

Ask Jeff 11.01.17

By Dr. Jeff Meyers

sermonaudio.com

Preached On: Wednesday, November 1, 2017

Crossroads Ministries

301 S. 8th Street
Opelika, Alabama 36801

Website: www.fbcopelika.com

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/jeffmeyers

Alright, ladies and gentlemen, it is time to commence. Hopefully you received one of our Circle of Concerns, otherwise known as prayer sheet. If you are a guest or visitor, maybe you're new to our fellowship, allow me to share with you how this works. If you know somebody or a situation that you want us as a church family to be praying for, please let us in the office know and we will get it on this sheet as soon as possible and we will leave it on there until you tell us otherwise. And if the prayer has been answered or the situation the Lord has intervened, please let us know as well if we do not already know so that we'll know that the Lord has answered that.

Just to let you be aware of kind of how this works on the sheet, you'll see that there are those that we are praying for in concerns both in specific places as well as at home, but on the back of your sheet tonight, I want to call your attention to several things. At the top is the sympathy section. Unfortunately, there are those in part of our body and connected to our body who have lost loved ones and friends, and we always want to remember and to reach out to them in these very difficult times. Also, those that are serving on the mission field and serving in the military oftentimes displaced physically from their family for elongated periods of time and we just want the opportunity to, as the book of Ezekiel says, we just want to stand in the gap for those that are being so selfless on our behalf, not only with the gospel but with our physical protection as well.

Let's pray and we'll get started.

Lord, tonight as we gather as a body of believers, Lord, it's a privilege to do exactly what your word says, to come boldly before your throne. Lord, in a world that tells us to cower and a world that tells us to back down, in a world that tells us it'd be better if we just kept our mouth closed, Lord, you have done just the opposite, you have told us to come boldly into your throne room with the concerns and the struggles of our heart and our life and, Lord, we come to you tonight with this sheet, this sheet of paper with so many names on it that is a small percentage of what's on our heart. So Lord, for those that are struggling physically and with ailments and diseases and diagnoses, Lord, we pray if it would be possible you would reach out of heaven and in spite of whatever a doctor or nurse has said, that you would touch them, that you would heal them, Lord, that you would change them from the inside out. Lord, for those that are the caretakers who oftentimes spend countless hours and nights and struggle with a lack of sleep and even nourishment, Lord, may you strengthen them in these days of hardship. But for those, Lord, who are in need

of a touch not of a physical healing but for spiritual healing, restoration, reconciliation in some situations or, Lord, repentance, we pray that your Holy Spirit would move mightily in their lives at this very moment so that they would be in the very center of your will. Lord, for those that are on the mission field, those near and far, serving in the military near and far, Lord, we pray for comfort, we pray for peace and, Lord, we pray that even in those days and times of loneliness that your word, that your voice would give them the relationship and the comfort that they so desperately need. Tonight as we open your word, guide us, lead us to truth, lead us to know what we need to know to be better equipped to live for you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Alright, tonight I know we've got a few folks here in person as well as on the other side of that camera that may be experiencing Wednesday night at First Baptist for the first time. Let me share with you kind of what a Wednesday night looks like. We typically divide it into two sections. We have a question and answer time where you have the opportunity to ask any question you want about any subject you want. We have a database that you can utilize electronically at fbcopelika.com/askjeff. You submit your question, it is put into a database that is completely random. I do not know who you are and I don't know when you submitted the question. Now if you do put your email address in there when you submit the question, when I push the "answered" button, it will send you a link to the video or the audio of the question being answered just in case you weren't here when that took place. By the way, you say, "Well, what do you mean if they're not here? Isn't it one of those kind of things that you gotta be present to win?" Today I got an email thanking us for this from northern Ireland, so the person asking the question may not even be on this continent and can't physically be with us, and because of time zone issues and such, may not have the opportunity to be watching live or to be a part of it. So we want you to know that you can be a part of that. You are absolutely anonymous when you ask that question. Now when we begin to go there in just a moment, you have the opportunity to raise your hand. When you raise your hand, you lose your anonymity but you have the opportunity to take it any way you want to. You can say, "I want to know more about that." Or you can raise your hand and say, "I'm tired of talking about that, let's talk about this." That's okay because you are in control. It's what you want and what you need to learn.

Then we have a Bible study that we're walking through at this current moment. We're walking through what we know as the book of Revelation, the last book of your Bible, and so tonight I want to take our format and I want to flip the script, so to speak. I want to start with our Revelation Bible study for two reasons. 1. One of the most debated, discussed and interesting subject matters in all the book of Revelation, and so I know at times we can chase the proverbial rabbit, we can get off subject, and I want to give it the adequate time that it deserves. 2. There is a very distinct possibility that this subject matter may cause a slew of questions to come out that I want you to have the opportunity to ask. So we'll go through the Bible Study, if there's no other questions or no further discussion, we'll go right into our typical Q&A. But I wanted to lead off with chapter 7 of the book of Revelation, the famous 144,000. If you've done any study of the book of Revelation, if you've even been remotely in contact with what we call eschatological or end times teaching, you've heard of this famous number, one of the most numbers not just

in the Bible but in all of the world because there have been groups throughout time, in fact, there are groups today who claim to be the representatives of this number of believers in the book of Revelation 7.

