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A WORLD WITHOUT COMPETITION

In our present world **life is a competition**.

The competition starts pretty soon after we are born, and it continues throughout our lives until we die.

As little children we already **compete for the attention of our parents**. Little children want the things they see other children have, and they compete for those things.

As we enter formal schooling, we learn that the entire educational system is a competition. We **compete for grades** with all the other children in school with us. For a certain subject others may get an A or a B, but we only get a C or a D. The competition for grades continues all the way through school. We need to have better grades so that we can get a scholarship for College. And in College we compete for good grades with all the other students, because better grades may enable us to land more lucrative jobs.

Every sporting activity during our years in school is a competition. We want to see whether or not we are better players than other people, so that we can make the team. And then our teams compete against other teams, to see if our teams are better players than other teams.

Winning makes us feel good and we are happy. Losing makes us feel bad. So we love to win, and we hate to lose.

We also **compete for jobs**. We have to **beat other applicants** for the same job. And once we have a job, then we compete for promotions. Other people would also like to get those same promotions.

All buying and selling is a competition. As much as possible, we want to pay less and get more for our money. If we collectively don't buy certain goods, then sellers lower their prices to entice us to buy. That's called "A Sale". But if other people are willing to pay a higher price, then we have to compete, by also being willing to pay that higher price ... or we will not get the things we really want to get.

When it comes to marriage, in many cases two or more men may **compete for the same woman**, and at times two or more women may **compete for the same man**. We compete by trying to impress the person we want to marry. We say things and do things to impress other people ... because we are competing for their attention or affection.

We talk about "**healthy competition**". By that we mean that we try to beat other people in some or other

endeavor, while keeping our emotions under control, in the event that we end up losing. By calling it “healthy competition” we are saying that this type of competition is good. But is it?

All forms of **gambling** are a type of competition. Gambling competes with others, or with the system, in the hope of receiving an inordinate return on whatever we have invested in the gamble.

The most powerful symbol of competition is money!

We compete for money. We want more money. And in order to have more money, we have to get it from other people, who currently happen to be in possession of that money. The employer has it, and we get it from him in the form of a wage or a salary or as commission. If our employer would not pay us money, then we would not work for him. **Money is the sole reason why we work for other people.**

Likewise, the buyer has the money, and we get it from him by selling him our goods or services. If we did not have something to sell, then nobody would buy anything from us. And we wouldn't get any money. As sellers we are competing with all the other sellers of those same goods or services.

The entire legal system is a competition for money! People sue others to get their money. And when criminals receive prison sentences, the lawyers on both sides of the issue worked because they will get some money, irrespective of the outcome of the trial. Lawyers willingly represent clients who they know are guilty, because they will get money for representing those guilty clients. And an enormous amount of all legal proceedings boils down to haggling over money, with one party wanting more and the other party wanting to pay less or even nothing. It's a competition.

All industries are competitions. Car makers compete with other car makers for the money of the buyers. Airlines compete with other airlines for the money of passengers who want to fly somewhere. The manufacturers of stoves and washing machines and TV sets compete with other manufacturers of the same products.

Hotels and vacation accommodations compete with other hotels and establishments for the money of people who need accommodation when they are away from their homes.

The entire entertainment industry competes for the money of people who want to be entertained, and who are prepared to pay money for such entertainment. And while actors compete for the Oscars and for other awards of recognition, they are competing primarily for inordinate payments for the movies they make.

Professional athletes compete for money first, and for fame and for fans after that. Obviously, all professional sports are competitions.

Buying a house is a competition. If it is an already existing house, we compete with the seller. We want to pay less, and he wants to receive more. And if there are other potential buyers, then we are also

competing with them. And if we ask a builder to build us a new house, we compete with that builder, where we would once again like to pay less, while the builder will do his best to justify asking us for more money, before the house has been fully built and is then ready for us to move in.

In order to get people to work for us in some capacity, we have to offer them money. If those people feel that we are not offering them enough money, then they won't work for us. We are competing with other people who would pay them more for the same type of work.

The printing industry is competing with other printers for the money of people who are willing to buy newspapers and magazines and books. If the things they print (books, magazines, etc.) are judged by the buyers to not be as good or desirable as other printed materials, then they lose the competition, and their books and magazines don't sell very well.

All **wars and conflicts** are competitions. One party wants something that is currently in the possession of the other party. It is much easier to just take what we want (lands, wealth, resources, etc.) from the other party than it is to earn or to produce those things ourselves. So we go to war.

All advertising is a form of competition. Advertising competes for the attention of people. It competes with other people, or with similar products that other people want to sell. The hope is that advertising will bring us more money, by attracting more customers for our products.

