

Ask Jeff

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Crossroads Ministries

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Well, hello, good evening. It is 6:30 Central Standard Time. Oh my, yes, today is a very special day in our culture and it appears that the inflatable heart is here at Ask Jeff. Welcome. So are you going to stay on stage with me all night?

["No."]

No. OK, thank you very much. No, gosh, don't. Okay, I unplugged him. All right. Anybody watching online or listening on the radio is like, what just happened? Yes, somebody walked out of the door in an inflatable heart costume tonight because it's First Baptist Opelakia. That's what we do. Here's the thing I'm going to shock you with, that's not even Dunbar. So you never know what you're going to get from the crew around here.

But it is my privilege to welcome you to our large group adult Bible study here Wednesday night, First Baptist Church of Opelika. Yes, it is technically on the calendar, a very special day known as Valentine's Day, which means that while we're doing Bible study, there might be some chocolates left on the table there that you can enjoy while we're doing Bible study. Tonight's Bible study, if this is your very first time with us here in person or watching online or listen on the radio a few days later, this is a Bible study that is unique because every subject, every topic, every passage, every point of discussion is originated by you. That's right, you have the opportunity tonight to ask any question you want, talk about any subject you want, or discuss any passage you want.

Now, let me differentiate between Wednesday night's and the days of the week. And you say, what do you mean the days of the week? We actually have a YouTube channel that does a question of the week Monday through Friday. Now, on our question of the day, we typically answer it within 90 seconds to two or three minutes, okay? The best way or the way to submit a question to the YouTube channel is to use our websites. fbcopelika.com slash Ask Jeff or AskJeff.net. You submit a question to those respective websites. It goes to the portal for the daily questions. All right? Wednesday night, we use either text messaging or for those in-house, your hands in the air. Now before I address tonight's means of asking questions, let me remind you that you can submit a question to both. It's okay. And the reason I would encourage you to do so is that we are guaranteed every week to answer five questions on our YouTube channel. I cannot guarantee that on Wednesday night and the reason is because y'all like to chase rabbits and ask secondary

questions and put your hand in there, which I love to do, but Wednesday night also affords us to spend a little more time on each respective question. So if your question maybe hasn't come up in a couple of weeks, if you'll submit it to the YouTube channel, you'll get kind of a preview of when it shows up on Wednesday night. But the best way to submit a question is with text messaging. Area code 334-231-2313. It doesn't matter where you are, you can be in the front row in house, you can be on the other side of the camera, wherever you are you can submit a text message question.

Oh Sir, where have you been the last few moments? Oh outside Mm-hmm funny. He's out of breath and he's sweating. I wonder what he's been doing.

Okay that being said, when you submit your question or your concern or your biblical passage by way of text messaging, it goes into our Wednesday night portal, eventually ends up on the screen. Now, you can submit a follow-up question as well. Whatever topic we're on, passage we're on, if you want to dig a little deeper, maybe take a tangent too, if you ask a follow-up question, it will show up in a different colored font and I will know we are staying on topic. Now, that's by way of text messaging. Those of you that are here physically in person, you have the opportunity to raise your hand. When you raise your hand, you get to take the conversation any direction you want to take it. However, you lose your anonymity because we know who you are. We can see who you are. But let me remind you, if you put your hand in the air to ask a question, your voice nor will your image be seen or heard on any of our media outlets. The radio won't pick it up, television won't pick it up, the internet. I will repeat your question so that those watching or listening can hear your question, but we want to make sure that you remain anonymous out there, but you can't remain anonymous in here, but it's okay because we're all family, so it's all good.

So, without further ado, how about we do some Bible study? Does that sound good? All right, here we go. Question number one. It says, Isaiah chapter 13 verse 12, who is the man more precious than fine gold? Also, what does chased roe mean in verse 14? Okay. Isaiah chapter 13, as you're turning to Isaiah 13, just a little reminder. You may or may not be familiar with this but Isaiah is typically looked at or commented on in two respective sections, chapters 1 through 39 and chapters 40 through 66. What you see in the first 39 chapters is an overwhelming communication or picture of the impending judgment of God. Now, obviously that's what we're about to deal with here in chapter 13. In chapters 40 through 66, you have kind of a theme of God addressing and ultimately resolving humanity's rebellion by his interceding on their behalf. Here's the incredible thing about the book of Isaiah: first 39 chapters impending judgment, chapters 40 through 66 is God resolving it. You may or may not know this, did you know your Old Testament has 39 chapters and your New Testament has 27? They parallel the book of Isaiah.

