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WHAT THINGS DOES GOD HATE?

(PART 1 OF A 2-PART SERIES)

We talk a lot about love. We are to love God above all else, and we are to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. But what about the opposite of love? What about hatred? Is there ever a place for hatred? Does God hate anything? If so, what are the things God actively hates?

Now **why** should we take a look at the things God hates? Is that really necessary? Clearly understanding all the things God hates helps us to have a better understanding of God. It helps us to more correctly anticipate how God will respond, when God is faced with something that God hates. It helps us to understand how God thinks. But more than that, knowing what God hates is a powerful tool for our own character and personality development.

We need to get to the point where we individually hate the same things that God hates. In Revelation 2:6 Jesus Christ said:

But this you have, that **you hate the deeds** of the Nicolaitans, **which I also hate**. (Revelation 2:6)

Jesus Christ is saying that it is to our credit if we really hate the things that God hates! It shows God that our minds are starting to think and reason the same way that God thinks. Ultimately we have to get to the point where we sincerely like the things God likes, and equally sincerely hate the things God hates. Then we will have developed some measure of godly character.

Understanding the things God hates is an indispensable part of understanding God. This type of understanding also forces our minds to take a stand. Once we understand the things God hates, do we wholeheartedly agree with God? Or **are we perhaps ambivalent** about one or two or three of the things that God hates? If we are, then that certainly calls our conversion into question. Disagreeing with God regarding anything that God clearly hates is not an option for anyone who wants to have his or her guilty past forgiven by God. No, it is not an option; hating the things God hates is an absolute requirement for salvation.

So what does God hate?

It is not enough for us to give the simple answer: God hates all sins. That answer is correct, but that answer avoids us identifying "all sins". Throughout the Bible we find a generous number of statements that specifically identify certain things that God hates. Therefore we have a responsibility to examine those statements more closely, so that we may align our own minds with those statements.

The biblical statements that identify the things God hates can be divided into **two groups**. One group consists of statements which are made by certain people, servants of God, who tell us what God hates. The other group consists of statements which actually present God Himself speaking in the first person, and telling us "I hate ...", as we saw above in Revelation 2:6.

Without taking anything away from the list of things certain biblical writers tell us that God hates, direct "I hate ..." statements by God Himself are if anything even more powerful, and therefore even more important. "I hate ..." statements by God Himself reveal God's feelings about certain things. It is

important for us to recognize and to clearly understand the things God hates.

Now before we go any further, we should first establish what we mean when we say that we “hate” something or someone.

DEFINING “TO HATE”

Merriam Webster Dictionary defines the verb “to hate” as follows:

to feel **extreme enmity** toward, to regard with active hostility,

to have a strong aversion to, find very distasteful.

Synonyms for “hate” include words like: abhor, despise, detest, loathe. These synonymous words each have the following focus:

ABHOR implies a deep, often shuddering repugnance.

DESPISE implies looking down on with disrespect or even aversion.

DETEST suggests violent antipathy.

LOATHE implies utter disgust and intolerance.

All of these words express **very strong feelings**. They express specific emotional attitudes. And those attitudes are directed **against someone** or **against something**. These words all imply a desire to get rid of someone or something. They express rejection. If the people or things we hate, abhor, despise, detest or loathe would just go away and permanently disappear out of our lives, that would make us happy. We don't really like coexisting with people or with conditions which we hate.

This is what our English verb “to hate” means to us. But what about the Bible? What about the Hebrew words that are translated as various forms of hatred? What meaning do they convey?

HEBREW WORDS FOR “HATING”

In the Old Testament there are a number of Hebrew words that are at times all translated either as “to hate”, or as some of the above synonyms for “to hate”. The main Hebrew words in this group are:

1) “**Sane**”. This word is used 146x in the O.T. and in the KJV it is translated 136x as “to hate”. This verb “sane” expresses **an emotional attitude** toward persons or things which are opposed, detested, despised, and with which one wishes to have no contact or relationship. The meaning is far stronger than the frequently quoted statement “to love less by comparison”. This word really represents a strong very negative response to someone or to something. This word is in full agreement with the meanings for our English verb “to hate”.