All elections are competitions. The different candidates compete with one another for the votes of people. People compete for positions of power and authority ... because they want more money, as well as power over other people. Commonly politicians are poor or of very average means when they are first elected to public office; and in many cases by the time they leave office they are extremely wealthy. That is not a coincidence.

How about our **health industries**? Thousands of drugs and medicines compete with one another for our money. And the various different disciplines in the field of health care compete with one another for patients. Do people seek the services of a surgeon or a naturopath or a chiropractor? Do people have a conventional treatment, or do they opt for the latest laser surgeries? All these disciplines are competing for the same clients.

The entire **exercise and fitness industry** is one gigantic competition. Whose services will we employ? Do we join a gym, or do we use the services of a personal trainer? Who offers us the best exercise routines for what we hope to achieve? Or do we train alone at home? The internet is clogged with a vast number of health and fitness gurus, all competing with one another for the same clientele.

All the **religions** of this world are competitions. They hope to gain followers. And they advertise their meetings and services to attract more people. They go on radio and on TV to increase their audience/viewer numbers. And they are hoping for converts. It seems there is a church for every flavor of religious feelings and beliefs.

In **the financial sector**: when it comes to the money we want to save, there are countless institutions and banks and investment firms and financial advisers and stock exchanges, all competing for that money. They compete by claiming to offer better interest rates or higher returns or a more personal service for our money. It is one big competition, with some winners and many losers.

The entire **health food industry** is one enormous competition, with thousands of different supplements, all of which supposedly offer us better health. The appeal to better health for most of us naive consumers is presented to justify the producers asking for considerably higher prices for their goods labeled “natural” or “organic” or “wholesome”, than they would otherwise be able to demand.

If only we will eat this extract or that extract of some exotic unknown plant, then we’ll live longer, or our health problems will be resolved, we are assured. And certification supposedly proves that their products are better and more “organic” than the products of the farmer or rancher down the road whose produce is not certified. So therefore such producers demand more money. The health food industry is one huge competition (a huge rip-off as far as I personally am concerned) for the money of the consumer. They all want more money.

Is there any area or aspect of life that we haven’t looked at? From the time we are born until the time we die life is **an endless competition**. That spirit of competition is aptly captured in the expression “**Survival of the Fittest**”. We are forced to compete in order to survive.

So the question is:

Why is life a competition? Is that what God intended when He created Adam and Eve?

THE BIRTH OF THE SPIRIT OF COMPETITION

God the Father and Jesus Christ have always co-existed. And They have never at any time competed with one another, or with anyone else for that matter.

God the Father is supreme. As Jesus Christ said, “My Father is greater than I” (John 14:28). This statement eliminates competition. Both are comfortable in that relationship, and both of Them will do whatever it may take (theoretically speaking) to maintain that relationship. There is no competition, none whatsoever, between God the Father and Jesus Christ.

And as long as They were the only two Beings in existence, there was no such thing as a spirit of competition.

Then God created all the spirit beings we collectively refer to as “angels”. We already know the story. **Satan rebelled** with one third of all the angels against God. Satan was then conclusively defeated by the forces of God.

Why did Satan rebel against God?

Satan wanted God's power and status and authority and glory. As God tells us in Isaiah 14:

For you have said in your heart, I will ascend into heaven, **I will exalt my throne above the stars of God**: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; **I will be like the Most High**. (Isaiah 14:13-14)

Satan had developed a spirit of competition!

Satan had begun to compete with the God who had created him. The motive for competing is to show that we are better than someone else. This motive is encapsulated in the statement "I win"!

Satan's rebellion was the original competition. Satan had created the spirit of competition. Now Satan didn't care about the well-being of all the other angels who had been placed under his authority. He just cared about himself. Selfish human leaders have the identical motivation. They don't really care about the well-being of their followers.

However, to achieve his own selfish and competitive desires, Satan needed help (or so he thought). And so he persuaded all of the angels, who were under his leadership at that point in time, to join him in his rebellion against God. In effect Satan persuaded all of those angels to also accept that spirit of competition against God, their Creator.

At this point we should note one important point:

The focus for the invention (or generation) of a spirit of competition was **competition with God**, the Creator. The competition was not with other angels. No, the spirit of competition in Satan's mind was focused on competing with God. That was the explicit purpose for why Satan developed this spirit of competition. He developed that spirit by using his own free mind to think in selfish ways.

A spirit of competition challenges God.

Now a spirit of competition **intensifies selfishness!** We have to focus on self in order to compete. If we don't focus on self, then we can't really compete with other people. The motivation for a spirit of competition is that I must do my best **to be better than someone else**. I have to constantly compare my performance against how certain other people are doing.