We're in chapter 13 per this question, so we are in that section of Isaiah that typically deals with the judgment of God. Here in chapter 13, there is a discussion primarily about those of Babylon, which makes sense because it's Babylon that takes them captive, it's Babylon that's ultimately going to pay the price, and per the question, when we get to verse 12, it says, "I will make a man more precious than fine gold, even a man than the

gold wedge of Ophir." And I know you're thinking, what does that mean? Well, anytime you see a verse in the Bible, such as this one, that seems somewhat confounding or even at times confusing, one of the best things we can do is find what is the context of this verse. Now I've already given you a little heads up. We're in the book of Isaiah. We know that this is a prophet that is speaking of or preaching about the impending judgment of Babylon. We know that it's in the section of Isaiah that primarily deals with the judgment of God. So we read this one verse, we don't quite know what it means, so one of the best things you can do is go back and read a verse or multiple verses before and after it to kind of give you a picture of what's happening.

So if you go back to verse 9, it says, "Behold, the day of the Lord cometh." Push pause for a moment. The day of the Lord is an Old Testament passage or an Old Testament statement that would be what we would call the Second Coming, the judgment of God. The day of the Lord involves not only Jesus' physical return, but more importantly per passage or chapter 13 of Isaiah, deals with the judgment of God against the rebellion of humanity in that time period in the book of Revelation that we typically refer to as the Great Tribulation because that's what Jesus called it. So anytime you see the phrase "day of the Lord," this is the judgment of God that's taking place.

So, "Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible." Can we all conjecture that the Lord is tired of it? He's done, right? Verse 12, "I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir. Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger. And it shall be as the chased roe, and as a sheep that no man taketh up: they shall every man turn to his own people, and flee every one into his own land."

Now the question that was asked is about verse 12 and about verse 14. Now the question about verse 12 is, who is this man more precious than gold? And verse 14, what is this roe that is running away? So when you look at it in context, going back to verse 9, day of the Lord, judgment, wrath, all kinds of things happening, if you take that verse and you kind of overlay the book of Revelation, one of the things you discover in chapter 6 through 19 of the book of Revelation is there's an incredible amount of loss of life. In fact, there are, you know, seals that break loose and with that seal significant numbers of humanity losing their life. There are judgments that take place. And just as a simplistic overview, whatever the population is when that first seal is opened, who I believe personally is the Antichrist, but whenever that happens, from that first seal being opened until the literal physical return of Jesus Christ, there is about a reduction of 75% of humanity's population. An enormous loss of life which explains verse 12, in the midst of God's judgment, in the midst of all these terrible things, a found man or a man is more precious than gold. In other words, humanity, our existence, there is such a loss of life

that any life that is found is seen as precious. So we get that kind of perspective that humanity, I hate to say this, has been so judged were very thin quantitatively.

Then you get to verse 14, and it talks about this roe and this sheep, and what it's saying there is even among those that remain, they are like a roe that is being chased, or a sheep that is going by their way. Let me put it in terminology that most of us, or a significant number of us can understand. If you've ever been deer hunting, okay, now there's a reason, the radio people may get upset, but I'm gonna say, there's a reason we call it hunting and not killing, right? Y'all understand that, right? If you've ever desired to acquire that certain buck or whatever it may be, you understand they're not wanting you to get them, correct? They're running from you. There's a reason that we wear the clothes we wear and we actually put scents on us to hide our scent because if they get whiff of us, they're gone. They don't want to be caught, correct? Now think about that context of verse 14, the roe that is being chased, the sheep that is wandering, you get the picture that God's given that even humanity that is left has no desire for the things of God. They're literally running from him. In fact, there's a passage in Revelation where it says even in the midst of all the judgments of God, it says humanity still does not repent of their wickedness. They still do not turn unto him. And so really what Isaiah chapter 13 is doing in a very prophetic form is giving us insight to what the book of Revelation will one day show in absolute fulfillment.

So hopefully that helps a little bit. Again, there's verses all over the Bible that when you read them in isolation, you're like, I don't know what this means. Kind of peel it back a little bit. Look at the verses before it. Look at the verses behind it and get some context to kind of give us color commentary. Any other Isaiah 13 questions? Everybody's good with Isaiah 13? Oh, yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Well, we just print the questions as they're submitted. I wasn't gonna call out the misspelling but it is a roe as in the animal not a row. Yes, that is correct. You got it. So we, hey, here's the deal, we don't spellcheck y'all. It's up to y'all. Now sometimes y'all get a little creative. But everybody's good with Isaiah 13?