2) “**Ma’ac**”. This word is used 76x in the O.T., and in the KJV it is translated 25x as “to despise”, 19x as “to reject”, 9x as “to refuse”, and 4x as “to abhor”, all synonyms for hating. This Hebrew verb means “to reject, to despise, to loathe”. This word also covers our English verb “to hate” pretty well.

3) “**Qalal**”. This word is used 82x in the O.T., and in the KJV it is translated 39x as “to curse”, and 4x as “vile”. It refers to making something despicable. This word also readily ties in with our verb “to hate”.

4) “**Na’ats**”. This verb is used 25x in the O.T., and in the KJV it is translated 8x as “to despise”, 5x as “to provoke”, 4x as “to abhor”, 4x as “to blaspheme”, and 2x as “to contemn” (i.e. to regard with scorn or contempt). It also ties in well with hating someone or something.

5) “**Ga’al**”. This verb is used 10x in the O.T., and in the KJV it is translated 5x as “to abhor” and 3x as “to loathe”. This word indicates an intense aversion, which is often expressed in punitive or adverse action. It also fits our English verb “to hate”.

There are also some other Hebrew verbs that tie into this subject, but the above list should suffice for our purposes. The point is that Old Testament Hebrew had a number of different verbs that express **the same very strong feelings** that our English verb “to hate” and its synonyms express. So a number of different Hebrew verbs convey the same strong feelings against someone or against some things, and they are equally well described by the verb “to hate”. So they need to also be taken into consideration in the subject we are examining.

In the Old Testament verses I will quote, I will include in brackets the relevant Hebrew verb from the above list for easier reference. Now let’s look at some of the things God hates.

First we’ll consider statements that do not involve God Himself stating His own feelings. After that we’ll look at God’s own statements.

SOME THINGS WE ARE TOLD GOD HATES

Take heed to yourself that you be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before you; and that you enquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise. You shall not do so unto the LORD your God: for **every abomination** to the LORD, **which He hates** (“sane”), have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods. (Deuteronomy 12:30-31)

God hates every pagan custom, no exceptions. Pagans sacrificing their own children is only one specific extreme example of such pagan customs. But there are also many other pagan customs, and those are equally hated by God.

What about us? Are we okay with pagan ideas all around us? Even if we, to consider just one example, don’t keep Christmas ourselves, are we comfortable rubbing shoulders with the whole Christmas rigmarole, which friends and some family members around us may be practicing?

How clearly do we grasp God’s hatred for all things pagan?

Neither shall you set up **any image**; which the LORD your **God hates** (“sane”). (Deuteronomy 16:22)

Okay, so God hates all religious images. How about you and me? Do we also hate all religious images? What is our emotional response when we are faced with some or other religious image, including religious images from other cultures?

The foolish shall not stand in Your sight: **You hate** (“sane”) **all workers of iniquity**. (Psalm 5:5)

“Workers of iniquity” covers pretty well all forms of breaking the laws of God. In this verse King David tells us that **God hates the people** who break His laws. Haven’t you heard that “God hates the sin but loves the sinner”? That isn’t what this verse says, is it? God does not love the human beings who break His laws.

Upon real repentance God is willing to forgive the sinner (i.e. including you and me), but God does not “love” anyone who is engaged in sinning. God does not love the adulterer, the murderer, the thief, the liar, the idolater, the Sabbath-breaker or the blasphemer, etc. No, God hates all workers of iniquity.

At this point we should clarify one specific point.

God hates all sins. God hates all opposition to His way of life. And God also hates the individuals who knowingly break His laws. God hates those people who rebel against Him. That is God’s position.

We human beings, on the other hand, are instructed by Jesus Christ to love our enemies (see Matthew 5:44). Enemies certainly includes those people who hate us. We are to hate the rebellious and sinful things people do, and the wicked character attributes people have, but **we are not to hate the people themselves**, those who have the evil character attributes, and who do the wicked deeds. So the statement “to hate the sin but to love the sinner” applies to us, but it does not apply to God, as we’ll also see in the next Psalm that we’ll look at.