In other words, every competition is ipso facto **a comparison with other people**. We have to compare ourselves with other people, if we are competing with them. And what is always the result of such comparisons? We reach a judgment! **Either** we judge that **we are better** than others (in whatever the competition is all about), **or** we (reluctantly) judge that **others are better** than we are.

Competitions demand that we make judgments. And that is not good. This specific point was explained by the Apostle Paul.

For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but **they measuring themselves by themselves**, and comparing themselves among themselves, are **not wise**. (2 Corinthians 10:12)

Every competition amounts to people “measuring themselves by themselves”, and “comparing themselves among themselves”. As Paul then concludes, that is not a wise thing to do!

Notice that Paul wasn't saying that they compare themselves to God. No, they, human beings, are just comparing themselves with one another, i.e. with other human beings. But that is still not something that God wants to see us do. When we compare ourselves with others, then we are expressing **a spirit of competition**. And that spirit always comes from Satan, the arch-competitor.

A basic principle we should all be able to readily agree with is this:

God does not want us to express or agree with or accept into our minds **anything that has originated with Satan!** Anything that originates with Satan God requires us to reject resolutely and unconditionally.

So in his own mind Satan developed a spirit of competition with God. He compared himself to God. But how did Satan then get all the angels under his leadership at that time to also develop that spirit of competition in their own minds? What did Satan do?

He couldn't just come out and say: “Listen everybody, I have decided that I myself want to sit on God's throne. But I can't do that on my own. I will need all of you to help me to achieve my selfish ambition. Will you do that for me?” That wouldn't have worked, would it?

No, Satan had to have something to offer all those angels. He had to hold out something desirable as an incentive, to get all those angels to also start thinking in selfish ways. And selfish ways are always competitive ways. And competition very easily produces **a spirit of violence**.

In Ezekiel 28 God tells us pretty clearly how Satan went about instilling this selfish competitive spirit in the angels under his leadership. We'll look at just two verses in that chapter.

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

You have defiled **your sanctuaries** by the multitude of your iniquities, by **the iniquity of your**

merchandise; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of you, it shall devour you, and I will bring you to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold you. (Ezekiel 28:18)

(**Comment:** The Hebrew noun “rekullah” (i.e. “merchandise”) is used only four times in the Old Testament, once in Ezekiel 26, and three times in Ezekiel 28. In Ezekiel 26:12 and 28:16 it is translated as “merchandise”, and in Ezekiel 28:5 and 28:18 it is translated as “traffic”. This word should be consistently translated as “merchandise” in all four verses, and I have made that correction in the above quotation.)

So what is God telling us in these verses?

1) Satan dealt with “**a multitude of his merchandise**”, meaning that Satan oversaw **a huge amount of merchandise** passing through his “sanctuaries”. The Hebrew word translated “sanctuaries” (i.e. “miqdash”) is commonly used for the Tabernacle and for the Temple. So Satan’s “sanctuaries” refers to Satan’s throne room or the palace he established for himself, from where he ruled over all of his angels, or it may even refer to the trading floor of his “stock exchange”, with Satan overseeing all the proceedings perched high on his high exquisite throne.

2) **Satan had invented trading**, where everything has a relative value. All the things deemed valuable became merchandise. In other words, Satan had established an environment where where will those wrong attitudes and wrong impulses come from?

They will come from the human mind, **without any outside input**. Even when Satan is locked away, Romans 8:7 will still be true. This verse has nothing to do with Satan.

Because **the carnal mind** is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. (Romans 8:7)

The expression “the carnal mind” is simply a way of saying “**the unrepentant mind**”. Satan does not make human minds unrepentant. Unrepentant minds are what we all automatically develop from birth onwards. Repentance is based on an active deliberate decision to change the way we use our minds. Repentance is a process that requires our conscious effort to change. Throughout human history very few people have ever gone through that process.

Consider:

God first created the angels. And later God created human beings. And then God gave human beings the exact same type of mind that God had earlier given to the angels.

Now in practice:

It was **only one of those angels** who totally on his own, without any outside input, developed that selfishness and that spirit of competition with God. That was Satan. None of the other angels who sinned had developed that wrong attitude on their own. No, all of them only developed that attitude after they had been exposed to Satan's selfish attitude.

Likewise, Adam and Eve did not develop that selfish attitude on their own without outside input. No, they also only developed that wrong attitude after they had been exposed to Satan's way of thinking. That is how the sinful selfish attitude entered all of humanity. From the time when Adam and Eve had children, those children were **from birth onwards exposed to** "the carnal way of thinking" of their parents, and of everyone else in their environment. And that then became the natural way for the human mind to think and to develop. It is intuitive for our minds to think selfishly.

