

God's Will Versus Our Will

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Many times in our lives we don't, as humans, understand why God does the things that He does or why He allows the things to happen to us. Humanly we don't see the why. When a young child gets cancer, you ask why. A member had this growth under her fingernail and it grew and then all of a sudden she lost her thumb, and you ask why. Another has lung cancer. Another has suffered with rheumatoid arthritis for thirty-five years, and on top of that now, the arthritis is scarring his lungs and he has breathing difficulties. Another in Wisconsin has kidney cancer. She went into remission and three years later it's back again with a tumor in her spine. We ask sometimes why? Why does God allow it and why did God cause it?

With that in mind, let's go to Matthew 6:9-10.

Matthew 6:9. *After this manner therefore pray you ... (KJV)*

Christ is saying this at the Sermon on the Mount. He is adding a spiritual interpretation of the law. He knew they prayed every day and He is saying, "This is how I want you to pray."

9b) ... Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

10) Your kingdom come, Your will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. (KJV)

That begs the question: Why does God want us to pray for His will to be done? Because, when you think about it, God is God. God will do what God will do. God has all power. He can make anything turn out any way He wants, so what is the point in asking us to pray that His will be done?

We have to understand that God's will is going to be done regardless, in an overall sense. Christ is going to return. He will set up God's government. The Millennium will occur. The Great White Throne Judgment will occur. Satan will be put away. Nothing is going to change that. No matter what we do or pray for, nothing will change that.

How about in our individual lives? Now we are getting to the crux of the matter. Pray that God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven. We are here on earth and we have to ask the question: What about God's will to be accomplished in my life? You see, it's God's desire for all people to be in His kingdom.

Here God is saying this through Paul.

1 Timothy 2:4. *Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. (KJV)*

That is absolutely true. The fact is that God has made us free moral agents. God has given us the freedom to choose in our life what we do and what we don't do. So it's up to us as individuals as to whether we will do His will or not.

One of the reasons He is asking us to pray that His will be done is that He is talking to each of us individually. We know some will not do His will.

***Luke 19:27.** But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me. (KJV)*

We know that some aren't going to want to. There will be serial rapists, serial murderers, people with absolutely perverted minds that would rather continue doing what they are doing than yield to God. They are so filled with evil and they won't submit to God despite God's desire to have all men saved.

When Christ says, "Let's pray every day that God's will be done," yes, we want to pray that His will is done on earth, but also His will to be done in our individual lives. It depends on us whether or not that happens because we are free to choose.

We are going to see today why God tells us daily to pray that His will to be done. God does not need our help. I've heard some people imply that they are so valuable to God that they are in a special category. God says that He can raise up stones to take our place. We're going to see that none of us are indispensable. We are going to see that we should pray daily because we are the ones that need help in Him bringing forth His will in our individual lives.

The title of the sermon is:

God's Will Versus Our Will

We're going to see that praying for His will to be done helps us in two ways.

The first way is that we learn to recognize His will. We want His will not only in general for all mankind, but for us specifically. That's one of the things I pray about just about as much as anything else. When you get into a situation, maybe counseling and you ask, "God, what do you want me to do?" You do too. What would Christ do in this situation? We want to recognize what God's will is.

The second way is that we want to learn to be able to submit to it. It's not enough just to recognize it. We have to submit to God's will.

We will spend the first part of the sermon on recognizing God's will and the rest of the sermon talking about our willingness to submit to God's will.

Point number one is recognizing God's will.

Right at the get-go, we have to realize one thing. The human mind is often incapable of recognizing God's will, because His will is so far above ours. His will is so superior to ours. His vision is so much grander than ours that we have difficulty with our pipsqueak human minds to comprehend it. Think about this from the standpoint of recognizing God's will in our lives.

Isaiah 55:8. *For my thoughts are not your thoughts ... (KJV)*

Human thoughts and God's thoughts are totally different.

8b) ... neither are your ways my ways, says the LORD. (KJV)

The ways of a human are not God's ways.

9) For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. (KJV)

As I said before, humans look at life through soda straws, where God sees the big picture. If you drew an analogy of a chess game, it would be like us seeing three or four squares on the board where God sees the whole board. We're just sweating it out with three or four squares and our whole vision is blocked because we are humans. God works in ways that we cannot even imagine in moving pieces around the board and we're only focused on this tiny little aspect of it. That's the human mind.