In plain terms:

God hates the sin and God also hates the unrepentant sinner.

We are also to hate the sin, but we are not to hate the sinner.

David living in Old Testament times didn’t fully know this distinction, and we today wouldn’t know this distinction either, if it was not for Jesus Christ’s clear statement in Matthew 5:44. To hate the wrong actions and attributes and conduct **without** also hating the perpetrators is not something any human being would have figured out without Jesus Christ’s statement on this subject.

For example, it is quite clear that Samuel hated King Agag of the Amalekites, whom Samuel himself literally “cut in pieces” with a sword (see 1 Samuel 15:33). Samuel didn’t just kill Agag. No, Samuel cut the dead person into pieces, a gory sight. This was not needed to kill Agag. But it was an expression of Samuel’s hatred for the man.

So “loving our enemies” is **a refinement of God’s laws**, which Jesus Christ only introduced during His earthly ministry. Before New Testament times it had always been a case of “love your neighbor and hate your enemy” (see Matthew 5:43). And that’s what servants of God like Samuel and David did.

Back to Psalm 5:5. How about us? Do we also hate all these forms of breaking the laws of God? Or are we more “tolerant” or more “understanding” of evildoers?

In another psalm David said:

The LORD tries the righteous: but **the wicked** and him that loves violence **His soul hates** (“sane”). (Psalm 11:5)

In this verse “wicked” refers to people who are wrong, unjust or guilty of some transgression. Again, God does not love those who break His laws. God hates the people who behave wickedly; and we are to hate their wicked conduct.

In reference to Jesus Christ, another Psalm says:

You love righteousness, and **hate** (“sane”) **wickedness**: therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness above Your fellows. (Psalms 45:7)

(Comment: This verse is explained in great detail in my 2011 article “Psalm 45:6-7 Explained”.)

In this verse the focus is on the wrong actions. So God clearly hates the wrong actions. In the previously quoted verses the focus is on the individuals committing wickedness. Taken together, it means that God hates both, the wicked actions and the people committing those wicked actions.

The point is that wickedness can never be separated from those who engage in wicked actions. Applied to God, the statement “God hates the sin but loves the sinner” is not correct!

On its own, wickedness simply does not exist before God. It requires human beings (or spirit beings) for wickedness to come into existence. And it is impossible to separate wickedness from the individuals (i.e. humans or demons) who perform the wickedness. And so God hates those who are responsible for wickedness.

To put this into perspective, we need to understand what Jesus Christ was saying, when He said “love your enemies”. **Christ did not mean that we are to have some positive emotional feeling for our enemies!** Love is not a feeling. In Matthew 5:44 Jesus Christ clarified what He meant by “love” for enemies. He meant exactly three things: **bless** (i.e. say positive things), **do good** for (deal fairly and kindly with), **pray for them**.

Of these three things, “praying for enemies” is the only one that reveals our emotional stance towards our enemies, because we are praying to God. Praying for them involves asking God to have mercy on our enemies, even as God has had mercy on us. Praying for them involves asking **that God’s will** for our enemies **may be done**.

In some cases the best thing for our enemies may well be that at this point in time God imposes on them some penalty for their wickedness, in an effort to motivate them to come to repentance. But that is not for us to know. Whatever is best for the wicked in the long term is beyond our knowledge; and so we ought to pray for God’s will to be done for all people, including our own enemies.

The only way to separate wickedness from those who perform the wickedness **is forgiveness from God**. And forgiveness from God is only available to those people who genuinely repent. But people who are identified as “the wicked” are obviously not yet repentant, and therefore it is impossible to deal with the wickedness of such people without at the same time also dealing with those people themselves. It is their wickedness that identifies those people.

Moving on, here is a collection of more things that God hates.

These six *things* does the LORD hate (“sane”): yea, seven *are* an abomination unto Him: **A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaks lies, and he that sows discord among brethren.** (Proverbs 6:16-19)

The Hebrew word for “abomination” refers to things that are abhorred and loathed. All “abominations” are hated by God. Adding the word for “abomination” to this list raises the intensity with which these things are hated by God to a higher level.

