DISCERNING GOD'S WILL FOR YOUR LIFE IN 2013

TO: LEGISLATORS FROM: PASTOR RALPH DROLLINGER 661-803-7970 24/7/365 DATE: DEC. 31, 2012

As you look into the whites of the eyes of the new year it is a good time to stop and reflect on where you're going, what areas you'd like to grow in and what objectives you'd like to accomplish. This is a good time of the year for reflection, even though your professional responsibilities are so looming; my prayer is that somehow you'll find time for a mini-retreat with our Savior.

Wise is the man who lives in accordance with God's will. As simple as that truth may seem, many live in defiance of it – and I am not talking about the unregenerate who are at enmity with God, refusing to bow their knee to the lordship of Christ. I am talking about followers of Christ who live as if God has not revealed His perfect will in the Bible.

In this week's Bible study, I want you to think about God's will in terms of what He desires to accomplish and how you should fit into that, versus the other way around (as is too often the case in American culture).

Read on.

WEEKLY MEMBERS BIBLE STUDY

WE WILL NOT BE MEETING DURING THE MONTHS OF NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER 2012

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PROVERBS ON GOD'S WILL FOR YOUR LIFE

I. INTRODUCTION

When most Christians hear about a study relating to God's will, they immediately think about how they can understand God's will for *their* life. That is a noble pursuit, as the Apostle Paul states, "So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is…" (Ephesians 5:17). But, instead of falling into the trap of narcissistic American culture, thinking that everything in life (and in the Scriptures) is about "me", let me (and each of us) thoughtfully consider what is the will of God period – and consider whether I am fitting my life into what God expressly states from His Holy Word are His objectives in the world today.

And then let me make sure I fall in line with that!

Isn't this a more spiritually mature, biblically based way to approach the subject – trying to fit our lives into God's plan – versus creating our own plan that we hope He'll bless?

As we think about this question, there are at least two Proverbs that relate to God's will. They are 10:29 and 16:20

The way of the LORD is a stronghold to the upright, But ruin to the workers of iniquity.

He who gives attention to the word will find good, And blessed is he who trusts in the LORD.

Both of these Proverbs provide the foundation to the premise of the introduction. **The way of the Lord** is what every believer should seek to discover – and fix as a direction for his or her life's objective(s). The one **who gives attention to** the way of the LORD per **the Word will find good,** states the second Proverb. **Blessed is he who trusts in the LORD** relates to the subject of ascertaining His will.

In order to best understand God's singular passion, what He desires to achieve during this, the Church Age, one need only study the New Testament relative to the same. And what leaps repeatedly from the pages of Holy Writ is the concept of God establishing the **Kingdom of God**, or the **Kingdom of Heaven**, both having the same meaning. Here then is His will: to build His Kingdom. Let us turn from our worldly pursuits and seek to better understand this concept; it is key to understanding the empirical will of God in the world today, and subsequently to understanding His will *for my life*.

II. HOW TO BEST UNDERSTAND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The Kingdom of Heaven is a phrase that means the same thing in the NT as does **the Kingdom of God**. Matthew uses the former term 32 times as he addresses a Jewish audience in his gospel account. This is because the Jews would not speak God's name directly out of high, reverential respect. They instead substituted the word **heaven**. (In somewhat a similar fashion today, one might say, "Heaven smiled on me today.") Matthew is sensitive to that fact in his writing.

With this clarification established, there is both an outer and an inner sense to the Kingdom that needs to be explored. Secondly, there are five biblical phases to the Kingdom that we must consider in order to more fully and clearly understand what it is that God desires to see happen here on earth.

First, one needs to understand the outer and inner aspects of the Kingdom….

A. THE OUTER KINGDOM

This includes everyone who carries on in a way for some amount of time that they know, and/or acknowledge God. In the parable of the sower (Mt. 13:3-23) both superficial and genuine adherents of the Kingdom of Heaven are depicted by the four

kinds of soil. Keep in mind that only one of the four soils is representative of true belief, the others may appear that way but are not. Similarly in the parable of the wheat and the tares (right after the parable of the sower in Mt. 13:24-30), true and false adherents of the Kingdom of Heaven are depicted as outwardly indistinguishable from one another. God's separation of the wheat from the chaff will not take place until later (cf. 13:30), which is referred to as the time of the "harvest."

The outer Kingdom thus includes everyone who outwardly appears to believe in God. And since we humans do not know the hearts of people, we cannot accurately discern the pretenders from the genuine followers of Christ, other than to observe the fruit of the Spirit in the lives of individuals. The point being, in the outer Kingdom, during the Church Age, God allows those who are superficial to identify themselves (at least for a time) with His Kingdom.

B. THE INNER KINGDOM

In contrast, the Inner Kingdom is composed of only true followers of Christ. When John the Baptist proclaimed, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt. 3:2; cf. 4:7) he was signifying the way into God's inner Kingdom of true believers.

Again, someday God will separate the two, but for now He allows the imposters to identify outwardly with His Kingdom. (And when we consider the parable of the soils, where there is only one authentic soil among the four, we could reason that there are three times more imposters than genuine believers in the world today).