We're going to illustrate this point of looking through soda straws through the nation of Israel and how God built the nation of Israel. We will analyze it from the Israelite's point of view humanly, but also from God's point of view and what He was accomplishing. We're going to see how seeing His will is beyond human comprehension, sometimes even by those who have His spirit. We need to understand that. The example is of the beginning of the nation of Israel. God gave the land of Canaan to Abraham for an everlasting possession. We know that. Let's go to Genesis 17. God is talking to Abraham.

Genesis 17:6. *And I will make you exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come out of you. (KJV)*

So this plan goes on for decades and centuries.

7) And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your seed after you in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto you, and to your seed after you.

8) And I will give unto you, and to your seed after you, the land wherein you are a stranger ... (KJV)

Now He identifies the land.

8b) ... all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God. (KJV)

This promise was made to Abraham who passed it on to Isaac, who passed it on to Jacob when he purchased that birthright from Esau. We know that this incredible promise was talked about from generation to generation,. This promise was passed on to Jacob and his twelve sons.

Genesis 37:1. *And Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan. (KJV)*

We see that this promise is passed onto the third generation, his twelve sons, including Joseph. They were living in the land that God promised them for an everlasting possession. They were fully settled there in that land. Then God takes them out of the land that He promised them forever. He takes them out of the Promised Land and sends them down to Egypt when Joseph was sold into slavery. Egypt is a pagan nation. Think about that. This happened. Just put yourself in the mind of Jacob and the kids when this happened.

Genesis 46:26. *All the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt, which came out of his loins, besides Jacob's sons' wives, all the souls were threescore and six; 27) And the sons of Joseph, which were born him in Egypt, were two souls: all the souls of the house of Jacob, which came into Egypt, were threescore and ten. (KJV)*

God said, "I'm going to give this to you forever, but I want you to leave. I want you to go to a pagan country." There were then seventy people down there.

To the human mind, this makes absolutely no sense. Jacob and his twelve sons are already living in the Promised Land, living in Canaan and fully settled there. Why force us to leave? What's the point? Only to take them back 400+ years later in the exodus. To man's mind this makes absolutely no sense. What is God doing? It would be like God saying to us in the State of Washington, "I'm going to take you out of Washington so one day you can live in Washington." So we would ask God what He was doing.

If I'm Jacob or Joseph, I've heard since I was old enough to hear this promise of this land being ours for an eternity. I'm living in the land that has been promised for an eternity and now God is saying to give it up. They're wondering what is going on here. Plus the fact that God wanted them to move to a pagan country that worships pagan gods. All this is after God promised that this land would be theirs forever.

Think about the human mind getting scrambled because they don't understand God's will. You see, it was unknown to them at that time because they're not seeing the full chess board that their seventy down in Egypt would become the first fruits of a very great nation that would number into the millions. God would use that nation as an example to all the earth. However, they didn't understand that. Over four hundred

years later, God takes them back to the Promised Land, but this time instead of seventy, in Exodus 12:38, it said when the children of Israel left Egypt, they journeyed from Ramses to Succoth and there were six hundred thousand men plus women and children. So if we do the math, it's probably two or three million in total. So you see, in the exodus, a great nation was born.

Remember that God's will is not always obvious to the human mind, and especially to the carnal mind. Why did God do it this way? It makes no sense humanly. We find a hint in Genesis 43. Joseph has been elevated and he is in the land of Egypt and he is talking to his brothers and his last brother, Benjamin, is coming.

Genesis 43:29. *And he lifted up his eyes, and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, Is this your younger brother, of whom you spoke unto me? And he said, God be gracious unto thee, my son. (KJV)*

Then he had to turn away.

30) And Joseph made haste; for his bowels did yearn upon his brother: and he sought where to weep; and he entered into his chamber, and wept there.

31) And he washed his face, and went out, and refrained himself, and said, set on bread. (KJV)

Here's the key.