God hates all forms of pride. **God will never work through proud people.** Are there any proud people out there of whom you think highly? How about proud politicians, or proud entertainers, or proud sports personalities ... do we think highly of them? If so, we are not thinking like God.

When Solomon said that God hates “a lying tongue”, then that tongue happens to belong to a specific human being. And if God hates the liar’s “tongue”, it means that God also hates the person who uses that tongue to spread lies. The tongue itself hasn’t done anything wrong; it is the owner of that tongue who is hated by God. **God hates liars!**

One specifically perverse form of lying is “bearing false witness”. The purpose of bearing false witness is either **to get a guilty person out of trouble**, or else **to get an innocent person into trouble**. Sometimes those two purposes are combined in the same occasion of bearing false witness. Such lies are especially hated by God!

Another specific category of people who are hated by God is identified as “he that sows discord among brethren”. That applies to gossipers and trouble makers, both men and women. And **gossipers have always been amongst us**, right? How do we view gossipers who divulge “the latest inside information” to us, in order to discredit someone in some way? God hates such people.

People who are willing to hurt other people (“shed innocent blood”), people who think up perverse activities (“wicked imaginations”), and people who are quick to join any evil activity (“swift in running to mischief”) are all hated by God, because all their activities are so obviously contrary to God’s way of life.

Let’s look at the next statement.

For they provoked Him to **anger** with their high places, and moved Him to **jealousy** with their graven images. When God heard *this*, He was **wroth**, and **greatly abhorred** (“ma’ac”) **Israel**: (Psalm 78:58-59)

Anger and jealousy are very strong emotions on God’s part. Saying that God “greatly abhorred Israel” is another way of saying that **God hated Israel** because of their idolatry. God hates people who engage in idolatry, irrespective of whether those people are Israelites or non-Israelites. God will never compromise with idolatry.

Let’s look at another thing God hates.

For the LORD, the God of Israel, says that **He hates** (“sane”) **divorce** (i.e. “putting away”): for *one* covers violence with his garment, says the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that you deal not treacherously. (Malachi 2:16)

Since divorce does not represent a direct breaking of any of the ten commandments, we would never on our own have deduced that God hates divorce. Therefore God used His prophet Malachi to spell out for us this specific hatred.

Once God explains this to us, then it is easy to understand why God hates divorce. But we would not have thought of this hatred on our own. The reason for God’s hatred is that men had **“dealt treacherously”** against their wives (see verses 14-15). Either the husband or the wife “dealing treacherously” is a very common cause for divorce. And while God allows divorce in certain situations, God still hates divorce, because divorce represents **a covenant being broken**. That is always a bad thing.

Let’s look at another Scripture.

And the LORD said unto Samuel, How long will you mourn for Saul, seeing **I have rejected** (“ma’ac”) **him** from reigning over Israel? fill your horn with oil, and go, I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided Me a king among his sons. (1 Samuel 16:1)

As I mentioned earlier, the Hebrew verb “ma’ac” refers to despising and loathing someone or something. So at that point in time God hated King Saul, and that hatred is expressed in God’s inflexible rejection of Saul. God could not trust Saul to be faithful. **God hates those individuals whom He cannot trust.**

Here is another statement.

There were they in great fear, *where* no fear was: for God has scattered the bones of him that encamps *against* you: You have put *them* to shame, because **God has despised** (“ma’ac”) **them**. (Psalm 53:5)

This is a reference to atheists (see verse 1), in this case atheists who are the enemies of Israel. **God despises atheists.** God hates those people who pretend that God does not exist. That shouldn’t surprise us.

We have now looked at many statements made by writers of the books of the Bible, statements regarding the things that God hates. Now let’s move on to statements made by God Himself, statements made in the first person. These are statements in which God Himself expresses His own feelings.

GOD HIMSELF TELLS US WHAT HE HATES

Let’s start in the Book of Hosea.

