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GOD HOLDS ALL OF US ACCOUNTABLE

God the Father and Jesus Christ determined that They would build the Family of God, so that They could share Their existence with a vast number of sons and daughters. Towards that end They first created all the spirit beings we know collectively as “angels”. Then They created this present universe. And at some point after that Jesus Christ came down to this planet Earth and then created Adam and Eve.

It was God’s intention to offer immortal life in His Family to all those human beings who would voluntarily submit their free minds to God, and willingly live by all of God’s laws. Working with mortal human beings, who had been given totally free minds of their own, was **something new for God**. There were no indicators of any kind to predict how this attempt, to create beings with minds that could freely accept and then emulate the way God uses His mind, would turn out.

But it seems clear that God anticipated that a certain portion of human beings would gladly accept God’s offer for immortal life in God’s Family, and that they would gladly live by all of God’s laws. God was also prepared for a certain portion of human beings using their free minds in totally selfish ways, and therefore not really submitting their minds to the ways of God. Those individuals would then at some point die and simply cease to exist. After that, the individuals in that group would in effect be as though they had never even existed in the first place.

FROM ADAM TO THE FLOOD

Let’s consider what God said to Adam, even before God created Eve.

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it: for **in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die**. (Genesis 2:16-17)

Adam later clearly communicated this instruction to his wife Eve. In fact, Adam had clearly discerned **the principle** involved in God’s instruction. What Adam told Eve, who had not witnessed God’s command to Adam, shows that Adam very clearly applied **the obvious intent** of God’s command.

Here is the point:

God told Adam “don’t eat that fruit”. But this instruction **implied** that therefore Adam wasn’t even

supposed to touch that fruit. The instruction “don’t eat it” implied “**don’t even touch it**”, because “touching it” means that you are thinking about eating it. Adam correctly understood these implications of God’s straight-forward “don’t eat it” instruction. And therefore when Adam then later told Eve what God’s instructions were, Adam correctly expanded God’s commandment to be “don’t eat it **and** don’t even touch it”.

This expansion of God’s instructions shows that Adam’s mind was not restricted to the letter of the law! Adam could be given an instruction, and he would understand **the obvious intentions** underlying that instruction. Adam didn’t reason: God didn’t say we couldn’t touch that fruit; He only said that we are not to eat it. That’s not how Adam’s mind **originally** worked! No, Adam quite clearly understood the obvious but unstated intentions of God’s commandment.

What this shows us is that a human mind, which has not yet been poisoned by Satan’s influence, will very readily grasp the obvious intentions for every law of God. **It is Satan’s influence on the human mind that leads to focusing on the letter of the law**, while willingly ignoring the obviously implied intentions for that law. The purpose for the Satan-inspired focus on the letter of the law is always **to limit and restrict** the applicability of all of God’s laws.

A focus on the letter of the Law is one specific manifestation of the natural human mind’s “enmity against God”. Can we see that? That is also something the Apostle Paul explained, when Paul said “**the letter** (of the law) **kills**, but (a focus on) the spirit (of the law) gives life” (see 2 Corinthians 3:6). The carnal mind always wants to focus on the letter of the law, to restrict the application.

Do you understand **why** a focus on the letter of the law “kills”?

Such a focus “kills” because the very purpose for focusing on the letter of the law is **to make allowance for breaking the spirit of the law**!

When there is no desire to want to break the spirit of the law, then there is never a need or desire to focus on the letter of the law. Anything that is covered by the letter of the law is automatically also covered by the spirit of the law. But in addition, the spirit of the law covers a lot of other things, which go far beyond the letter of the law.

The letter of the law **restricts** the application of the law. And the carnal human mind does not like the spirit of the law. The carnal human mind demands restrictions to every law’s applicability, and therefore focuses on the letter of the law. And that is the focus that “kills”, as Paul tells us.

Anyway, when Eve later talked to Satan, Eve told Satan what Adam had said to Eve. Eve’s statement to Satan reflects Adam’s understanding of “the spirit of the law”. Here is Eve’s statement:

But of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God has said, **you shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die**. (Genesis 3:3)

God hadn't actually said that.

That is only **what Adam had told Eve** regarding what God had said to him. And Adam had **very correctly** expanded God's instructions for Eve's benefit. Adam understood the obvious ramifications of the commandment.

Anyway:

Both Adam and Eve understood very clearly that they were not to eat the fruit of that specific tree. They both understood that the penalty for eating that fruit was death.

So what was God doing when God told Adam that the penalty for eating that fruit was that "you shall surely die"?

God was establishing accountability for what we human beings do.

Whatever we do, we will be held accountable for. God showed Adam that there are consequences for our actions. And **when we do things that are wrong before God, then the consequence is death**.

Question: Why does the penalty for doing wrong have to be death? Why? Why couldn't it be some lesser penalty, short of death?

Answer: A human mind that **knowingly does what is wrong** before God is showing that it is not willingly subject to the way God's mind thinks and reasons. And therefore such a mind, which knowingly disobeys God, demonstrates that it will not fit into the environment that God has planned for His Family. And therefore such a mind must be permanently removed from God's environment. God's environment is His entire creation. And **death is the most merciful way** by which such a permanent removal will be accomplished.

Going back to Adam and Eve:

Genesis 3:3 represents a part of the very first instruction that God ever gave to human beings. And that accountability has never changed since the time of Adam's creation. And so **it is still the same today**. That's what the Apostle Paul tells us.

