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DO WE DESERVE MORE FOR DOING MORE?

We understand that Satan is the god of this present age. Satan has a great deal of control over all human beings in this age which spans the time from Adam to the second coming of Jesus Christ. But Satan's control is NOT based on humanity being forced to do Satan's bidding. Satan cannot force any human being to do anything!

Satan's entire rule over humanity is based on nothing more than **deception and persuasion**! Satan **deceived Eve** regarding what eating the forbidden fruit would do for her (Genesis 3:4-5), and through Eve Satan then **persuaded Adam** to also eat that fruit. And those are Satan's tools for ruling: **DECEPTION & PERSUASION**!

Note! It is frequently the people who are deceived that are then **used by Satan** to persuade those who are not deceived. [Coincidently these also happen to be the two main tools used by many politicians in order to get themselves elected into some or other public office, deception and persuasion.]

If we are able to **counter** and to **neutralize those two tools**, then Satan loses all his power over human beings!

Now just to clarify one point at this stage: even when Satan loses all his power over human beings, that does not means that all human beings will automatically accept God's ways. This is something I have tried to explain at length in my article "**The Right and the Wrong Types of Obedience**", which article is available on my website. What it does mean is this: when Satan loses his power over human beings, THEN those human beings who STILL resist God's way of life will be doing so without any input from Satan. Some human beings will indeed still resist God's way of thinking even when Satan is not able to influence anyone. That's one of the lessons we will learn during the millennium.

Revelation 12:9 shows that Satan has been 100% successful with using the first of these two tools. We all know this Scripture, but seldom have we asked: **WHY** does Satan deceive "the whole world"? What does Satan hope to achieve by deceiving us human beings?

The answer here is that **deception is the foundation** for the second tool to work. In order to persuade us to reject God's ways, Satan must first deceive us! Now there are some people whom Satan is able to persuade to accept his way of life even without deceiving them! Those are the people who will readily gravitate towards vile and perverse ways of thinking and behaving, ways that are epitomized by Satan. SOME human minds **spontaneously** work just like Satan's mind, even without being exposed to Satan. This we should be aware of.

But there are also many, many other people, probably the great majority, who would to a large degree reject the baser aspects of Satan's way of life if they were not deceived! Those are the people who will "by nature" do many of the things contained in God's law (see Romans 2:14). And **this group of people** is only likely to act on Satan's suggestions if they are first deceived in some way. And so in order for Satan to rule over all humanity, he needs to deceive all people in some way. And he has done just that.

In this regard we might keep in mind Paul's statement that "**Adam was not deceived**" (1 Timothy 2:14). Because of peer pressure from Eve, **Adam was persuaded** against his own better judgment. Have YOU ever been persuaded to do something against your own better judgment? That is what happened to

Adam.

In Adam and Eve we have the perfect example of deception and persuasion working together to achieve universal disobedience to God (Adam and Eve were the only human beings alive at that point in time, making their disobedience "universal").

To state this in simple terms: Satan rules over all humanity by persuading all people to engage in conduct that is contrary to God's ways. And while some people might be persuaded by Satan even without first being deceived by him, the majority of people need to first be deceived by Satan, so that they will then respond to many of Satan's suggestions.

In other words: In order to persuade people to do certain things, Satan first has to **deceive them into believing that those things are right or at least acceptable before God**. If you can convince me that something is the right thing to do, then I am much more likely to do that "something", whatever it may be.

Now every single deception from Satan always goes back to the most basic point, that Satan seeks to persuade man that **Satan's "get-way of life"** is better than God's "give-way of life". And one of the most effective ways to deceive man in this regard is to **disguise the get-way of life** as if something from the get-way of life is supposedly perfectly compatible with God's give-way of life. Satan seeks to deceive us into accepting that **some of the most profound aspects of his get-way of life** are not expressions of the get-way of life at all, that they are supposedly fully compatible with God's give-way of life. That is the deception!

WHAT GOD HAS DONE

Satan deceiving us into believing that some aspects of his get-way of life are supposedly a part of God's give-way of life depends to some degree on Satan deceiving us about **the motivations** underlying some of God's actions.

In plain terms: Amongst other things, Satan wants us to assume that the laws God gave to Israel are all a perfect reflection of God's intentions for man. So when God gave some or other law to Israel, then **Satan wants us to assume** that that specific law automatically perfectly reflects God's intentions and God's own way of thinking.

And while that is indeed the case most of the time, it isn't necessarily always the case at all!

To correctly understand God's intentions regarding all the laws, judgments and statutes that God gave to Israel in the days of Moses, we need to **also keep in mind** what God tells us through the Prophet Ezekiel.

Wherefore I gave them also **statutes *that were* not good**, and **judgments whereby they should not live**. (Ezekiel 20:25)

In this verse God is referring to **some** of the statutes and judgments that God gave to Israel. Because we didn't really understand what God is saying here, we weren't comfortable with this plain and straightforward translation back 30 and more years ago. And so somebody then asserted that this should be translated as "I gave them **over to** (other people giving them) bad statutes and bad judgments". This was an attempt to say: it couldn't possibly be correct that God Himself would have given Israel SOME statutes and judgments that were not good. And this explanation was then endlessly repeated by many other ministers, including me many years ago.

But this explanation was not correct! The Hebrew verb here translated as "I gave" (i.e. the verb "nathan") is used with the qal stem in the perfect tense; and it really means "**I gave them** these statutes and these judgments".

So the questions we should ask are:

WHY did God give Israel some statutes that were NOT good? WHY did God give Israel some judgments whereby they should NOT live? WHY did God do that? There must be a very important reason for this, because God would surely not have given such statutes and such judgments on impulse or for some whimsical reason.

This also raises another very significant question:

Can you identify WHICH STATUTES and WHICH JUDGMENTS God was referring to? Was God speaking about an isolated statute and judgment here or there? Or was God referring to **something far more fundamental** and far more significant than an isolated statute here or there?

IT IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT THAT YOU UNDERSTAND THIS MATTER CORRECTLY!

So try to understand the approach that God has taken in dealing with humanity. Here in general terms is the overall picture.

1) When God created Adam and Eve, then **God INTENDED to implement** all of the ideal conditions and circumstances that reflect **God's perfect give-way of life**. It would have been a perfect representation on the physical level of what spirit life in the presence of God will be like. God intended to give human beings everything that is good and perfect.

2) But God's perfect way of life can only succeed in an environment of absolute and unconditional submission to God and to the will of God. If there are any shortcomings whatsoever in this regard, even the slightest ones, then **God's perfect way of life cannot really be implemented**. This applies to both, shortcomings in the overall environment itself, and also shortcomings in any individual being within that environment.

[COMMENT: "Shortcomings in the overall environment" are obviously caused by certain individuals. So Jesus Christ will eventually not only banish Satan and the demons, but He will also "destroy **the works of the devil**" (1 John 3:8), a reference to this whole physical creation that Satan has corrupted.]

CAN YOU UNDERSTAND THIS POINT?

3) It is because God's perfect way of life cannot be implemented in an environment that has been exposed to flaws, that **therefore** this entire present universe will ultimately have to be burned up and replaced by the new heaven and the new earth (Revelation 21:1).

4) That is also the reason why Satan and all of the demons will have to be permanently banished from the presence of God and from the new environment which God will create (see Jude 1:13), because their very presence would prevent God's way of life from being fully implemented. So they must be banished before the new heaven is created.

5) That is also why human beings who do not ultimately fully accept God's way of thinking must be blotted out. And they must likewise be blotted out before the new heaven is created.

6) That is also the reason why God the Father has never come to this earth or spoken to any human

being. God the Father never has and never will come into contact with: either individuals who still have sin, or with an environment that has been exposed to sin.

