

## Methuselah Watch

Had Methuselah been an average Wal-Mart worker, he would have had to work his entire life to make almost as much money as Wal-Mart CEO H. Lee Scott makes in one year!

### Let's review the math.

In 2004 Lee Scott was paid \$22,991,599 in total compensation, including stock options.

In 2004 the average "full-time" Wal-Mart associate was paid \$9.68 per hour for 34 hours per week (the number of hours considered "full time" according to the Wal-Mart Associate Handbook) or \$17,114 per year.

The average full-time Wal-Mart associate would need to work 1,343 years to make what Mr. Scott made last year.

### Let's review the Scriptural texts.

In Genesis 5 of the Hebrew Scriptures, the life spans of several patriarchs are mentioned.

Adam	930 years
Lamech	777 years
Seth	912 years
Noah	950 years

And, the person whose name is the personification of long life, Methuselah, lived a *mere* 969 years.

None of these biblical heavyweights would be able to work at full-time jobs long enough to make the amount of money that Mr. Scott made in 2004. Even Methuselah would fall 374 years short of matching Scott's annual income.

Of course, Jesus lived only 33 years. Had he started as a greeter or stocker at a Wal-Mart instead of leaving the manger to head for Egypt with Mary and Joseph, he would have accumulated \$564,762 – one week's salary for Mr. Scott.

Doesn't it seem like the cashiers, greeters, drivers, forklift operators, and stockers could be paid a living wage? Could they join Mr. Scott in being covered by health insurance at an affordable rate? Jesus could heal the sick, so probably didn't need health insurance. But the rest of us....

Perhaps Methuselah just needed better health insurance.



## When Prophets Confront Profits

**F**our Walton family members, the beneficiaries of Wal-Mart's profits, are tied for #4 on Forbes' list of the richest Americans with \$18 billion each.

Wal-Mart's employees – more than 70 percent of them women – are paid an average \$9.68 an hour if they are full-time employees. (The associate handbook lists 34 hours as full-time.) An average full-time Wal-Mart employee earns only \$17,114 annually, under the \$18,850 federal poverty guideline for a family of four in 2004.

In the top 100 cities where Wal-Mart's share of the grocery industry grew more than 20 percent between 1998 and 2002, the number of cashier jobs fell as much as 2.3 percent.

Every time Wal-Mart expanded its market share by one percent in the grocery business, retail food cashiers' wages dropped an average 5.5 cents per hour.

Full-time associates can choose to participate in a Wal-Mart health care plan after six months of continuous employment. (Part-time employees must wait two years.) But participation in the program can cost 42 percent of the associate's annual income before the benefits are even accessed. (For spouses to participate, the employee must pay all of the spouse's insurance plus a \$50 spousal surcharge.)

Wal-Mart drains the public coffers. In most states that keep the statistics, Wal-Mart is the employer of the most individuals working full time and still receiving public benefits in the form of food stamps, Medicaid, or housing subsidies.

Each Wal-Mart store employing 200 people costs taxpayers approximately \$420,750 annually in public social services used by Wal-Mart workers whose low wages and unaffordable health insurance mean most of them are among the working poor.

### **The Golden Rule – loving your neighbor as much as yourself – is not evident in these statistics.**

*Sources include Business Week magazine, the United Food and Commercial Workers website, The United States of Wal-Mart by John Dicker (Tarcher/Penguin, 2005), and "Everyday Low Wages: The Hidden Price We All Pay for Wal-Mart," a report by the minority staff of the U.S. House of Representatives Education and the Workforce Committee.*

*And to  
whomsoever  
much is given,  
much shall be  
required.*

*– Luke 12:48*