Now as you're turning to Revelation 7, what I want you to understand is that we are in a very unique part of Revelation because we're going to discuss it, this is a parenthetical chapter, meaning out of the chronology. I'll discuss that in a moment but this is the first time that this happens in the book of Revelation.

So Revelation 7, beginning in verse 1. We're just going to read the first eight verses. It says,

1 And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. 2 And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, 3 Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. 4 And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel. 5 Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand. 6 Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephthalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand. 7 Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand. 8 Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.

Now what may appear on the surface to be somewhat of a monotonous boring list of names and numbers, oh, there's a lot we're going to peel away today to see because as we're going to discover, some of the names listed in Revelation 7 are not listed in the book of Numbers 1 and 2, and some of the names that are listed in the book of Numbers are not listed in Revelation 7.

So as we begin this, this is a parenthetical chapter of scripture. What that means by definition is the introduction of a parenthesis. The best way I can describe chapter 7 is that you're stepping out of the chronology of Revelation. Now remember, up to this point, at least beginning in chapter 6, in chapter 6 we had the opening of the famous first seal and we've seen six of these seals open in succession in chronological order. After that sixth seal was opened and we finished discussing that last week, we now have chapter 7 which is a parenthetical chapter out of the chronology discussing how the Lord moved and worked, and if you'll allow me to use the term, saved people during this horrible time

period that Jesus called the great tribulation. When we get to chapter 8, verse 1, the seventh seal is going to be opened up and then the first of the famous trumpet judgments is going to be opened.

You'll notice on your outline that I've listed for you, we are about to enter a season of parentheses. Now this is critical for our understanding because in chapter 11, by the way, and I put there kind of a question mark in chapter 11, but in chapter 11 is the description of this famous temple in the book of Revelation. Back it up to chapter 10, there is a book that is eaten and then told do not reveal the contents thereof. When you get to chapter 12, it's a description of spiritual warfare, the activity of Satan throughout time. Chapter 13 is a description of the antichrist and, by the way, chapter 14 we're going to get to talk about the 144,000 again.

Now the reason that I laid all that out for you is the chronology, the revealing of the trumpets and the vials and all of the in order events in the book of Revelation, there's not a whole lot left until we get to Jesus' return. What we're about to enter a phase of, even though there are seven trumpets and even though there's seven vials, we're about to hit a section of the book of Revelation that is describing for us not the details of that event as much as what's happening behind the curtain, what's happening behind the scenes, what's been happening in some cases for thousands of years that mankind is now just seeing for the very first time. So chapter 7 is a parenthetical chapter. Do not read this as happening between the sixth and the seventh seal. Now it could occur between the sixth and seventh seal but as we're going to see, what happens in this chapter is more than just that brief time period, it goes before the sixth seal and most likely even after the seventh as well.

Now in this chapter, kind of an introduction, I describe to you what I call the tactic of God, how does he operate, how does he work. Notice what he says to the angles in the four corners of the earth. Now before you believe that the Bible is unscientific, before you believe that it is archaic and out-of-date, in the book of Isaiah 40:22 it says that the Lord looks down upon the circle of the earth, and the gospel of Luke 17 talking about the return of Jesus, it says as lightning and the east and the west, and the picture is that the entire world is affected at one time. So understand that when the Lord uses this concept of four corners, you know, we know it as north, south, east and west, if you take the lines of latitude and longitude, it divides in broad pictures into four distinct sections. What we can grasp in this chapter is the Lord is speaking worldwide. Why is that important? Because beginning in verse 9, next week, it's going to talk about all nations and tongues and tribes coming to know the Lord. This is not regional. This is not just in the Middle East. This is not just in Israel. This is worldwide. So when we speak about the Lord working his salvation plan in people's lives, it is, listen, always worldwide.

So he begins this chapter saying to the four corners of the earth. Now then he moves on a little bit, that the wind should stop, and you see that there are these angels, that they have a job to do. They're to hurt the earth. They're to hurt the trees. This is a section in scripture from chapter 6 to 19 where the wrath of God is being poured out on those who have rebelled against God. This is where it gets a little interesting as far as timing is concerned because the angels are told not to hurt the earth or the trees during this little

time period, and it said that the wind should not blow. Now I'm not a meteorologist and I would never claim to be, but can you imagine what it would feel like and be like if all of a sudden the winds ceased? Do you know how hot it's going to be in the South if the wind stops? I mean, think about that for just a moment. But nonetheless, what is interesting to us is in this chapter it's not that the winds cease and the angels don't hurt the earth or the trees the entire period, but just until the servants are sealed.