32) And they set on for him by himself, and for them by themselves, and for the Egyptians, which did eat with him, by themselves: because the Egyptians might not eat bread with the Hebrews; for that is an abomination unto the Egyptians. (KJV)

From the very beginning of their coming down to Egypt, there was a separation between the Egyptians and the Israelites because of the practices of the Israelites versus the practices of the Egyptians. The Israelites sacrificed and ate the animals that were the very gods of Egypt. It was an abomination to them. Therefore, they would not eat with the Hebrews.

The Roman historian, Tacitus, who wrote at the time of Christ, said: *"They [Jews of his day] sacrificed the ram in order to insult Jupiter Ammon and they sacrificed the ox which the Egyptians worshipped under the name of Apis."*

So we see that there was an immediate separation because the Israelites were an abomination to the Egyptians. In Genesis 46, Joseph is giving advice to his brothers because he knew that Pharaoh was going to call them into his presence and he was giving them a "heads up" about what to say and what not to say.

Genesis 46:33. *And it shall come to pass, when Pharaoh shall call you, and shall say, What is your occupation?*

34) *That you shall say, Thy servants' trade has been about cattle from our youth even until now, both we, and also our fathers: that ye may dwell in the land of Goshen ... (KJV)*

They say, "We understand the differences and we want to dwell in the land of Goshen which is separate."

34b) *... for every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians. (KJV)*

So Joseph gave them this "heads up" with the plan that it would be best for the Israelites to be totally separate and live in a different part of Egypt so they wouldn't intermingle. What he wanted to do, which was part of God's plan, was that there be a separation in Egypt. They didn't know why and they didn't understand.

Why did God want them separate? Why was it so important? Now God is speaking to Moses about Israel and about the problems He knew Moses would face when they went into the Promised Land.

Exodus 34:12. *Take heed to yourself, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither you go, lest it be for a snare in the midst of you:*

13) *But you shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves:*

14) *For you shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God:*

15) *Lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they go a whoring after their gods, and do sacrifice unto their gods, and one call you, and you eat of his sacrifice;*

16) *And you take of their daughters unto your sons, and their daughters go a whoring after their gods, and make your sons go a whoring after their gods.*

(KJV)

One of the first things God told Moses to tell ancient Israel is don't follow the religious practices of those around you. Destroy their altars, their temples. Don't intermingle with them. Don't intermarry with them. If you do, it will lead to worship of a false god. What Christ, the God of the Old Testament is telling Moses is to stay separate. Don't intermingle.

Now fast forward a thousand years from this time in Exodus 34. The northern ten tribes have gone into captivity. The southern two tribes have gone into captivity in Babylon. We covered that in a recent sermon in the post exilic era. Remember Nebuchadnezzar captured Judah and Benjamin and then the Persians conquered Babylon and then Cyrus, the King of Persia, allowed the Jews to return to the land of Canaan.

What was the first thing the Jews did when they got back? Let's turn to Ezra 9. This happened within the first year of their return to the Promised Land. You would think they would be grateful. You'd think they would be so righteous.

Ezra 9:1. *Now when these things were done ... (KJV)*

That refers previously to offerings to the temple.

1b) ... the princes came to me [Ezra], saying, The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the people of the lands, doing according to their abominations ... (KJV)

Even the leaders are doing what God told Moses not to do, that we just read in Exodus.

2) For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands: yes, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass. (KJV)

Less than one year after their return to the Promised Land, they were so overjoyed, and already they are committing the sins that got them into captivity in the first place.

Ezra 10:18. And among the sons of the priests there were found that had taken strange wives ... (KJV)

Then in verses 20 through 44, they list the names of the priests. I stopped counting at a hundred. Think about that. One year and what did Israel do? They went right back into worshipping false gods. That proves the point because we can ask the question: What would have happened if God allowed Jacob and the seventy to just go to Egypt and intermingle? They would do exactly what we just read. They would have likely done the same thing we just read in Ezra. They would have intermarried with the surrounding nations. They would have become a melting pot, a hodge-podge. They would have accepted pagan religion and they would not be the model nation that God had intended.

As confusing as I'm sure this whole thing was to Jacob and to Joseph, it was God's will and He was working out something behind the scenes. He had a grander and greater plan for those seventy. By keeping them separate, they could grow into a nation of millions without intermingling, without coming into contact all that much with the Egyptians. Yes, they went into slavery and some did come into contact, but as a whole they did not.