Here we go. It says, oh boy, that's not what it says, I said that. It says, I love the question why, not what. Why were the last 12 verses of Mark removed in all the new King James versions? All right, go to the book of Mark, chapter 16. Let's have some fun tonight. Some of y'all decided to get a little spicy. Mark chapter 16, there are, for those of you who may not be familiar with this, there are a host or there are a selection of passages in your New Testament that for a lack of better terms, have been debated and discussed regarding their veracity. Are they actually a part of the original text? Is this actually what the Bible first gave us or is this something that humanity has inserted for their own purposes, whatever it may be?

So you go to the Gospel of Mark chapter 16, you pick it up in verse 1, it begins like all the other gospels on resurrection day. "And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene,

and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him. And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great. And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you. And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid." Now, you may notice that many of your Bibles will have either a footnote, an asterisk, a set of parentheses, there will be something there, and then communicated below or on the side is some type of brief explanation that the rest of the gospel of Mark is not found in respect of manuscripts. I'll discuss that in just a moment.

Let me address a very practical response to this question, and then we're going to get kind of a cerebral response. The practical response to this question is this: the book of Mark begins in verse 1 of chapter 1, "The gospel of Jesus Christ." You know what the word gospel means? Good news. If you stop this gospel in verse 9, how do you have good news? You've got women who are afraid and not telling anybody about it. Is that good news? That's not good news at all. If you read the rest of the gospel of Mark chapter 16, you get a whole lot of good news because you have Jesus appearing, you have them celebrating, and you have the gospel going to the ends of the earth. Okay?

Now, that's kind of a practical response to this. Let me get in somewhat of a cerebral response. I want you to look at your Bible, no matter which Bible you have, at some point or some level, most of them have some type of footnote or reference, and say one of two statements. One of those statements will be as this, "The most ancient and most reliable manuscripts do not contain the following verses." Some of you all see that in your Bibles? It's there. Some of your Bibles, we can get a little more specific. They will say that the manuscripts Sinaiticus and Vaticanus do not contain the following verses. Now, when yours says the most ancient and most reliable, they're actually meaning Sinaiticus and Vaticanus. Okay? So, their argument is that we have these two ancient documents that are supposedly so reliable that they do not contain these verses and so therefore they should be excluded. Okay? Now, I'm going to do a really odd approach to this question. I want you to turn to the book of Hebrews chapter 9. Turn to Hebrews chapter 9. Just a little fun exercise tonight. Now remember the footnote that was put in your Bible in Mark chapter 16. We're gonna go to Mark chapter 9. I mean, I'm sorry, Hebrews chapter 9. We could go to Mark 9, but we're gonna go to Hebrews 9. Hebrews chapter 9. I'm gonna read verse 23 and 24 of Hebrews chapter 9. You ready? It says, "It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." Alright, it's a great statement. Okay, fine, doesn't have really anything to do with Mark chapter 16, right? Here's what I want you to look at.

I want you to look at the end of verse 24 or at the beginning of verse 25. Do you see any footnote there about ancient manuscripts? No. Do you see any footnote there about Sinaiticus or Vaticanus? Does anybody, does any Bible, I know I can only talk to those that are in person, does anybody have it? Here's what I find fascinating. Remember back in Mark 16 it said that Vaticanus didn't have those passages? Did you know that Vaticanus does not include Hebrews 9:25 to the end of the Bible? They didn't tell you that, did they? Wasn't that convenient? See, one of the biggest problems is I went to seminary and they actually taught me how to read Greek. Isn't that scary? And the thing that's frightening to me is they tell you what they want to tell you that you haven't studied when it's convenient for their agenda. See, when you get to the end of Hebrews chapter 9, it goes into chapter 10. You know what chapter 10 says? There is nobody that's qualified to mediate your sins but Jesus Christ. There's nobody. Oh, and by the way, if you leave out the end of Hebrews and James and 1st, 2nd, 3rd, John and Jude and Revelation, then you've removed all or the majority of the prophetic statements about the Second Coming. Yet none of your Bibles tell you they don't have those passages either. Isn't that convenient?