Now here's what you and I both know: the Lord can do that in a day, can he not? He could do that in an hour. He could do that over the period of a month. The chronology of how long it takes for him to seal these individuals is not given to us, so these angels could be suspended, the wind could be halted for 30 minutes, we don't know what the time period is. What we do know is that the ministry, the activity, the lives of these who are being spoken of transcend a chronology beyond just the sixth and seventh seal. What we do not know is exactly when this event takes place. It's parenthetical. Now this is just a little Jeffism. Why would I think that the Lord would not tell us when? Because every time the Lord tells us when something's going to happen, we always mess it up. Every single time. And what do we do as humans? We say, "Well, if that's when he's gonna do it, then I'm not gonna get things right until right before." And so the Lord has this way of saying get right because you're supposed to and leave the timing to me.

Alright, so now we get to the people of this chapter, the famous 144,000. Now I know you're going to be shocked but the people who visit you on Saturday morning handing out literature are not these people. They're not. Now when you get to chapter 14, there's a real good litmus test to know if someone who comes to your door claiming to be one of the 144,000 is one of these individuals. Litmus test #1: it says that they are men. Well, if they show up at your house and they're a woman, they can't be. 2. It says they had not known a woman. So if they're married, they can't be. 99.9% of the people who've ever shown up at my door claiming to be a part of the 144,000 are disqualified according to chapter 14 but they love to only stay in chapter 7. We're going to talk more about that in just a moment. But it says that they are sealed. Now there's some precedence here and it may feel a little bit like Bible or Sword drill but I want you to see it with your own eyes.

Go all the way back to the book of Ezekiel. By the way, the book of Ezekiel is referenced all throughout chapter 7 quite a bit. Let me remind you, those of you who have not heard, that there was a major denomination in the United States about 100 years ago that did not allow young people to read the book of Ezekiel until they were 30 years of age. They believed it would cause mental illness and instability. So that being said, let's get crazy.

Ezekiel 9, beginning in verse 4. I know Ezekiel is kind of tough to find. He's right there in the midst of the prophets. It says,

4 And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof... 6 Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at

my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house.

Here in the book of Ezekiel which, by the way, even though he was a prophet of the Babylonian exile, the Israelites had been taken out of their land by the Babylonians, they were over in what we know as Babylon, he's an exilic prophet and so he's speaking to the Israelites of what it's like to go through exile but his prophecies have a twofold application, not only the 70 year exile they were going through then but the future seven year exile that we find in the book of Revelation. That is why Ezekiel will be utilized so much in the book of Revelation. It's also why the prophet Daniel is utilized so much, because Daniel lived during the exile of the Babylonian captivity.

So that being said, in the midst of all this, it describes the Lord going through and setting aside and marking his people so as not to be experiencing the judgment as it is being poured out. They are set aside. Now fast forward back to the book of Revelation and we're going to go to chapter 14. I mentioned to you earlier, chapter 7 and 14 of Revelation are both parenthetical. Chapter 14 and chapter 7 both discussing these famous 144,000, but in chapter 14, verse 1, of the book of Revelation, it says,

1 And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.

So Ezekiel prophesied thousands of years before that when the wrath of God began to be poured out, that he would mark his people specifically. We come to chapter 7 and it says that these 144,000, 12,000 out of each of the 12 tribes, were marked, they were set aside and the location is their forehead, and they are distinguished that they are of the Lord's.

Now I kind of put something in your outline there and notice the location, the "in" versus the "on." Those of you that have been a part of a study regarding the mark of the beast, in some of your Bibles it would say that famous mark of the beast is inside the head or the right hand, some will say on. Some of your Bibles in chapter 14, verse 1, say in the forehead, some say on the forehead. That word that is utilized there in Revelation 14:1, in Revelation 13, that word does not have a limited strict definition. It's the word "epi," like an EpiPen that we might use for allergies. But the word can mean on, can mean in, it can mean through, under, around. The only way to translate it is context. That's it. Well, for the sake of our discussion tonight, I don't know if it will give us a whole lot of, I guess, benefit to discuss whether it's on or if it's in, can we just come to the agreement that God marks his people? God seals his people in chapter 7, these 144,000.

Now these 144,000 are to be distinguished from those that we're going to read about beginning in verse 9, those that are of the nation and tribes and tongues etc. These are a specific group of people from specific tribes, as we're going to see, for a very specific purpose. Now this is where I want to take a time out, alright? You'll notice on your outline I've got some little asterisks there for comparison. In Ezekiel during a time of tribulation and exile, God says he will mark his people on their forehead, correct?

Revelation 14, there are marks on their forehead. Revelation 7, there are marks on their forehead. Turn to Ephesians 1 and I want you to see something very distinct between the days of which you now live and the days that one day will be. Ephesians 1, a beautiful description of the Lord sealing his people.

Now what were they called in Revelation 7? They were called the servants of God. You and I today because of Jesus Christ, what are we called? We're called the sons of God. There's a big distinction and a difference between a servant and a son. In fact, John 1:8, he said that basically that it is a right, it is a privilege, it is an honor to be declared a son of God by faith in Jesus Christ. Ephesians 1:13, it says,

13 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

You and I today don't have the name of the Lord written on our in our forehead, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit. Fast forward a few pages to the right to chapter 4, verse 30. It says to grieve not the Holy Spirit. In other words, don't be a part of activities, don't be a part of things that you shouldn't be a part of.

