added.

<sup>21</sup> Jillette.

<sup>22</sup> Dan Barker (2016), *God: The Most Unpleasant Character in All Fiction* (New York: Sterling), p. 13.

<sup>23</sup> E.J. Forrester (1996), "Jealousy," *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* (Electronic Database Biblesoft).

<sup>24</sup> Charles Lee Feinberg (1942), "Exegetical Studies in Zechariah: Part 10," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 99:428-439, October.

<sup>25</sup> NASB; cf. Romans 13:13; 2 Corinthians 12:20.

## SPEAKING SCHEDULES

### Eric Lyons

December 7-8	Cookeville, TN	(931) 432-6333
December 22	Wetumpka, AL	(334) 567-6561

### Dave Miller

December 1	Montgomery, AL	(334) 264-2985
December 29	Montgomery, AL	(334) 264-2985

### Jeff Miller

December 6-8	Mathis, TX	(361) 547-2016
December 15	Montgomery, AL	(334) 264-2985



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## The Editor



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