This process is what Paul meant in Romans 5:12.

Wherefore, as **by one man sin entered into the world**, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (Romans 5:12)

One man, Adam, had accepted the selfish way of using his mind from his wife Eve, who had accepted it from Satan. And from then onwards that selfish way of using their minds became the foundation for how they would think and evaluate everything in life. And that is the way of thinking with which all of us have been engulfed since birth. It is in fact "the natural way" for us to use our minds.

However:

This whole process also revealed something new to God.

Neither God the Father nor Jesus Christ had ever entertained a selfish thought! So when They then placed a spirit within each of the angels whom They created, and which spirit imparted consciousness and self-identity and a completely free will to each of those angels, then there was no precedent of any kind that could have predicted how those minds in the angels would function. Would they all readily use their free minds to always submit themselves to God? Or would their free minds resist God and even challenge God?

God had to find out how such created spirit beings with minds of their own would think and reason.

So God tested all of the angels He had created. For the righteous holy angels of God the way they were tested is not revealed. But for the one third of the angels who rebelled with Satan against God, their testing involved being sent to this planet Earth, to prepare it for the next phase of God's great plan.

So when **one spirit being** changed his way of thinking (i.e. Satan) to putting self first, and thereby to competing with God, it showed God that **potentially** any of the other spirit beings (i.e. any of the angels) could also have chosen that way of thinking, even without any input from Satan's mind. In other words, Satan was the one who became selfish without needing any outside stimulus to become that way. **But**

any other angel could potentially also have become selfish without needing any prompting from Satan.

Satan becoming selfish without prompting from another mind showed that any of the angels could likewise become selfish without any prompting from another mind. And God clearly tested all of the angels in ways that permanently established how their minds would work.

So when God then created physical mortal human beings, and then placed essentially the same type of spirit within those human beings (we call it “the spirit in man”, see Job 32:8), then the question was:

How will those mortal human beings deal with selfish thoughts and impulses that are presented to their minds?

Note the distinction: it was not about selfish thoughts originating in their minds. No, it was about dealing with selfish thoughts that are presented to their minds by an outside source.

Will they reject that selfish way of thinking? Or will they embrace that selfish way of thinking? And will their minds be capable of originating such a selfish spirit without any outside input (as Satan had done), or will they only accept a selfish way of thinking when it is presented to their minds from some outside source? Just how selfish will human beings with totally free minds turn out to be? And just how spontaneously will those human minds accept a selfish way of thinking?

So God exposed Adam and Eve to a test that would reveal some of the answers to these questions. But even after Adam and Eve had sinned **the answers to some of these questions were still outstanding.**

So for the next 1,536 years (that’s exactly 50% more than two to the power of ten, i.e. $2^{10} \times 1.5$) God worked exhaustively with the minds of human beings. That takes us to exactly 120 years before the flood (see Genesis 6:3). At that point in time God had accurately established the answers to all the questions about how the human mind functions.

God’s assessment of the human mind was that “**every** imagination of the thoughts of his heart is **only evil** continually” (Genesis 6:5). The results of this 1,536-year assessment were in fact **so bad** that God actually regretted that He had created human beings. That’s what “... it repented the Eternal that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart” means.

God then had the answers to all the questions about the free independent minds of human beings.

Are they susceptible to selfish impulses from the outside? Yes!

Will they reject a selfish way of thinking? No!

Will they embrace a selfish way of thinking? Absolutely!

Can they generate a selfish attitude **without** outside input? Absolutely!

How quickly will a human mind accept selfishness? Spontaneously!

How does the human mind respond to God's ways? With hostility!

How many minds will readily submit to God? Far less than one in a million!

(i.e. before the flood, before God decided to modify the original plan).

So for our original question: **during the millennium**, while Satan is securely locked away, some human minds will have no difficulty in generating their own evil selfish thoughts. While outside forces (i.e. a spirit being in the millennium saying "this is the way, walk you in it") will prevent such minds from turning their evil thoughts into actions, they nevertheless can and will entertain such thoughts in their minds. And at the end of the millennium when Satan is set free for a very short time (see Revelation 20:7-9), all those evil thoughts will have the opportunity to come out into the open. But along the way they will not have influenced other people with their negative attitudes. No, **they themselves generated their own evil attitudes**.

Now note something about that huge mob, "the number of whom is as the sand of the sea" (Revelation 20:8). This will be an incredibly huge number of people, who **all** generated that selfish and competitive attitude themselves, **without any outside input!** They will have quietly harbored their resentful selfish attitude for decades and for centuries.