> For **the wages of sin *is* death** ... (Romans 6:23)

What was God actually telling Adam when God said that for disobedience "you shall surely die"? What does this statement mean?

God had obviously told Adam something like “I have just created you”, and God explained that He had created Adam from the soil beneath Adam’s feet. And God also explained that He had placed a spirit within Adam (see Genesis 2:7), which spirit gave Adam consciousness, awareness and a sense of identity.

So when God said that the penalty for disobedience would be death, God was saying, in paraphrased form:

“If you disobey this instruction, then I will take the life I have given you from you, and **you will permanently cease to exist**.”

In other words, Adam, **there is nothing immortal about you**. I have created you with the intention of giving you immortal life. But if you disobey Me, then I will take that potential away from you, and you will cease to exist. You, Adam, are accountable for what you do with the existence I have given you.

We need to understand the following things:

When Jesus Christ, the God who created Adam and Eve, the God who worked with Old Testament Israel, said “you shall surely die”, there was no such distinction as “**the first death**” and “**the second death**” (see Revelation 20:6). At that point Jesus Christ had not even remotely considered the possibility that He Himself might have to lay down His life as a voluntary sacrifice, in order to make salvation for human beings possible. At that point Jesus Christ had not yet considered the possibility of some human beings actually having **two physical lifetimes**.

That prospect was simply not yet a part of God’s plan!

At Adam’s creation the word “death” had only one meaning. The concept of a resurrection from death (i.e. to be in the second resurrection) was not yet a part of God’s plan. And the meaning of “death” was “the opposite of life”. So the warning of “in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die” meant: **in the day you eat that fruit, you lose the opportunity to have an immortal life in the Family of God**. Your physical life will continue until you eventually die. But for you **there will not be any hope of ever living again**. Your opportunity for immortality will have been taken away from you, because you disobeyed Me.

The same terms under which Adam and Eve had been offered the opportunity for immortal life also applied to all of their descendants **right up to the flood**. Obey God and in due time you will be given the free gift of immortal life in God’s Family. Disobey God and you will die, and you will never live again. The opportunity for an immortal life will be taken from you.

It was a straight-forward, uncomplicated plan.

The sacrifice of Jesus Christ for human sins was **not yet** a part of God’s plan. For Jesus Christ to lay down His life for us had not yet been considered by God the Father and by Jesus Christ. Why should that have been a consideration? Jesus Christ was not going to lay down His life for the angels that

sinned, all of whom Jesus Christ had personally created. So **why should Christ have considered doing that for human beings**, who have the exact same type of mind that God gave to the angels?

Understand also a basic point:

“Bringing a sacrifice” of any kind, let alone the sacrifice of a life, is never, never part of **the original plan** to achieve anything! A plan that requires any sacrifice of any kind for its achievement is **always a response** to unanticipated developments! A sacrifice shows that something undesirable, something that had not been anticipated, has taken place and needs to be dealt with!

The Last Great Day after the Feast of Tabernacles was not yet a part of God’s plan. The Last Great Day is **an appendage to God’s plan**. It was added to God’s plan to deal with certain unexpected problems that had arisen.

The placement of the LGD within the annual cycle shows that **God first lets His plan run its course** (that’s from the Passover to the end of the Feast of Tabernacles), and then God deals with certain problems that had arisen in the course of God’s plan being executed (that’s the Last Great Day).

The original plan was a much simpler version of God’s present plan.

That original plan of God started with the Holy Day of **Trumpets**, followed by the Holy Day of **Atonement**, and then concluded with the Feast of **Tabernacles**. It was a plan that concluded with a feast. That feast was to celebrate that God’s purpose had been accomplished.

The plan was based on God’s expectations that “an acceptable percentage” of all human beings would gladly choose God’s way of life. There was only going to be “one harvest” into the Family of God, represented by the Feast of Ingathering (i.e. Tabernacles). And those human beings who did not accept God’s way of using their minds would in due time die and cease to exist. Why plan anything more complicated than this?

In the world of Adam and Eve God started the year with the Holy Day of Trumpets. God started the year in the season of autumn (for the Northern Hemisphere). Jesus Christ’s coming to this earth in Genesis 1:2 identifies the start of God’s original plan for mankind, the plan that was in force in the pre-flood world.

After Adam and Eve had sinned, God decided to continue with the plan God had established the day when God created Adam and Eve. Jesus Christ remained on earth in the time before the flood. And He was available for all those human beings who desired “to walk with Him”. Jesus Christ continued to deal with human beings as He had intended to do on the day that He had created Adam and Eve.

As it turned out, there were **only three men** in the pre-flood world who took up that offer. They were Abel and Enoch and Noah. But this was not remotely what God had expected.

Jesus Christ Himself worked here on earth for 1,536 years, trying to motivate human beings to voluntarily accept God's way of life. After that long period of time Jesus Christ **finally conceded** that the current plan would never achieve the goals God had set out to achieve.

Notice what Jesus Christ then said at that specific point in time.

And the LORD said, **My spirit** shall not always **strive** with man, for that he also *is* flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years. (Genesis 6:3)

The Hebrew verb translated "strive" in this verse is "din". This Hebrew verb means: **to judge**.