To summarize this first point, what human mind could have devised such a plan? We wouldn't even think about that, a plan so great and so grand that seventy would be taken out of the land that was promised to them forever, go down to a pagan land and yet at the same time, be totally separate so they could grow into millions and then as a complete nation, come back to the land that they were promised in the beginning. They were separate from the religious beliefs of that pagan nation that they went down to. They didn't become contaminated in that regard, which would allow them to grow to millions and be relatively undefiled from the pagan practices around them. That could have only happened in Egypt.

Once the nation was then ready in Egypt, grown to millions, God performed multiple miracles. He brought them back to the land that He promised in the very beginning. Instead of seventy, millions came back and this was God's will. It was so far greater than Jacob or Joseph could even comprehend while they were going through it.

That is a huge lesson for us today. What about today? We see so many sick or so many trials come, just like they had a trial. People don't understand and they don't see what God is doing behind the scenes. Today, all too many lose faith in God when He doesn't do what they want them to do. They have a picture in their mind what God should do and when God doesn't do it, they lose faith.

I'll give you an example of a lady who is now deceased. This goes back about ten years. She had cancer. It went into remission and then it came back. She was not part of our group, but I called her to let her know that we were praying for her. This was about a week before she died. I said, "Hi, how are you doing?" She shot back angrily and said, "I'm dying! God is allowing me to die." As if somehow that shouldn't be. She said, "I wanted to go to the place of safety, and God is not letting me go to the place of safety." I tried to patiently explain that we all face death and God has a plan that we cannot see, so maybe it would be better to accept God's will than to get angry with God. But people do that.

The problem is that God's will is often too grand for our mind, too expansive for what we can see. So when we go through trials, let's remember this account of Jacob going to Egypt and then coming back when it made no sense to them humanly. Let's remember this account. At the time they just couldn't understand it, yet God had this grand vision far greater than what they could come up with. God had this wonderful vision.

So this first point is that we need to pray daily that God's will would be done, because it will help us recognize His will, not be blind to it.

As we've seen, we need to understand that knowing God's will doesn't come easy to the human mind. The longer we're in the church and the longer we go through these trials, we begin to grow in faith that no matter what God does or allows to happen to us, it is for our good. It is for our ultimate benefit just as it was with the nation of Ancient Israel. Let's keep that in mind.

The second point is, once we recognize it, we need to be willing to submit to it.

Again, as we've said, it doesn't come easy to the human mind. We could ask the question: Why doesn't it come easy to the human mind? Well, we live in Satan's world.

2 Corinthians 4:4. *In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. (KJV)*

We are influenced all around us whether we like it or not. This is the reason why we often don't submit to God. We have to be careful about that. The human mind does not want to submit to God. If we do want to submit to God, we can't have a human mind.

Romans 8:7. *Because the carnal mind is enmity [King James says enemy] against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.
8) So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. (KJV)*

We can't do His will if we're in the flesh. The human mind does not want to submit to God and God's laws.

Here's the big question for all of us. When we pray for God's will to be done in our lives as Christ admonishes us to do, are we truly seeking His will or are we praying to have affirmation from Him of what we already want? There's a big difference. Do we pray with an open mind and really mean it and say, "God, whatever You want I will do." Or do we have such a mind that says, "I already know what You want, so I'm going to pray for it because this is what really needs to be done here." We have to be careful.

We're going to see two examples of this. First is a tribe called by God to be His people. Then secondly we're going to see an individual called and commissioned by God and in both cases, they have an agenda that is not God's agenda and yet, on the surface, they say, "God, I'll do whatever You want."

The context here is that Judah is fearing an attack from Babylon. They know it's going to happen. The leaders of Judah are coming allegedly to seek God's will. However, as we read, we're going to find out that they secretly had their own desire and that was to leave the Promised Land and go back to Egypt. Think about that. What a screwball idea. Now they're back in the Promised Land and they want to know what God's will is, but they really want to go back to Egypt which is full of sin. That is the human mind.