30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

Now this is where we're going to draw a very distinctive line here. According to 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 it says that we are bought with a price, the blood of Jesus Christ, and our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. That means that when we get saved, when we believe on Jesus, we are sealed by, it is set, it's basically the language of our day would be a down payment, okay? We are sealed. There is a down payment. The Holy Spirit resides inside of us until the day of redemption when we are caught up to be with him. When you get to Revelation between chapter 6 and 19, you don't see anybody "sealed with the Holy Spirit." You don't see anybody being described as the temple of the Holy Spirit, in fact, when we get to chapter 11, the temple is not the body of a believer, it is actually a physical structure that is described in Jerusalem. Here in the book of Revelation, these 144,000 have the name of the Lord on or in their forehead.

You say, "Jeff, why is that so critical to spend so much time on?" Because I think we need to grasp that what we see happening in Revelation 7 is in a completely distinct and different time period than what we're experiencing today. If Revelation 7 when it comes to salvation is to be applied to us today, then we're all in trouble because I don't see the Lord's name on anybody's forehead right now. But according to Revelation 7, there is a day that is coming.

Now here's what I find unique. In Revelation 7, those who are sealed during this time period have the name of the Lord on their forehead, what do those that are not sealed? They have the mark of the beast. Where is it? Their forehead. No wonder the Antichrist's

means of execution is the removal of the head. That's what you see all through the book of Revelation.

So that being said, they are called the servants of God. Now back to chapter 7 of Revelation. We went all over the map. We'll come back, I promise. This is what is critical and, by the way, even those who might show up to your door on a Saturday morning, you can have a dialog about this and they're trained to do so. Notice what it says, they are the servants, very specifically, out of all the tribes of Israel. Notice the phrase "body of Christ" is not used. Notice "family of God" is not used. The tribes of Israel, and what I put out beside this on your outline that I want you to grasp is this: this is a physical description, not a spiritual description because beginning in verse 9, it says there are going to be more than 144,000 that the Lord operates in their lives. There's more than 144,000 to use our terminology that are "saved" during the tribulation. But during this time period, specifically there are 144,000 and I hate to say this but I'm going to go ahead and say it, what we see is they testify or they witness to the world the truth of Jesus Christ.

I'm going to pause for just a moment. Anytime you find anybody or a group of people who have erroneous biblical teaching, most of the time they have right teaching at the wrong time. Think about that for just a moment. Right teaching, wrong time. If you've ever know anybody that believed that if you didn't get dunked in water you couldn't go to heaven, go back to Matthew 3 and if you didn't go through John the Baptist, you weren't following Jesus. It's the right teaching at the wrong time. Someone who says you have to be a part of the 144,000, you have to be from a tribe of Israel, well, in this passage that is true but that is not this time.

So the function of these 144,000 are as, I hate to use the phrase, they're witnesses, they're testifying, but one thing I put that I think's interesting is of the 12 tribes that are listed, Judah is listed first. You know that Judah was one of the small guys, right? Even though that was the tribe that Jesus would come from, this is the only time in scripture Judah is listed first. Why? Because the primary person is Jesus Christ. In fact, the very first verse, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ." So it makes sense that the Lord would list Judah first.

Now there are some substitutions here. If you were to go back to the book of Numbers 1 and 2, if you have trouble with insomnia, Numbers if your friend. Go back to Numbers. So-and-so begat So-and-so and they had so many kids, and they lived so many years, and woo, I mean, it is hard. Numbers 1 and 2 list out the 12 original tribes, the number of their descendants as they're going into the Promised Land. There are two tribes listed in the book of Numbers that are not listed in Revelation 7 and there are two tribes in Revelation 7 that were never an original tribe. What we know as the tribe of Ephraim and the tribe of Dan have been replaced. They're no longer tribes.

Now there are occasions in your life where you will have people visit your door and they don't claim to be a part of the 144,000 but they claim, those are the ones with white shirts, black ties and bicycles, they claim to be descendants of the tribe of Ephraim. Well, I don't want to be a part of a tribe that doesn't get there at the end, do you? Even though it was

there in the beginning, it's not there in the end. Just a little tactic you can use when they show up to your house, and now you know why they never come to my house.

But Ephraim and Dan are replaced. Joseph and Levi take their place. Joseph and Levi were never tribal leaders in the Old Testament. In fact, what we see with Joseph is Joseph received a double blessing of God, remember that? The Lord said, "I'm going to give you a double blessing." How did he do that? Two of his sons were tribal leaders: Ephraim and Manasseh. That was his double blessing. So when Ephraim is removed, and we'll discuss that in a moment, Joseph takes his place. Makes natural sense. When Dan voids his relationship with the Lord and he is removed from the tribal list, Levi or the Levites replace him. What's significant about that is the Levites were never to be owners or possessors of the land, in fact, that's what you see in the Old Testament, the original temple offering of the tithe was a tenth of the land to support the Levites and the priests because they didn't have ownership of anything of a physical possession nature. So these two groups, Joseph and Levi, replace Ephraim and Dan.