So here, exactly 120 years before the flood, Jesus Christ is telling us that **His spirit had been judging human beings for the past 1,536 years**, trying to motivate people to live by all of God's laws. **That was their time of judgment**. And they all (except for Abel and Enoch and Noah ... and maybe a small number of other people who are not identified for us?) chose the way of selfishness over the ways of God.

Understand that mistranslating the Hebrew "din" as "strive" has seriously obscured a significant fact.

That fact is this: in this verse God tells us that He had been **judging humanity** for all those years! "Always" in Genesis 6:3 means: "for the entire 1,536 years" God had been judging man! That was a distinct period of judgment. That is what the Hebrew verb "din" means. Don't obscure that fact by replacing this verb with the ever-so-plausible word "strive".

Notice these points about this verse.

1) By saying "My spirit shall **not always judge** man", Jesus Christ was indicating that there was going to be **a change in the plan**! That's what the words "not always" tell us. They tell us that Jesus Christ was going to take **a different approach** to dealing with mankind, but only after another 120 years, an approach where many people would **not** be judged. Instead, only a small portion of human beings would be judged, while the rest would be judged in the second resurrection period.

Changing to a different approach is an acknowledgment that the present approach was not achieving the desired results.

2) The statement "for that he also is flesh" presents **the reason why** Jesus Christ was going to adopt a different way of dealing with mankind. Obviously Jesus Christ already knew that we human beings "are flesh", because that is how He has created us. What this statement tells us is that **the past 1,536 years had been a revelation to God**, regarding how a totally free and independent human mind will function and operate.

To be specific:

God had placed the same type of mind within human beings and within the angels. But whereas with the angels this type of mind resulted in **two out of every three angels** gladly accepting God's way of using their minds, with human beings (in approximate numbers) only about **one out of every one billion human beings** gladly accepted God's way of using their minds. That was a staggering catastrophe! That ratio was totally unexpected and totally unacceptable for God.

At the time when Jesus Christ created Adam and Eve, and then placed the spirit in man within each of them, Jesus Christ had not even remotely understood just how universally perverse, how depraved, how evil and how vile the human mind is spontaneously. **It is selfish to the core**, and it will always choose selfishness ahead of voluntary submission to God. That is the total opposite of the way God is, and all selfish attitudes disgust God. As Jesus Christ then inspired Moses to record:

And GOD saw that **the wickedness of man** *was* great in the earth, and *that* **every imagination** of the thoughts of his heart *was* **only evil continually**. (Genesis 6:5)

That realization was a shock for Jesus Christ, who had created Adam and Eve.

It was not what Jesus Christ had foreseen when He had created Adam and Eve, not even remotely. God simply does not anticipate evil and perversity. We human beings will readily anticipate evils, but not God. God's mind is pure!

The expression "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart" refers to how those human beings used **their minds**. Their minds were the biggest problem. The bad actions were only a consequence of how people used their minds. We need to also understand that **evil minds are always a far greater problem than evil actions**.

Evil actions can be dealt with and then sorted out. But **evil minds never change**! The people before the flood did not have access to God's holy spirit, because access to the tree of life had been cut off. And so none of their evil minds were capable of changing.

Here is an important point for us to understand:

God had already learned that the evil minds of spirit beings (i.e. Satan and all the demons) can never change. It is not possible to rehabilitate the mind of an evil spirit being. And therefore Satan and his demons will be banished into "the blackness of darkness for ever" (Jude 1:13).

What God learned in the pre-flood period is that **evil human minds can likewise never be rehabilitated**. That was not what God had expected. And that is the fact which God has recorded in Genesis 6:5, that evil human minds can never change.

All human beings before the flood were accountable to God for all their actions. And all of them (except for the few who are identified) will miss out on salvation. They had their chance and they rejected it. It was their time of judgment.

AFTER THE FLOOD

Jesus Christ's statement "**My spirit shall not always judge man**, for that he also is flesh" in Genesis 6:3, exactly 120 years before the flood, already indicated that after the flood God would usher in a plan in which **not all men would be judged in this present life**.

God said it in plain terms, and we have just never seen it at face value. We've correctly understood this concept ever since Mr. Armstrong's time, i.e. the concept of a second resurrection. But we've never understood that Jesus Christ was actually spelling this out in Genesis 6:3. The last part of this verse tells us that **the judging of all men would only continue for the next 120 years**! Then there would be a change in plan, whereby **only some men** would be judged.

After the flood God would set in motion **a modified plan**, in which only a very few human beings would be judged by God. And those who would be judged would also be accountable to God for what they did in their lives, and how they would use their minds. All the rest of the people would be judged at a later time, i.e. in the second resurrection.

Because Jesus Christ had come to understand that an evil human mind can never change on its own, therefore God devised a plan which made **provision for man to receive some help**, in order to achieve a change of his evil mind.

That provision to receive some help from God is a reference to **God's holy spirit**. God's spirit was given to God's servants in Old Testament times, and since Acts chapter 2 that help has also been available to all human beings who express a sincere desire to change their selfish minds (i.e. to all who will truly repent).

As I have explained for many years, repentance refers to **changing the way we use our minds**, changing **how** we think. But this also means is that we may not have completely changed our selfish way of thinking, before we are ready for baptism.