[COMMENT: Upon repentance our sins are completely wiped out. So when we are then resurrected, we will all be totally without any vestiges of sin. And only then will we come into the very presence of God the Father (unlike contact that is presently limited to praying to God the Father from a distance).]

7) **Now when Adam and Eve sinned, then it became IMPOSSIBLE for God to implement the whole way of life that God had intended for mankind.** God's perfect way of life CANNOT work in the presence of flaws and sins and shortcomings. It became impossible for God to implement all the things God had intended to implement. We know this because **God tried for over 1500 years to implement some aspects of His way of life and it didn't work**.

So what did God do?

When human beings sinned, then God faced a choice: either blot out those human beings or else **ADAPT His dealings with mankind** in such a way as to accommodate some of their failings. Now blotting out Adam and Eve was not a desirable option, because, amongst other things, that would have amounted to conceding defeat to Satan, who had managed to deceive and to persuade the human beings to sin. And God will NEVER allow Satan to win!

But once the human beings had sinned, then God's perfect way of life could also no longer be implemented amongst those human beings. God, in the person of Jesus Christ, tried for over 1500 years before the flood to implement God's way of life to some degree amongst human beings. But those 1500+ years proved conclusively that it was virtually impossible to do that.

So then after the flood, and especially in the days of Moses, **God gave instructions that "accommodated" man's flawed disposition**. How did God "accommodate" man's flawed disposition? By accepting a considerable number of man's get-way of life positions.

Now lest you misunderstand:

1) God did give Israel His **perfect spiritual law**, expressed in the ten commandments. And that law is certainly holy and just and good (see Romans 7:12).

2) It is not in "the law" that God made any "accommodations" to man's selfish disposition. The statutes and the judgments are **applications** of the law to certain circumstances. And it is in those applications of the laws, expressed in statutes and judgments, that God showed some "accommodation" for man's flawed disposition. In other words, while the intent of the laws is "an outgoing concern" in absolute terms, in some of the practical applications God accommodated some aspects of the get-way of life. And God did that for the present dispensation.

The chances are that you **already know a number of those positions** where God did not insist on a strictly outgoing concern for other people. But there may be other things in this list that you may not have considered before? These are all positions that in some way conflict with God's perfect way of life. But God accepted them for this present evil age (see Galatians 1:4) so that God's modified plan for mankind could at least continue.

People in the world cannot understand this. And so they have been deceived by Satan into believing that these statutes "that were not good" are a part of God's way of thinking. But can **you** see through Satan's deception in this area?

Here is a random list of some of the things that God allowed or at least accepted, even though strictly speaking **these things conflict with God's own wishes**, i.e. these things are not expressions of the give-way of life. And they are statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby ideally Israel should not have lived.

SOME OF THE GET-WAY OF LIFE POSITIONS THAT GOD TOLERATED

1) God allowed men to practice **polygamy**.

2) God allowed **divorce**.

3) God allowed **slavery**.

4) God allowed **warfare**, which obviously involved killing.

5) God accepted the concept of **money**, the ultimate expression of the get-way.

These things you no doubt already knew. And I have written about them in the past. None of these five points are really compatible with God's give-way of life perspective. They all in some way or other are expressions of the get-way of life.

In recognizing this fact I am not in any way trying to pass some judgment on people who were or are involved with these things. Servants of God like Abraham, Moses and David engaged in some of these things (polygamy, slavery, killing, etc.), and all of us today are intimately involved with money.

It is not a matter of passing any judgment. It is simply a matter of acknowledging the facts, that our perverse human dispositions made it impossible for God to even attempt to **fully** implement His perfect give-way of life amongst His chosen people. In order to have any chance of being applied at all, it had to be "watered down" to some degree. And that is what the statutes and judgments that were not good do; **they water down certain things** to accommodate some aspects of man's get-way of life. Without such "watering down" God's ideal undiluted way of life is just too strong for any of us in this present age to cope with. Can you understand this?

Think how difficult life would be for us in our societies today if we tried to totally reject any and all dealings with money. It would be extremely difficult to live in any city without somehow using money. So God has accommodated the use of money in His dealings with mankind, in the same way that God accommodated the other things mentioned above. And it is not our place to make any judgments regarding people who were in either the distant past or even in the recent past involved with some of these things.

But there is **one more major concept** that God also accepted, even though it likewise is at odds with God's perfect give-way of life. And this is something that Satan has managed to persuade us to accept as something that God Himself **supposedly** endorses, as if it is a part of God's give-way of life. This concept Satan has managed to sell to humanity hook, line and sinker, the whole nine yards.

THE FOCUS ON SELF

Our minds have been conditioned to accept as perfectly logical and certainly as **endorsed by God** the idea that the more we work, the more **we deserve** to receive. In order to motivate us to work hard or harder we believe that it is only right and proper that we are given certain **incentives**, which in our

societies in most cases means more money. And any position to the contrary is very easily asserted to be a socialist or communist position.

We believe that we deserve to receive more if we do more. In many societies people strongly believe in working for a percentage commission. The more we make, sell or produce, the more we feel we should be paid. And we readily switch jobs if we can get more money somewhere else. This outlook is really pretty well universal.

Now this is not an either-or situation. God is certainly not a communist or a socialist, but neither is the acquisition of wealth an accurate representation of God's way of life. The reason is simple: communism and socialism and also the acquisition of wealth are all expressions of selfishness, though they come to selfishness from different directions. Communism and socialism are just as selfish as the desire to become rich.

We believe that in order to get people to perform well we need to give them an added incentive. But **incentives ALWAYS appeal to selfishness.** Isn't that obvious?

With God's way of thinking we do what is right before God for the simple reason that it is the right thing to do. It was **Satan** who introduced the concept of: what do I get if I do a good job? **What's in it for me?** Will I be promoted? And if there isn't anything special in it for me, then WHY should I put out extra effort?

This is a very fundamental deception Satan has palmed off on humanity. It is far more serious and has more far-reaching consequences than any of the specific laws referred to above (i.e. warfare, slavery, divorce, etc.), because **this deception affects our whole view of life** and every aspect of it. If we do more, then we expect to get more. And apart from those who wish to "redistribute our wealth to other people" (though such people usually have ways to exclude their own personal wealth from being redistributed), almost all people accept this premise. We should get more for working harder and longer than other people who don't work as much and as long as we do. What could possibly be wrong with that approach?

The main thing that is wrong with that approach in absolute terms is that it is a complete endorsement for selfishness.

Now don't misunderstand what I am trying to explain.

IT IS OKAY TO MAKE A LOT OF MONEY

The main point I am trying to get across is that GOD **ACCOMMODATED** THIS APPROACH TO LIFE after Adam and Eve had sinned, and especially after the flood. It is on the same level as God after the flood including in man's diet the eating of clean animals, even though originally God had not intended for man to eat meat.

I myself fairly regularly eat meat, mostly beef, chicken and turkey. Jesus Christ Himself, at the very least, clearly ate lamb during His earthly ministry. So when I point out God's original intentions for Adam and Eve ("I have given you every herb bearing seed ... to you it shall be for food", Genesis 1:29), I do not mean to imply that God's people today should be vegetarians. Not at all. But we should be able to recognize and to acknowledge God's original intentions, some of which God Himself modified, first after the flood, and then later also at the time of Moses.

Likewise, it should be clear that it was not God's original intention that man should expect extra rewards (i.e. incentives) for faithful obedience and hard work. We'll look at a number of Scriptures in a moment. But when mankind rejected God's way of life, then **God accommodated the concept of expecting added incentives for faithful service** and obedience. But from the beginning it was not so.

[Later I will refine this last statement, when we discuss how God has actually made use of this concept of incentives to motivate human beings to accept and to internalize His way of thinking.]