Now here's the big question: why? Why would Ephraim and Dan not be in the list anymore? Here's your simple answer: idolatry. It's idolatry. They put their eyes on something other than the Lord and the Lord said, "All right, we're done with this." Now I'm going to summarize the whole Old Testament real quick. The Lord gave them plenty of chances to repent. It wasn't a one and done thing, it wasn't like college basketball today, you play one season and go to the pros. I mean, it wasn't one and done. The Lord gave them time after time after time after time. And so beginning with Ephraim, Ephraim's idolatry just for the sake of time we won't go back into Hosea, but it's listed there on your outline. Ephraim was considered wild. He was a rebel. He was an idolater and the Lord not only warned him but also told him that he would no longer possess an inheritance because of his idolatry. Now Dan, to me, is the interesting one. I mean, both of them are idolaters but Dan, there's so much more that is given about him, and again in the interest of time, I'm not going to have us go back and read all these passages in the Old Testament but what we see about Dan's idolatry, in the book of Amos 8 he is removed. The Lord said, "Enough is enough." And Dan is decommissioned, Dan is told that he is no longer a part of the tribal organization of the Lord.

Now when he's removed, the thing that's interesting about Dan is this. 1. The first incident of anybody cursing God in the Bible comes from someone who's a descendant of Dan. So the idolatry is running deep. In other words, what I want you to hear, it's not like a generation showed up and the Lord said, "Whoa, this is a bad generation. I'm done with you guys." This had been going on for a very long time and there does come a point where the Lord says, "Enough's enough. I'm done. Enough's enough." So the first incident of somebody cursing the Lord in the Bible is in Leviticus 24 and it's a descendant of what we know as the tribe of Dan.

Second of all, in Judges 17 through 18, at some point for homework if you want to go back and read those two chapters, we have a good summary of all the stuff that is happening. In that chapter, Dan shows up with Ephraim and Levi all in the same passage, and so the two that are removed and the one that is substituted for, are all there together

and you almost get this picture that the Lord is pulling his favor from these two and replacing it with one of which Joseph isn't mentioned in this passage but Levi is. Judges 18, this is intriguing. When Dan goes both feet into idolatry, here's what he requests. I'm not making this up. I'm not doing conjecture. This is Judges 18:19. He wants somebody to lead him who is a father and a priest. Does that sound familiar to anybody? Someone who is a priest and who is called a father? Interesting that a lot of the governance and a lot of the structure that we this week celebrate having removed ourselves from 500 years ago, looks eerily similar to what the Israelites got caught up into when they got off track and that's what we celebrate this week. 500 years ago, we celebrate we got back on track. We had gotten off track. We had started looking like the world. We had become idolatrous. We had started doing it the world's way and just calling it church. That's what Dan did and they sought after a person who would be called father and called priest, who would lead them and, listen, bring them their idols from far away, and finally in Judges 18:24, he is just flat out called an idolater.

So when you get to Revelation 7, the 12 tribes of Israel, they surface again. Now this is something to just throw in historically. I've had friends throughout the years who are Jewish not only by birth but by faith. And anytime you ask a Jewish individual kind of their personal religious leans, some of them claiming to be Orthodox, some of them claiming to be conservative, I had a friend of mine that called himself a conservodox because he went to two synagogues, okay? It's possible. And there's multiple avenues and just like, you know, we've got a bunch of different kinds of Baptists, there's a bunch of different kind of Jews too. Where do we think we got this from? We learned it from them. It's okay. But when you begin to listen to them and to hear from them, to hear their story, one of the intriguing things to do is say, "Then what tribe are you from?" Do you know what their answer is? "I don't know." They don't know.

Now some of them have heard a rumor, some of them have said, "Well, I know So-and-so who knows So-and-so who knows So-and-so and they think that." You remember they were displaced for 2,000 years. When you get to Revelation 7, though, nobody is questioning it, nobody is doubting it. They know who they are. So there's a day coming in the future that those of these specific tribes will somehow, someway know again who they are the descendants of. You say, "How is that going to happen?" I really don't know but here's a good idea. Did you know in the book of Ezra when the Israelites go back out of captivity, kind of a parallel to here, when they get out of captivity, they don't know what to do, they don't know how to do it, they go digging in the dirt and they find a scroll, and when they find that scroll, all of a sudden they're like, "Aha! This is how we build this building. This is what we do. Here's the blueprint." You do know they're digging in Jerusalem today, right? They're digging under and all those... It's possible that all these details one day will be discovered and say if your name is or if you come from, then you're of the tribe of. But the thing for us to note tonight in Revelation 7, this is not a description of spiritual belief, these are physical entities, 12 tribes, 12,000 each. Two of the tribes are no longer because of idolatry and Joseph and Levi have replaced.

Last but not least, in or on their foreheads. The Lord marks them. By the way, in Ezekiel 9, we read it, he said, "This is how I'm going to do it." This is case in point, the devil

never has a creative idea of his own ever. He doesn't know how to do anything except imitate what God does. God marks, he's going to mark. Everything the devil does in history or in your life is a twisted imitation of what God desires to do. God desired to mark his people and set them aside, so what does the Antichrist do? He marks his people and he sets them aside. Interesting discussion about "in" versus "on," but for the sake of tonight can we just agree it's in the forehead and there is a mark that is identifiable from the shoulders up.