Jeremiah 42:1. *Then all the captains of the forces, and Johanan the son of Kareah, and Jezaniah the son of Hoshaiah, and all the people from the least even unto the greatest, came near,
2) And said unto Jeremiah the prophet ... (KJV)*

On the surface, it sounds really good.

2b) ... Let, we beseech you, our supplication be accepted before you, and pray for us unto the LORD thy God, even for all this remnant; (for we are left but a few of many, as thine eyes do behold us:)

3) That the LORD thy God may shew us the way wherein we may walk, and the thing that we may do.

4) Then Jeremiah the prophet said unto them, I have heard you; behold, I will pray unto the LORD your God according to your words; and it shall come to pass, that whatsoever thing the LORD shall answer you, I will declare it unto you; I will keep nothing back from you. (KJV)

“I will tell you plainly what God says.”

5) *Then they said to Jeremiah ... (KJV)*

Here are the leaders' response.

5b) *... The LORD be a true and faithful witness between us, if we do not even according to all things for the which the LORD thy God shall send you to us.*

6) *Whether it be good, or whether it be evil, we will obey the voice of the LORD our God, to whom we send you; that it may be well with us, when we obey the voice of the LORD our God. (KJV)*

This is the attitude we should have. “God, whatever you want me to do, I don't care what it is, whether it's my will or not my will, I'll do it.” But this was not their attitude.

7) *And it came to pass after ten days, that the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah.*

8) *Then called he Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces which were with him, and all the people from the least even to the greatest, (KJV)*

These are all the ones that came in the beginning saying, “Whatever God tells us, we will do it with a happy face.” All of them are back now.

9) *And said unto them, Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, unto whom you sent me to present your supplication before him ... (KJV)*

Here is what God says.

10) *If you will still abide in this land ... (KJV)*

Remember, it's the Promised Land; theirs as an inheritance forever.

10b) *... then will I build you, and not pull you down, and I will plant you, and not pluck you up: for I repent me of the evil that I have done unto you.*

11) *Be not afraid of the king of Babylon, of whom you are afraid; be not afraid of him, says the LORD: for I am with you to save you, and to deliver you from his hand.*

Now we get to the crux of the matter.

13) *But if you say, We will not dwell in this land [Promised Land], neither obey the voice of the LORD your God,*

14) *Saying, No; but we will go into the land of Egypt ... (KJV)*

God knew what they were thinking. He knew exactly what their motivation was and so He is doing a preemptive strike saying, "If you have in your mind to go to Egypt, now listen to what I tell you."

14b) ... where we shall see no war, nor hear the sound of the trumpet, nor have hunger of bread; and there will we dwell: (KJV)

They wanted to go right back into the land of sin that they were extricated from through the exodus. They wanted to go back.

15) And now therefore hear the word of the ETERNAL, you remnant of Judah; Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; If you wholly set your faces to enter into Egypt, and go to sojourn there;

This is what will happen.

16) Then it shall come to pass, that the sword, which you feared, shall overtake you there in the land of Egypt, and the famine, whereof you were afraid, shall follow close after you there in Egypt; and there you shall die. (KJV)

God says, "I'm guaranteeing this."

*19) The LORD has said concerning you, O you remnant of Judah; Go you not into Egypt; know certainly that I have admonished you this day. (KJV)
... (KJV)*

It can't get any more direct than that, the prophet going to God and bringing the message back. God said, "I know what you want to do, but it will end in disaster, so don't do it."

They wanted God's stamp of approval on what they had already decided to do. There is a lesson for us that we have to be very careful about that.

Jeremiah 43:1. *And it came to pass, that when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking unto all the people all the words of the ETERNAL their God, for which the LORD their God had sent him to them, even all these words ... (KJV)*

Notice their reaction.

2) Then spoke Azariah the son of Hoshaiah, and Johanan the son of Kareah ... (KJV)

Notice this.

2b) ... and all the proud men, saying unto Jeremiah, You speak falsely: the LORD our God has not sent you to say, Go not into Egypt to sojourn there: (KJV)

They didn't get the answer they wanted, so they say, "No, God didn't say this." Despite the fact that they went and asked and said, "We'll do whatever You want us to do."