So in our world today it is both acceptable and desirable to **engage in lawful activities that will produce wealth for us**. I try to invest the money I have available to produce **the best possible return**, and I assume that you do the same with your money. I have an incentive to invest with one company and not with another. Being motivated by incentives is **the reality we live with** in this present age. I accept that reality, and in this age I see no reason to even attempt to avoid responding to certain desirable incentives aimed at motivating us to produce more, in the same way that I freely eat clean meats. So please don't draw the wrong conclusions from what I am trying to explain.

And lest you misunderstand:

It is good and right to seek to produce and to accomplish and to **strive after goals**. And it is right and proper **in this present age** that we are rewarded for good work and for achievements. We should always seek to be as successful as possible in any endeavor. As Ecclesiastes 9:10 tells us, we need to do the best we can at "whatever our hands find to do".

Success is to be encouraged and acknowledged. In this article I am not in any way whatsoever trying to be critical of the desire to succeed and to advance and to accomplish. I myself would like to achieve these same things.

WHAT I AM TRYING TO EXPLAIN IN THIS ARTICLE IS THAT IN GOD'S PERFECT WAY OF LIFE IN THE FUTURE, NOT IN THIS PRESENT DISPENSATION, WE WILL NOT REALLY EXPECT TO GET MORE FOR DOING MORE!

In God's perfect way of life the motivation for doing more will be the desire to serve more; the motivation will be to please God more. For example, **the righteous angels** who do more than they are commanded to do, do so from a motivation of wanting to please God the Father as much as possible, without the slightest thought of wanting to advance self by doing more. Wanting to get more for self, which was and is Satan's motivation, will never enter the thinking of the righteous angels.

So now let's examine **the Scriptures** to see if we can discern God's real intent in this matter of the motivation for all our actions and behavior.

CONSIDER THESE THINGS

When God first created **Adam and Eve** God was going to provide for all their needs. They were free to eat of every tree in the garden (except one). It was not a matter of Adam getting more fruits to eat or in some way being promoted if he worked harder. God had instructed Adam and Eve with the words: "be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth, and subdue it, and have dominion ..." (Genesis 1:28). There was no hint of saying: if you do more then you can have more. There were **no added incentives** to spur Adam on towards achieving more.

Next, consider the time when God provided **manna** for the Israelites in the wilderness. As it says:

And the children of Israel did so, and gathered, **some more**, **some less**. And when they did mete *it* with an omer, **he that gathered much had nothing over**, and **he that gathered little had no lack**; they gathered every man according to his eating. (Exodus 16:17-18)

There was no incentive of any kind to "gather more" manna. As a personal and most certainly unproved speculation, I wouldn't be surprised if there was also **some kind of miracle** involved in the eating of the manna. Here's why I say this:

1) It was clearly God's intention that no manna was ever to be kept over to the next day (except on Friday nights).

2) But people might not be able to judge perfectly in advance how much they would like to eat for the rest of that day. God was going to take this inability to judge correctly in advance of people feeling hungry into account. I don't think that God wanted to see the people throw out left-over manna every evening.

3) So in order to see that all the manna that was gathered was consumed every day, God (I wonder but obviously cannot prove) perhaps made it so that the people who had gathered more manna got slightly less nutritional value from each "cup" of manna (to pick an arbitrary specific volume)? This would have motivated them to eat more, and thus consume all they had gathered.

4) And for the people who had gathered less manna, perhaps God made it so that they got slightly more nutritional value from each "cup" of manna? When they finished eating the lesser volume they had gathered, they in effect had received the same total nutritional value and sense of being satisfied as the people who had gathered more received from consuming their greater quantity of manna.

5) In that way those who gathered "much had nothing over", and those who gathered "little had no lack".

This speculation may not be correct at all? If so, it doesn't matter. What matters is that God very definitely avoided giving the Israelites any kind of incentive to gather more. God in effect said: you can gather more food if you want to do so; but you will have to eat it on the same day, and you will not get one iota more benefit from gathering more, when compared to gathering less. So if you enjoy gathering the manna, then go ahead and gather a larger volume. But understand that gathering more will not benefit you even in the minutest way, when compared to other people who gather less.

In other words, you will not be better off by gathering more. Doing more doesn't earn you more. [This also applies to us today: we are not really better off by gathering more than other people around us gather every day (i.e. money not manna).]

We also know that those who did try to keep some manna over to the next day got into trouble, with the manna breeding worms and decaying (Exodus 16:20). Here **God was very forcefully removing any possible incentive from people to do more today in order to have more tomorrow.**

This was a very vivid example of Jesus Christ's admonition that we are to ask God: "give us this day **our daily bread**" (Matthew 6:11).

It was also a clear illustration of Jesus Christ's subsequent admonition: "take therefore no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself" (Matthew 6:34). In the wilderness the Israelites had to **live by this principle every single day for 40 years**!

For the entire 40 years God did not give the Israelites any incentives to produce more so that they could have more. And for those 40 years God was leading them on a daily basis (see Exodus 13:21-22).

Similarly, during His ministry Jesus Christ made the same point: **don't worry about tomorrow**. In Matthew 6:34 Jesus Christ was hardly encouraging God's people to work harder in producing more so that we could then have more.

UNDERSTANDING JESUS CHRIST'S INSTRUCTIONS

Let's take a closer look at this whole section of Scripture.

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. (Matthew 6:24)

Usually we don't believe Scriptures like this at face value, do we? Usually we want to clarify a statement like this to be compatible with the way we live our lives. And since most of us today do serve some or other "master" for about 8 hours every day (i.e. our place of employment), we have to explain that this Scripture is not in conflict with us earning a living. [By the way: people who are self-employed frequently have to work more than just 8 hours every day to keep their businesses going. So in our world today this is even more of a consideration for people who are self-employed.]

And yes, in this present world it is appropriate that we work at earning a living, up to six days a week (Exodus 20:9). Working in order to earn a living is not what Jesus Christ meant by "serving mammon". Serving mammon only enters the picture when the job becomes all-consuming, when the striving to earn more becomes the driving force in a person's life, **when financial incentives begin to control a person's life**. Now if we are honest, then we need to acknowledge that for very many people this can become a very fine dividing line. And I am not the judge on these things.

Jesus Christ next said the following:

Therefore I say unto you, **Take no thought for your life**, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? (Matthew 6:25)

In our world today **our whole lives revolve around "taking thought for our lives"**. That is virtually all that some people ever think about. We plan, scheme, fret or worry how to get more money, money to pay for food, clothing, housing, transport, and an education for the kids; and beyond that money for luxury goods and for vacations. The facts are that we really do take a lot of thought "for our lives"! There's no point kidding ourselves, is there?

Look, I'm not the one who said the words in Matthew 6:25; that was Jesus Christ! And Christ was quite specific in this statement, wasn't He? So don't expect me to somehow "talk away" this plain statement by Jesus Christ, because I can't do that.

Now notice the next statement.

Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? (Matthew 6:26)

Do you understand what Jesus Christ is actually saying in this verse? Are you sure?

Jesus Christ is here pointing out **God's original intentions for mankind**! It was God's ORIGINAL intention to provide for human beings in exactly the same way that God originally provided for all the

animals that God created in Genesis 1. Jesus Christ is here very specifically referring to "sowing, reaping, and storing in barns", i.e. **a reference to planning ahead**, to tell us that originally those things were not a part of God's plans for mankind.

One of the very first penalties God imposed on mankind, pronouncing this even before expelling man from the Garden in Eden, was **a change** in how man would obtain his daily food. This is recorded in Genesis 3.