So in other words, what has happened here is you have, and I'm just going to call it out because I'm feeling that way, it's a feisty night, what you're seeing is a product of an agenda, okay? Because I'm here to tell you that if you go back and do the research, they're absolutely telling you the truth. Sinaiticus and Vaticanus do not have those verses, okay? They are older than the manuscripts that do. But is it always true that oldest is best? I'm going to ask you a very honest rhetorical question. In today's world, is the news outlet that reports the story first always the most accurate? Who's usually the most accurate? It is the outlet that kind of sits back, lets the dust settle, see what we really have versus what we don't have, and then they report that which has been verified to be true. So again on a very practical yet cerebral scale what we see here is there are some ancient manuscripts that have bigger issues than Mark chapter 16. They're not telling you about Hebrews chapter 10 and they're putting doubt and questions in your mind. They are the older ones but that does not mean they have allowed the quote dust to settle. What's fascinating is that the manuscripts that we have that do contain the last passages of Mark chapter 16 are those that were done under the umbrella of dust settling and under the umbrella of orthodoxy. You say, what do you mean the umbrella of orthodoxy? Well, you may not realize this, but the first couple hundred years of Christianity, we couldn't figure out who Jesus was. I don't know if you realize that, but the big debate, number one in the first century was, was he even a flesh? In the second and the third century it was, was he eternal with the Father or was he a created being? These manuscripts came out during a time where we hadn't figured out Jesus yet. So you understand why there might be some issues there. They were the first to report, but they didn't have all the data. They didn't have all the information. And if you leave this chapter at verse 9, you do not get a visibly witnessed resurrected Jesus, which is problematic because in 1 Corinthians 15 it says part of the gospel is they saw him in the flesh and you don't have that in Mark chapter 16 if you remove these last verses.

So again, I would argue adamantly that they are valid, they have veracity to them, and they should be embraced no matter what the footnote on your Bible says, if that makes

sense. Questions, thoughts, concerns, issues? It's a famous discussion about Mark chapter 16 that maybe you already got figured out and you're good to go. Everybody's good? All right, oh, follow up. It says, since the King James Version translators used Easter instead of Passover in Acts 12 and all the other versions translate Pascha to Passover in Acts 12, it appears to create a contradiction. Would the other translators have done that intentionally or as to discredit the Bible? Okay, go over to Acts chapter 12. Somebody's interested in what we call textual criticism. We can go there all night long. Acts chapter 12. Let me tell you about Acts chapter 12. We have, not only the arrest of Peter and some of the apostles, we have the first martyrdom of one of the apostles. James, whom we believe to be James the Lesser, is going to lose his life for the sake of gospel at Herod's hand. Don't worry, Herod gets his own hand taken, literally head, at the end of the chapter. I'm going to read verses 1 through 4 and then address this question as it is written. It says, "Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword. And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.) And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people." Now, some of your Bibles, per the question, if they're not a King James, will actually have the word "Passover" there and I'm going to be absolutely forthright and honest with you, the quote word that is there in Greek is pascha. and pascha literally translated is Passover. It really is, so the question is why would a group of men translating the Bible, why would they take a, can we be honest, pagan word, pagan celebration, Easter, you do know it was a pagan celebration, why would they put a pagan word and put it in place of a word that every other place in the Bible pascha is translated Passover? Why would there be such a discrepancy? The key to this question is in verse 3. Notice what it says in verse 3 at the end in parenthesis, "These were the days of unleavened bread." Unleavened bread and the celebration of Passover were synonymous with one another, right? Here's the problem. What did Herod say he was going to do? He was going to, quote, let him out after this. Okay? The problem you have is that with the chronology of unleavened bread and Passover, you do realize that it does not always fall in line with what we know as the secular, now Christianized, celebration of Easter. I'll give you an example. This year, we are going to celebrate what we know as Easter at the end of March. Passover is three weeks later in April. Again, now, I get on my high horse every now and then. I can't change history. I wish I could. If I were, quote, king for a day, this is one of the things I'd change. If I could change anything we would celebrate the resurrection of Jesus on the Sunday morning the following week of Passover because that's actually when it happened, okay? The problem is thanks to the fourth century and the quote-unquote Christianization of the Roman Empire, we merged with what we know is the secular celebration of Easter and now we celebrate it on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the spring equinox. It's something crazy like that, right? And it changes every year, okay?

