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UNDERSTANDING THE WILL OF GOD

Regarding praying, Jesus Christ gave His disciples the following instructions:

But you, when you pray, **enter into your closet**, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret shall reward you openly. (Matthew 6:6)

Our personal private prayers should never be a spectator sport. We are to pray in privacy, with no one else observing us. And after this preface Jesus Christ then gave His disciples the well-known outline that is commonly referred to as "the Lord's Prayer". We are very familiar with that outline. Here is how that outline starts:

After this manner therefore pray you: Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. **Your will be done on earth**, as *it is* in heaven. (Matthew 6:9-10)

One of the first things we are instructed to pray for is that God's will may be done here on earth. Do we actually do that ... pray for God's will to be done?

Why did Jesus Christ instruct us to pray for God's will to be done? What will happen if we don't pray for God's will to be done here on earth? Would that change anything? Would some things turn out differently, on the personal level, on the national level, and on the international level, if we do not pray for God's will to be done?

Some people seem to think that it is a foregone conclusion that God's will is always going to be done here on earth. If that is so, then **why must we pray for a foregone conclusion?** Doesn't it seem sort of redundant to pray for something (i.e. God's will) that is going to happen anyway, even if we don't pray for it?

Now consider the last part of that sentence: "as it is in heaven". In other words, Jesus Christ was saying:

We are to pray that God's will may be done here on earth **in exactly the same way as God's will is being done in heaven right now.**

This is **a comparative statement!**

It compares conditions on earth with conditions in heaven. The clear implication here is that right now **conditions in heaven are perfect**, with the will of God the Father always being done perfectly.

Jesus Christ's instruction here, that we are to pray for the same degree of perfection regarding God's will for conditions here on earth, implies that here on earth right now that level of perfection does not exist, that **right now the will of God the Father is not really being done perfectly here on earth.**

Isn't that the implication inherent in Jesus Christ's statement?

Let's also clearly understand that praying that God's will may be done here on earth amounts to **asking God to intervene in this world's affairs**, and to take over full control of everything that happens on earth.

In other words, unless God does intervene, **the will of God is not going to be done here on earth.** Without divine intervention God's will is simply not going to be done, as far as human beings here on earth are concerned.

The entire record of human history demonstrates this very emphatically!

God's will was assuredly not being done on earth before the flood, and then God intervened. After the flood God's will was not being done on earth in leading up to the tower of Babel, and then God again intervened. During the 40 years of Israel's wanderings in the wilderness God's will was not being done time and time and time again, and then God would intervene. During the period of the judges God's will was not being done here on earth, as evidenced by every man at that time doing that which was right in his own eyes (see Judges 21:25), rather than doing what is right before God. So God intervened again and established Saul as king.

During the times of the kings after David God's will was not being done on earth, and therefore God eventually sent both Israel and Judah into national captivities. After the death of Ezra the will of God was once again not being done on earth, as evidenced by a totally hypocritical class of religious leaders, called "Pharisees", usurping religious authority away from the priesthood, and introducing an endless number of heresies into the Jewish religion.

During the ministry of Jesus Christ God's will was not being done here on earth. This should be clear from Jesus Christ's statement in Matthew 23:37.

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *you* who kills the prophets, and stones them which are sent unto you, **how often would I have gathered your children together**, even as a hen gathers her chickens under *her* wings, **and you would not!** (Matthew 23:37)

Here "God's will" was to gather Jerusalem's children together, but the Jewish people refused to be gathered by God. So therefore God's will was once again not being done.

Since the time of Christ's ministry God's will has not really been done here on earth either. The proof is evident from the advice that Jesus Christ gives to all of the seven eras in Revelation 2-3. In each case where Jesus Christ gives some advice to the people of a Church era, it means that **that advice expresses the will of God.** And that advice is given because the people of that era were (or are) not really doing the will of God fully.

Does any sound-minded individual really believe that the **conditions in our world today**, with abortions and so-called same-sex-marriages, etc. in any way reflect the will of God being done? Wars, rapes, murder, rioting, pollution, etc. are major attributes of our world today. Do they reflect the will of God? Obviously not! So **in our perverse world today God's will is assuredly not being done!** There is never a place for perversions and depravity and greed and lust and coveting, etc., the hallmarks of our world today, in any aspect of the will of God.

We need to recognize that since the time when Adam and Eve sinned, the will of God has not really been done on earth, except very sporadically in very limited locations. For the past approximately 6,000 years God's will has overwhelmingly been ignored by the vast majority of human beings.

Those of you who go back to Mr. Armstrong's time might remember statements to the effect that God sentenced mankind to go its own way for 6,000 years. For example, in the October-November 1981 issue of The PLAIN TRUTH Mr. Armstrong wrote an article titled "Coming Soon: A WORLD AT PEACE!". In that article Mr. Armstrong wrote the following paragraph:

And so, since that was MAN'S DECISION **God SENTENCED the human race** that sprang from Adam to 6,000 years of being cut off from the possibility of receiving the Holy Spirit that imparts life eternal. In effect, God said, "**Go form your own governments, your own religions, produce your own knowledge** and systems of education for 6,000 years." (the bold text is my emphasis)

This is something Mr. Armstrong said many times with very similar wording. But here is what we need to recognize from this statement:

When God in effect told mankind "go do your own thing for 6,000 years", then this meant that **God's will was not going to be done on earth for most human beings for the entire time up to Christ's second coming.**

A sentence for transgressions is not the expression of God's will. A punishment is not an expression of God's will. As God tells us in Ezekiel 33:11, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked". God pours out penalties upon the wicked precisely because the wicked were not or are not doing God's will.

When God's will is being done on earth, then no penalties will be poured out on this earth. So as long as penalties continue to come upon us rebellious human beings, so long God's will is not really being done on earth.

So here is what we should understand:

The correct premise we need to work from is that the will of God is overwhelmingly not being done here on earth!

And that is why Jesus Christ instructs us to pray to God the Father that God's will may be done in our lives and in our circumstances. It is certainly not God's will to destroy anybody. But in the time that still lies ahead the wicked are indeed going to be destroyed by God. That destruction will be a penalty from God, because the wicked are not doing God's will.

Notice also the three consecutive statements in Matthew 6:9-10.

"... hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come, Your will be done ..."

These three statements all instruct us to pray for things that are **still future**. Right now **God's name** is not being respected at all in this world. God's name is in fact endlessly used in vain all around us. It is only after Jesus Christ's second coming that God's name is going to be hallowed worldwide. And the establishment of **God's Kingdom** is very obviously also still future. And, likewise, **God's will** is not really being done on earth today. No, that is something that is also still future. It is when the Kingdom of God is established that the will of God is going to be done perfectly. And that is also when God's name is going to be hallowed.