And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: **cursed *is* the ground for thy sake**; in sorrow shalt thou eat *of* it all the days of thy life; **Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee**; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; **In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread**, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou *art*, and unto dust shalt thou return. (Genesis 3:17-19)

Right here God was pointing out that instead of God providing all of Adam's food, from then onwards Adam was going to have to work hard to provide for himself. The point is: **this was a penalty**! Man having to work for his own food is a penalty from God, even though we today look upon it as a perfectly natural thing for us to work for our food. The point is that IF Adam and Eve had not sinned, then they also would not have been required to sow, reap, and gather into barns. God would have continued to provide "their daily bread" in the same way that God provides for the birds of the air.

Can you understand that in Matthew 6:26 Jesus Christ is alluding to God's original intentions for mankind? Had that ever occurred to you?

Let's continue.

And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, *shall he* not much more *clothe* you, O ye of little faith?" (Matthew 6:28-30)

Again, can you understand what Jesus Christ is saying here?

Jesus Christ is pointing out that, had man obeyed God, then **God would have taken care of all of man's needs, not just his need for food!**

You see, that is what "a God" does, take care of all of the needs of His creatures and His creation. And if man had fully submitted His life to God, then God would have taken care of all of man's needs, and of all the production of wealth. All wealth would have come from God, without any kind of "incentives" to work hard for wealth placed before human beings. God's creatures (i.e. human beings) pray to God, and God then answers their prayers, which are requests for help with needs.

To get some idea of how this would have worked, consider what God said to David through the prophet Nathan:

And **I gave thee** thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and **gave thee** the house of Israel and of Judah; and **if *that had been* too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things**. (2 Samuel 12:8)

The details regarding the things God gave to David are not important for us. What is important here is

God’s statement: "**if that had been too little**"! Can you see what God was saying? If human beings will totally and absolutely submit their lives to God, then God will also totally and absolutely provide everything that they might possibly want. [COMMENT: "Submitting our lives absolutely" implies that we would NEVER want something that would violate God’s laws or wishes, like another man’s wife in David’s case.]

The point is: throughout the Bible there are hints that **God is very desirous to fulfill all our legitimate wishes**, if we will totally and willingly submit our lives to God. And originally God did not intend for there to be any "incentives" (like: if you **work more** then you will **get more**) for human beings to acquire wealth. Originally God intended to provide whatever His creatures would ask for, if they submitted their lives to God.

This original intention by God to fulfill all of the needs and wants of human beings is also addressed by Jesus Christ’s instruction: "**ASK and it shall be given to you**" Matthew 7:7). It is further indicated by God’s statement regarding what God will do during the millennium and during the period for those who will be in the second resurrection.

And it shall come to pass, that **before they call**, **I will answer**; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. (Isaiah 65:24)

Can you understand how totally incompatible this statement is with the concept of: **IF I work for you** what will you give to me in return? Can you understand that this verse is speaking about a time when no human being will be "employed" by any other human being, when **nobody will work for a salary or a wage**? It is speaking about a time when nobody will have "a second master", not for eight hours a day, and not even for one hour a day.

Oh yes, people will work for free in helping their neighbors and anyone else who needs help. People will work alright, but nobody will be "gainfully employed". It will be work motivated by a desire to help someone else; but there will be no incentive like: IF I help you in building your house, THEN you must help me reap the crops in my fields. People will work for **the joy of working** and being **active** and **strong** and **alive**; and there will genuinely be no desire or expectation to receive anything in return. **That is the way God is**, and that is the way people will also be.

And there will never be the thought (except for the rebels in Ezekiel 38-39) of: I really want to have more of ... (whatever), and **therefore** I will devote myself to doing what is required to have more. And THEN I will be satisfied.

Think of the man in the parable who tore down **his barns** to build bigger ones, so that he could lay up his fortune for many years into the future (Luke 12:18-19). Christ didn’t give any indication that this man was somehow evil. **YET MOST OF US TODAY, INCLUDING ME, DO EXACTLY WHAT THIS MAN DID, FINANCIALLY PLAN FOR THE FUTURE!**

But Jesus Christ said to this man: you fool (Luke 12:20). The man clearly did something that God does not approve of. Yet all of us can very easily be in exactly the same situation.

Yes of course, it is a matter of setting priorities, putting our commitment to God ahead of everything else in our lives (Luke 12:21). But we need to also understand why Jesus Christ called this man a fool. The acquisition and retention of wealth was clearly **a major motivating factor** in this man’s life. It is the man’s motivation that Christ criticized, not the manner in which the man acquired his wealth, which in that particular example happened to be an abundant crop provided by God.

Let’s continue with what Christ was saying in Matthew 6.

Therefore **take no thought**, saying, What shall we **eat**? or, What shall we **drink**? or, Wherewithal shall we be **clothed**? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for **your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things**. (Matthew 6:31-32)

Here Jesus Christ addressed specifically our absolute needs: food and clothing. Now what was Jesus Christ getting at with this statement? In verse 24 Christ pointed out that we cannot serve two masters. And this whole section from verse 25 down to the end of verse 34 is an elaboration of that "second master".

The second master Jesus Christ was referring to is **the pressure to provide for our needs and wants**.

And Christ's point is that **if we do worry** about how we will be able to provide for our basic needs, **then we are in fact serving that second master**. We need to face these Scriptures honestly, because they are not difficult to understand.

When the birds have eaten enough for today, then they don't worry about where their meals tomorrow will come from; that is something they will deal with tomorrow. And that is the illustration Jesus Christ provided for us in this regard.

After pointing out that these things (how to provide for our needs and wants) are the driving forces for people in the world, Jesus Christ pointed out that God the Father is acutely aware of these our needs. The implication is that if we live as God desires to see us live, then God will also take care of these needs. As Jesus Christ then said:

But **seek ye first the kingdom of God**, and his righteousness; and **all these things shall be added unto you.** (Matthew 6:33)

We all know this verse, and we've heard it quoted dozens of times. But do we actually do this, seek God's kingdom FIRST? How do you know that you are indeed **seeking** God's kingdom first? Does Sabbath-keeping and tithing and Holy Day-keeping prove that we are seeking God's kingdom first? Just how can we know?

This is still a part of Jesus Christ's explanation that we cannot be "seeking" two different things simultaneously. For example, **we can't seek the kingdom of God on cruise control**! The purpose of cruise control is to allow us to devote attention to other things. So if we are on cruise control in our striving for the kingdom of God (i.e. we keep the Sabbath, etc.), it means that we are devoting our main attention to something else, and that would then be our "second master". Cruise control in one area of life always implies that our attention is devoted primarily to things in another area.

The thing with seeking first the kingdom of God is that **only we ourselves know** whether in our lives God really does come first, or whether we are motivated primarily by striving after the same things that the world strives after. Now in some cases it becomes obvious that we are or are not seeking God's kingdom first, because our actions reveal our priorities. But in many cases there are no outward manifestations that would support or deny such a priority, because mere Sabbath-keeping, etc. is not enough of an indication of total commitment. Judas Iscariot kept the Sabbath and all the annual days right up to his death, but he clearly wasn't seeking God's kingdom first.

Jesus Christ then concluded this section with the following statement.

Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day *is* the evil thereof. (Matthew 6:34)

So in this section Jesus Christ said **three times** "take no thought" (see verses 25, 31 and 34), in addition to **one time** asking the question "why do you take thought?" (verse 28), implying that it is folly to do so.

In addition to wanting us to direct our primary focus to seeking the kingdom of God, verse 34 then encourages us to **focus** our attention **on the present**, rather than worrying about the future.

Now let's look at something else that Jesus Christ said. This is very revealing regarding how God Himself views this matter of incentives for working hard.

THE LABORERS IN THE VINEYARD

You know the parable in Matthew 20:1-15, right? But do you understand the significance of this parable?