The reason that it is important is because if you read this passage chronologically, to allow them in prison, Peter's the one in prison, right, to allow him in prison and not to be released until after Easter or after Passover, you realize if you make that word Passover, chronologically Passover has already taken place because it says this is the feast of

unleavened bread. Unleavened bread is synonymous with Passover, but unleavened bread lasts longer. Do you understand that? In other words, they start roughly the same time, but unleavened bread ends later. Look at verse 3, "These are the days of unleavened bread." What you and I know as the actual celebration of Passover had actually taken place and so for him to say, I'll leave him there until the Passover is over, would actually be a chronological problem so they took what we know as the secular term of Easter, which by the way, would have been the celebration that Herod celebrated. Herod didn't celebrate Passover, he was a pagan. He celebrated Easter, bunnies, eggs, etc., whatever it may be, right? And so therefore, yes, that word pascha every other time is translated Passover. If you translate it Passover, you've got a chronological problem and you've got Peter waiting in jail for another year. Did Peter wait in jail another year? He didn't. Read two more chapters over, he gets out.

So by translating it Easter, you actually don't have an error of chronology. If you translate it Passover, you may have translated the word a little more accurately, but you've got a world of mess on your hands. Which leads to this, I had a Greek professor, now I took way more Greek than anybody should take, but I did it. I had a Greek professor who one day got real frustrated with a bunch of us guys that were studying Greek. He said, all right guys, put all the books up, we're gonna have a talk. We said, what's going on? He said, all right, I'm done with all this mess. He said, put everything up, let's just have a talk. And here's what he said. You ready for this? He said, you can make any word in Greek and any phrase in Greek say anything you want it to say. He said, you must translate it in context, context, context. In other words, when you look at this passage contextually, you can't put the word Passover or you have an error in chronology and you have Peter in prison for a year longer than he gets out. So contextually speaking, Herod wouldn't have celebrated Passover to begin with, he would have celebrated Easter, and we know from our own calendars, there's many a times where Easter takes place after Passover which allows it to not have any error of chronology. Context, context, context. By the way, isn't that what we just did with Isaiah 13? You have to look at context. If you just pull a verse or phrase or word out independently, unfortunately, you can build a whole theological construct around that and make it say anything you want, anytime you want, for any purpose or agenda that you want and that's when it gets a little bit dangerous.

Any Easter, Pascha, Passover, Acts 12? You know, we fed y'all chicken Alfredo tonight. Looks like it's sitting a little on the heavy side. But wasn't it good? Mmm, it was good.

Alright, question number three. It says, when we die, do we go to paradise like the people in the Old Testament, or is paradise closed? Ooh, this is a good question. I'm actually going to answer this question backwards or as we like to say here in the South, back'ards. Y'all ready? Alright, go to 2 Corinthians 12. 2 Corinthians chapter 12. What if, y'all know when I say what if, it could get a little bit scary, what if paradise isn't closed but it's just changed locations? 2 Corinthians chapter 12, the Apostle Paul, according to the scripture, is going to have a vision, a revelation. In fact, he's gonna say, I don't know if I'm in the body, I'm out of the body. Beginning in verse 1, chapter 12, 2 Corinthians, "It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I

knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." Now, this is the famous passage of the thorn in the flesh, remember that thorn he refers to as a messenger of Satan? He begged God three times to take it away. God did not do it. He said, "My grace is sufficient for thee." But per the question that was asked, Paul says, "I was in the third heaven." Now, don't panic that there's three heavens like some faiths preach and teach. We have the, quote, heavens where the birds fly in. We have the heavens of what the constellations and the stars are in. And then we have, quote, the throne room of heaven. The third heaven means he was literally in what we would call the throne room of God, okay? He's in the third heaven and in verse 4, what does he refer to it as? Paradise, okay? Now Paul, this is 30 years, well not quite 30 years, yeah it's about 30 years after the resurrection of Jesus, refers to the heavenly place as paradise.