In staying with our outline, and building a background relative to understanding the will of God, we must understand that there are five phases to the Kingdom of God. What follows is a theological overview of this subject. The Kingdom of God is more fully understood via the following:

III. THE FIVE PHASES OF THE KINGDOM

A. THE PROPHESIED KINGDOM

The coming Kingdom of God is prophesied in the OT Book of Daniel. Daniel states that the coming world kingdoms (henceforward from the fallen theocratic nation of Israel, from wherein he writes) will be of Gentile domination until which time as the Great Messiah comes (the Second Coming) who will conquer them all and set up His Millennial Kingdom.

B. THE PRESENT KINGDOM

This is the phase referred to by John the Baptist and Jesus. Both state that **the Kingdom of God is at hand** (Mt. 3:2; 4:17). John was ushering in the Kingdom of God, and Jesus was and is the King of the Kingdom. However, Israel would reject her King, and the Kingdom was and is postponed. This leads to a clearer understanding of the third phase of the Kingdom…

C. THE INTERIM KINGDOM

This is the Kingdom that resulted from Israel's rejection of her King. After being rejected, the King (Jesus) in a very real sense went into exile (heaven) and His Kingdom on earth exists only in a mystery form in the hearts of His followers. Even though Jesus created the world and remains its ruler, He does not now exercise His full divine authority over the earth. Presently He reigns only in the hearts of His followers. This is the aspect of the Kingdom that is referred to in Romans 14:17 when Paul states, "For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." Of course there will be a future time when He returns and all of that changes when Jesus returns to set up His millennial, physically present reign from Jerusalem over all the earth.

This is a direct reference to the earlier point in the outline, that now the present Kingdom is an inner,

not an outer matter during this interim period in world history between the first and second advent of Christ.

D. THE MANIFEST KINGDOM

In the coming phase, after the end of the Church Age, Christ will return and set up His physical, Millennial Kingdom. He will rule over all the earth from Jerusalem, (no longer in exile so to speak). He will rule both internally and externally. Internally, He will reign in the hearts of true believers, and externally He will reign over all mankind. (Keep in mind non-believers will be birthed into Christ's Millennial Kingdom who may never bow to Christ; nonetheless, Christ will reign over them as their external leader).

E. THE ETERNAL KINGDOM

At the end of the one thousand year Millennial reign of Christ is the eternal state for all true believers. 2Peter 1:11 is one passage that refers to this phase when it says, "For in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you."

F. CONCLUSIONS ABOUT HIS KINGDOM

This short chronological theology of the Kingdom should aid in the understanding of the various passages throughout Scripture that speak about the Kingdom of God. It is the priority in the mind of God; it is what He wants to accomplish! My point in stating all this is simple:

IT IS IMPORTANT FOR GENUINE BELIEVERS TO FALL IN LINE WITH GOD'S EXPRESSED WILL: TO BUILD HIS KINGDOM!

Hopefully the quick lesson in Kingdom theology is helpful to punctuate this point in your thinking. You and I need to be about helping to establish God's Kingdom internally in the lives of individuals during this period of the Church Age. Think of it in this way: Kingdom building is what is important to the One to whom we owe our lives! It follows that His will for your and my life must in someway relate to His will for His world!

IV. BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATIONS OF THIS PRIORITY

To underscore this priority, notice Jesus and the Apostle's emphasis relative to Kingdom building from the following passages:

A. JESUS

Acts 1:3 To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God.

Matthew 6:33 Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you.

John 18:36 Jesus answered, "My Kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm."

B. PHILIP

Acts 8:12 But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike.

C. PAUL

Acts 19:8 And he entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God.

Acts 28:31 preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered.

V. KINGDOM VIRTUES

What should be the virtues of those who are presently members of the Kingdom of God? The following passages are intended to stimulate you toward Kingdom living in 2013.

Matthew 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:10 Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:19 Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 7:21 Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.

VI. PARABLES EXPLAINING THE KINGDOM

The following are Jesus' parables pertaining to a further understanding of His Kingdom. These references will help you to find and study each of them and glean additional truths about God's desire to build His Kingdom through His called-out ones. (Each is a Bible study in itself!)

Mark 4:11 And He was saying to them, "To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of heaven, but those who are outside get everything in parables,

Matthew 13:31 He presented another parable to them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field;

Matthew 13:33 He spoke another parable to them, "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of flour until it was all leavened."

Matthew 13:44 The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid again; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

Matthew 13:45 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls…

Matthew 13:47 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea, and gathering fish of every kind;

Matthew 18:1 At that time the disciples came to Jesus and said, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

Matthew 18:3 and said, "Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 18:4 Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 18:23 For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a

king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves.

Matthew 19:23 And Jesus said to His disciples, "Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 19:24 Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven."

Matthew 20:1 For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.

Matthew 22:2 The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son.

Matthew 23:13 But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.

Matthew 25:1 Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.

Revelation 11:15 Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever."

Revelation 12:10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night.

VII. ADDITIONAL KINGDOM OF GOD PASSAGES

John 3:3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

1Corinthians 6:9 Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals,

1Corinthians 6:10 nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.

1Thessalonians 2:12 so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

2Timothy 4:1 I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom:

VIII. SUMMARY

Understanding more about the Kingdom of God and His expectations regarding it will help you to properly evaluate and ascertain God's will for your life in 2013. My prayer is that you will take these passages and the theology of the Kingdom to heart as you make plans for the coming year. Amen.