You see, God understood that these people were hypocrites in their hearts, saying one thing, but really wanting to do something else. God felt they were hypocrites because they used the term "seeking God's will" as a guise for getting God to rubber stamp what they wanted in the first place, for what they actually desired in their hearts. It reminds me of Proverbs 16:25.

Proverbs 16:25. *There is a way that seems right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death. (KJV)*

There is perhaps no better principle of this in what we just read, where people confuse their will with God's will. Now the Bible doesn't specifically record what happened to these people. It's not in the Bible, but you can believe that God made good on His promises. Those that went to Egypt died by famine and the sword in Egypt.

When we read this we could say that they were unconverted Jews. They didn't have God's holy spirit. They were just a bunch of carnal people. Well, they'd have plenty of examples of doing the right thing including going into captivity in the first place, but that's true. They didn't have God's spirit. Some could say that they didn't have a close relationship with God and didn't know God. God didn't talk with this generation directly. I'm here to tell you that whatever God tells me to do, I will do, because I've got God's holy spirit. We can say that.

Let's consider another example. This is an individual who God spoke to, He called directly and He commissioned him directly. This man wanted God's will to be done as long as it was his will, even when God was eye to eye with him. He would obey God as long as it was his personal wish to obey God. We're going to consider the life of the prophet, Jonah. When we think superficially in our Bible story books for our kids, we think of Jonah as a man who was given a commission by God, didn't want to do it, ran away and got swallowed by a big fish. He finally did what God wanted him to do and then he pouted about it. That's the short story.

We will take time to see that there is much more to this story than what I just said, especially as it relates to submitting to God's will.

Normally in a study of Jonah's life, you would start in Jonah, chapter 1, but that is not where the story begins. Turn to 2 Kings 14.

2 Kings 14:23. *In the fifteenth year of Amaziah the son of Joash, king of Judah, Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel, became king in Samaria, and reigned forty-one years. (NKJV)*

Now this is Jeroboam II. Remember when the tribes split after Solomon's death, Rehoboam was Solomon's son. He made it very hard on the nation of Israel. The northern ten tribes split off and Jeroboam I became their king. Jeroboam sinned horribly. He had sacrifices up north so they wouldn't go to Jerusalem. He changed the date of the Feast of Tabernacles. They worshipped on the high hills, etc. That was Jeroboam I. Now we're down the road from that and this is Jeroboam II. Jeroboam II, the son of Joash, King of Israel, became king in Samaria and he reigned forty-one years. That is a very long time for a king.

24) And he did evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam [Jeroboam I] the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin. (NKJV)

Verse 25 tells us that some good things happened. Despite his evil ways, according to God's plan, some good things happened.

25) He restored the territory of Israel from the entrance of Hamath to the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the ETERNAL God of Israel, which He had spoken through His servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet who was from Gath Hepher. (NKJV)

So we see here that even though Jeroboam II was evil, God used Jonah to prophecy that Jeroboam would expand the borders of Israel to a size not seen since the days of David and Solomon. This actually happened. God was saying, "You're going to take some land back from Assyria." What happened at this time was that Syria was having trouble with the Medes, so they had to take troops out of the Promised Land to a different front. That left a vacuum and it was fairly easy for Jeroboam II to expand the land of Israel while Assyria was having trouble with the Medes.

I want to be clear that this is my speculation. We see here at this juncture, thinking about Jonah's mind and what's going on in his head.

Remember the day that the two aircrafts slammed into the twin towers. Our son lived in Boston and he called us early in the morning and said, "You need to turn the T.V. on." Just after we turned it on, one of the towers came down. Many Americans at that time were not happy. It was natural to become angry with those who attacked our country, despite the sins and the moral decline. It was only natural not to want bad things to happen to our country and to get angry with those who brought the death of those thousands of people.

I believe Jonah had the same mindset and attitude. Remember that the prophets Amos and Isaiah were contemporary with Jonah. Undoubtedly Jonah knew them and Jonah was familiar with their prophecies. Hosea and Amos prophesied that God would one

day use Assyria to punish Israel. Can you imagine Jonah's excitement and eagerness when God came to him, as we read in 2 Kings, "I want you to prophecy to Jeroboam saying that we're going to expand the land of Israel at the expense of the Assyrians." You talk about your will coinciding with God's will and he was on a mission. He did it. He prophesied to Jeroboam and certainly within a few years, that very thing happened. This is a perfect example of when human will and God's will come together and coincide. He was patriotic and jumped at the chance to do God's will and prophecy against the enemy, Assyria.