A PROBLEM WE NEED TO RECOGNIZE

There are many religious people in this world who are quite **fatalistic**. Whatever happens, they ascribe it all to "God's will". Someone has an accident, and they say "that must have been God's will". Someone is elected as president or as prime minister, and they say "well, that's God's will". A violent storm or a flood or an earthquake destroys some people's homes, and they say "well, that was God's will". It is all a "que sera sera" approach to life.

With this approach people can very conveniently **absolve themselves of all responsibility** for what has happened. It was simply God's will, and nothing they could have done would have changed that, is how they reason. Good things happen, and that's God's will; and bad things happen, and those things are also God's will.

This approach is basically a cop-out, to deflect all blame for whenever things go wrong, or when bad conditions come about.

Now **by itself the expression "Your will be done" is rather vague**. And if someone says this expression in prayer to God, by itself this expression doesn't convey much meaning. For example:

You tell a friend: I always pray that God's will may be done on earth.

Your friend asks: So what exactly is God's will that you are praying for?

You reply: I don't know. I just want to see God's will being done; that's all.

Your friend says: So you don't actually know what you're praying for, right?

You reply: Well, I'm praying for God's will to be done.

Your friend says: How will you know when God's will is being done?

You reply: Well, after I have prayed, whatever then happens I take to be God's will.

Your friend asks: After you have prayed, is there any chance that what then happens is actually Satan's will and not God's will?

You reply: God is more powerful than Satan, and therefore whatever then happens must be God's will.

Your friend asks: If that is the case, then how can Satan possibly be "the god of this present age" (2 Corinthians 4:4), if nothing ever goes his way?

You reply: That just applies to people in the world; he is their "god". But when true Christians pray that God's will may be done, then whatever happens is God's will. etc., etc.

This hypothetical conversation exposes a major issue. Can you spot it?

Before we can really effectively pray "Your will be done on earth" **we must first know what God's will is. We must know what we are praying for.**

If we have nothing specific in mind, then the expression "Your will be done" becomes meaningless! **It may sound really good** to say "Your will be done". But without having some idea regarding what we are actually referring to, **the expression is hollow** and empty. It has no body to it.

When we pray "Your will be done", without having the slightest clue as to what that will may be, **then God has to assume** that we are in agreement with things about which we have no understanding at all. But God doesn't make assumptions like that about us. And there is the possibility that we are **just mumbling expressions we believe God expects to hear from us.**

The point is:

When we pray "Your will be done", **we must know what we are talking about**. Otherwise those are empty words. As the Apostle Paul tells us:

Wherefore be you not unwise, but **understanding what the will of the Lord is**. (Ephesians 5:17)

The Greek word here translated "unwise" means "foolish". So Paul is telling us that **if we don't understand God's will, then we are foolish**. In other words, it is extremely important that we strive, and strive earnestly, to understand the will of God, lest we be found to be foolish.

Now after learning about the Sabbath and Holy Days and tithing and clean and unclean meats, **how many of us are striving** on a regular basis to understand the will of God **more fully**? It is not possible to understand the will of God without seriously striving for such understanding. And if we don't strive seriously for such understanding, then according to Paul we are being foolish. But that is not a good situation to be in, is it?

It's not a matter of just having a good attitude and saying to the minister: just tell me what God wants me to do, and I'll do it. **That is the lazy man's way of trying to live a Christian life**. And God's Church has always attracted many people who fall into this category.

It is really a matter of: are we personally going to put out effort to try to understand the will of God, or **do we just want the minister to do that for us**, so we can then simply do what the minister tells us to do? I will tell you that if we do not put out serious effort, then **our understanding of the will of God will always remain shallow**. And sadly, that is the way it is right now for many people who attend the various Church of God groups, that their understanding of the will of God is shallow.

For example, let's suppose you are a dairy farmer and then you come into God's Church. So you say to your minister: "just tell me what I as a dairy farmer must do, and I'll do it". That was how people under the "government of God" teaching in years gone by used to approach this matter, get the minister to tell them what they must do, and then have the minister make their decisions for them.

The correct way for the minister to handle this is to say to this new member:

"Look, I am not the dairy farmer; **you** are the dairy farmer. **So you figure out what you need to do** in order to keep God's Sabbath days. As long as **you yourself** haven't put any thoughts into how to resolve your situation in a way that God will approve of, **I see no reason why I should try to resolve your situation for you**. Would you try to keep God's Sabbath days if you didn't have a minister to ask ... or would you not even try to keep the Sabbath? Now, once you yourself have seriously thought about your situation and started to implement some of the conclusions you have reached, **then** I'd be happy to discuss your situation with you, and to give you my comments on the decisions you have reached or are contemplating. But I am not going to propose any solutions to you before you have put your mind to this matter. **That's your responsibility**. That is the way for you to use your own mind, and to build some godly character. You have to form **your own personal convictions** regarding how you should keep God's Sabbath days in your particular circumstances."

Hopefully none of us are going to be satisfied with a shallow understanding of God's will. So we need to put out serious effort to understand the will of God in every area of our own personal lives.

We need to understand that God wants to see every single one of us put out effort to understand His will. "Doing what is right" is important; but "doing what is right" for the right reasons, **based on personal understanding**, is more important. Faithful obedience without any real understanding only has very limited value before God. With all actions of obedience it is always the involvement of the mind that is important.

Now there is a big difference between "**seeking God's will**" and "**seeking God's permission**". To illustrate this difference, let's consider our children.

THE EXAMPLE OF CHILDREN

Let's say our young children are friendly, cheerful, outgoing and willingly obedient to us. As we like to say, they are good kids. And then our 8-year old comes and says: "dad, **can I have ...?**" Or our 12-year old says "mom, **can I go out with my friends to ...?**" Now the things they may want to have or do can be quite acceptable, and so we acquiesce to their requests.

But what is happening here?

Are our children seeking our will in these situations? No, of course not. They are really seeking **our permission** (or our acceptance) **to have their own will fulfilled**, right? Can we see that? And we may be very willing to fulfill their requests in these situations. But the point is: these situations reveal a mind-set that is focused on self.

Now **in our approach to God we are sometimes just like our children** in these sort of situations. **We are looking for God's permission** or God's approval to have something or to do something. And in many cases that may also involve perfectly acceptable things. But it is a focus on what we want to do or have.

However, having the attitude of "**Your will be done**" **is a totally different perspective**. In that perspective our own will or wishes or desires don't feature at all. If we have a "Your will be done" approach, then this requires us to **actively seek what God's will is on every issue** that we have to deal with, both practically and intellectually. With this approach it is only after we have established what we believe is God's will on some specific issue, that **then we make our decisions**.