When Satan is then briefly set free, **Satan will not be the originator of their selfish attitude!** Satan will be **only the catalyst** to bring out into the open the anti-God attitude those people have held in their minds for all of their lives! This group of people will not include any individuals who really repented at some point during the millennium. It will consist exclusively of unrepentant and resentful people, who never at any point in their lives really repented.

The purpose for Satan's brief freedom will not be to test people! The purpose will only be to bring **already existing hidden wrong attitudes** out into the open. The purpose will be to expose openly those people who during their long lives never accepted God's way of thinking into their minds, even when they outwardly obeyed all the laws of God to the letter (i.e. basically like the Laodiceans in our age today), because they had no choice as far as outward obedience is concerned.

So when that huge multitude is then destroyed by fire which will come down from God out of heaven (see Revelation 20:9), then the spirit of competition with God will once again have been totally eliminated from the earth. As I mentioned earlier, as far as being visible on the outside, the spirit of competition will be eliminated at the start of the millennium. But as far as the invisible and unrevealed attitudes in the minds of people are concerned, the spirit of competition will only be permanently eliminated in the lake of fire. That will be the same time when death and the grave are permanently eliminated (see Revelation 20:14).

In other words: From the start of the millennium the spirit of competition will not be evident in any of the activities in which human societies will be involved. Nobody will see any competition anywhere. However, certain people will still harbor a spirit of competition in their minds, without ever revealing their competitive spirit to anyone else. They are the ones who join Satan in his rebellion at the end of the millennium, and who are then destroyed by fire.

Then during the 100 years for the people in the second resurrection, there will very likely again be people who will harbor a selfish competitive spirit in their minds. They will continue to live up to the time of the lake of fire. And then at the time of the lake of fire those people will be destroyed, and their inwardly hidden attitudes of selfishness and competition will also be eliminated.

And that will be the end of competition, not just in actions, but also in the hidden crevices of the minds of unrepentant people. The time of the lake of fire will be the time for the completion of God's plan to build the Family of God.

Eliminating the spirit of competition is absolutely vital for the achievement of the plan of God.

Whether or not we human beings recognize it, a spirit of competition is ultimately always directed at competing with God, because it is God who is perfect and supreme in every way. And God owns absolutely everything. There is no place for any form of competition within the Family of God. And therefore that spirit of competition will be completely eradicated before God creates the new heaven and the new earth, and then brings the New Jerusalem down to the new earth (see Revelation chapters 21-22).

But what about us today? We live in a world of competition. What are we to do? Can we compete? Can we play games with winners and losers? Can we compete for jobs and for opportunities to advance ourselves in some way?

HOW DO WE DEAL WITH COMPETITION?

From earliest childhood onwards we have been exposed to competing. As small children we knew who amongst us was the strongest, who was the fastest runner, who was the best swimmer, who got the best grades in school, who was the best ball player, etc. And those amongst us who were "the best" in one of these things, did their best in turn to maintain that status of being "the best". When a new child entered our group, who claimed to be stronger or faster or smarter, etc., then that was a challenge for the one who had held that status in our group until then.

Was the new kid really stronger than Billy, or smarter than Mary, or a faster runner than Bobby? In this present life the pecking order in any group is always a matter of competition.

From early childhood we are involved in playing competitive sports as a part of our schooling. That means that there are some winners, and also quite a few losers.

Today sports have become so competitive that some parents enroll their 4-year old children in learning to play tennis or golf or some other sporting activity. And the intention is that once those children reach

adulthood, they will be able to compete with the best players in the world ... and earn very large amounts of money.

The problem with competition is readily illustrated with children, whose parents train those children from a very early age to become really good in one specific sport. This is easily illustrated with tennis, though it applies equally to all other sports. So let's look at tennis as an example.

Some children are from an early age trained to play tennis. At the same time a spirit of competition is obviously also instilled in those children. That is unavoidable. And as they grow up, so their playing skills improve. As teenagers they are already extremely good players. Winning becomes the all-important goal. And they are fiercely competitive.

But sometimes they will lose a game. Nobody wins all the time. And sometimes they could have hit a winning shot, but they unfortunately hit the ball into the net, and therefore they lost that point.

How do such people respond to hitting a bad shot? How do they respond to losing a game?

While this is obviously not the case for all players, in many cases such children then **cry out in anger and in frustration!** They may smash their rackets, or they throw their rackets away, or they hit a ball into the spectator area. Girls may start crying because they lost a game.

Some players, the most competitive ones, will **cry out after every single point**. And by then they are adults, and no longer just teenagers.