Now let's fast forward a few years to Jonah 1:1. This occurs after that event. God is going to ask him to do something else. You would think that he would jump right on it as he did the first time, but that's not what happened.

Jonah 1:1. Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, 2) "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me." (KJV)

We're going to see that what God told him to do was to warn them that they were going to be blown to smithereens if they didn't turn from their evil ways.

3) *But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the ETERNAL ... (KJV)*

God said, "I want you to go to Assyria, to the capital, Nineveh, and prophecy against them that if they don't repent, they will be obliterated." Jonah didn't want to do it, because it was not his will. So we see his will is contrary to God's will and so what does he do? He goes in exactly the opposite direction. Rather than go to Nineveh, he goes to Spain. He goes west when God told him to go east.

Let's think a bit about Jonah's will. Jonah was patriotic. He loved his country. He wanted bad things to happen to the Assyrians. Assyria was the enemy of Israel. Jonah knew the prophecies of Hosea and Amos saying that God would use Assyria to punish Israel and he wanted them destroyed. He wanted them wiped off the face of the earth so they wouldn't come back later and destroy or punish the nation of Israel.

It would be like today with this fanatic group, ISIS, in the Middle East. They are beheading Americans and other people. They're assassinating and butchering people. What if somebody said, "God wants you to send this prophet over there and tell them to repent." Most people would say, "I don't want them to repent. I want to nuke them. I want to burn them off the face of the earth." Jonah was somewhat of that mindset. The bottom line is that he ran, because this time God's will was different from his. He had no problem following God's commission when his will and God's will were the same.

Jonah ran. He got on a ship to Spain. God sends a storm. Jonah is thrown overboard. God prepares a great fish and Jonah gets swallowed and he spends three days and three nights in the belly of the fish. As a kid's story, you kind of pass on by it. However, if you're in the belly of that fish, what is down there? That fish has everything it has

eaten in a while and all the acids that convert the food into nourishment for the fish. So it's corrosive and certainly not good on the skin. Plus the fact, it is totally dark. You're under water and you don't know what is going on and you can't keep time and you're down there amongst all this gurgling and probably new stuff coming in from time to time and you're sitting there for three days and three nights. This is not a good way to spend seventy-two hours.

The Bible does not specifically say that Jonah repents. It certainly shows that his attitude changed.

Jonah 3:1. *Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying,*
2) *“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you.”*

3) *So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three-day journey in extent.*

4) *And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk ... (KJV)*

He got a third of the way into the city.

4b) *Then he cried out and said, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” (KJV)*

This was the message he was supposed to deliver in the very beginning. Jonah tells the Assyrians to repent of their violence and their evil ways. If you study Assyria, they were one of the most violent groups of people that ever lived. They did things that we don't even see, despite all the brutality going on today. So Jonah tells the Assyrians to repent of their violence or they will be blown to smithereens.

10) *Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it. (NKJV)*

Now let's just stop here. If you were a prophet and you see this vast city full of kids, elderly, feeble human beings and they repented and God decided to spare them, wouldn't you be overjoyed? Think of the precious lives that would be spared.

Let's look at Jonah's attitude.

Jonah 4:1. *But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry.*

2) *So he prayed to the ETERNAL, and said, “Ah, LORD, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? (NKJV)*

He said, “I told you so! I knew if I went down there, they would repent and I knew that You, being a good and merciful God, you would forgive these horrible people. Now I'm really ticked about it, because I knew it was going to happen.”

2b) ... Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in loving kindness, One who relents from doing harm.

3) Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live!" (NKJV)

Can you imagine? What he is saying is, "I was afraid they would repent in the very beginning. Didn't I tell you that?" So after this point, Jonah basically spends the rest of the book pouting about it. We don't have time to go into that, about the little tree that grows up and gives him a little shade, and God cuts it down and Jonah is in a real snit.