Alright, that being said, any questions about the 144,000 or anything related to chapter 7 of Revelation? And if nobody's hand goes up, that's because we had Tex-Mex and it's sitting heavy. Anybody? Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Yes. Dan in Genesis 49:17, you're right. It's in the second to the last chapter of Genesis. Dan is called a serpent and an adder. He's also called a lion. Interesting that Dan who is an idolater, who is removed, is the only person outside of Satan himself that is described as a lion and a serpent. Now think about that. Satan is called that old serpent, right, more subtle than any creature in Genesis 3, Revelation 12, that old serpent. In 1 Peter, what is he called? He's called a lion that roars around seeking whom he may devour. You're absolutely right, Dan is the only person other than Satan that those two animals are used to describe him and that's in Genesis 49.

[unintelligible]

Oh, I could have gone about two more pages on Dan but you and I would be the only ones interested in it. So go ahead, keep going.

[unintelligible]

Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Yes, that is correct. Yes, when you get to the book of Daniel, I believe that passage is in chapter 10 if I'm not mistaken. It's after chapter 9, I know that, I think, positive. If I'm wrong, forgive me, I messed up. But in the book of Daniel, it is said that the Antichrist does not regard the faith of his fathers. Is it 11? I was only one off. I was close, but I was right because I said after 9, correct? And 11 is after 9, right? Yes, I got that one right. Okay, good deal.

Alright, does not regard the faith of his fathers and, again, I know, you, sir, know this and I know most of us do, when it comes to the opinions of who the Antichrist will be, there's a million of them, but because of that passage, there are many who say because Dan was an idolater, he's described exactly as the Antichrist is in that one verse in Genesis 49:17, that the Antichrist will be a descendant of the tribe of Dan. That is a valid assumption based on those passages. Now there's a lot of other aspects that are involved in who this Antichrist is but it would be hard to argue that, that he would be from the tribe of Dan.

Now today and let me kind of throw some interesting fuel on that fire, the Jewish people have not stayed within their tribe. They don't even know which tribe they're from and so it's kind of like if I went and took a DNA test, there's a lot of different stuff in me, right? So I don't know if Daniel 11, if that were to be absolutely literally prophetic, does that mean he's 100% from the tribe of Dan? That would be tough but having a portion of, I think that's completely feasible. But the description of a serpent and a lion, an idolater, and one who forsakes the God of his fathers, is exactly what Dan did and it would make sense that at least that approach returns in the Antichrist.

Does that help? I'm glad you brought up Genesis 49. I didn't go there but he's the only person other than Satan himself that's described by those two animals. Intriguing. Anybody else? Anything else? Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

I am so glad you brought that up. The question he asked is: this mark on the forehead, visible, nonvisible, you know, erasable ink, what are we dealing with here, you know? Is it only visible by the angelic beings that are sealing them? Can they see each other? Can the Antichrist see? Lots of good questions there, right? It boils down to, and forgive me for going back to syntax, it goes back to that word "epi," you know, in chapter 14, verse 1. Some of your Bibles say "in the forehead," some say "on the forehead." Again, that word "epi" does not have a specific definition.

Now this is the way I like to describe the word "epi," alright? If Dan Stricklin, our student pastor, if he sent me a text message right now and said, "Jeff, your boys are in the Well," that's where our students are now, I'm good, right? If he sends me a text that says, "Your boys are on the Well," that's a whole other story, isn't it? That's a big tall building and we gonna exercise some forthright parenting, so to speak. But the reason is say that is the Well is still the building, the question is where is the location in reference to the building. The forehead is the item and based on that word it could be "on" or it could be "in." The word can only be interpreted by context. We cannot, I cannot put my foot down and say that word means "in." I can't put my foot down and say that word means "on" because it also can mean "under" and it came mean "around" too. But we know that he would not put his name around our forehead or over our forehead, it's either "in" or it's "on," alright?

What I find intriguing and, by the way, as you look through your Bible or for those of you who have electronic Bibles with all kinds of different versions, the version of

scripture that most prevalently does the word "in" is what we collectively know as the old King James Version, which when they translated it had never witnessed the use of a hypodermic needle. There was no medical reference to placing something inside the body and so in context, what they were alluding to was something, this is to your point, something that is very secretive, something that is only for those that are in the know, not for display for all. The mark of the beast, the same word is used. I believe, now this is just Jeff here, when you read the book of Revelation through and you read it over and over and over again, and by the way, it only takes about 30 minutes to do so, and you just kind of absorb yourself in the tone of it, there is this idea of nobody really knows what's really going on. Can I really trust him or is he just pretending? This guy's acting like he's been a good guy for three years and now all of a sudden he turns, and so I don't believe the feeling we get from Revelation is we're going to have neon signs saying whose side we're on. I tend to go more toward the "in" translation because I think there's going to be times where it looks like they're one of us but I'm not quite sure. Remember, 2 Corinthians says that Satan himself disguises himself as an angel of light.