There is a difference between making a decision based on what we believe God will allow or accept, and making a decision based on what we believe God would like us to do. This is also something the Apostle John was well aware of. And so John wrote:

And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do **those things that are pleasing in His sight**. (1 John 3:22)

To receive answers to our prayers, we must first of all obey all of God's commandments. But **that's just the beginning**. The expression "do those things that are pleasing in His sight" is just another way of saying "we are seeking to do the will of God".

Seeking to do God's will requires a certain mind-set. And there have been **very many people** attending the churches of God over the past half century who **have never had that mind-set!** Their mind-set went no further than "keeping His commandments".

I am here to tell you that such a mind-set is not enough!

The right way of approaching a relationship with God must be based on a desire to seek to understand God's will on everything, and to then act on that understanding. This way of using our minds is not something that can be commanded and then we have it. It is also not something a minister can do for us. It is not a mind-set that can be imparted to us by anyone else.

We either have something in our minds that leads us to always desire to understand God's mind and God's will more fully, or we don't have it. We ourselves have to generate that kind of desire. And no amount of preaching can give it to us.

This is not something God is about to force on us. If we don't develop on our own **this desire** to always seek to understand the will of God, and to then act on such understanding, then we are not going to fit into the future that God has planned out for His Family. God is looking for people who voluntarily, of their own accord, desire to think the same way God thinks. If that way of thinking has to be forced on people, then it is of no value before God.

"Desires" cannot be forced on us, because they are an expression of our independent ways of thinking. Our personal desires reveal our innermost thinking to God. Our desires are always under our own control. And we are always responsible for our own desires.

Now here is an exercise in trying to understand the will of God (i.e. God's way of thinking). Consider the fearful people in Revelation 21:8 who will be thrown into the lake of fire.

But **the fearful**, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part **in the lake which burns with fire** and brimstone: which is the second death. (Revelation 21:8)

People who are "fearful" haven't necessarily broken any of God's laws. In fact, they may even be faithful law-keepers. They may even abhor sorcerers and whoremongers and idolaters and liars. But God will throw them into the lake of fire together with sorcerers and idolaters. That's what Revelation 21:8 tells us.

Now most people who attend the churches of God can read Revelation 21:8 and just move right on. But **if you have a mind which seeks the will of God**, then **this Scripture should stop you in your tracks!** Why? Because it is puzzling. Okay, we can understand idolaters and sorcerers being thrown into the lake of fire. But the fearful ...? Why, **usually we feel sorry for fearful people**, and we try to encourage them, right?

A person who is trying to understand the will of God, will ask: **why** does God throw fearful people, who may be keeping all of His laws meticulously, into the lake of fire? What is God's thinking here? God has told us what He will do to the fearful, and we need to try to understand **why** God will do that. That's what seeking God's will is all about. Anyway, I've explained this one in the past, and you can figure it out for yourself (a good exercise).

Now there are literally **hundreds of Scriptures like this**, where something that God will do doesn't fit in with our personal thinking. A mind that is seeking the will of God will stop at those Scriptures and ask some questions. The intent is to understand **why** God did something or will do something, that is different from what we, with our present level of understanding, would be inclined to do.

We are already familiar with Isaiah 55:8-9.

For **My thoughts are not your thoughts**, neither *are* your ways My ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts. (Isaiah 55:8-9)

Seeking to understand the will of God is **the process of seeking to understand God's thoughts**. Now while our thoughts and ways are not God's thoughts and ways, if we have a desire to understand God's will, then that effort will lead to our thoughts and ways **at least drawing closer to God's thoughts and**

ways. And the goal is to get to the point where eventually our thoughts will be on the same wavelength as God's thoughts, and that must be the case for every issue that affects our lives.

This matter is not about Sabbath-keeping or about observing the annual Feasts and Holy Days and tithing, etc. **This is about the way we use our minds.** Do our minds desire and seek contact with God's mind (as revealed by God's will) or not? Do we have a desire to "become one" with God? Or do we just say: **tell me what I have to do** to get into God's Kingdom, and I will do it?

There is a huge difference between those two ways of thinking. And so when we approach God in prayer, we should ask ourselves: am I seeking God's will, or am I only seeking God's approval for my will?

A MAJOR PRINCIPLE

Consider again how we deal with our children.

When we can see that our four-year old wants to do something that is not right or not appropriate, we commonly step in and stop our son or daughter from doing that. They take something from another child that is not theirs, and we make them give it back. Our child did something wrong to another child, and we make our child apologize to the other child. We see our child playing with matches, and we take the matches away from him. Our toddler walks towards a swimming pool, and we firmly grab the toddler and take him away before he could perhaps fall into the pool. Our little child runs out towards a busy street, and we stop our child before he can get hurt.

In other words, **we take preemptive actions** to protect our children. We strive to intervene before our children are likely to get hurt. And we make them stop conduct and behavior that is unacceptable. That is a part of teaching our children and nurturing them towards maturity and adulthood.

Put another way, we have to **micro-manage** the lives of our very young children, taking care of every aspect of their lives. We tell our little children what they can do, and what they cannot do. And when they do or attempt to do things they should not be doing, then we intervene. And that is very appropriate when we are raising very young children.

Now this approach towards the way we appropriately raise our very young children is very commonly the approach many of the world's religions enjoin on their followers. **Many of the religions in this world seek to micro-manage the lives of their followers.**

They may tell their followers when to pray and how often to pray. They may even tell their followers the actual words they have to pray, repeating memorized prayers by rote. They may tell their people what clothes to wear, and how to groom themselves, and what hairstyles they must have. They may attach a significance or symbolism to facial hair for men. They may stipulate what leisure activities are acceptable, and what activities are forbidden. They may have rules about what civic activities their members may participate in (e.g. voting, accepting public offices, etc.), and what civic activities are not permitted for their members.

In short: these religions may **exert a large influence over the day-to-day lives of their members.** And their members don't really have much personal choice over the clothes they will wear, or the way they will groom themselves, or the leisure activities they may engage in.

But that is not the way God deals with us human beings!

The principle I have in mind here in this section is that, unlike many false religions, **God does not micro-manage the lives of His people.**

God gives us great scope to choose the things we may want to do. And while God certainly sets parameters for His people, those parameters are so wide that we have far more scope for how to structure and organize our lives than we could possibly explore in one single lifetime. Those "parameters" are the laws of God, and within the laws of God we have a very wide range of choices available to us, for us to be unique individuals.

Now as far as seeking the will of God is concerned:

Instead of a church or a religion telling us: this is how you must dress and groom yourself, we should ask ourselves: **how would God like me to dress and groom myself?** Now in this process we can seek God's will, or we can seek God's approval for our own will. And there is a difference.