We can see examples of such reactions on TV at every major tournament. And this illustrates the real problem with competition.

When a player cries out because he hit a bad shot, then **that is exactly what Satan would do**, if he were to hit a bad shot.

And when a player smashes his racket because he lost a game, then **that is also exactly what Satan would do**, if he lost a game.

In other words, when people become so competitive that they lose control over their emotions when things go badly for them in a game, then they are very openly exhibiting Satan's spirit of competition. They are showing that for them the game is not really "just a game". For them it is a competition that **they simply must win**. And when they don't win, then they are extremely angry, just like Satan. And this anger is especially common when their opponent is someone who is below them in the pecking order, someone they are supposed to be able to beat.

In their own minds it's not that the other player happens to be playing much better (though that's what

they'll say in the interview after the game, that's good PR). No, they tell themselves, it's just that they themselves made some mistakes; it's that they were unlucky. If only they had hit this one shot (when they had a match-point) differently, then they would have won. And they believe that basically they are still a better player than the person who just beat them. And the next time they will win, is what they tell themselves.

It reminds me of an incident around fifteen years ago, when a top player was beaten in a major semi-final match by a player who was theoretically below him in the pecking order. His opponent was going through to the final. On his way off the court this top player who had just lost, was asked about the chances his opponent had in the final. That is, could the man who had just beaten him also win the final? While continuing to walk off the court, this top player turned his head to the reporter and said: "**I hope the other fellow wins**". And he continued walking off the court. And that statement said it all.

This player, who is frequently praised for his great sportsmanship, was caught off guard and revealed **his true feelings**, which were **envy** and **jealousy**. His PR people immediately explained to him what he had done, and he has never done that again ... reveal his true feelings when someone below him in the rankings actually beats him. Since then he has always in interviews acknowledged that those who beat him played better than he himself did, though he will at times still mention that his opponent was lucky with certain points going his way, and that he himself "could have" won, but was unlucky. (When he himself won, it was obviously never due to luck, right?)

This reveals the real problems with playing competitive sports.

It is not the sporting activity itself that is the problem. **The problem with competitive sports is the attitude** it so easily creates in many players, probably in the great majority of players who are highly proficient in their sport.

This competitive attitude is mostly less prevalent in players who are very average when it comes to skill, players who even before the game starts don't think about winning, because they usually don't win anyway. And they are comfortable with that.

Becoming angry because we hit **a bad shot** is an attitude that comes from Satan. People may say: this type of anger is okay because it is anger directed at self. But that's not true! **We're angry because we didn't get the point**. We can hit an equally bad shot, but somehow still get the point ... and then we are not angry at all. It's not really the bad shot we hit that angers us; we are really angry because we didn't get the point.

This specific matter can be seen more readily in golf, when average players play for small amounts of money with their friends. People hit **a terrible shot** which causes them huge problems, and in anger they break their club, or they throw it away. (I once found a pitching wedge in extremely dense brush just off the green.) People can also hit **an equally terrible shot**, hit a tree on the wrong side of the fairway, and the ball bounces back onto the fairway, and rolls onto the green right up to the flag. In this case **the terrible shot gives them joy** instead of causing them to be angry. And they are certainly not "angry with themselves" for having hit such a bad shot.

Competitive players are never angry at the skill level, or their own deficiency in executing some shot. They are angry because they didn't get the point.

When we respond with any of the negative emotions to losing a point, or to losing the whole game, then at that specific point in time Satan is in control of our minds. The negative emotions in this context are anger, frustration, jealousy, resentment, etc.

If people **smash their rackets** or bats or clubs because they lost a point or a game, they are acting on impulses which Satan, the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2), has sent to their minds. That is very bad.

Thinking of tennis tournaments, if people in the secrecy of their own minds wish that the player who beat them will be beaten by the next person he plays, they are embracing Satan's competitive spirit. This is also very bad!

When money is involved, where winners receive money and losers have to pay money, then all players are almost guaranteed to have a highly competitive spirit. Winning becomes all-important. That likewise is not good.

When any sport is performed professionally, then winning becomes the dominant motivation. And when 50,000 fans watch their favorite professional team, then very few of those 50,000 fans care primarily about good play. The most important thing for those fans is that "our team wins". And if their team wins, then as a secondary thing "good play" can become a consideration. But winning is more important than good play.

Who cares if the other team actually played much better, but were unlucky not to score? Who cares if the referee made some very bad calls against the other team ... and that is why they lost and our team won? Who cares if our guys fouled the star player on the other team, and that star player was injured, and then our team won?