Now go to Luke chapter 23. Luke chapter 23, We're gonna find ourselves in one of the seven statements that Jesus makes on the cross. Luke chapter 23, we're gonna be in verse 43. Remember the famous thief on the cross. Remember there's two thieves, one on one side that condemns him and one side that confesses him, right? The thief that confesses him says, "Remember me when you come in your kingdom." Verse 43, "Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Now the reason that I want to call your attention to this distinction is that the third heaven as Paul referred to, was not a place that humanity could enter apart from the shed blood of Jesus Christ and his blood, it hadn't been shed in Luke 23 yet. In other words, you go back a few pages to the left, go to Luke chapter 16. Luke chapter 16, one of the most famous stories Jesus told beginning in verse 19, is the story of a rich man and a Lazarus. Not the Lazarus that Jesus would raise from the dead in John chapter 11. This is the Lazarus, the beggar who licked the sores at the gate, that beggar Lazarus to this certain rich man. Now the word paradise is not used in Luke chapter 16. The word that's actually used is the phrase or the term Abraham's bosom and it refers in that passage that the rich man descends into hell and that, whom we know as Lazarus, goes into, quote, Abraham's bosom. Now, it doesn't use the word paradise, but if you read Luke 16:19 through 31, what or whom Lazarus, what he is experiencing is very paradisaal, if that makes sense. No pain, no agony, no heartache, no misery. The exact opposite of what the rich man is experiencing. So when Jesus says, "To day you will be with me in paradise," you do understand that on that day, both of them lost their physical life. Now Jesus gave his up, right? Remember it says he gave up the ghost. What happened to that thief? Broke his legs, died. So on that day, he could not have experienced what you and I experience today. If I drop right now, I'm going straight to the third heaven. Bye, see y'all later. Hopefully y'all say something nice at my funeral. If not, I won't hear it anyway, I don't care. So, I actually do care because my kids are still around and so is my wife. But nonetheless, that being said, but understand what Paul's saying in 2 Corinthians 12. The tomb's already empty. Alright, Jesus has already paved the way and so when we talk about paradise, understand Paul addresses heaven as you and I know it today as paradise, but in pre-resurrection times, the question mentioned in the Old Testament, paradise is actually this place that Jesus

alludes to of Abraham's bosom, the place of the righteous prior to an empty tomb. That's why Matthew 27 is important because in verse 52 it says when Jesus rose from the dead it says the graves of many of the saints rose and it says they walked in the holy city. I think that's a picture of these guys raising and eventually going with him into what we would call the current paradise or the third heaven.

Now the question asked, do we go to paradise like the people? We go to paradise but it's a different place, okay? Is paradise closed? Now, the paradise of 2 Corinthians 12 is open to all who believe. The question I can't, I don't know who submitted it, I think the question you're asking is the paradise of the pre-resurrection of Jesus closed. Go to Matthew chapter 27. Now, Jesus said that every word of God was inspired. Every jot, every tittle, right? So it says what it means and it means what it says. I quoted Matthew 27 earlier, verse 52. I actually want to go back up into verse 51 because I've been emphasizing context tonight. It says, "And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose." Does anybody see a problem with that verse? It doesn't say "all." It doesn't even say most. It says many. And many of the saints arose.

Now here's where we get to have a lot of fun tonight and because it's a special night at least on our calendar I'm gonna go ahead and do it for you. I'm gonna open up the can y'all ready? You know one of the most difficult theological questions in all of the world to ask, now I'm just gonna go there, all right here we go, one of the most difficult theological questions that you can ask, I'm gonna ask it for you is what do you do about people in this world that have never heard the name of Jesus? Jesus is the only way to heaven. Jesus is the only means of salvation. What do you do with those folks? Now, we are commissioned to tell the gospel to all the world. What do you do with people who have never heard the name of Jesus? What do you do with people who have never read about? What do you do with those individuals? Here's what's fascinating. In Matthew chapter 27, it didn't say they all left, it said many, right? It opens up this sliver of, is it possible that even though what we as believers in Jesus Christ know as Paradise has relocated, is it possible that it is still an active part of God's big picture? You say, well, how could it be? Last time I checked, hell's still active, is it not? Did you know that nobody, well, when I say nobody, the overwhelming majority of people who ended up in Abraham's bosom in the Old Testament did not believe in Jesus? They never heard of him. I got news for you, you know in the book of Joshua, you know when they're sitting there, you know, they're getting rid of all the ites, the Midianites, Gadites, all the ites, they weren't doing it in the name of Jesus. They didn't know who Jesus was. They didn't know about a cross. They didn't know about a resurrection. So, according to what we just read in Luke 16, where do they end up? They end up in Abraham's bosom, right? But those that rejected the things of God, whatever it may be, ended up in hell. Is it possible, is it possible that those who have never heard the name of Jesus, that in God's wisdom and his provision and his sovereignty, much like he did in the Old Testament, that rather than condemning them to a devil's hell because nobody ever gave them a Bible, that much like in the Old Testament and Romans 1 talks about that we all have a knowledge of a Creator and we're without excuse if we recognize him, whoever he is and wherever

he is, is it possible that much like the Old Testament that those who have never heard the name of Jesus but are calling on God, believing in God, whatever they believe of, that there is a possibility that they go into what we know as the Paradise of the Old Testament?

