



Conducted by
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GOD ... AND THE 'GODS'

This month we have a two-part question to consider.

"In the first Commandment, Exodus 20:3, God states, 'You shall have no other gods besides Me', and then in verse 5, He says, 'I, Yahveh, am a jealous God'.

In Psalm 82:6, we read 'I said, Ye are gods'.

1. In what sense is God 'a jealous God'?
2. Who are the 'gods' mentioned in the Psalm?

1a) With regards to the passage in Exodus 20, we have to admit that it is easy to see how some readers - (and some who, at school, had to learn to recite the Ten

Commandments, as I did!) - might gain the impression from that verse that God is not only a jealous God but is also a vindictive God, who punishes the children for the sins of their fathers. And that is an entirely erroneous impression.

If you look up the word '*jealous*' in a concordance you will also come across the word '*jealousy*', and you will be led to that striking verse which states, '*Yahveh, whose name is Jealousy, is a jealous God*' (Ex. 34:14).

The problem arises because these two words today do not mean what they meant in Old Testament times; and sustain a meaning which is different, even, from 1611, when the Authorized Version was produced. I am sure that we have all discovered, in reading the older version, that problems arise because, over the years, many words have acquired very different meanings. If we had the space to spare, this fact could very easily be demonstrated.

Today we list '*jealousy*' among such sins as '*envy*', '*malice*' and '*pride*'. In fact, the Oxford Dictionary defines the word '*jealous*' as, '*resentful towards another on account of known or suspected rivalry; envious*'. Because of this, jealousy is the motivation behind a great many of the sins that people commit.

The biblical meaning of 'jealous'

But the Old Testament word at which we are looking is '*quanno*' and its basic meaning is, quite simply, '*zealous*' or '*enthusiastic*' or '*passionate*'.

It is in this sense that the prophet Elijah uses the word when he declares his enthusiasm for God, in 1st Kings 19:10. Similarly, when God declares that He is '*jealous*', He tells us for what it is that He is jealous. Several times He states, "*I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion*". There is no '*resentfulness*' in His '*jealousy*' for Jerusalem, but the expression of a deep and wonderful love and concern for the city in which He '*caused His name to dwell*'. This means that when, in Ex. 20:5, He says, '*I am a jealous God*', He is declaring His zealousness for the protection of His own honour as the one True God. In Isa. 42:8, He states, "*I am Yahveh; that is My name; My glory I give to no other, nor My praise to graven image.*"

Visiting the Sins of the Fathers'

1b) As for the supposed vindictiveness of God, which some think they see in that verse; it should be noted that the verse does not teach that children bear *guilt* of the iniquities of their parents. The word '*aven*' = '*iniquity*', mean '*perverseness in error, or waywardness*'.

If God had wanted His people to understand that children bear the '*guilt*' of the sins of their parents, He could have caused that very word. '*Asham*' is the word for '*guilt*', and there is a world of difference between the *guilt* of sin and the *consequences* of sin'

The Bible does not teach the errors of '*inherited guilt*', or '*total inherited depravity*'. The truth is much simpler than that, and something which faces us every day of our lives.

The truth is that children *suffer* because of the sins of their parents. It is a sad fact that all too often the innocent have to suffer the consequences of the sins of the guilty.

Within the last few days, as I write this, the world has been saddened by the news of the death of a small, courageous African boy, who died of AIDS, the scourge of our modern world. It is a disease with which he was born because of the sin of others.

The Stain of Sin Spreads

The reality is that sin always brings appalling consequences and its effects are borne, not only by those who are responsible for committing it, but also by their children and their children's children.

And, remember also, that since children learn from the behaviour of their parents - whether it be good or bad - *'the sins of the fathers'* are very often reproduced and copied by their offspring. There are families in which criminality, lawlessness, immorality, violence and addiction have become a way of life and accepted as normal. And, sooner or later, they bear *consequences* of such a life style. But, as for the matter of *guilt*, the prophet Ezekiel has the definitive word, in Ezek. 18:20:

"The soul that sins shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself".

2. *The second part of our question asks, "Who are the 'gods' mentioned in Psa. 82:6?"*

The O.T. passage, in the Hebrew text, reads, *'I Myself said 'Ye are gods''*, and it is important to notice that the pronoun, *'I'*, is emphatic. The stress should be placed on the *'I Myself'*, because the speaker is God Himself and He is addressing those whom He calls the *'elohim'*.

That word is used very frequently in the Old Testament, and, although it is used in a special way as the first of the three primary names of God, it is also used in a more general sense. (The other two names being *Adonai* and *Yahveh*).

'Elohim' in Creation

We first encounter it in Genesis chapter 1, when God's action in Creation is described. You will find it used 27 times in the 31 verses of that chapter, and it is used because its root meaning is that of 'strength', 'power', 'might' or 'authority'. The word, of itself, does not imply deity, yet it is a very fitting title when used of the Almighty in His creative activity, *'Yahveh Elohim'* - is the Strong One.

So, the answer to the question 'Who are the 'gods'?', is that, because the root-meaning of the word is 'might' or 'power', the *'elohim'* to whom God speaks in the psalm, are Judges.

They are *'mighty ones'* who are to be recognized as His representatives, His agents, because they have been appointed in accordance with His law, to execute judgment among His people, Israel.

Into this category of *'gods'* were placed not only the judges, but also the priests and prophets, because they also had a divinely appointed ministry.

The Lord's use of 'elohim'

It is interesting to note that, in John 10:33-36, the Lord Jesus uses this passage in a discussion with the Jews, knowing that they would have no problem accepting this use of the term *'elohim'* and would see the strength of the argument he was making, because they knew that their Rabbis taught that the word was applied by their Law to men who had been called and appointed by God to undertake special service.

The Lord's argument runs like this:

"The Father Himself called certain people 'elohim' when He called them to undertake certain duties among the people. In the exercise of their ministry they represented Him, and acted with His authority. They were therefore called, 'the elohim' - the mighty ones.

Do you, then, call the One whom the Father actually and directly sanctified - consecrated, set apart and sent into the world, a blasphemer, because I said that 'I am (the) son of God?'"

Since the Jews accepted that God had called certain of His servants 'gods', they had no reason for accusing Jesus of blasphemy when he called himself *'son of God'*.



CHILDREN IN PRISON

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Nepal is a fundamental Hindu country, sandwiched between China (Tibet) and India. With major political troubles. Maoist infiltrators are rioting and many are victims. The country is terribly poor and corrupt, the Christian minority is less than 1% they have faced horrific torture and persecution over the years, but are small strong and faithful. Please pray for them.

The Health care is so poor that there is only one doctor per 17,000 people. The Health expenditure per capita is 4 pounds.

Initially I decided to go to Nepal as a self funded volunteer to nurse Tibetan refugees who are all Buddhists, a wonderful way to teach Jesus.

While there I helped in Leprosy Hospitals, Health Clinics, orphanages, Aids homes, Drug rehab, and with handicapped and street children. There are so very many needs.

God Blessed me richly.