As long as our team wins, in most cases we don't care about any of those things.

Okay, so that goes for professional sportsmen and sportswomen. But what about us?

Is it okay to compete in playing Scrabble or Bridge or Chess or Checkers or Tennis or Soccer or Golf or Basketball, etc.? After all, most people who play these games hope to win.

As I mentioned at the start, from start to end our lives are a competition. That's the world we live in because Adam and Eve rejected God's ways and God's rule over their lives. In practice we already compete in many ways on a daily basis, before we even play any competitive game.

When we try to negotiate a lower price for something we wish to buy, we are competing with the seller. When we try to negotiate better terms for a large loan we wish to take out, we are again competing. We compete in many ways. So when it comes to recreation and entertainment, playing Scrabble or Bridge, etc. is not a problem. And when we play sports (tennis, golf, basketball, squash, etc.) that is also not a problem.

These activities are not a problem in themselves. It is only when we cannot control our feelings and emotions when we happen to lose, that the attitudes we may get into can be a serious problem.

For example:

When we make a bad play, make a wrong move on the board game, discard the wrong card, miss an easy shot at the basket or at goal, or hit the golf ball really badly, **if we then respond in anger** or in frustration or with resentment, **then it is not good for us to play those games**. Making a bad play means nothing more than that we are human. No human being is perfect. And the anger with which we may respond to a loss or to a bad shot is an attitude that is broadcast by Satan to every person who plays any competitive game. All players have to deal with that attitude.

In this regard we also need to understand that it is not just our outward reactions that we need to control. Yes, it is important that we don't react with anger or with frustration. But **it is more important** to also not have those negative responses on the inside. If we are angry or frustrated on the inside, but manage not to show those feelings on the outside, **then we still have a problem**.

It's one thing for the people we are playing with, and for any spectators, to see us respond calmly and in control of our feelings. But God sees what is going on **in our minds** (see Hebrews 4:12-13). And if we are really angry that we made a bad play, and that our opponent benefitted from our bad play, then not showing that anger is only half the battle. We need to also work on not getting angry on the inside in the first place.

For example:

Hypothetically, if I were to play golf with Tiger Woods or some other golf champion, I would not get angry just because I don't play as well as Tiger Woods. But if I lose when playing with someone, who in my own mind I believe I should be able to beat, then I am much more likely to get angry or frustrated on the inside. And **that is the wrong spirit of competition** which comes from Satan.

Some key questions we might ask ourselves when we play any competitive game:

Are we interested in playing the game well and skillfully, irrespective of how well our opponents may play? Or is our concern that we need to get a better score than the other people we are playing with/against, irrespective of how well or badly we ourselves are actually playing? How important is winning to us? Are we frustrated when we play badly and lose? But if we play badly and still win, does that make our playing badly somehow not so bad?

The answer to the question that really counts is **the way we are thinking in our minds**, which isn't necessarily the same answer as the one we express publicly to our fellow-players. Highly competitive people will often hide their true feelings when they have lost. But God looks at our hearts, our real motivations and our attitudes.

In essence, when we engage in any competitive activity, **God is looking at** whether we harbor Satan's attitude of serious competition, or whether that competitive activity is in our innermost minds nothing more than a casual recreational activity, where participating in the activity is far more important to us than whether we win or lose. For example, I didn't run half-marathons because I was hoping to win. I knew in advance that I might take twice as much time to complete the race as would the winner. I participated in the race because I enjoyed running, and I wanted to challenge my own body to do the best that I could do, even if I might come last. I wasn't competing with anyone else.

When we engage in a potentially competitive activity, and we try our best to do as well as possible, **if** winning is not really that important in our minds, if it really makes no difference to us whether we win or whether someone else wins, **then** there is no problem at all in us engaging in that activity.

As long as that activity does not lead to us harboring a wrong attitude or a wrong emotion in the event that we lose (e.g. a game of squash or golf, etc.), then that activity is not a problem. The real issue is the potential effect that activity may have on our minds.

Anyway, this article is not intended to discourage anyone from pursuing their favorite sporting or recreational activities. The real concern is that we always control our minds and our emotions, to the point of **firmly rejecting Satan's competitive spirit**. And my focus is not on various sports activities in our present world. The wrong competitive attitude I have discussed is what we need to guard against. We need to guard against comparing ourselves with other people.

My real focus in this article is on the millennium, when Jesus Christ will be ruling this whole earth. That's when nothing in society will be based on competing with others.

So what will things be like in the millennium?

THE MILLENNIUM

Without arguing about being exact, we can say in general terms that there are **about 600 muscles** in the human body. That includes the skeletal muscles, the cardiac muscles and smooth muscles. The point is that none of those 600 muscles were put into the human body by God for a free ride.

