



ZEAL FOR THE GREAT COMMISSION

The Christian's Role in God's Plan



A world map with a central fire and radiating arrows.

What is “Zeal”?

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Zeal defined

- Merriam-Webster [English]:
 - Zeal [NOUN] “Eagerness and enthusiastic interest in pursuit of something”
 - Zealous/Jealous [VERB] “Marked by fervent partisanship for a person, a cause, or an ideal”
 - Z/zealot is what's called an “AGENT NOUN.”
 - Identifies a person by a characteristic



Zeal defined – Hebrew/OT

- קִנְאָה (qin'ah: kee-naw'):
 - "...embraces ardor, zeal, passionate intensity, jealousy, or envy. Context determines whether the emotion is righteous or sinful, divine or human. The word appears about forty-four times, spanning Torah, Historical Books, Wisdom Literature, and Prophets." – Topical Lexicon
 - Appears ~43 times
 - Most often translated as "jealousy" or "zeal"



Zeal defined – Hebrew/OT

- קִנְאָה (qin'ah: kee-naw'):
 - Scriptures:
 - Numbers 5 – “Law of Jealousy”
 - Numbers 25:6-13 – “The Zeal of Phinehas”
 - Aaron’s grandson (Ex. 6:25)
 - Midianite woman (Num. 25:7)
 - Ezekiel 39:25 – “Therefore thus says the Lord God: Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob and have mercy on the whole house of Israel, and I will be jealous for my people name.”
 - Isaiah 59:17 – Christ is wearing “zeal as a cloak” and is **CONSUMED** with “zeal for your house.” Cited as he cleansed the temple (Jn. 2:17).
 - Zephaniah, Ezekiel, and Isaiah link God’s jealousy to the guarantee of the New Creation at the end of time.

Zeal defined – Greek/NT

- ζῆλος (zēlos: dzay'-los; noun):
 - “...Gathers into one term two opposite passions: fervent devotion and corrosive envy. Context alone reveals whether the writer [is referring to an honorable or sinful “zeal” or “Jealousy”], yet both ideas share a common core – the heart’s intense heat toward a person, cause, or possession.” – Topical Lexicon
 - Appears 16 times
 - translated in ESV as: “sinful jealousy”(9x) “Godly zeal” (6x) and “fury” (1x)



Zeal defined – Greek/NT

- ζῆλος (zēlos: dzay'-los; noun):
 - Scriptures:
 - Good Zeal – Pure, self-sacrificing fire that defends God's Honor
 - 2 Cor. 9:2 – Achaia's readiness to give to the Macedonia
 - Sinful Jealousy – Driven by self-centered desire
 - Acts 13:45 – "when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, reviling him."



Zeal defined – Greek/NT

- ζηλόω (zēloō: dzay-lo'-o; verb):
 - “The verb carries two poles of meaning: (1) commendable zeal, earnest desire, or protective jealousy that safeguards covenant loyalty, and (2) sinful envy that begrudges another’s advantages. Context determines the moral value, yet in every case the word portrays a strong inner fire that moves a person either toward wholehearted devotion or toward hostile rivalry.” – Topical Lexicon
 - Appears 13 times
 - translated in ESV as: “make” (4x), “desire”(3x), “jealous” (2x), “envy” (1x), “feel” (1x), “made” (1x), and “covet” (1x)



Zeal defined – Greek/NT

- ζηλωτής (zēlōtēs: dzay-lo-tace'; agent noun):
 - 1. "...Scripture applies [this word] to a range of passions – from law-keeping and religious tradition to Spirit-empowered service and practical benevolence – revealing that zeal itself is value-neutral until its object is identified." – Topical Lexicon
 - 2. "One marked by ardent zeal."
 - Appears 8 times
 - translated in ESV as: "zealous" (5x), "Zealot" (2x), and "eager" (1x)



Zeal defined – Greek/NT

- ζηλωτής (zēlōtēs: dzay-lo-tace'; agent noun):
 - Scriptures:
 - Acts 22:3 – Paul's speech before being jailed – “zealous for God”
 - Titus 2:14 – “[Jesus Christ] gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.”



Zeal - Summary

- קִנְאָה (qin'ah: kee-naw'):
 - In God: Secures His Holiness and our redemption
 - In the obedient: Fuels courageous faithfulness
 - In the flesh: Breaks down unity
- ζῆλος (zēlos: dzay'-los; noun):
 - Holy zeal is a reflection of God's character
 - Sinful jealousy challenges God's supremacy



Zeal - Summary

- ζηλόω (zēloō: dzay-lo'-o; verb):
 - Intense emotion that can either honor God or oppose Him.
 - Commends Zeal that:
 - protects faithfulness to the covenant
 - Fuels repentance
 - Seeks the church's edification
 - Condemns Zeal that:
 - Persecutes
 - Manipulates
 - Quarrels



Zeal - Summary

- ζηλωτής (zēlōtēs: dzay-lo-tace'; agent noun):
 - A redemptive character attribute if it's channeled toward God
 - Must be refined by the Gospel (see Paul)
 - Encourages the body of Christ to cultivate zeal that is both fervent and faithful, advancing the Kingdom with uncompromising truth and Christlike love.