By the time we are ready for baptism **we have made a resolute and determined start to use our minds differently**, to change the way we think and the way we view the world around us. At that point we've also stopped doing things that are wrong, and we are working on changing our thought processes, i.e. on changing the mind of Romans 8:7.

We've reached the stage where we "delight in the law of God" in our minds (see Romans 7:22). But at the same time we also recognize that another part of our mind is pulling us towards a selfish way of thinking (verse 23).

That is the recognition we have to come to. The help to deal with that situation, so that the selfish pulls in our minds don't drown out the law of God, is why God then makes His holy spirit available to us. In other words, the holy spirit is only made available to us **once we recognize that we need help**. As Paul in this context then put it:

O wretched man that I am! **who shall deliver me** from the body of this death? (Romans 7:24)

We need God's holy spirit to be able to change the evil human mind into one that will joyfully submit itself to God and all His ways. Without the holy spirit such a transition is not possible ... that's what "**every** imagination of the thoughts of his heart is **only evil** continually" has already told us.

So the major change after the flood was that **God would specifically call a small number of people** to an opportunity for salvation. Abraham was the first person God called after the flood. From there it led down to the nation of Israel.

This is what God's modified plan of salvation for mankind looked like at that point:

God left all people spiritually blinded until God called Abraham. Once Abraham's descendants had grown into the nation of Israel, then God's plan called for selecting 144,000 people (less a small handful) from amongst the people of Israel to become the group that would make up the first resurrection.

Consider:

That opportunity to provide all the remaining people needed for the first resurrection is what made Israel "**a peculiar treasure**" to God, and "**a kingdom of priests**" (see Exodus 19:5-6). Israel would be "a peculiar treasure" to God, because God would only look amongst the people of Israel for candidates for the first resurrection.

This expression "a peculiar treasure" really means "**God's private property**". The word "peculiar" is defined in Webster's Unabridged Dictionary as: "that which belongs to a person in exclusion of others". This means that it refers to a private possession.

Now all those in the first resurrection are destined to become "kings and priests" (see Revelation 5:10). That is **why** God referred to Israel as "a kingdom of priests" ... to show that Israel would be providing both kings and priests for the Kingdom of God. And **no other people would be providing any kings or priests for God's Kingdom**.

In time it became clear to God that Israel would simply not be able to provide that many people for the first resurrection, because the people of **Israel kept going into paganism**. So then **God divorced Israel**. And instead of being married to the physical nations of Israel, God adjusted His plan so that now Jesus Christ is destined to marry spiritual Israel, otherwise known as the Church of God. And so now **the**

offer to be a peculiar treasure and a royal priesthood to God has been taken away from physical Israel, and given to the Church of God instead.

As the Apostle Peter wrote:

But you (members of God's Church) *are* **a chosen generation**, **a royal priesthood**, **an holy nation**, **a peculiar people**; that you should show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light: (1 Peter 2:9)

These are all the things that had previously applied to the physical nations of Israel. Now these things all refer to "the bride of Jesus Christ". So when Christ in due time divorced physical Israel, then all these things were taken from Israel, to later be given to spiritual Israel. That is what 1 Peter 2:9 is explaining.

The point to recognize is this:

In Old Testament times **Israel was held accountable by God** for the opportunity to provide all the people needed for the first resurrection. That would be only a tiny portion of 1% of all Israelites who would ever be born. The other 99%+ of all Israelites through the millennia would not be considered for the first resurrection. Those 99%+ would end up in the second resurrection.

So **why did Jesus Christ divorce Israel?** Are you ready for the answer?

In the days of Moses God was still looking for almost 144,000 individuals to fill all the still empty positions in the first resurrection. That meant that God was looking for far less than 1% of the 100-million-plus Israelites, who would be born throughout history, before the time of Christ's second coming, to fill those still empty positions.

Jesus Christ divorced Israel because it became abundantly clear to God that **not even a tiny portion of 1% of all Israelites were willing to come to a genuine repentance**, and to freely submit their lives to God. **This trend was very clear** to Jesus Christ, because from the time of Moses all the way down to the last kings in both the House of Israel and the House of Judah, it was a case of **endless rebellion**, and an endless descent into pagan religious practices.

It became clear to God that no matter how intensely God worked with the people of Israel, that number of slightly less than 144,000 people would simply not be achieved within the general time-frame that God had established, if God was going to rely exclusively on physical Israelites.

It required "a divorce" for God to be able to **extend the potential manpower pool** for the first resurrection from just the people of Israel to include people from all nations and all ethnic backgrounds. **Without a divorce it wasn't really possible for God to start looking for candidates for the first resurrection amongst any non-Israelite people.**

That is because in Exodus 19:5-6 God had **explicitly restricted** that potential manpower pool to the people of Israel. Therefore God Himself could not look for candidates for the first resurrection outside of the people of Israel. **The restriction of Exodus 19:5-6**, which verses form the preamble to the Old Covenant with Israel, **had to be removed**. And for God it required a divorce from Israel to remove that restriction.

Only once the restriction of Exodus 19:5-6 was removed, was the way opened up for God to start looking for candidates for the first resurrection amongst all nations and all people. And after the divorce **it still took several centuries**, to the very end of Jesus Christ's earthly ministry to be precise, for that option to search amongst all nations for candidates for the first resurrection **to actually be set in motion**.