So what we see from this example and the example of the Jews in Jeremiah, that just knowing God's will is not enough. Recognizing God's will is not enough. The second reason we are to pray that His will be done so that we will want to do it, not just recognize it, but we will want to do it.

Both the Jews in Jerusalem and Jonah wanted to do God's will as long as it coincided with their will.

So the lesson for us today is that we have to seek God's will with an open mind, not with preconditions, not with an agenda, but with an open mind. We must not ask God to rubber stamp what we have already decided is best. Again, we see three or four squares on the checkerboard, but God sees everything. God is a God of love and He is going to do what is best for us, sometimes in spite of ourselves.

So the summary of the second point is that once we recognize God's will, we must be willing to submit to it even if it is contradictory to what we personally want.

Let's conclude now with a question. What was the only sign Christ gave of His being the Messiah? What was the only sign?

Matthew 12:38. Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from you.

39) But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas:

40) For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. (KJV)

Christ's choice of Jonah as an example is very interesting. Why? Was it just because of the seventy-two hours or was there something else that Christ was trying to get across? Jonah is the only Biblical example that we have of where God told a prophet what He wanted him to do and this prophet ran. It's the only example I can think of in the Bible. He was told what to do and he refused to do it. It's the only time we see this in the Bible. Since his will was contrary to God's, God's will was contrary to his

personal desires and he failed to carry out the command. Christ is using this as an example. Yes, Jonah eventually did it, but he didn't like it and he pouted about it.

What is happening here is that Christ is making a contrast. He is demonstrating His life and His example with the exact opposite of Jonah's life and Jonah's example.

Remember the last night of Christ's life. This has been coming for an eternity. He knows exactly what is coming. He was praying so hard that great drops of blood fell from His forehead.

With that in mind, let's go to Matthew 26. This is in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Matthew 26:39. *And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me ... (KJV)*

But unlike Jonah, notice this.

*39b) ... nevertheless not as I will, but as You will.
40) And he cometh unto the disciples, and finding them asleep, and said unto Peter, What, could you not watch with me one hour?
41) Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. (KJV)*

His flesh was screaming out because He built human beings. He knew how the nervous system works and He knew the pain that was coming.

42) He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. (KJV)

What an incredible example. The exact opposite of Jonah. The one who became God in the flesh, instead of focusing on His own comfort, His own ease and wellbeing and desires, knowing He was about to be tortured and die, His singular focus was on knowing God's will and submitting to God's will.

That's one reason that I think He picked Jonah because of this huge contrast.

If we were asked the question; Why did Christ come to the earth? Ask the average church member. Many people would say to proclaim the gospel, to pay the price for sin, or to start the church. All of these would be true. But there is an underlying reason that is fundamental to those three reasons we just talked about.

In John 6:38 it tells us directly why Christ came to this earth, what His mission was, what His mindset was and what His desire was. This was His purpose.

John 6:38. *For I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him that sent me. (KJV)*

That says it all. As we saw in the beginning of the sermon, we are to pray daily that God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Did Christ command us to do this because we are so valuable that He can't do it without us? Of course not. I think the reason is that we, as fleshly humans, need help. We need all the help that we can get. By daily praying that God's will be done, by daily praying that it be done in a general sense and in our specific lives, it allows us to recognize what God's will is and, above all, realizing that His will is perfect and it is always for our good and never for our harm.

Secondly, like the example of Jesus Christ, we would be willing to submit to His will with no preconceptions, no agendas and no preconditions, nothing at all. "Tell me what to do, God, and I will do it because I know that is best for me because You are a loving God and You will do nothing for my harm and even though I don't understand like Jacob and Joseph didn't understand, I will do it because I know that You are the great God and You see the whole chess board and I really cannot as a human being.

So, when trials come, we need to remember that God's vision is so much greater than our vision. It's incomprehensible. As human beings we are so limited in our vision and how we perceive things. We are physical and to make the jump to the spiritual realm and how God sees things is very, very difficult for a human being. So when trials come, we have to remember that God's will is for our good, for our being in His kingdom and we need to trust Him as Christ did, even humanly if we don't understand at the time, which we often do not.

So as we move forward, let's absolutely dedicate ourselves to Christ's example of knowing God's will and then submitting to God's will.