So I don't know if that helps with your question but I don't, you know, back in the '70s we looked at these passages and said that we're going to have like tattoos and bar codes on our foreheads and that was kind of the theme that was going on. I don't see it as a necessarily open visibleness, I see it more of a secretive because the Antichrist comes in stealthily, he comes in under the disguise of good but he's evil, and here the Lord is preserving his people. I just don't see the Lord as someone setting us up for instant retaliation because the minute you walked out of your house, it would be, "Woohoo, we know who they are." But here is what is different there is a complete different lifestyle. One is following the Antichrist and following every piece of propaganda he puts out, the other one is living a very peculiar different life and is secretly worshiping the Lord. Does that make sense? You have two different lifestyles no matter what the outside appearance may be.

I don't know if that helps. Now let me be honest with you, I'm going to say this and I've said this on other issues in Revelation, when I get to heaven one day, if I breathe my last breath before all this takes place one day and I get to the pearly gates, I don't think the Lord's going to say, "Jeff, the word was 'on,' you don't make it." It is important to talk about but it's not that important. Does that make any sense? It's critical to our understanding but this is not a salvation issue for us. If you're in Revelation 7 one day, it's a pretty important issue, whose mark do you bear, the Antichrist's or the Christ?

Does that help at all? A little bit there? Anybody else on the 144,000? I thought we might... Oh, yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

See, I knew someone was going to bring that up tonight. Yes. Nimrod. By the way, I had a middle school football coach that when we messed up would call us Nimrods. "Come here, Nimrod!" I just thought that was an ugly word. I didn't know that that was somebody in the Bible back then. But Nimrod was the character in the book of Genesis

who is responsible for cultivating what we know as Baal worship, okay? Nimrod ascended, well, the story of Baal worship and all that is that he ascended "up into heaven" and that he had a child with his mother, that's the story, and his mother is memorialized by seated holding a baby in her arms. Does that look like any other statues in our world? Yeah. Eerie, once again, how when we get our eyes off Jesus and we put our eyes on how the world does it, we end up walking down the same paths that we did years and years and years ago.

So to your point that Nimrod and Molech and when the Israelites, remember when they would offer their children unto Molech or children unto the fire, they were to sacrifice their children. When Jesus was there in Matthew 16 and he gathers his disciples around and says, "Who do you say that I am? The gates of hell shall not prevail." If you actually go to that place in Caesarea Philippi where he actually preached that message, there is a place to the side where the Baal worshipers would sacrifice their children to Molech. That's what they did, so it began with Nimrod, you have that interesting imagery, Baal worship splits into Baal and Ashtaroath, the female side who is called the Queen of Heaven. The parallels can keep going, folks, if you want me to. Then it matriculates itself in Jezebel and all that issue, and you eventually get to a place where they're sacrificing their babies and offering money so as not to be thrown into the fire by Nimrod, this great heavenly entity. Dan is a descendant of these guys so he fits the pattern much like what was brought up earlier of the serpent, the lion. And here, it's kind of just one big bore text, isn't it? It just kind of all starts feeding and you're like, "Oh my."

So to the earlier question is the Antichrist going to be of the tribe of Dan, wouldn't shock me because if you start looking back at the history there. But you had to bring us back over there. I just had memories of old football practices. I appreciate that because I go called Nimrod almost every day of my life growing up. "Come on, Nimrod!" Why is it that all coaches have the same voice? Have you noticed that? "Come on!" Do they teach all that? "Come on, boy!" I don't know. Sorry. I apologize. "Can I depend on you?" I'm having flashbacks, man. I appreciate that. Thanks. All of a sudden my body just started hurting.

Anyway, the 144,000, Dan, any of these Jehu's? It gets a little crazy. Anybody? Alright, we're good with that? Oh, I'm sorry. Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

From one extreme to the other. Go.

[unintelligible]

Oh, I don't understand either. It's okay.

[unintelligible]

Yes, the question that he's asking. He's asking me if this is what I'm proposing, that these are Jewish Hebrew men based on chapter 14, who have found Jesus and who are proclaiming him? Yes. They are those, in fact, and the reason, it may not have said that specifically here in chapter 7, when you get to chapter 14 it says they preach the everlasting gospel. They proclaim the good news. In fact, it goes on later to say that by the word of their testimony. So oftentimes the simple response, forgive me for being simple, is the 144,000 are the number of gospel preachers in the tribulation, and beginning in verse 9 of chapter 7, it says without number, those are the numbers of believers during the tribulation, that these are set aside gospel proclaimers.

Does that help? Okay. By the way, I'm going to go there. You didn't go there but you did. Do you find it interesting, we've talked about the Baal worship, we've talked about Nimrod, that the preachers here are men who don't marry? Do you see the analogy again? In other words, anytime our eyes get off Jesus and get onto an institution or an organization, we start structuring ourselves to look different than what God's called us to look like and it's real easy to do.

Anybody else on this subject matter before we go to the famous database? It's good stuff. That's not a question but I like it. Alright, here we go. We're off the 144,000, right? Uh-oh, I've got to go to my database.