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because you have rejected (“ma’ac”) knowledge, **I will also reject** (“ma’ac”) **you**, that you shall be no priest to Me: seeing you have forgotten the law of your God, I will also forget your children. (Hosea 4:6)

This statement is addressed to the people of Israel. Now only the line of Aaron from the tribe of Levi were given the priesthood. The other tribes had no part in being priests. So when God here says that His people Israel “shall be no priest to Me”, then God is not referring to the physical Levitical priesthood.

God’s statement in Hosea 4:6 is really a reference to the first resurrection. In effect, with this statement God has rejected Israel from providing all of the 144,000 people for the first resurrection, because those 144,000 are all destined to be “priests”. See Revelation 5:10. With this statement in Hosea 4:6 God is **taking away** His promise that Israel would be to God “a kingdom of priests” (see Exodus 19:6).

Israel actively rejects the knowledge of God, and therefore **God actively rejects Israel from one specific promise**, i.e. from being “a kingdom of priests” to God. Hosea 4:6 is a very strong statement from God, full of emotion. It expresses a major penalty on Israel. A few chapters later God is speaking specifically to Ephraim.

After saying that God would take “glory” away from them (Hosea 9:11), and that God would bereave Ephraim of her children (verse 12), and give them “a miscarrying womb” (verse 14), God then said:

All their wickedness *is* in Gilgal: for **there I hated** (“sane”) **them**: for the wickedness of their doings I will drive them out of My house, **I will love them no more**: all their princes (i.e. leaders) *are* revolters. (Hosea 9:15)

Ephraim represented the ten-tribed Northern Kingdom. And God says that He hated them because of their wickedness, and that He would drive them out of His house. This is another example of God hating people who engage in wickedness. God Himself is the Speaker in Hosea 9:15.

Let's look at another statement about Israel. Here God refers to Israel as "His heritage".

Mine heritage is unto Me as a lion in the forest; it cries out against Me: **therefore have I hated** ("sane") **it**. (Jeremiah 12:8)

When Israel, God's heritage, "cries out against God", it means that Israel is openly hostile towards God. It is another way of saying that the natural human mind of Israelites is also hostile towards God (see Romans 8:7), just like the natural minds of all non-Israelite people. It should be no surprise that God actually hates the people who are openly hostile towards God.

A little later in the Book of Jeremiah God said:

Because of their wickedness which they have committed **to provoke Me** to anger, in that they went to burn incense, *and* to serve other gods, whom they knew not, *neither* they, you, nor your fathers. Howbeit I sent unto you all my servants the prophets, rising early and sending *them*, saying, Oh, do not **this abominable thing that I hate** ("sane"). (Jeremiah 44:3-4)

God hates people who provoke Him to anger with wickedness and idolatry. So what about the idolatry entrenched in all of this world's religions today? Does God also hate those idolatrous religions? Yes, He does!

We've already seen Revelation 2:6, where God tells us that He hates the religious practices of the Nicolaitans. God repeats this a few verses later, in verse 15.

So hast you also them that hold **the doctrine** of the Nicolaitans, **which thing I hate**. (Revelation 2:15)

God has now in a very short space twice referred to the pagan doctrines of the Nicolaitans. God strongly hates the doctrines, teachings, customs and practices of all the false religions that exist in our world. But how about us? How do we view those religions?

Let's consider another statement from God. During the period of the Judges in ancient Israel Eli of the line of Aaron was the high priest. But when Eli did nothing to curb the atrocious behavior of his two wicked sons, then God pronounced a very severe penalty on Eli. In the introduction of that penalty God said the following to Eli:

Wherefore the LORD God of Israel says, I said indeed *that* your house, and the house of your father, should walk before Me for ever: but now the LORD says, Be it far from Me; for them that honor Me I will honor, and they that despise Me **shall be lightly esteemed** ("qalal"). (1 Samuel 2:30)

Those that despise God shall be "lightly esteemed"? That's baloney! That's a serious mistranslation, based largely on the Latin Vulgate Translation. A correct translation here is "they that despise Me **shall be cursed**"! Despising God will always reap an automatic curse, because God hates the people who despise God. So verses 31-34 then spell out the details regarding how God was going to curse Eli.