Today many people dress and groom themselves because some famous entertainer dresses a certain way, or people dress and groom themselves to receive the approval of their peers, because that is the way their peers dress and groom themselves. For example, when people see that their peers have tattoos, then they also want to have tattoos, or they may feel pressured to also get some tattoos.

In many cases our modern world promotes ugliness, with the intention of shocking people. That shouldn't be a surprise since **Satan has become the ugliest being in existence.** So it should be no surprise when Satan then promotes ugliness.

By contrast, seeking God's will in this area of life will ask the question: how would God like me to dress and to groom myself? And then God's answer is: you can dress and groom yourself **however you personally like**, as long as you keep **a few basic principles** in mind. That is, principles like: dress and groom yourself in a way that is pleasant, and that makes you look attractive, and that is modest (i.e. it doesn't emphasize sexuality), and that is not an expression of rebellion or vanity, and that is not intended to make "some kind of statement". You also ask yourself questions like: **would God really like** me to put some tattoo on my body? And **would God like** me to put make-up on my body? What is my real innermost motivation for wanting tattoos or make-up?

To use tattoos as an example: can we recognize the difference in approaches between "**would God like** me to have a tattoo?" versus "**will God allow** me to have a tattoo?" For "allow" the answer is yes, because God will not stop you. But for "like" the answer is going to be different.

That reminds me of Balaam, who repeatedly asked God "can I please go with these men who want to give me a very large amount of money?" Balaam didn't want to know God's will. No, Balaam only wanted God's permission. We are all surely familiar with this story (see Numbers chapters 22-24). And Balaam was shortly after that account killed by the Israelites (see Joshua 13:22). So in the end: God first allowed Balaam to go to Balak, and then God had Balaam killed by the Israelites.

Seeking the will of God should extend into all areas of our lives. For example, God has told us what animals are suitable for us to eat, and what animals are "unclean" (i.e. Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14). So in seeking the will of God regarding what we should eat, there are again two approaches we could take.

On the one hand we can say:

I can eat anything I want to eat, except for the animals that are forbidden by God's commands in Leviticus 11 and in Deuteronomy 14. That means I can automatically eat and drink everything that does

not contain any meat products. In addition, I can also eat all the clean animals that God has mentioned in those two chapters.

This approach represents looking for God's permission. But this approach does not really look for God's will.

On the other hand we can say:

I know that God "allows" me to eat and drink everything except for the unclean animals identified in those two chapters. But I want to know if God would like me to eat everything, without considering any further restrictions or principles. I want to know **if God would like me to eat and drink "clean foods"** (i.e. free of pork or sea foods, etc.) **that** we today know **cause major health problems**, because of what man has done to those foods, even as the consumption of unclean foods will cause health problems.

Without making a fetish out of what to eat and drink, because, after all, "the Kingdom of God is not meat and drink" (Romans 14:17), **I would nevertheless like to know what God would like me to do here.** Should I eat and drink things which in the long run will damage my health, simply because they are technically "not unclean"? Or should I avoid them in the same way I avoid eating pork?

This approach represents seeking the will of God.

Let's continue.

ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF SEEKING GOD'S WILL

If we are looking to understand the will of God, then we need to have a different approach to reading the Bible. We need to **question things** that don't seem right to us. Here is another example we can examine.

In Ecclesiastes 1:2 Solomon wrote:

Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities; **all is vanity.** (Ecclesiastes 1:2)

A mind seeking to understand God's will is once again going to stop in its tracks after reading this Scripture. We then ask ourselves: **would God ever tell His creation "all is vanity"?** Why would God say that? Does God really believe that "all is vanity"? If that is true, why would God even bother to create things, if they are all going to be just vanity?

The statement "all is vanity" is an expression of **futility**. Why even bother to do anything, if it is going to be vanity anyway? Is God the author of vanity, since God is the Creator of all?

A mind trying to understand the will of God will say: I don't believe that the statement "all is vanity" is really true! "All" includes God's plan of salvation for us human beings; and there simply is no way that God would refer to His plan of salvation as "vanity". So there must be something I am missing. But it is clear that this statement "all is vanity" cannot possibly be true.

For that matter, there are actually **many statements** in the Book of Ecclesiastes that are simply not true! They can't possibly be correct because they contradict statements in other parts of the Bible, statements made by Jesus Christ Himself, and by the Apostle Paul and by others. So how are we to understand all these statements?

(These statements are all discussed in my old article from 1996 entitled "Understanding the Book of Ecclesiastes".)

If we are seeking to understand the will of God, then examining Scriptures like these gives us the opportunity to refine our understanding of the mind of God.

CONSIDER CAIN AND ABEL

We all know the story of the two brothers Cain and Abel. When Cain got into a bad attitude, then God warned Cain about his attitude. And after that warning Cain then killed Abel (Genesis 4:8).

Now God is all-powerful, and God could very easily have intervened and stopped Cain from killing Abel. Furthermore, God could also have resurrected Abel. But God didn't do either of those two things! Instead, God allowed Cain to kill the only human being on earth at that time (well over 100 years after Adam's creation) who was faithfully submitting his life to God. And let's also recognize that the killing of Abel clearly represented **a huge setback for God's plan** in leading human beings to salvation. And the all-powerful God just allowed that setback to happen.

Now think about this. **If you and I had been there in God's place**, we would most likely have intervened and stopped Cain from killing Abel, right? I mean, **that's what we do for our children** when we can see a major disaster shaping up ... we step in and prevent that disaster. But God didn't do that.

We've all heard worldly atheistic people argue: if there really is a God, then He wouldn't allow all these evils in this world to happen. He would have much more concern for us, and stop all these evils. That's what we do when our own children are involved. So if we are supposedly God's children, then why doesn't God do that for us?

We've all heard arguments like that, right?

This brings us back to the difference between "what is God's will" and "what will God allow". Was it God's will that Cain would kill Abel? Of course not. The next question is not "did God allow Cain to kill Abel?", because God very obviously did allow it. The real question here is: **Why** did God allow Cain to kill Abel? It's not as if God could not have stopped Cain, right?

Why does God allow us human beings to sin? Why does God allow evil to exist? Why does God allow innocent people to suffer at the hands of evil people?

All these questions revolve around understanding the will of God.

God the Father and Jesus Christ devised a plan to create a Family of God Beings. And **the will of God is an expression of God's resolve to achieve the goal of that plan**. The will of God is an expression of God's determination to build the Family of God just as originally intended. The methods for achieving that goal may need to change or be adapted to changed conditions; but the goal always remains the same.