Here we go and, oh, you've got to be kidding me? Chuck, I need verification here. Come here. Y'all are gonna think that I have lost my mind. Would you, I don't have another microphone but you can, I want you to read the question. Read the question.

[unintelligible]

Alright, one of you asked why was Dan omitted from the 12 tribes in Revelation 7? Answered. I could not have made that up. There is no way.

Alright, next question. Alright, it says in Luke 9:23, oh, it says as it says in Luke 9:23, how does one deny himself, take up his cross and follow Christ?

Really good question. Go to Luke 9:23. We've gone from the prophetic to the very practical real fast. Luke 9. By the way and this is, as you're finding Luke 9 it's an opportunity for me to give a very shameless plug for what we know is happening beginning January 21, 2018 here at First Baptist. We're going to have the opportunity as a church to go through a discipleship study known as Master Life. The key verse of Master Life is Luke 9:23. It says, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me daily." For those of you who have pondered and said, "You know, I just don't know if I should." If you include our staff and our deacons who've already completed it, our leaders who are now going through it, our students, not college students because they haven't signed up yet because they don't know their schedule yet, but our students and our adults that have already signed up, today we cross the thousand person barrier. So there are more than a thousand of us who have either completed, going through, or are going to complete this process of discipleship in 2018.

Now I gave you that plug because I want to give you time for Luke 9:23. It says, "And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away? For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels." Phew, that kind of tells it the way it is, does it not?

Now allow me to take this very simple verse, yet so profound, and just to break it down like I like to do in three different categories: historical, doctrinal, spiritual. Historical. In the context, Jesus, this is a part of his ministry, he is walking to and fro and going about, he's answering questions, he's performing miracles, great teachings, and in the process about the cost of discipleship, Peter has just confessed him as the Christ. You know that famous passage we just alluded to in Matthew 16? Luke 9 is the parallel passage. Caesarea Philippi, look at all these religions and, "Who does the world say that I am?" Remember what they said? "Well, some think you're Jeremiah. Some think you're this guy. Some think you're Elijah. Some think you're just a good prophet." And Jesus said, "Who do you say that I am?" And Peter spoke up and said, "You're the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus said, "Oh, flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my Father who is in heaven." Immediately thereafter, Jesus begins to teach them. He says, "There's coming a day where my life is going to end. I'm going to be placed on a cross. I'm going to bleed for the salvation, the forgiveness of sins of humanity." Remember what this same Peter said? "Not on my watch, Jesus! No! That's not gonna happen!" Remember what Jesus said? "Get behind me, Satan." Immediately after that, Jesus speaks these words and he says, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, let him take up his cross and follow me daily." Historically that's where it takes place.

Let me do some doctrinal and then I'm going to apply it spiritually here. I've got a few moments. Doctrinally it's spoken to a specific person, at a specific time, for a specific reason. Jesus is addressing the disciples but Peter in specific. Did Peter do anything significant the night before Jesus' crucifixion? What did he do? Deny. "If any man come after me, let him deny himself," and do what? "Take up his cross." Alright, let's go back about 2,000 years and let's just speculate. Peter is there outside of the high priest's home. It's the middle of the night, the trial has commenced. Jesus is being taken up and down into this dungeon area. These people keep coming up to Peter and saying, "Aren't you one of his?" "Oh no, I don't know that guy." "Oh, you have the dialect of a Galilean, you must be one of his." "No, No," and he actually begins to cuss, to curse at one of these young ladies. What do you think it would have looked like for Peter if Peter that night when Jesus is being condemned by the entire Sanhedrin, if Peter had said, "Yeah, I'm his"? There wouldn't have been three crosses the next day, there would have been four. Let that sink in tonight. If any man, to Peter, if you deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me. Didn't Jesus carry his cross to Golgotha?

Now that's the doctrinal application, let's get spiritual. What does that mean? That means that you and I today, born again believers 2,000 years later, what do we glean from this? It's real simple. When you get saved, you have to deny yourself. It's no longer what you want, doing it your way, thinking you can do it your way. You're saying God's way is the only way. I'm denying myself. What does it mean to take up your cross? That means to sacrifice, to give of yourself and to do it his way, not your way, every day of your life. Jesus is saying, "Hey, you believe in me, you call yourself one of my children, you're a 'Christian'? It's not what you want anymore, it's what I desire for you." Take up your cross. How many times have you heard the statement, "Well, that's your cross to bear. That's my cross to bear." Take up your cross and follow me daily.

So historically it's right after this great confession, doctrinally, woo, what a statement to Peter, spiritually it gives us a picture of our salvation, an encouragement, but here's your final thought. How did Peter do that night? He didn't do real well, did he? Did Jesus give him a second chance? Yes. When we mess up, does Jesus give us a second chance? Yes, alright?

Let's pray.

Lord, as we depart from this place, thank you, thank you, thank you for second chances. Lord, we desire to deny ourselves, we desire to take up our cross daily and we confess we struggle. Help us, O God, to follow you daily. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Alright, as y'all depart, we talked about the 144,000, I know it's kind of complex but I wrote a little book called "Simple" if you're interested in it. It talks about those guys back there. So that being said, see you on Sunday. God bless.