To be quite plain:

In order to call non-Israelites for the first resurrection, not only did God have to divorce both houses of Israel. But God in the flesh (i.e. Jesus Christ) also had to die first. The God who had married Israel at Mount Sinai, first divorced Israel, and after that God Himself, the One who had married Israel, then died on the stake. In effect, the Husband in that marriage (i.e. Jesus Christ) died. It was only **after Christ's death and subsequent resurrection** that the way was opened up for God to call non-Israelites to have a part in the first resurrection. With Christ's death on the stake, His marriage to physical Israel was totally erased.

During His ministry Jesus Christ still emphatically said: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (see Matthew 15:24). It was only **after His resurrection** that Jesus Christ issued the command: "go you therefore and **teach all nations** all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (see Matthew 28:19-20, text corrected). (See my 2015 article on "Our Trinitarian Baptism Formula" for a detailed explanation of these two verses.)

And that brings us to the Church of God.

ACCOUNTABILITY FOR GOD'S CHURCH

So right up to the end of His ministry Jesus Christ restricted His efforts to the people of Israel. It was the marriage to Israel that had imposed this restriction. It was only after His resurrection that this limitation was completely taken away, and then the opportunity to be in the first resurrection was extended to people from "all nations".

Since that time God has been looking at **all people in all nations** for potential candidates for the first resurrection. The way by which this opportunity has been opened up to all nations is for first of all the gospel to be preached to the people in every nation. Once that has happened, then God can assess who are the potential candidates to call. God makes that assessment based on how people respond to the true gospel message (not to some phony counterfeit spread by "missionaries" around the world).

The Apostle Paul explained this process to the people in the Church in Rome as follows:

How then **shall they call** on Him in whom they have not believed? and **how shall they believe** in Him of whom they have not heard? and **how shall they hear** without a preacher? (Romans 10:14)

In the next verse (verse 15) Paul answers these questions by stating that God has sent out His servants with the gospel message, to bring it to all nations.

So now in this age it is the members of God's true Church who are accountable to God for what we do and how we live. We are accountable because God opened our minds to understand the truth. So grasp this vital point:

We are accountable to God **because God has opened our minds to understand the truth**. That opportunity to understand the truth makes us accountable to God.

When you understand this point, you should also grasp why all the people before the flood were held accountable by God, and why none of them can be in the second resurrection. **The minds of all the people before the flood were open to understanding the truth**. Jesus Christ walked amongst people before the flood.

A key is this:

When God gives us understanding, then that makes us accountable, irrespective of what we do with that understanding. Whether or not that understanding causes people to repent is not the criterion, as far as accountability is concerned. So people who have been given understanding and then repent, they are accountable to God. And other people who have also been given understanding, but **never repent**, **they also are accountable to God**.

The criterion is what God has done. And God gives understanding to people.

If God has given understanding to a human mind, then as far as being accountable to God is concerned, it makes no difference whether that mind then repents or whether that mind does not repent. **In both cases that human mind becomes fully accountable to God**.

Obviously, how those two minds are then treated by God is vastly different. The one will be classified as a good and faithful servant, while the other will be classified as a wicked servant. But both will have to give account to God for how they responded to the understanding to which God had opened their minds.

Just because one individual decided never to seek real repentance, and never to strive to become a part of God's true Church (and was thus never baptized), that doesn't automatically open up a path to the second resurrection for that person. **Not by a long shot**!

God is not playing games. And God cannot be tricked or outsmarted. It's not that **God dealt harshly** with those people before the flood, who refused to submit to God; but that since the flood **God somehow goes easy** on people who actively reject submitting themselves to God (i.e. people to whom God had given **some** understanding). That's not how it works.

Take the Pharisees as a case in point.

They were not repentant, and most of them did not come into God's Church. Yet Jesus Christ plainly said the following:

But woe unto you, **scribes and Pharisees**, hypocrites! for you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for **you neither go in *yourselves***, neither suffer you them that are entering to go in. (Matthew 23:13)

Jesus Christ told those Pharisees point-blank: **you are not going to be in God's Kingdom**! The fact that those Pharisees never at any time really repented has nothing to do with their accountability before God. And neither are they going into God's Kingdom via the route of the second resurrection. They are just not going to be there! Why? Because they had no excuse.

They all had a certain amount of understanding. They understood without any question whatsoever that Jesus Christ had to be, at the very least, a servant of the true God, because of all the miracles He performed. Yet **they refused to accept that knowledge**. But that access to a certain amount of understanding made them accountable to God, irrespective of what they did with that understanding.

Accountability applies to both, those who accept and positively act on understanding they have been given; and also to those who reject the understanding they have been given, and consequently never act on it.

Why are people in both situations equally **accountable** to God?

Because **their response to the understanding they were given reveals their true character**! People who refuse to respond to understanding they have been given (e.g. the Pharisees) reveal a type of character which God will never accept into His Family. Choosing to not examine **uncomfortable information**, because we then might have to change and do something we would prefer not to have to do, is a character flaw that God will never tolerate in His Family. It is in fact **a form of hypocrisy**.

Have you ever heard someone say "**I don't want to know that**", in response to some information that brings serious responsibilities with it? That attitude represents a very serious situation, because "I don't want to know that" people are not going to be in the second resurrection. **They are being hypocritical**, and they think that they can escape responsibility by claiming ignorance.

There would be no point in God having "I don't want to know that" people come up in the second resurrection. Their attitude has already revealed their character regarding how they will deal with truth

that they just don't like. They lack integrity!