To get to the point: God is the "Householder" who hires people to work "in His vineyard". So God hired some people very early, at daybreak, and God agreed to pay them "a penny a day" for working for Him (Matthew 20:2). When this agreement was struck the workers were all quite happy to work for a penny a day (in biblical times a family could live adequately on a penny per day).

God then went out later, at 9:00 a.m. (Matthew 20:3) and at noon and at 3:00 p.m. (Matthew 20:5) and finally at 5:00 p.m. (Matthew 20:6), and in each case hired more workers for His vineyard. So at the end of the day (i.e. sometime after 6:00 p.m.) God was ready to pay all these workers. So here was the situation:

SOME people had worked for **12 hours** (6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.), and SOME people had worked for **9 hours** (9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.), and SOME people had worked for **6 hours** (12:00 noon to 6:00 p.m.), and SOME people had worked for **3 hours** (3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.), and SOME people had worked for **only 1 hour** (5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.).

Jesus Christ told this parable because, amongst other things, He knew that His audience would feel that those workers who had worked all day were getting "a rough deal" in only being paid a penny. Look at this parable as **an insight into the mind of God**, revealing to us how God thinks. Don't look at this from your standards of what's fair and what is not fair. Try to understand God's thinking, because God (i.e. Jesus Christ) is the One who told this parable.

So then in Matthew 20:8 we come to "pay day", the time when all the workers were to be paid. Here's how this went.

And when they came that *were hired* about the eleventh hour, they received **every man a penny**. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received **every man a penny**. (Matthew 20:9-10)

So **everyone**, from those who worked for only one hour to those who worked for 12 hours, **received exactly the same pay**, one penny per person.

Yes, we understand that in this parable Jesus Christ used "a penny" to represent THE FREE GIFT OF ETERNAL LIFE! But never forget that it was Jesus Christ Himself who chose this particular imagery. Jesus Christ knew that to human thinking this **would appear to be very unfair** on the people who had worked for 12 hours. But that didn't bother Jesus Christ in the least. In fact, Christ presented this parable in these specific terms to deliberately provoke this type of response. Notice:

And when they had received [it], **they murmured** against the goodman of the house, Saying, **These last have wrought [but] one hour**, and thou hast made them **equal unto us**, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. (Matthew 20:11-12)

EXACTLY!

We human beings feel **we deserve financial incentives** for working harder and longer. But that is not how God sees it! God does not really believe in offering us financial incentives to work harder and longer, because in doing so God would in effect appeal to our selfishness.

We need to understand that **the whole concept** of being rewarded financially for doing more **comes from Satan**! It was Satan who believed that he deserved more because of the good job he (in his own mind) was doing; he "deserved" to sit on the throne of God (Isaiah 14:13-14) is what Satan believed.

So understand that one of Christ's purposes in telling this parable was to point out that our belief that "if you work more then you should be paid more" originated with Satan, and not with God! God doesn't pay more simply because someone works more! And one reason for this is very simple: **GOD IS ALREADY OVERPAYING EVERYBODY**! The "pay" God is offering us human beings is so far, far greater than the value of any "work" we might perform, that asking God for "more pay" simply because we did more work than someone else expresses both greed and also a lack of appreciation for what God is already "paying" us!

I'll just remind you that all of us already owe God "ten thousand talents" (Matthew 18:24), and when God is willing to freely forgive us this enormous debt, then it is extremely greedy on our part to somehow expect additional incentives for "doing more" on a scale that might perhaps warrant a couple of pennies more. [10,000 talents were **more than 100,000 years of wages** for a good laborer!]

Satan demands incentives for doing more, because Satan is the embodiment of selfishness. A focus on expecting more for doing more is inspired by Satan, because such a focus can never see self in the correct relationship to God!

Look, God has already given the life of His Son Jesus Christ in order to make salvation possible for us human beings (John 3:16). And then we still want God to give us added "incentives" to work harder? What "incentive" did we ever give to God the Father to motivate Him to be willing to sacrifice His Son Jesus Christ for us?

Let's continue with the parable.

But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, **I do thee no wrong**: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take [that] thine [is], and go thy way: **I will give** unto this last, even as unto thee. (Matthew 20:13-14)

When God said "I do you no wrong", God was saying: in My sight you don't deserve to receive more simply because you worked more than someone else. You cannot limit My ability to give MORE to someone who may have worked less than you. Be content with what I have offered YOU, and forget about what I am offering other people, because that is not your business.

Now let's look at the punch line.

Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? **Is thine eye evil, because I am good**? (Matthew 20:15)

YES, YES, YES!

That is precisely the problem!

The last part of this verse reads in the Greek text: "**ei ho ophthalmos sou poneros estin hoti ego agathos eimi**".

Note that there are two parts to this verse. The first part is clearly a rhetorical question, indicated by the inclusion of the word for "not". But the second part is only translated into English as a question because of the Greek word "ei". In fact, the Greek word "ei" is actually left untranslated in the above translation, being represented only by the question mark at the end of that statement. "Ei" is primarily a conditional particle, though it is at times also used as a conjunction.

So here in Matthew 20:15 "ei" introduces a condition, yes. But that does not necessarily make this statement a question. In this context it is intended to present a factual statement, from God's point of view, rather than another rhetorical question.

The literal word for word translation of the above Greek text reads: "**For as much as** (ei) **the eye** (ho ophthalmos) **of you** (sou) **evil** (poneros) **it is** (estin) **because** (hoti) **emphatic I** (ego) **good** (agathos) **am** (eimi)."

That statement is not at all a rhetorical question! It is a plain factual and very emphatic statement. So a suitable English translation for the whole verse would read:

"Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own, for as much as **your eye is evil because I (very emphatically) am good**?"

God is saying: it is a fact, **your eye is indeed evil**, because you are critical of what I have decided to do! **Your eye is evil** because you expect to receive more simply because you worked more, displaying selfishness. **Your eye is evil** because you are judging Me based on Satan's standard of what is fair and right. **Your eye is evil** because you are motivated by selfishness.

God wasn't saying: I wonder, could it be that your eye is evil? No, God was making a very emphatic statement that "your eye is most certainly evil"!

Now note!

The man who had worked hard and long, without any complaints from God regarding the quality of the man's work being mentioned, is the one who had the evil eye. Now his "evil eye" involved **his expectations**, thinking that because he had worked longer therefore he should get more. According to Jesus Christ right here, that is not a right way of reasoning.

However, let's face it:

Almost **all of us would have reasoned the same way**, wouldn't we? I mean, if I work for one hour at a certain job, and you work for 12 hours at that same job, you would surely feel hard done by if your pay for that job wasn't a cent more than my pay for the one hour I worked. The reason is that **we are completely conditioned to expect more if we do more**. For most of us this is a deeply ingrained premise regarding our perception of fairness. To us it simply isn't fair if somebody else is paid just as much for one hour's work as we are paid for working 12 hours at the identical job. To us fairness means that we break the total pay down into a specific amount for every hour that we work, and more hours of work should translate into more total pay. But from God's point of view this means that all of us need to

examine "our eyes" regarding what is right and what is wrong (i.e. regarding "evil").

Jesus Christ's statements in Matthew 20 obviously clash with what we all are inclined to believe spontaneously. But it is Satan who has deceived us regarding what is fair and what is not fair. Satan has disguised his standard regarding **what is fair** to appear like a part of God's give-way of life. But it is really nothing more than **a centerpiece** in Satan's get-way of life.

God is good and God's ways of going things are good. So IF God decides to pay one person just as much for an hour's work as God pays another person for 12 hours' work, then we need to try to understand WHY God reasons that way, and WHY to us that doesn't seem fair.

Consider what Jesus Christ said at another occasion. This was in response to a request from the apostles to increase their faith (see Luke 17:5).