Now creating God Beings involves creating beings that will have totally free and independent minds. Once God has resurrected us as "sons of God", then we will have minds that will be totally independent. God the Father must then have **the absolute assurance** that we will always use our free independent minds in the same way that God uses His mind, guided by the same intentions, wishes and desires as those that guide God's own mind.

But such absolute assurance cannot be achieved in a very carefully controlled environment that is micro-managed!

In other words, it is simply not possible to achieve God's goal in an environment that is micro-managed and controlled down to the lowest level. **There must be room to go contrary to God's wishes** during the training and testing program, if that program is to produce the results God desires. Why? It is the express purpose of the training and testing program **to bring all potential problems out into the open**. In other words, the training program is there to weed out all problems. But to weed them out, they must first be brought out into the open.

ENFORCED OBEDIENCE

We need to understand that enforced obedience would lead to many **potential problems staying hidden** under the surface. The millennium will provide an example of "enforced obedience". During the millennium, apart from one single rebellion initiated in the land of Magog (see Ezekiel 38-39), all problems will indeed stay under the surface until the end of the 1,000 years, when Satan is then released for "a little season" (Revelation 20:3). The reason why Satan is released for that "little season" at the end of the millennium is to help bring all those hidden problems out into the open. Once Satan has facilitated that particular process, he is bound once again, and that will be for good.

Let's consider a hypothetical situation to illustrate this.

Let's say we have **a city with one million people**. In that city one man really hates his boss and decides to kill him. So he waits for his boss one evening, and in the parking lot he pulls out a gun and presses the trigger. In that split-second God intervenes and the bullet drops harmlessly to the ground. The boss is unhurt and the other man is punished by God with some sickness. In time everyone in the city hears this story.

The same thing happens with ten other would-be murderers, that God always intervenes and then severely punishes the bad guys. Meanwhile a dozen other men in a dozen separate incidents try to rob innocent people. In each case God intervenes and also severely punishes those would-be robbers. All these stories also get around. Also, in a variety of different situations ten different men try to rape some poor defenseless women. In each case God also intervenes and severely punishes those would-be rapists. Those stories also become well-known in the city.

So now all the other would-be criminals in the city realize that if they attempt to commit a crime, then they cannot escape detection, plus an immediate severe penalty from God. So **they have been intimidated into not committing any criminal acts**. So for this city the crime problems have now been solved, right? No, wrong!

The crime problems have only been "solved" for the time being; but they have not been permanently solved.

The fact that no further crimes are attempted is only due to fear, the fear of the inevitability of getting caught and then being punished. But **the underlying attitudes** of all other would-be criminals **have not changed**. So all potential would-be criminals in that city still have carnal hostile attitudes towards God's standards, but they just keep those attitudes hidden.

However, in our hypothetical city all **these potential criminals** with hidden hostile attitudes would now be looked upon as "**model citizens**", because they openly speak out against all criminal activity. But

they have never proved that they are model citizens in their hearts; they have never proved that their minds don't harbor any "enmity against God".

God needs to know what we would do **if we are not intimidated by the fear of a penalty** for what we might consider doing. And "delayed penalties" are looked upon as "no penalties" by the carnal mind. Solomon understood this point quite clearly. And he wrote:

Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, **therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.** (Ecclesiastes 8:11)

If a penalty is not imposed quickly, then the carnal mind ignores that potential penalty. And **that is exactly what God needs** in order to test human minds ... an attitude on the part of evil minds to not being intimidated by delayed penalties. In that way evil minds will reveal themselves openly ... i.e. when they don't fear any immediate penalties.

And so when human beings sin, then the consequences of those sins must play themselves out. Otherwise hidden animosity towards the will of God would never come out into the open. It is absolutely imperative for this present age, in which age God is only looking for 144,000 people, that the hidden attitudes of human minds are brought out into the open. For the people who are called by God, God must know how their minds work.

We need to grasp that the consequences of all sinful actions must be allowed to take effect. So if some evil person decides to murder someone, then in this present age the consequences of that evil person's actions must come about. The innocent victim must be allowed to die, generally speaking. And so God allowed Abel to be killed by his brother.

Consider another example of seeking the will of God.

WHERE DOES GOD WANT YOU TO KEEP THE FEAST?

Every year soon after the Passover most people in the various churches of God start to make plans for the Feast of Tabernacles. And for many people that process goes something like this:

Look, last year we kept the Feast here in our state. Here is how much second tithe we now have. And I would really like to travel somewhere. We've been to the Caribbean and also to Europe in previous years. This year I'd really like to go to South America. I can't speak Spanish, but I hear that UCG (or Living or COGWA, etc.) will have simultaneous translations into English, and that's good enough. So how about us going to South America for the Feast this year?

Or, I see that this other CoG is having a cruise for the Feast, or they are going to do a tour of Israel for the Feast, and it would be really cool to keep the Feast with that group. I mean, it doesn't get better than doing a tour of the Holy Land for the Feast, right?

What are these people doing?

They are all looking for exciting opportunities for keeping the Feast. And since many of the Church of God organizations encourage such thinking, they are not really asking for approval for their own will. No, they are already one step beyond that point. **They are assuming approval for their own will!**

Of all the people in all the various CoG organizations who will be observing the Feast of Tabernacles,

perhaps 1 in 100 will ask the question: Where would GOD want us to keep the Feast this year?

That question would simply not even occur to the vast majority of people. That's because **they are not in the habit of really seeking God's will**. Typically most people only seek approval for their own will, as to where they should keep the Feast.

Such people seem to think that God says: "I don't really care where you will keep My Feast. As long as you keep it somewhere with some group, that's okay with Me." Is that how we think God looks at this? Does God have any opinions as to where and with whom (for those people who first choose a desirable location, and then look for which CoG group has a Feast site in that location) we should observe His Feasts?

[Comment: These points regarding the Feast don't apply to those people who attend a Church of God which offers only one single Feast site for their members. This really applies to people who have the choice of two or more Feast sites, in addition to perhaps considering a site by an organization with whom they normally don't attend, but which organization happens to have a Feast site in an area they really would like to visit. This applies to the multiple thousands of people who desire to "transfer" to another Feast site year after year, because they can afford it. **None of them ever ask the question:** Lord, how do You feel about people wanting to "transfer" to other feast sites? Is that practice acceptable to You? What is Your will on this question?]

Now am I trying to change people here? Not really. I am simply trying to illustrate **how commonly people** in the many different Church of God organizations **don't really seek God's will**. Seeking God's will in this area would very quickly bring the principle that God is not divided into the discussion. And as already indicated, with this subject many people also commonly mistake **their own desire for God's approval** for their own will, with supposedly seeking God's will. But these two things are not the same thing at all.

Now let's look at another question.