Now, I'm not going to write that in concrete, but I tell you what I'm also not going to do, I'm not going to say that somebody who's never heard the name of Jesus is going to heaven just because they never heard the name of Jesus because last time I checked, he's the only way, the only truth, and the only life. Nobody, it doesn't say everybody except those that have never heard. It says nobody. Now, can I show you something beautiful? Y'all ready? It's going to happen. You knew it was going to happen tonight. You ready? Revelation chapter 20. Here we go. Revelation chapter 20. Yes. Did it take 38 minutes? All right, great. Revelation chapter 20. Now, here's what's fun about chicken Alfredo night, I'm so feisty I'm just going to ask the questions for you. Here you go. Revelation chapter 20. This is that famous passage about what we call the millennium, the thousand year reign of Christ. Now, remember, I'm just going to do a quick chronology here. I'm going to use you and I as an example. You're a believer in Jesus Christ, I'm a believer in Jesus Christ. There is coming a day, I'm going to use illustrative material tonight, let's just pretend that tonight is the night where according to 1 Thessalonians 4, the trump sounds and those that are dead in Christ and alive in Christ are caught up to be together with the Lord. Okay? We're gone. We're there. There's coming a day in Revelation chapter 19 that we are going to descend with the Lord and it says in chapter 20 that we will reign with the Lord, correct? We're gonna reign with him.

All right, so let's pick up the story in verse 4. It says, "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." Look at verse 5, "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection." And so, in other words, what we have, we have this biblical possibility that what we know as those who have never heard the name of Jesus, they've never had a Bible, but just like Romans 1 says, they believe there's a God out there somewhere, they just wish they knew who he was, kind of like Cornelius in Acts chapter 10, that upon their death there's the possibility of what we know as an Old Testament Paradise, Abraham's bosom, and when Jesus comes and reigns on the earth, they are raised and guess what happens at the end of the thousand years? Satan is loosed and he deceives and they have to make a decision, you picking Jesus or you picking me? And so guess what that means? That would mean that every single person from every single place, from every single time period must make a decision for Jesus because he's the only way, he's the only truth, and he's the only life.

Now I realize that I was, and I can say this because of my family heritage, I just went off the reservation. Okay? However, when we address this question, what is Paradise, we have to answer it honestly. It is described in 2 Corinthians very differently than it is in Luke chapter 23, and at the same time, when it gets vacated, the Bible does not say it's

completely empty or is it closed. And so all we've done tonight is looked at all these Bible passages, kind of put them all together in a giant jigsaw puzzle and you know what we concluded? Now you don't have to agree with me or not. All I did was put a bunch of Bible verses together. You know what we concluded? Is that every single human being who has ever breathed air on planet Earth has to make a decision for Jesus. Now I think that's pretty biblical, right? That being said, I don't know who submitted the question and I probably went a completely different direction than you wanted, but I had a whole lot of chicken Alfredo and I'm having fun tonight.

Any other questions about Paradise? I went off for a long time. Nope, but we gotta have some. All right, I'll just keep on going. Here we go, moving on. It says, if whoever believes in Christ will be saved, what does "for many are called but few are chosen" mean? Oh, Matthew chapter 22. Here we go. Matthew chapter 22. I don't know who submitted the question, but whether you realize it or not, you're actually staying on topic here. Did you organize it that way, sir? No, you didn't know, did you? Here we go. Matthew chapter 22, verse 14. This is the conclusion of the parable of the marriage feast. Now, I realize we have but a short time left. I'm going to read the entirety of the parable. Okay? I know it's 14 verses. I know that's a lot of information. But again, context, context, context. The last statement in this passage says, quote, many are called, few are chosen. Here we go. Verse 1. It says, "And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, The kingdom of heaven..." Now, I'm stopping right there for a moment. We've discussed this a lot on Wednesday night. Some of you are new. Some of us need a refresher course. In the book of Matthew, the kingdom of heaven, when you look at it in its totality, is describing that earthly reign of Christ. The kingdom of God is your personal relationship with the Lord. Kingdom of God is spiritual. Kingdom of heaven is physical. For example, John 4:24, God is spirit, we must worship him in truth and spirit. John chapter 14, Jesus said, "I go to prepare a place for you," i.e. heaven. Heaven is real. It is tangible. God is spirit. Kingdom of God in the book of Matthew is your relationship with the Lord. Kingdom of heaven is him coming to reign on the earth.