Notice what the Apostle Peter tells us about "scoffers".

Knowing this first, that **there shall come in the last days scoffers**, walking after their own lusts, (2 Peter 3:3)

The Apostle Peter was thinking specifically about scoffers (or mockers) who reject the idea that Jesus Christ will return. This is clear from the next verse. And after that Peter said the following:

For **this they willingly are ignorant of**, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: (2 Peter 3:5)

The scoffers Peter refers to are people whose religion is evolution. And they try to ridicule the fact that God created this universe and all things in it.

Now people can also be "willingly ignorant" of many other things that they also just don't want to know. That includes people understanding some things, but just refusing to engage their minds with the truth of God, and therefore they **very deliberately** don't show any interest of any kind, as far as God's truth is concerned.

When that is the case for some close relative of ours, we tend to very quickly say something like "oh, **God hasn't called my** ... (whatever relative it may be) at this time, and that's why he/she is not in the Church of God".

But **in many cases that is simply not true**! In many cases God actually called such people, but they just refused to respond.

Very often the truth is that the person started to understand some things, and then decided to not get involved, because of any number of personal reasons. So the person was indeed called by God, and began to actually identify that call (i.e. the person started to understand some things), and then **wilfully dismissed that calling** from God.

There is a difference between **not being called** by God, and **wilfully turning away** from a calling by God. These two situations are not the same thing at all.

We don't really like to contemplate this type of situation for people who are close to us. But here are some things we need to consider:

1) When a truly converted member of God's Church is married to someone who is not a member of God's Church, and who has no intention whatsoever of becoming a member of God's Church, then

that unconverted husband or wife is getting a daily witness of what true Christianity is all about. Every single day of the year that unconverted spouse is living with a converted Christian. What if that marriage continues for 5 years, 10 years, 20 years or even 50 years ... **how much more of a witness does that unconverted spouse need to understand the truth of God, before we can say: he/she has heard a call loud and clear?**

When an unconverted person lives for 10 or 20 or 30 years with a converted member of God's Church, **what more do we expect God to do** to that unconverted person's mind, so that we can say: yes, God has called that person?

Converted members of God's Church are to be "the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14). What does this mean? It means that we are to live Christianity. We are to provide examples, for how God wants all people to live, to the world around us. Now look at verse 16.

Let your light so shine before men, **that they may see your good works**, **and glorify** your Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

People around us are supposed to see our right way of living. For what purpose? The explicit purpose for us to set an example of godly living is **so that they will glorify God the Father**. So what does this expression "to glorify God the Father" mean? Do you know? And how can people glorify God?

People "glorify God" by repenting and by willingly submitting their lives to God's rule.

Understand that unrepentant people are not really capable of glorifying God. God is not looking for some verbal praise from unrepentant people. Such praise is worthless to God! That's what Jesus Christ said in plain words!

And why do you call Me, Lord, Lord, and **do not the things which I say**? (Luke 6:46)

Unrepentant people saying "Lord, Lord ..." does not glorify Jesus Christ. The only way we glorify God is by repenting, submitting our lives to God, and obeying God's laws and instructions. Without repentance verbal praise is without any value. So back to Matthew 5:16.

What is the purpose of us letting our lights shine?

A major purpose for us to let our lights shine is **to motivate unrepentant people to seek real repentance**. But for people to seek repentance requires that God first calls them. That's also what Jesus Christ said in plain terms.

And He said, Therefore said I unto you, that **no man can come unto Me, except it were given unto him of My Father**. (John 6:65, also verse 44)

So we are to live a godly life so that people in the world can be motivated to want to repent. But they can't have that motivation without God the Father extending a calling to them.

Can you yourself now put the picture together?

When an unconverted person lives with a converted spouse or parent, then that converted person represents the means by which God extends a calling to the unconverted family members! The purpose for letting our lights shine, especially for unconverted people within our own families, is **to present a calling from God to those unconverted individuals**.

"Let your light so shine" is not some soppy, sentimental, meaningless platitude! It is an extremely important **command** that Jesus Christ gave to His people.

Letting our lights shine is in actual fact a major, major way in which God extends His calling to the unconverted. It is a major way by which God has sent out invitations to the marriage supper, and where many of those who receive those personal invitations respond with "**I pray you, have me excused**" (see Luke 14:16-24). Read this whole parable yourself. God is angry with those who answer "no thank you, Lord". Verse 24 is an especially sobering warning.

For I say unto you, That **none of those men which were bidden shall taste of My supper**. (Luke 14:24)

Understand that those are not my words. I'm just quoting Scripture.

So back to us letting our lights shine in our own personal circumstances.

We are supposed to let our lights shine, especially for our own families. We just have to live the Christian life in integrity and truth. We certainly don't have to preach to any unconverted family members. But they are exposed to a witness of what God is doing, by experiencing how the converted person is living.

To say in that type of situation "well, God hasn't called him/her" is self-deception! Look, that type of situation is pretty much **like conditions before the flood**. In analogy, Jesus Christ fulfilled the role of "the converted close family member", and all human beings before the flood fulfilled the role of the unconverted close family members. Any person before the flood could have had daily contact with Jesus Christ, had they actually wanted to have such contact. But they all (except for three people) said "no thank you, Lord".