DOES GOD SELECT HUMAN LEADERS?

When people are elected into offices of leadership (e.g. presidents, prime ministers, chancellors, etc.), then many people who attend the various churches of God often say: **it was God's will** that this man or woman would become the national leader. Or they may even say that God put that man or woman into that leadership position.

But that's not how it works in most cases!

Let's look at a Scripture in Psalm 75.

For promotion *comes* neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God *is* the judge: **He puts down one, and sets up another.** (Psalm 75:6-7)

In the previous verses in this psalm it speaks to "**the foolish**" and to "**the wicked**" (verses 4-5). The point Asaph, the writer of this psalm, is making is that God is going to punish "**all of the wicked of the earth**" (verse 8). The verses immediately before and immediately after the "putting down & setting up" statements deal with God's interactions with **wicked people**. So **the context** is one of discussing how God deals with wicked people. The last verse of this psalm is still talking about cutting off the power of the wicked (i.e. verse 10).

People commonly like to take verses 6-7 **totally out of this context** of addressing wicked people, and instead give these verses an all-encompassing universal application, as if they somehow are to apply all the time, and in all circumstances. But that is simply not correct.

There are and there have been many, many rulers who were not set up by God at all!

Recall again Mr. Armstrong's correct statement quoted earlier:

"In effect, God said, **Go form your own governments**, your own religions, produce your own knowledge and systems of education for 6,000 years."

God did **not** say: "go do your own thing for 6,000 years, **but all along I will be the One who will choose your leaders**". These statements that God will select the leaders, but that God is also cutting man off for 6,000 years are not compatible. If God cuts man off for 6,000 years, then God is not selecting man's leaders for those 6,000 years. And if God is selecting all the leaders for man throughout those 6,000 years, then man hasn't really been cut off from God.

It is either-or. We can't have it both ways.

Now coming down to the kings of Israel: God selected Saul, and then God selected David, and then God also selected Solomon. But after Solomon most of the kings (both good and bad) of both Israel and Judah were not selected by God! Some simply succeeded their fathers. That is not the same as "being set up by God". Others started an insurrection, getting rid of the current king, and then just taking over the kingship.

A few more kings were specifically appointed by God (i.e. Jeroboam and Jehu). But most were not really selected by God. For example, God did not select Ahab to be king over Israel ... Ahab simply took over after his own father's death. But he had not been selected by God.

Ahab was against God all his life. As the Scripture says:

But there was none like unto Ahab, who did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up. (1 Kings 21:25)

God never sets up evil people!

It's not as if God ever says: "let's see, now I need some really sick, depraved and perverse individual to be the leader over here or over there. So now who can I set up to do that job? Oh, here I've got a man named Ahab. He's just what I have been looking for. So I will set him up as king over ten of the tribes of Israel."

God **never** at any time wants perverse, depraved and thoroughly wicked people in positions of leadership! And **God is not about to install such individuals into leadership positions**. God never selects wicked human beings to do a job for God. That's simply not how God does things! It would not be just for God to appoint someone to do a wicked job, because that individual wouldn't stand a chance to resist doing wrong ... not if God specifically selected him to fill a role that requires some anti-God conduct.

So here is a very basic point to understand:

God selects leaders to do good jobs. Not all those who are selected to do a good job end up being faithful to God. And when that happens (i.e. some end up not being faithful), then God will

in due time replace them. And when someone is needed to do a bad job, then God lets Satan select the individuals.

Satan selects leaders to do bad jobs. And in this case those so selected by Satan always come through with the goods; they always willingly fulfill the job to which Satan has appointed them. So Satan usually doesn't need to look for replacements. He picks the most perverse and depraved individuals to start with, thereby guaranteeing success.

Satan will never install a good leader into a leadership position. And God will never install a wicked leader into a leadership position. Now while all wicked leaders are without exception installed in their positions of power by Satan, **not all good leaders are necessarily installed by God**. And here I mean "good" in a worldly sense, and not necessarily "good" in the eyes of God.

There are people in the world who have integrity. Yes, they are still carnal and unrepentant (think of someone like Jehu, who actually happened to have been given rulership by God), but they have a certain worldly commitment to doing what is right. This means that Satan would never choose them, because Satan can't control them as fully as Satan can control a thoroughly perverse person.

So when there are leaders who are, relatively speaking, good leaders, they may have been appointed by God, or they may be the result of "time and chance". In the 6,000 years of humanity being cut off from God, there have been a lot of "time and chance" situations, where unrepentant worldly leaders have done a better job for their nations or communities than any Satan-appointed leaders would have done.

Let's look at **two examples**, one where God appointed a leader to do a good job, and the other example where Satan sent his people to achieve a bad result.

THE EXAMPLE OF JEHU

God hates all false religions! It doesn't matter what they may call themselves. If they are a false religion, then God hates them. See the first two commandments in Exodus 20:1-6, and note that God is "a jealous God". So in Old Testament times God hated baal worship.

Now King Ahab had basically made baal worship the national religion of Israel. Therefore God then decided that a general in the army, Jehu by name, would become king (see 1 Kings 19:16). God's specific commission for Jehu was to totally destroy both Ahab's family and baal worship out of Israel.

In due time the Prophet Elisha instructed a young man to go and anoint Jehu as king (see 2 Kings 9:1-3). Jehu was then told very specifically:

And ... he poured the oil on his head, and said unto him, Thus says the LORD God of Israel, I have anointed you king over the people of the LORD, *even* over Israel. And **you shall smite the house of Ahab** your master, **that I may avenge the blood of My servants** the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the LORD ... (2 Kings 9:6-8)

This instruction Jehu fulfilled with very great zeal. You can read the account yourself. And as Jehu then said to the man named Jehonadab:

And he said, **Come with me, and see my zeal for the LORD**. So they made him ride in his chariot. (2 Kings 10:16)

And Jehu certainly was zealous! He set into motion a plan to flush out every single baal worshiper in his kingdom. As it says in verse 28:

Thus Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel. (2 Kings 10:28)

And therefore God rewarded Jehu for this zeal. God said:

And the LORD said unto Jehu, **Because you have done well in executing *that which is right in My eyes*, and have done unto the house of Ahab according to all that was in My heart, your children of the fourth *generation* shall sit on the throne of Israel.** (2 Kings 10:30)

With all this zeal you might think that Jehu was a committed servant of God, what with his zeal in destroying Baal worship. But that wasn't really the case. Jehu was in fact quite content to let **other forms of paganism** exist freely in his kingdom. Notice:

Howbeit *from* the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, Jehu departed not from after them, *to wit*, the golden calves that were in Bethel, and that were in Dan. (2 Kings 10:29)

But **Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the LORD God of Israel** with all his heart: for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, which made Israel to sin. (2 Kings 10:31)

Jehu was appointed by God to do a good job, i.e. to destroy baal worship out of Israel, and to destroy the entire family of Ahab. But Jehu didn't really keep God's laws in his own life, and he accepted paganism in the form of the golden calves. But destroying baal worship out of Israel was certainly **a good thing for the nation of Israel**. God had "set up" Jehu to cut off the power of the wicked (that takes us back to Psalm 75:7,10).