Eli had very weakly confronted his sons, but Eli had not taken any action **to expel his sons from the priesthood** for their perverse behavior. That's what God had expected Eli to do, to put his sons out of the priesthood. But Eli did nothing. Therefore God cursed Eli's house with a severe penalty.

So we need to understand that when God sends us a specific warning, which we clearly recognize as coming from God, and we do not heed that warning, then that makes God angry. And then we will in some way be cursed by God.

What God did to **Lot's wife** is an example of God cursing those who don't heed unmistakable warnings from God. Both Lot and his wife, and also Eli received very clear warnings from God. And the curses God pours out are expressions of God's hatred for the people involved. **The only people God ever destroys are the people that God hates.** So when we see people being destroyed by God, then that destruction is an expression of God's hatred.

Let's now take another look at Israel.

The Lord GOD has sworn by Himself, says the LORD the God of hosts, **I abhor** the excellency of Jacob, **and hate** ("sane") **his palaces**: therefore will I deliver up the city with all that is therein. (Amos 6:8)

When God tells us that He has "sworn by Himself", then we are dealing with an extremely serious situation. This is not some casual statement about Israel; it is an expression of some **extremely strong feelings** on God's part.

"His palaces" is a reference to the civil leadership in Israel. In plain language, this verse tells us that **God hates the national leadership** in the nations of Israel. When the leadership in the nations of Israel condones and encourages homosexuality and sex-changes for little boys and little girls, and abortions, and similar perversions, then it should be no surprise that **God hates those who are responsible for those vile practices.**

Let's look at the Prophet Zechariah.

And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbor; and love no false oath: for **all these are things that I hate** ("sane"), says the LORD. (Zechariah 8:17)

Another statement along these same lines is recorded by Isaiah.

For I the LORD love judgment, **I hate** ("sane") **robbery** for burnt offering; and I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. (Isaiah 61:8)

God hates it when we human beings are motivated by greed and selfishness, which is what "robbery" amounts to. It should be clear that God in fact hates **all forms of selfishness.**

The question is: how do we view selfishness? Do we justify it? Do we agree with the Hollywood actor who had the line "greed is good"? God's hatred for all forms of selfishness is unequivocal. Do we perhaps deceive ourselves regarding our own selfish motivations for some of our actions?

Right, we have now looked at almost 20 biblical verses or passages that speak about the things God hates. Apart from one single statement, all of those statements are really self-evident, because they involve breaking laws of God. The one statement that might not have been self-evident, though it should be easy to understand after some serious consideration, is God's hatred for divorce.

Because of the law that Moses gave regarding dealing with the matter of divorce, it might not have occurred to us that God actually hates divorce. Therefore God spelled out this hatred through the Prophet Malachi. And of course, later Jesus Christ elaborated on this specific hatred in Matthew 19:4-9.

It is interesting that when people want to get divorced, they invariably focus on the exception clause,

which makes provision for divorce in certain situations. But such people **never** focus on the fact that God has told us in the plainest of terms that **God hates divorce**. No, they invariably focus on the exception clause and say “that’s my situation”. Implied in their thinking is that in their situation God no longer hates divorce, and therefore Malachi 2:16 loses its meaning in their personal situations.

As far as all the things God hates are concerned:

There is one more area where God has an intense hatred! But it is a hatred **we would never figure out on our own**, because at first reading it doesn’t appear to involve breaking any of God’s laws. And if this matter does not appear to break any of God’s laws, then we would never know about **God’s extremely intense hatred in this particular matter**. Therefore God spelled out this particular hatred in quite clear terms, so that once we are aware of God’s hatred in this matter, then we are in a position to avoid being involved with the things that God hates.

That hatred is the subject of Part 2 in this 2-Part series of articles dealing with the things God hates. The title of Part 2 is: “What Does God Hate More: The Jewish Calendar Or Christmas?”. With the general background to the things God hates, which we have examined in this present article, we’re now ready to look at Part 2.

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