Every single muscle in our bodies is supposed to be used! Every single muscle serves a very specific purpose. And if we don't use certain muscles, then in time we will lose them. They will just waste away.

God gave us all those muscles so that we would use them. That means we need to use our legs and our

arms in vigorous activities.

While I certainly cannot prove this, I believe that during the millennium the government of Jesus Christ will encourage mortal human beings to engage in sporting activities, but without any sense of competition.

It is good for human beings to run and swim and climb and lift and use the arms for throwing. How do I know that? I know that because God designed our bodies in such a way that when we engage in all of these types of activities, then **our bodies release specific hormones that make us feel good!** That tells us that those activities are good for us.

Yes, we can use our muscles in plowing, planting, reaping, making furniture, etc. And that's fine. But God also wants us to have recreational activities that we find enjoyable. God wants us to **enjoy being alive!** And the feel-good hormones, which our bodies release when we use our muscles to participate in some enjoyable activity, are supposed to encourage us to engage repeatedly in such activities.

People who never engage in such vigorous activities have no idea how those activities can make us feel good, and without any spirit of competition being involved. In the millennium, I believe, such activities will be engaged in with a spirit of cooperation and helpfulness. As Solomon tells us in Ecclesiastes 9:10, "whatsoever your hand finds to do, **do it with your might ...**". This tells me that we are to engage vigorously and energetically and enthusiastically in physically demanding and challenging activities, but without a spirit of competition.

Now consider this contrast:

1) When we engage in vigorous activities, then our bodies release feel-good hormones.

2) But if we engage in those vigorous activities with a competitive spirit in our minds, then those feel-good hormones are not released. Instead, that competitive spirit will cause our bodies to release stress hormones, and those stress hormones do not make us feel good.

Okay, can I give you some examples of such vigorous sporting activities that are likely to be carried out during the millennium?

No, I can't for a very specific reason.

You see, none of us human beings have ever lived in a world where there was no competitive spirit. Everywhere we turn we have some form of competition. Everywhere we make comparisons.

None of us can really picture a society where comparisons and a spirit of competition simply don't exist, not when politicians compete for elected offices, and when manufacturers compete for customers, and

when ... etc.

All we can do with our minds, in which a spirit of competition is considered completely normal, is **try to imagine** what things would be like without such a spirit of competition.

A lifelong prisoner has a far different concept of freedom than someone who has always been completely free and has never in any way been restricted regarding what to do and how to live. All of us human beings have been lifelong prisoners to Satan through the fear of death (i.e. until we came to real repentance). Paul explained this as follows:

And deliver them who through fear of death **were all their lifetime subject to bondage**. (Hebrews 2:15)

My point is this:

As far as the spirit of competition is concerned, we are still prisoners. We need to use money to buy our food and clothing, etc. We need to buy and sell. So we compete for money. We compete and look for the best prices. So in our thinking we cannot banish the spirit of competition completely. We can only banish it in certain areas of our lives (e.g. not have a competitive attitude when we play games, etc.).

But we are at present not able to view life without any kind of competition at all. We have never experienced that. As long as we need money to live, and an income from some employer, we cannot grasp what the total absence of all competition will be like.

In our thinking we unavoidably have to start out from the things we are familiar with. What we are familiar with is a world that runs on competition. Some of the premises we may start from, and some of the assumptions we make, may not apply at all in **a world that will be vastly different** from the one in which we live our lives, a world we can't really picture.

When Jesus Christ begins to rule, that will not be just a 20% or 40% upgrade to our present world. In other words, in the millennium people will simply not do things the way we do things today. It will be a total and complete change, and life will be radically different from today. That is precisely why God will destroy everything human beings have done and made, before Jesus Christ begins to rule. As I mentioned earlier, nothing is worth carrying over into the millennium.

Things will be different. Today we are in the situation of 1 Corinthians 13:12.

For **now we see through a glass, darkly**; but then face to face: **now I know in part**; but then shall I know even as also I am known. (1 Corinthians 13:12)

This verse applies very much to us trying to understand exactly what physical societies in the millennium will look like. And as far as what people in the millennium will do for entertainment, for leisure and for

exercise is concerned, **we really are not even in a position to speculate.**

All we know regarding these specific activities is that God's laws and godly principles will be observed. And those will set certain parameters. But what things will look like in practical terms is not clear. It is like trying to look through an opaque glass, and then reach a conclusion as to what we are seeing on the other side of that opaque glass.

But one thing is clear: there will be no competitive spirit in any of the daily activities for people in the millennium.

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