Now throughout history there may well have been many leaders who were not appointed by God, and who never submitted their own lives to God, but who did "good things" for their countries or their nations. The important point here is that none of those leaders who did good things for their nations were appointed by Satan, because the good things they did for their nations worked against Satan's intentions and desires. Satan never appoints people who do good things.

God sets up people to do good things. But some leaders who were not specifically set up by God, because God is not working with their particular nation, may also sometimes do good things.

THE EXAMPLE OF AHAB

Now let's look at an example where God wanted the bad guy (Ahab) to make a bad decision that would lead to his own death. Here is the situation:

God had decided that Ahab should die in battle. In this case, instead of commissioning someone to go and kill Ahab, God decided to use a foreign army to kill Ahab. This time someone needed to persuade Ahab to voluntarily go to the battle in which he would die. Ahab himself needed to make a very bad decision. Now God was not going to send one of His servants to Ahab with the message: Ahab, I want you to make a bad decision, so that you can then be killed in battle.

So this was a job for Satan to carry out. And even then God still gave Ahab fair warning through God's servant Micaiah. Here is what Micaiah told Ahab:

And he said, Hear you therefore the word of the LORD: I saw **the LORD sitting on His throne**, and all the host of heaven standing by Him on His right hand and on His left. And the LORD said, **Who shall persuade Ahab**, that he may go up and fall at Ramothgilead? ... And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will persuade him. And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, **I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets**. And He said, you shall persuade *him*, and prevail also: go forth, and do so. Now therefore, behold, **the LORD has put a lying spirit** in the mouth of all these your prophets, and the LORD has spoken evil concerning you. (1 Kings 22:19-23)

God will never send someone to tell a lie. But Satan, the father (i.e. originator) of all lies, has no problem with sending lies to people. Telling lies is an identifying sign of Satan's servants. When they spread lies, they are only doing their master's bidding.

This whole account was presented to Micaiah, and through him to us, to show us how God sometimes makes decisions. Deceiving Ahab by telling him lies was not an option for God Himself to implement. So God gave that job to Satan. And Satan (the lying spirit) then promptly sent a host of demons to influence the priests of baal, Satan's human servants, to convince Ahab with their lies.

Presenting lies to people, to push them into making bad decisions, is one of Satan's main ways to lead humanity astray. Lying is always Satan's first choice of weapons in his warfare against God's people.

[Comment: Think about this **the next time someone gives you really bad advice**. That advice will be coming to you from Satan and not from God.]

In this instance "about 400 men" (1 Kings 22:6) all presented the same lies to Ahab ... go to war and God will give you victory. They all said the same thing to Ahab ... telling him that he would win.

Now notice how Micaiah presented this information to Ahab. It is clear that **Satan** (the lying spirit in that vision) **volunteered** to do the job. God didn't force Satan to do the job; no, Satan was eager to do the job ... lying is Satan's favorite activity. He needs no coaxing to spread lies.

While it says here that "the LORD **has put** a lying spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets", what actually happened was that **God gave Satan permission** to spread these lies before Ahab. Satan volunteered, and Jesus Christ, "the LORD" in this passage, told Satan, go and do what you have volunteered to do, and you will be successful.

Now the purpose of this unique vision was to show us **the decision-making processes** that are involved in God's dealings with mankind. When good things need to be done, then God sends His angels to do those jobs. And when bad things need to be done, then Satan volunteers the services of his demons, and God sets very narrow and precise parameters within which Satan's demons can carry out those instructions.

We also see here that Satan's tools for influencing human behavior are, with very few exceptions, restricted to influencing human minds to engage in bad conduct. And lies are Satan's main way of influencing human minds. In other words, Satan can send thoughts, moods and attitudes to human minds, but he cannot force human beings to actually act on those thoughts, moods and attitudes.

Anyway, Ahab believed all the lying prophets, went to battle, and then he died.

OUR ELECTED LEADERS TODAY

So now **what about the leaders we in our modern world elect** as presidents or prime ministers? Are they installed by God or by Satan?

That depends!

As Jesus Christ told us, by their fruits we will know them (see Matthew 7:20).

If those leaders cause damage for their countries, if they **make things bad** for their people, then in almost all cases **those are the leaders that Satan selected!** In very rare exceptions those may have been people who were originally selected by God (e.g. King Saul and King Solomon), but who subsequently turned bad, by rejecting God's rule over their lives. However, the more perverse and depraved those individuals are to start with (e.g. like an Adolf Hitler, etc.), the more obvious it should be that Satan is the one who gave them their positions of power.

God never sets up perverse liars.

On the other hand, if those leaders do things that **make things better** for their people, then amongst the people of Israel (the nations with whom God has worked primarily since the days of Moses) it may quite possibly be that **God set up those leaders**, while amongst all non-Israelite nations it is more likely that such good, but unrepentant leaders are the result of time and chance, rather than specific selection by God. However, there may well be exceptions in both directions with these two options.

What this means is that **it is easier to identify the leaders that Satan raises up**, because of their perverse actions and conduct, than it is to identify the leaders that God raises up, because leaders that do a good job for their nations could be leaders that God selected; but they could also be the result of time and chance, but without having been explicitly commissioned by God.

Spreading lies on a massive scale is a clear identifying tag for someone raised up by Satan. That was true in the days of Ahab, and it is still true today.

I mention this because we here in the United States have been subjected to **an absolutely massive and prolonged campaign of lies** and more lies and deceit and hypocrisy!

Never in our history as a nation have we been exposed to such a staggering volume of lies in the public sector. **The lies keep coming at us like a raging torrent.** They have been sustained for four full years now, and they never let up, though they did also already exist more than four years ago.

To be quite clear:

It is not a matter of being for or against our current president. For us the point really is that we need to recognize what is actually happening to our country. Satan has set loose on us thousands of his demons, to be "lying spirits" in the mouths of our, not "prophets", but so-called "public servants". Never before has the American public been exposed to the intensity with which the endless stream of lies and deception is being thrust upon us, by the news outlets, on radio and TV, by journalists, by social media, by politicians and by the militant wings of one political party. They do indeed present to us "fake news", and they hate being exposed for what they are.