Jesus Christ presented a scenario that is perfectly normal from God's point of view. A rich man has a servant who works in the fields all day plowing and feeding cattle (Luke 17:7). When the man finally comes into the house, after having worked all day, the land owner says to him: I have some more work for you here. I now want you to prepare my meal, and after I have eaten, then you can also eat and drink and take care of your own needs (Luke 17:8).

Jesus Christ deliberately presented a situation where a man had to work much more than he had anticipated working. He was expected to work **overtime without any kind of extra compensation**. Again, our human feelings would be inclined to say that this servant was getting a raw deal, that his employer was really taking advantage of him. But after presenting this picture Jesus Christ then said the following:

Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. (Luke 17:9)

You and I might feel that thanking an employee who has been willing to do some extra work that we requested, would be the least we can do to acknowledge that employee's service. But **God doesn't think so**. From God's perspective, just because there has been a heavier workload on a specific servant, that doesn't necessarily merit some recognition. Working overtime is just a part of the job in God's eyes.

Now notice the lesson Jesus Christ attached to this parable.

So likewise ye, when ye shall have done **all those things which are commanded you**, say, **We are unprofitable servants**: we have done that which was our duty to do. (Luke 17:10)

Here Jesus Christ very emphatically opposed the notion that "we should get more if we do more". Looking upon ourselves as "unprofitable servants", even after having done "all those things" we were commanded to do, is greatly at odds with what we would naturally tend to believe. If we really do look upon ourselves as unprofitable servants (and we certainly don't accept such a view very easily, do we?), then we are hardly going to expect more than what other people will receive.

One major difference between the parable of the laborers in the vineyard working for a penny a day on the one hand, and the two parables about the pounds and the talents (i.e. Luke 19:12-17 and Matthew 25:14-30) on the other hand is this:

1) The parable of the laborers for a **penny** is intended to **expose the mind of man**, how it responds to God's initiative.

2) The parable of the **pounds** and the parable of the **talents** are intended to **expose the mind of God**, how God responds to man's actions and motivations.

We need to recognize that the parable of the laborers for a penny has a completely different focus from these two other parables.

To put this into plain terms:

God NEVER wants us to be motivated by the thought that we will "get more if we do more"! That would be a motivation to do whatever it takes to advance self. It would be a selfish motivation. **Our "doing more" must have a selfless motivation.** Romans 9:3 is one of the best illustrations of this motivation.

For **I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren**, my kinsmen according to the flesh: (Romans 9:3)

Paul's motivation for "doing more" was not to advance self; it was primarily to serve other people.

Now whether or not GOD will actually "give us more because we have done more" is **a completely different and unrelated matter**. Whether or not God gives greater rewards to those who have done more has nothing to do with the motivation and the expectation we are to have for doing more.

God will reward faithfulness and integrity. But whether another person's reward will be greater or smaller than the reward we receive should never enter our thinking. We should not try to compete for the greatest rewards! All rewards are totally under God's control.

Consider the following points:

When God called **Abraham**, then God had a certain reward in mind for Abraham (i.e. the conditional promises God gave Abraham). NOBODY ELSE was able to compete for that particular reward, because God was simply not offering that position to anyone else. Now IF Abraham had not passed the tests God gave him, then there is no way of knowing what God would have done.

Likewise, when God called **Moses**, then God also had a certain reward in mind for Moses. And NOBODY ELSE was able to compete for that particular reward. Now IF Moses had fallen short, then again there is no way of knowing how God would have dealt with that situation.

Likewise, when God called **Saul** to be the first human king in Israel, then NOBODY ELSE was able to compete for that position, which also carried a certain reward with it. It was only when Saul repeatedly fell short that God Himself then selected a replacement for Saul (i.e. **David**). And the reward that God had intended for Saul, had Saul proved himself faithful, was then conferred upon David, that reward being the position of king over the 12 nations of Israel in the Kingdom of God.

We could look at other examples (the prophets, John the Baptist, etc.) to make the same point. It always comes back to exactly the same point, namely:

But **now hath God set the members every one of them in the body**, as it hath pleased him. (1 Corinthians 12:18)

Those of us who have been called by God into His Church are never in competition with one another. The reason is this: at the time when God calls us, God already has a specific position in His kingdom in mind for each one of us, and while our testing may be identical to the testing many other people will be exposed to, when we pass the testing, then THAT IS THE POSITION God will give to us.

God doesn't do it the way we might do this. We might accept 100 candidates for training in our big enterprise. And then **at the end of the testing** we decide where to place those 100 candidates, based on how they performed throughout the testing. What this means is that those 100 candidates were all along in competition with one another for the top positions that were on offer.

But that is not how God does it. **God is not the author of competition.**

When God accepts 100 candidates for training, then God ALREADY has a specific position in mind for every single one of those 100 candidates. And while all 100 candidates might go through the same or similar training programs, at no stage are they ever competing against one another for any specific position. At the end of the testing, if they all pass the tests, they will receive the exact positions for which God called them in the first place.

By now some of you may be saying: wait a minute, what about "let no man take your crown" (Revelation 3:11)? So let's consider this matter.

First of all, it is "**YOUR**" crown, meaning that it was assigned to you at the time God called you. And all the other people who are called with you have likewise already got a crown assigned to them. So none of them are competing for YOUR crown. The only competition in this matter is a competition with yourself! God has called you for a very specific position, in the same way that God called Abraham and Moses and the prophets for very specific positions. And the only question is: will you prove yourself faithful or not? If you prove yourself to be faithful, then God will give you that position. But if you don't prove yourself to be faithful, then God will have to call someone else for that specific position which God had intended for you.

But don't think of your calling as all of us somehow competing for the same positions, and then "may the best man win", because that is simply not how a calling from God works. **God never has two people simultaneously competing for the same position.** That very concept is the embodiment of Satan's philosophy. Satan invented competition, and his way of life is built on competition.

SOME MORE SCRIPTURES

Let's consider some other Scriptures.

I have planted, Apollos watered; but **God gave the increase**. (1 Corinthians 3:6)

This is one of the main problems with providing incentives for producing more. It is always God who gives the increase, and incentives ignore this most basic premise. Note also that Paul certainly did not see himself in competition with Apollos. Rather, Paul viewed their efforts as complementary. At any rate, how can we offer an incentive to somebody when God is the One who gave the increase? And even more so: how could we demand an extra reward for something that God provided (i.e. the increase)?

Expecting bonuses and **added financial incentives** for producing more is a fundamental premise of **Satan's get-way of life**, as opposed to God's way of give.

Offering anyone added incentives for doing anything is **fundamentally at odds with God's way of life**. Do you understand why that is so? You see, IF people do certain things because there are specific incentives attached to doing those things, then **you never know what really goes on in their minds**!

Do they do those things because of convictions and commitment? Or do they do those things because

they want to qualify for the incentives that are being offered? Would they do those things if there were no incentives offered for doing those things? Added incentives always introduce an element of selfishness into any issue; incentives actually appeal to selfishness. And that makes incentives a problem for God's way of life.

It is Satan who believes that you should get more if you do more. And he has conned all of us human beings into accepting this premise. And because this idea is so universally accepted, that nobody thinks of even questioning it, therefore **God has "accommodated" this concept** for this present age. It is on the same level as God for a period of time "accommodating" things like polygamy and divorce and slavery. But from the beginning it was not so.

Rather than being motivated to do certain things by a desire to become wealthy, we need to keep in mind that it is God's prerogative to give wealth. As Solomon wrote:

The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it. (Proverbs 10:22)

Solomon stated this same point slightly differently in the Book of Ecclesiastes.

Every man also to whom God hath given riches and wealth, **and** hath given him **power to eat thereof**, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour; **this** [**is**] **the gift of God**. (Ecclesiastes 5:19)

Let's understand these verses correctly.

