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LOVE AFFAIR WITH A JEALOUS GOD

(Meet Me in My Park in Time—R.S.V.P.)

Jealousy figures more in broken relationships and even murder mysteries than in great love affairs. But the Scripture proudly affirms that God “is a jealous God” (Ex. 20:5). Even more amazing is the Lord’s revelation at Sinai that His *name* is “Jealous”! (see Exodus 34:14).

The Hebrew term *qannā’* has the meaning of “zealous”: ardently devoted to a purpose, fervent, enthusiastic. In the verses above, it expresses God’s zeal for His law, the context seeming to anticipate attempts to make the law onerous or “heavy”—too much to bear. In fact, the mission of Messiah, the gospel prophet Isaiah predicted, would be to “magnify the law, and make it honourable” (see Isaiah 42:21, KJV). In particular, this mis-

sion would be necessary because of attacks on the Sabbath, which alone of the commandments identifies God as our Creator—and in a special sense, with its provisions for physical and spiritual rest—reveals His loving concern for our physical and spiritual health.

Think of the ardent devotion with which He pursues fellowship with us. A special day for a special intimacy. A day in which we can enthusiastically fellowship with our Creator! For this purpose He sanctified—that is, set aside for a special purpose—the Sabbath.

Some who read the biblical “thou shalt nots” on Sabbathkeeping

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would define its hours with such terms as “weekly misery” and “boredom.” And true it is that God hedges the Sabbath in the same way government agencies fence our parks. Webster defines a park as: “A very large area of land belonging to the government *preserved in its natural state* and accessible to the public.” To achieve these goals, the park agencies post restrictions, regulations, constraints, limitations, boundaries, and other rules.

The Sabbath is like a park. God’s government preserved a piece of time in its natural state and declared it eternally accessible to all. To “preserve” means to keep as is, with no changes. Why did God put hedges around His Sabbath? Because He knew that if He didn’t, we’d fill it with all the things we fill other days with.

“Thou-shalt-not” hedges

So what is the purpose of the Sabbath? Just as with our country’s parks, it’s for the enjoyment of all. *What! Enjoy* the Sabbath? Yes, Enjoy God’s presence. God’s family. God’s ardent desire for fellowship with us. All this, in His “Park in Time.” Even the “Thou-shalt-not” hedges He put in place around it are an expression of His love. He knew that without them we wouldn’t “remember.”

Sometimes we’re tempted to think that His hedges limit our freedom. But a closer look reveals that

they enhance and amplify our freedoms by enabling us to share His love. They keep our Sabbath hours empty. Empty of buying and selling; empty of business tensions and transactions; empty of irritating appointments, empty of the five- or six-day rat-race of routine and road rage and rancor.

On the other hand, we may find our Park in Time filled with activity. Guests for food and fellowship. Visits to hurting neighbors or church members. An outing in God’s outdoors. An invitation to God’s house! Conversation with Him! Hurts shared. Needs expressed. And from Him, counsel given. Lovingly. Redemptively.

While enjoying Sabbaths in God’s Park in Time, it’s likely we’ll remember the first park He gave our first parents. It was called the Garden of Eden. There He came weekly to visit with Adam and Eve. He didn’t come because He was exhausted from His work of creation. That didn’t tire Him one bit! Rather, He came because a father loves to visit his children! Call it Father’s Day! A *holy* day because the Holy One comes on that day to affirm His Fatherhood.

No wonder Satan hates that day!

No wonder he whispers “Forget”!

No wonder God says “Remember”!

Have a happy Father’s Day this Sabbath and enjoy personal fellowship with our Jealous God! □