This unprecedented intensity with which these lies are thrust upon us makes me wonder about the reason for this intensity. **My thinking here may be completely wrong**, but I am wondering whether this intensity of lies is not due to **Satan**, the father of all lies, realizing that he **is running out of time**? I am wondering whether this concerted and well-coordinated presentation of lies on this massive scale is not

the sign for Revelation 12:12?

Therefore rejoice, *you* heavens, and you that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having **great wrath**, because **he knows that he has but a short time**. (Revelation 12:12)

The coordination between the news networks and the printed media (i.e. journalists) and social media and the political leaders of one party in all endlessly repeating the same lies is unprecedented. And many of those who claim to have won the recent election, instead of being joyful are angry, and they speak with "great wrath" regarding all those who disagree with their views. They don't tolerate contrary views and opinions.

They want to ruin the lives of those who supported the current president. They also wanted to ruin the lives of the people who have been added to the Supreme Court of the United States during the past four years. Many want to destroy law and order. They want to riot and loot the businesses of law-abiding citizens. They have "great wrath". They punish those who dare to voice opinions contrary to their views, by censoring them on social media, and by threatening them with the loss of their jobs. They endlessly throw out false accusations against those who dare to disagree with them.

And when in response to their slogan of "Black Lives Matter" some few leaders attempted to turn this into a more sound-minded slogan of "**All Lives Matter**", those few leaders were shouted down and vilified and threatened. **Great wrath** was directed at anyone who attempted to say "All Lives Matter".

These people want to destroy this country by throwing down monuments, by getting rid of police forces, by erasing a correct knowledge of our history, by taxing people to the hilt, by destroying our free market economy with shut-downs. They are mostly angry, resentful and bitter. They want everything for free. They make ever greater demands, yet they are never satisfied. And many of their followers look and behave like mindless pawns, chanting utterly perverse slogans, and delighting in every opportunity to riot and to loot.

They never let a good crisis go to waste. And they are in a hurry to get what they want. And the evidence is clear that they have committed **massive election fraud** for the explicit purpose of seizing power against the will of the majority of our legal citizens. They cover up the crimes committed by their own leaders, and they fabricate crimes for those who oppose them. And **they are always angry!**

It is the United States of America that these angry people want to destroy. **They want to destroy this country** as it has existed for more than two centuries.

When we consider all these multiple aspects, putting the whole picture together, then it seems to me that **"the father of all lies" is foaming out his rage on the United States**. What is taking place is absolutely unprecedented in our history. And it is all **built on a foundation of lies**. To me that looks very much like the work of "lying spirits".

The intensity of these attacks on our freedoms to me indicates that the one controlling all these venomous activities knows that **"he has but a short time"**. The most visible components of the whole picture are: lying and hypocrisy and **intense anger** at those who oppose their intentions.

Now I may be completely wrong in my assessment here. But to me this looks very much like Satan venting his great wrath on humanity. And that would be **because his time is seriously running out**. To me this certainly looks like a fulfillment of Revelation 12:12.

Now I don't mean to imply that these lying spirits are not also present in other countries around the world. They are present in other countries. Many other countries also face this lying wrath. But surely we here in the United States are facing **the brunt of this vicious attack on truth and integrity**.

So ...

I may be wrong in my assessment that we have now entered the time of Satan's "great wrath", because he only has a short time left before he will be locked up for 1,000 years (see Revelation 20:1-2). But at least we should carefully watch how world events unfold in the months and years ahead of us.

At this time I don't think that there are any specific actions we need to take, other than making sure that we are seeking God's will, and that we are now able to recognize campaigns of massive blatant lies being spread, and that we are now able to lead such campaigns back to Satan, the father of all campaigns to spread lies.

We need to **make sure that we are not spiritually asleep**. And we should certainly not assume that all leaders have been appointed by God, because that is simply not the case.

Now let's consider another Scripture.

GOD IS NOT WILLING THAT ANY SHOULD PERISH

Here is what the Apostle Peter wrote:

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, **not willing** that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9)

When Peter wrote "not willing that any should perish", Peter was writing about the will of God. This tells us that Peter was quite confident that he understood God's will in this specific matter. How about you ... do you understand God's will regarding the things Peter is discussing here?

So let's note the following things:

- 1) God's will is that no human being should lose out on immortal life in God's Family.
- 2) However, it is clear that many human beings will in fact perish in the lake of fire; that many actually will lose out.
- 3) In fact, God has made provision for people to perish in the lake of fire, by planning the lake of fire as a part of His great plan.
- 4) So **with some things God's will is not going to be achieved**, at least not perfectly.
- 5) And as we have already discussed, **before the flood** God's will for mankind was also not achieved.
- 6) For that matter, God's will for **all** the angels who were originally created by God was also not achieved, because a third of those angels rebelled against God, and they then became demons.
- 7) And it was not God's original will that God would destroy all life on earth (except for those in the ark)

with a **worldwide flood**.

There is a common denominator involved whenever some facet of God's original will is not achieved perfectly.

That common denominator is that **beings with a totally free will of their own have prevented some aspects of God's will from being fulfilled**. By "beings with a totally free will" I am referring to angels and to human beings.

God's will involves the **potential future destiny** for all angels and all human beings. God's will here is predicated on the willing, unconditional submission of the free minds of all angels and the free minds of all human beings. God had given angels minds that could choose between cooperation and rebellion. For those angels who chose to rebel, God's original will for those angels is not going to be fulfilled, because those angels will be permanently banished from God's presence.

Likewise, with those human beings who choose to rebel against God, God's original will for them is also not going to be achieved, because they will be blotted out in the lake of fire.

When some aspect of God's will is not going to be fulfilled (i.e. with the angels that became demons, and with the human beings that will end up in the lake of fire), then this shows what **an enormous risk** God was taking when God decided to give both angels and human beings minds that were totally free to either accept, or else to reject God's way of using His mind.

However, God clearly believes that the ultimate reward, creating sons and daughters for the Family of God, is well worth the risk that both God the Father and Jesus Christ have taken. By now, in the year 2020, **project "Building the Family of God" is well on the road towards becoming reality**.

Step one, consisting of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, has already been achieved. And step two, resurrecting the 144,000 firstfruits, lies in the not too distant future ahead of us. From then forwards there will be 144,000 sons of God assisting Jesus Christ in working with "the end ones" for the Family of God. And then the Family of God will be complete.

From then onwards the will of God will always be fulfilled perfectly.

So in conclusion: are you going to include the statement "may Your will be done here on earth and in my personal life, as Your will is being done in heaven" in your prayers to God the Father? And if you do include this thought, will you be actively on the lookout for understanding the will of God more fully in all areas of your life? That involves studying the Bible with an enquiring mind.

Frank W Nelte