That's very similar to an unconverted person living with a truly converted spouse for decades. But people before the flood didn't want contact with Jesus Christ, just like in most cases today the unconverted spouse does not want to get involved in the converted person's religion.

We all know that God didn't spare the world before the flood.

The Apostle Paul made the same point to the Corinthians. Paul discussed a situation where a man has an unconverted wife, or where a woman has an unconverted husband. After acknowledging that the unconverted spouse might choose to end the marriage with the converted believer, Paul urged the believer in that situation to strive to maintain the marriage, by setting a godly example.

Notice what Paul said:

For what do you know, O wife, **whether you shall save *your* husband**? or how do you know, O man, **whether you shall save *your* wife**? (1 Corinthians 7:16)

What is Paul telling us in this verse?

The believing spouse cannot possibly be instrumental in "saving" the unbelieving spouse, **unless God actually first "calls" that unbelieving spouse**. That's John 6:65 again, right?

The only possibility in this situation is that God calls the unbeliever through his or her believing spouse. And once that calling has been presented to the unbeliever, **then who knows** whether or not the unbeliever will also "be saved"?

In 1 Corinthians 7:16 Paul shows that God uses a believer within a marriage to call the unbeliever. And then the only question is whether or not the unbeliever will respond to that calling. But the calling from God has been clearly presented to the unbeliever by the example that is set by the believer.

Now here is the point.

God is not a respecter of persons (Romans 2:11, etc.). So in marriages that involve one believer and one unbeliever, Paul has shown us that God calls the unbeliever through the believing spouse. Now if God uses the believing spouse in some such marriages to present a calling to the unbeliever, it means that God really uses the converted spouses in all such marriages to present a calling to their unbelieving spouses. Paul has already addressed the situation where the unbeliever decides to break up the marriage. That's in verse 15.

So that then leaves the situation where the unbeliever clearly wants to maintain the marriage to the believer, but without wanting to get involved in the believer's religion. In this situation **the unbeliever cannot avoid exposure to God's calling**, through the godly example of the believer's way of life. And the question then is: will the unbeliever respond to that calling, or will the unbeliever ignore it?

But either way such exposure to a calling from God brings accountability with it. Such a person is not at all in the same position as the rest of the world, which has never been exposed to close contact with any

converted Christian.

2) Now the exact same type of situation also applies to children, where one or both parents are converted members of God's Church. This is especially the case when the parents are converted church members before the children become teenagers, though it applies to children of any age who are still living with their parents.

For children living for 15-20 years with converted parents, **what more do you expect God to do for those children**, before we can say "they have been called by God"?

Have they had 5,000 days of exposure to converted parents ... but that still isn't enough? You don't think that there is some magic switch in the minds of children that God needs to flip before they'll seek contact with God, do you? How are children like that (i.e. those who show no interest in contact with God) different from the people of Israel in the wilderness, who always saw the pillar of fire by night, and who rebelled against God anyway? The answer is that they are not really different at all from the Israelites in the wilderness.

What we need to understand very clearly is that **unconverted spouses and unconverted grown children of members of God's Church are accountable before God for refusing to submit their lives to God**!

This is important to understand!

They have with their minds rejected the opportunity, provided by having a truly converted spouse or parent, of becoming a part of God's Church and having a part in the Kingdom of God. With daily exposure to a converted close family member, living in the same house, **they have for years stared a calling from God in the face**, and then said: no thank-you, not now.

Let me spell this out very plainly:

Anyone who is exposed to God's truth through a converted spouse or a converted parent, and who then makes **the calculated decision** "I'm not going to get involved, because then I'll have to change some things in my life", becomes accountable to God for that calculated decision.

Jesus Christ explained this principle in the Gospel of Matthew.

And **he that takes not his cross, and follows after Me**, is not worthy of Me. (Matthew 10:38)

Think about this very carefully.

(Comment: The word "cross" is used here and in the following discussion to mean: the responsibility to

obey God and to live a Christian life, which may include having to deal with difficult trials.)

When does our accountability to God start: **before** we take up our cross **or** only **after** we have taken up our cross? "**Before** we take up our cross" includes all of our lives before we have actively made the decision to be baptized. "**After** we have taken up our cross" refers to our lives from the time of baptism onwards.

People who are baptized have taken up their cross; they have formalized their commitment to live by all of God's laws. And people who are not baptized have never yet taken up their cross; they have never yet agreed to make a binding commitment to God.

Here is the point:

Our accountability to God and responsibility for living by all of God's laws does not start when we take up our cross! Our accountability starts when we can recognize that personal cross before us. **Our accountability starts when we can see that "there is a cross that I will have to carry"**. And if we at that point decide to walk away and not even attempt to take up that cross, then we are nevertheless just as accountable as the person who does take up that cross.

Anyone who "is not worthy of Jesus Christ" is not going to be in God's Kingdom. That should be self-evident. Matthew 10:38 shows that accountability to God already starts before we in fact pick up that cross, which we have come to recognize.

The personal recognition of a cross is the deciding factor as far as accountability is concerned.

How we deal with that recognition of a cross (i.e. either take it up or not take it up) will determine the eventual outcome. But either way we become accountable to God.

People who recognize that cross but walk away from it, do so because **they want something else in life**, something they value more highly than the cross they have begun to see. Jesus Christ addressed His next statement to such people.