MOST RICH PEOPLE HAVE NOT BEEN BLESSED BY GOD! MOST RICH PEOPLE BECAME RICH BY WORKING FOR INCENTIVES!

Most of the people throughout history who have been rich, became rich Satan's way, not God's way! Their riches had nothing whatsoever to do with blessings from God!

We can even look at Solomon himself. He **INITIALLY** became rich because God blessed him with abundant riches (see 1 Kings 3:13-14). But God's blessings were conditional. As God said to Solomon in the dream "**IF YOU WILL WALK IN MY WAYS** ..." (verse 14). However, at some point Solomon became very selfish, and in order to maintain his lavish lifestyle of extreme luxury he then taxed his own people to the hilt! See how the people said to Solomon's son "**your father made our yoke grievous**" (1 Kings 12:4). So Solomon's wealth **in his latter years** was no longer due to "the blessing of the LORD"; at that stage his wealth was due to **selfish striving for wealth**. By then Solomon did have "a second master", and God was angry with Solomon (1 Kings 11:9).

Very many rich people have not had the ability to enjoy their wealth for very long (i.e. they didn't have "power to eat thereof"). How many of the world's wealthy people have died before age 60 years, let alone 70 years or 80 years? How many have lived with major health problems? How many have seen their own children die before them? How many have gone through one unhappy marriage after another? How many have lived lives of infidelity?

How many have had major mental problems? How many have been enslaved by phobias? How many have gotten their wealth by destroying other people? How many have gotten their wealth by criminal activities and by acts of war? How many live with fears? How many have had family members kidnapped for ransom? How many have lived with guilty consciences?

How many rich people have seen their wealth disappear during their own lifetime? How many rich people have become the victims of personal attacks or of major accidents? How many know they don't have real friends whom they can trust? They only have sycophants around them, people who flatter

them for personal advantages.

All these things are not really compatible with "the blessing of the Eternal, it makes rich, and **He adds no sorrow with it**". Yes, there certainly are some wealthy people who have been blessed by God. But there are also vast numbers of wealthy people whose wealth had nothing at all to do with any blessings from God. And in their cases it is virtually inevitable that "sorrows" are attached to their wealth.

Solomon, for example, didn't trust any of his one thousand wives, and only one single man amongst a thousand men. See Ecclesiastes 7:28.

Which yet my soul seeketh, but I find not: one man among a thousand have I found; but a woman among all those have I not found. (Ecclesiastes 7:28)

This statement all by itself tells us that at this stage Solomon's wealth was assuredly no longer due to "the blessing of the LORD". He was **a very, very lonely man** who didn't really trust a single one of his 1000 wives, and amongst a thousand or more servants he had found one single man whom he felt he could trust. At this stage Solomon's wealth very clearly had "sorrow added to it", which proves that it no longer came from God.

Solomon is the most profound example of miserable loneliness in the midst of thousands of people. At this stage **his life was pathetic**, not unlike a Howard Hughes or an Elvis Presley or an Aristotle Onassis in their later years. There was nothing there any more that could be led back to blessings from God. All of God's blessings had disappeared by that point in time. He was a very negative and pessimistic old fifty-something in the last few years before he died. He didn't even live to age 60 years.

We should understand that **most rich people will only show a facade**. And rich people with a facade did not obtain their riches as a blessing from God. So don't make the mistake of confusing riches with a blessing from God.

Consider the following point:

For a Christian it is very dangerous to acquire wealth in any way other than as "a blessing from the Eternal"! Because any other way of acquiring wealth implies "a second master" somewhere in the background. And that is never good.

As Paul told Timothy:

For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, **they have erred from the faith**, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. (1 Timothy 6:10)

They "erred from the faith" because they didn't perceive that Satan is the author of **added financial incentives** for extra and longer work. When Satan persuades us to focus on the financial rewards we will get, we don't recognize that those rewards will require us to put up with "a second master", to whom we end up becoming enslaved. Satan will always use a combination of deception and persuasion to attack us and our commitment to God.

And many people who pursue the goal of getting rich fall prey to these two forces (i.e. deception and persuasion), and they end up being rich people with empty lives. Never underestimate the powerful synergistic effect these two forces can exert on any of us, if we are not completely on our guard.

GOD'S USE OF INCENTIVES

Now let's try to understand something regarding God's interactions with mankind. Let's take a closer look at how God "accommodated" certain things for this present age.

We'll see that God actually made use of the concept of providing incentives for us to work harder. And so it may be difficult to understand that in absolute terms God does not encourage human beings to be motivated by added incentives, when we can see various statements that are indeed intended as incentives to motivate us to obey God.

Consider marriage.

Surely we all understand without reservations that God intended marriage to be between **one man** and **one woman** for life? It is clear that God's original plan did not intend for man to ever engage in polygamy. Are we agreed? So at some point God, because of man's utterly selfish ways, "accommodated" the concept of polygamy, to the point where even some of God's faithful servants were polygamists. And apparently those men didn't even have a problem with polygamy; having two or more wives didn't bother their consciences. They didn't perceive any problem with polygamy. And in their circumstances God accepted that.

So consider the following point.

It is one thing for God to "tolerate" the clearly selfish practice of polygamy. But it is another thing altogether for God to be actively involved, like a facilitator, in a man acquiring even more wives. Yet, that is precisely what God said to David after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba. Recall that God Himself said to David: "**I gave your master's wives into your bosom**" (2 Samuel 12:8). Now consider this statement in light of the fact that God is actually opposed to polygamy.

Can you understand what God does when He interacts with us human beings in this present age?

When God "accommodates" some or other aspect of the get-way of life into His interactions with mankind in this present age, THEN God sometimes also makes use of that specific aspect of the get-way of life. But such "making use of" does NOT constitute unqualified acceptance and approval in different circumstances and in a different dispensation.

Can you understand this?

Consider the incentives God has provided.

God showing some acceptance for using added incentives to encourage greater commitment and greater achievements amongst human beings is really on the same level as God providing some additional wives for David. Both of these things are "watered down" versions of what God would ideally like to see amongst human beings.

So when we then see Jesus Christ giving parables that show men working for the incentive to make more money, and then being praised by God for doing so (e.g. "Lord, Your pound has gained ten pounds ... well, you good servant ... have you authority over ten cities"; see Luke 19:16-17), we need to understand that Jesus Christ was simply **using imagery that His audience could relate to**.

We should also keep in mind that at no stage were any of these servants motivated by the incentive to make more money for self! The one pound was God's all along. And the ten pounds were God's money all along. At no stage did either the one pound or the ten pounds belong to the servant; **it always all**

belonged to God. So this servant assuredly was not incentivized by the prospect of making anything for himself! Thus there is no hint of selfishness on the part of the servants who produced an increase in this parable. They did not produce an increase for their own benefit. The same is true for the servants who doubled their Lord's money in the parable of the talents; they produced an increase for their Lord, not for themselves.

Consider this statement.

Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. (John 15:8)

In a manner of speaking this is an incentive which Jesus Christ set before us. But there is nothing tangible about this incentive. It doesn't entail acquiring anything for self. There is no accumulation of money or goods inferred in this statement. **There is nothing specific that you can strive after.** The only things which this "incentive" can produce are: less concern for one's own well-being; more concern for the well-being of others; more of a desire to help and serve others; more determination to resist Satan's selfish impulses; more efforts at using God's Spirit to produce the fruits of the Spirit in our lives; a greater commitment to God; etc.

THERE IS NO CONNECTION WHATSOEVER BETWEEN THE INCENTIVES GOD HAS PROVIDED FOR US, AND THE INCENTIVES SATAN HAS PROVIDED FOR HUMAN BEINGS! NO CONNECTION AT ALL!