He that finds his life shall lose it: and he that loses his life for my sake shall find it. (Matthew 10:39)

With the statement "he that finds his life shall lose it" Jesus Christ did not just mean that such people will die the first death. What Jesus Christ meant here is that **such people lose out on eternal life in God's Family**. Why is that so?

This is talking about people who have seen the cross in front of them (previous verse), and faced with that choice, they rejected it in favor of certain things that this life seemed to offer them. They show that **they want something from this present life**, even while they can see right in front of them the cross

that holds out the invitation to immortality in the future.

They have made a choice! And because they made the wrong choice, therefore they lose the opportunity for an immortal life in God's Kingdom.

Now the vast majority of all human beings who have lived since the flood have never at any time "seen the cross" right in front of them. So they have never even had the opportunity to take up their cross, because they have never seen it. But the unconverted spouses and the unconverted adult children of converted members of God's Church can see that cross right in front of them. They can see it 365 days every year, year after year after year. Such unconverted people are obviously in a completely different situation from people who have never had any contact with any converted people, let alone very close daily contact.

A SERIOUS PROCESS

It is an extremely serious process for God to select independent free minds, to whom God will give an immortal existence. God must have absolute surety that such minds will indeed always, for endless future eternity, be joyfully submissive to God's rule, that they will freely embrace God's philosophy of life, and God's way of thinking, and all of God's standards.

God will not take the chance of making a mistake with even one single mind amongst billions of people, who will eventually make up the entire Family of God. God must have absolute certainty with every single person. The key for God to establish such certainty is for God to know exactly **how such minds will think and reason**, what factors will motivate such minds in different circumstances.

One major way to establish this is to see how our human minds deal with a large variety of circumstances.

When we are confronted with a number of options for what we could do, what choice do we make? Do we actually accept facts that contradict our own personal positions? Or do we try to ignore and do away with facts that would require us to change in some ways? What value do we attach to "the pearl of great price" (see Matthew 13:46) that God has shown us? Are we actually curious when God shows us "a burning bush" (see Exodus 3:2-3), or do we just walk away from it?

Do we value our family relationships more than God's offer for immortal life (see Matthew 10:37)? How do we respond to living with a converted spouse or a converted parent? How easily are we attracted to the ways of this world? Do we hold fast to commitments we have made, or do we give up on commitments? Will great pressure cause us to give up on commitments we have made?

The answers to these types of questions will tell God a great deal about how our minds work. And that is the purpose of severe trials for Christians, **to establish how our minds will work in pressured situations**. Trials are given to us to show God hidden aspects of our minds, hidden aspects that trials help to bring out into the open.

For an unconverted person to live for years and for decades with someone who is truly converted, and to never be motivated to want to become like the converted person, reveals a character that is not good, and one that is certainly not trustworthy, as far as God is concerned. For the unconverted person their converted spouse or parent is their particular “burning bush”. Are they curious enough to look into the converted person’s religious convictions, or don’t they even notice “the burning bush” in their own home?

Accountability before God is a very serious subject. And we need to fully accept that accountability for us personally. As the Apostle Peter said:

For the time *is come* that **judgment must begin at the house of God**: and if *it* first *begin* at us, what shall the end *be* of **them that obey not the gospel of God**? (1 Peter 4:17)

Yes, what shall be the end of them who obey not the gospel of God, but **who have lived with the gospel** for decades? All those who “obey not the gospel” are also going to be judged. That is what Peter is saying. And they don’t all necessarily fall into the same group. Peter’s reference to “those that don’t obey the gospel” places such people into a very serious situation. Peter presented this as a serious warning, as he elaborated in the next verse.

And if **the righteous** scarcely be saved, where shall **the ungodly** and **the sinner** appear? (1 Peter 4:18)

Notice that Peter has made a distinction between “the ungodly” and “the sinners”. They are not the same. But neither group will become a part of God’s Family. So what is the difference between these two groups?

“**The sinners**” are those who actively break God’s laws. Their whole lifestyle is contrary to God’s way of life. They don’t care about what is right and what is wrong before God. They have no conscience towards sinning.

“**The ungodly**” don’t go quite that far. The Greek word “asebes”, here translated as “ungodly”, literally means “**to lack respect and reverence for God**”. What is someone with this attitude really like? This type of individual is best represented by “**the unjust judge**” in one of Jesus Christ’s parables. This is recorded in Luke 18. Notice a few verses.

Saying, There was in a city a judge, who **feared not God, neither regarded man**: (Luke 18:2)

And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, **Though I fear not God, nor regard man**; Yet because this widow troubles me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. (Luke 18:4-5)

In his own life this judge wasn’t necessarily actively breaking God’s laws. His own lifestyle wasn’t

necessarily a problem. But **his attitude was a huge problem**! He had no respect for God. He made his own rules. This unjust judge typifies “the ungodly”.

So the difference between “the sinners” and “the ungodly” is as follows:

The problems with “**the sinners**” are **their actions** and their conduct. It is what they do that is the problem.

The problem with “**the ungodly**” is **the way they think**, the way their minds work. Their attitude and their lack of respect for God is the problem.

Now people who live for decades with a converted member of God’s Church, without ever being motivated to seek a relationship with God, are clearly a part of “the ungodly”. So they too are accountable to God.

And we who have been called by God in this age are most certainly accountable to God for how we deal with that calling.

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