The premise for the incentives that Satan provides, in his subtle attempts to become our "second master", is that we will get something for self, that we will have more, and in that way we will then supposedly be better off, etc.

The premise for the incentives that God provides for Christians is that we will give more of our lives to God and to the service of other people, without the prospect of any gain or advancement for self. And if we are indeed faithful, including working "overtime", then God will give us the crown that He had already selected for us even before we concluded our training. There is no promise of more because we worked harder.

On the contrary, our commitment to God requires us to be prepared to lay down our own lives for other people (see John 15:13).

No matter how "hard" and "selflessly" we work, **even if we did develop more character than Abraham or Moses**, there is no way that we can edge those individuals (Abraham, Moses, etc.) out of the positions that God Himself appointed for these individuals even before they concluded their training. No amount of hard work on our part can ever get us the positions which God will give to Abraham or Moses or other servants of God from the past. With God we don't necessarily get more simply because we did more. Instead, we "get" the position for which God originally called us.

So any references by God to incentives are purely intended to help us understand things from our present perspective, one where **having incentives to do better is an integral part of our most basic thinking**. All such references are presented in terms that we should be able to understand, without regard for whether or not those terms are compatible in absolute terms with God's give-way of life. That is like God's reference to giving David additional wives being made in the context where polygamy was a commonly accepted practice within Israelite society at that time, even though it is actually in conflict with God's desires.

Now let's consider why ultimately God's way of life makes no provision for incentivizing people to advance themselves.

CONSIDER GOD'S EXISTENCE

Originally there were just two Beings: God the Father and Jesus Christ. Their way of life was one of an outgoing concern for the Other One, which way of life is called "love". God the Father was in charge and Jesus Christ fully accepted that arrangement, with no desire to ever change that around, so that theoretically He might also have the opportunity to at some point be in supreme charge.

There was **no incentive** of any kind for either one **to try to advance self**. There is nothing, absolutely nothing, that could ever be set before God the Father as an incentive to say: if You do this and this, then You will have more and be better off. Such a thought is an impossibility, because God can have whatever He wants to have, without any kinds of restrictions or conditions being imposed on God.

So the way of life that God the Father and Jesus Christ have shared has no place for any conditional incentives to somehow advance self, or to better self. Nobody can say to God: if You do this and this, then You will get such and such.

So God's way of life is utterly devoid of any incentives to advance self, in relation to other beings.

God's whole plan is based on **every individual within that plan fully accepting his assigned place in the greater Family of God structure**. There is no room for competition amongst members of the God Family, with (theoretically) some individuals periodically moving higher or lower on the ladder of importance in the Family. That will simply never happen.

Once a person has become a member of the Family of God, there is nothing, absolutely nothing, which that person could do to somehow advance up the ladder of importance in the Family. **The Family of God is not a competition** like the tennis rankings in this world, where today a player may be ranked as #52, but after a good tournament next week he is ranked as #38.

Those who do more in the Family of God, do more within the context of where God has placed them within the Family. But such doing more doesn't somehow promote them ahead of some other members of the Family of God who may have done less. No, every member of the Family of God will be happy and content with the position God has appointed for each member.

Those who will a part of "an eye" will be perfectly content to be that, and those who will be part of "an ear" will likewise be perfectly content, as will also those who will be part of "a foot", as will also those who will be part of "a hand" (see 1 Corinthians 12:14-18). The eye, ear, hand and foot will not compete for preeminence. And those who will have positions equivalent to being "doorkeepers" will be content with those positions (see Psalm 84:10).

There will be a fervent desire to do the will of God the Father, and there will never be any desire or incentive to somehow advance self in relation to anyone else in the Family of God.

So **there is no room for any selfish incentives in the Family of God**. And therefore God originally also did not make any provisions for special selfish incentives amongst human beings, supposedly to try to motivate human beings to do more or to work harder.

The only incentive for all in the Family of God will be to unconditionally do the will of God the Father. But seeking to advance self, as Satan had tried to do, will never enter the picture.

IN CONCLUSION

Our entire world economy is based on the system of providing financial incentives for people to produce and to accomplish. Without this incentive system **our entire world order as we have it today would collapse**!

For example: Goods from China would not flood the markets of the world if there was no incentive that those goods will be sold for a profit. The same is true for every other economy in the world: nations would not try to produce any goods for export without the incentive of making profits from those exports. People wouldn't drill for oil if there wasn't a profit to be gained. People wouldn't be motivated to commercially produce any of this world's luxury items, if there was not the incentive of making a big profit from those luxury items.

We all know that Paul referred to Satan as "the god of this age" (2 Corinthians 4:4). What most of us have never realized is how effectively Satan controls the whole world, by getting all people to accept his position that "if you do more, then you deserve to receive more". **That is Satan's foundational premise**, the paramount foundation for this present evil world.

That is the way for Satan to get all people to accept his get-way of life philosophy. The deception is so effective that most people would assume that God fully endorses the idea that "if you do more, then you deserve to receive more". Satan's point of view on this issue seems perfectly fair to us. And this concept is so deeply ingrained in our most basic thinking, that God decided to accommodate this line of thinking for a period of time, even as God accommodated polygamy for a period of time in the past.

Today God no longer accommodates polygamy, and in the millennium God will no longer accommodate incentive programs, to motivate people to do more. During the millennium God wants to see what really motivates people to do the things they do, without this matter being distorted or camouflaged by certain incentives to advance self in some or other way. **God will take selfish incentives away completely.**

This understanding that Satan is the one who believes that "if you do more, then you also deserve to get more" was already revealed in the Book of Ezekiel. Notice these verses:

By thy great wisdom [and] **by thy merchandise hast thou increased thy riches**, and thine heart is lifted up because of thy riches: (Ezekiel 28:5)

By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. (Ezekiel 28:16)

Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy merchandise; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee. (Ezekiel 28:18)

[COMMENT: The word "traffic" in verses 5 and 18 of the KJV is a translation of the same Hebrew word which is translated as "merchandise" in verse 16. The word means "merchandise", and that is how I have rendered it in all three verses.]

Before Satan invented this system there was no such thing as "merchandise". The concept of merchandise is based on incentives; it is based on the idea of getting things for self. Merchandise ALWAYS focuses on what we can get. **The concept of merchandise opposes and resists God's give-way of life.**

When Satan had invented the concept of trading (i.e. what will you give to me for this item?), that was when "iniquity was found in him" (Ezekiel 28:15). In verse 18 God tells us that **the concept of merchandise itself amounts to iniquity**.

So what can we today do?

Very little!

Once David had a gaggle of wives, what could he do? Should he have sent all but one back to their own parents, and then lived a monogamous life? That wasn't going to work, and it certainly would not have been fair to keep the youngest and most recent wife; and God didn't expect such an action from David. In fact, God even selected the son of David's last wife (for all practical purposes, since Abishag (1 Kings 1:3-4) didn't really count) to be David's successor, in the person of Solomon. The system under which David lived made it virtually impossible for a polygamist to extract himself from his polygamous relationships.

The same is true for us today regarding the situation we have been discussing.

We work for incentives (i.e. the salary or wage we receive from our employer), and our lives are intricately intertwined with the use of money. That is why God accommodated this aspect of the get-way of life for our present dispensation. There is no point in us even trying to change these things in this present age. I will continue to use money, and I will continue to seek the best returns for my investments. In this regard we really are just tiny little pawns in Satan's present evil world.

But acceptance of our present way of life circumstances should never stop us from recognizing that God does not see a problem in paying someone who has worked for one hour the exact same pay that God pays someone else who has worked at the identical job for twelve hours. We need to recognize that Satan's competitive nature underlies our belief that those who do more should also get more. **Getting has no place in God's ultimate way of life!** And when "giving" is the sole motivation, then incentives to get more for self will evaporate and no longer exist.

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