Now, that being said, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants,

Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen."

Now, in the context of this passage, here's something I'm going to share with you tonight. Now, I remind us all the time, this is a Bible study. This is not a Baptist study. This is not a denominational study. This is a Bible study. One of the hardest things that we, I use myself included, we have to do is read the Bible without our preferential or experiential lenses on it. Most of us have been taught that the marriage supper of the Lamb is when we all go to heaven and eat with Jesus. Right? That's what we've been taught. Here's the problem, that's not what that passage said. For the kingdom of heaven, you read in the book of Matthew about the kingdom of heaven and it is about the earthly reign of Christ. Okay? It's not up there with him, it's down here. And it says he bid those that were of his. Well who are the group of people that were his that overwhelmingly have rejected him? It's called the Jewish people. And then he said, go to the highways, go to the byways, bring them all, any who will come. That's why when you get to the book of Revelation chapter 7, it says in that Great Tribulation, there were those of many nations, people, all this thing within the context they're in. And then he says, many are called, but few are chosen. That verse has to be interpreted in light of the one before it, because guess what? The guy didn't have on a wedding garment. He wasn't prepared. He wasn't ready. Here's the beautiful thing. For you and I to be ready to go to heaven one day, all we have to do is believe on Jesus but during that Great Tribulation time that we've studied so much in the book of Revelation, in order to quote, be ready when he comes, that's when you read Matthew chapter 25. Remember the sheep and the goats? Remember the virgins and the oil, the lamps? This same parable is in the context therein basically saying that those who are going through that horrific time period, that they were not prepared nor were they of qualification to enter the kingdom. They would have been on the left side, of course, Jesus says in Matthew 25, "Go into the lake of fire prepared for the devil and his angels." There is not one single verse that we just read that has anything to do with understanding you have a sin problem and asking Jesus to save you. Not one of them. I've got news for you, when you read Matthew chapter 25 and Jesus descends to the earth and he establishes his kingdom and he separates the sheep and the goats, do you remember what he says to those that go into the kingdom? These are not believers. These are not those that have believed. You know what he says? They say, "Why do we get in?" Remember what he said? "You fed me. You clothed me. You did all those things." They go, "How did we know it was you?" Do you see the parallel here?

And so what we see in this passage that has caused a concern enough to submit a question, when many are called but few are chosen, what it's saying there is in that context of when this passage actually comes to fruition, whoever it is has got to show up ready and prepared. Okay? Here's the beautiful thing. When it comes to your relationship with God, you don't need to worry about this. This is another time for another people. This isn't about you. One of the biggest mistakes we make doing Bible study is we take every single passage in the Bible and we force it into our understanding of relationship with Jesus. You realize that three quarters of your Bible was written before the gospel of Matthew. We just talked about that passage. In Paradise, these were individuals who didn't know to call on the name of Jesus. They had never heard John 3:16, Romans 10:9,

and 10. All they knew, by the way, Hebrews chapter 11, the great hall of fame of faith, by faith Abel. What did Abel do? Said he offered a better sacrifice. By faith Noah. What did he do? He built a boat. By faith Abraham. What did he do? He went to a land he knew not of. The commonality is faith. The expression was completely different. It does not say by faith Abel built a boat. It does not say by faith Abraham offered a better sacrifice. So what do you see? All the way leading up to the empty tomb, it's people properly responding to God what he had revealed to them and so therefore, in Matthew chapter 22, I know I love to ask this question, how many born again believers in Jesus were present when he taught this message? Zero. He hadn't gone to the cross. He hadn't raised from the dead. And so therefore he is teaching to a group of people that is prophetic to what is to come in the future. The marriage supper of the Lamb has nothing to do with you and nothing to do with me. Nothing. It has everything to do with the kingdom of heaven.

Now I know what some of you are thinking, we're the bride of Christ. You're absolutely right. You are the bride of Christ. You're not a guest here. You're a part of the bridal party. You know there's a big difference, right? I'm serious, I'm not joking around. There's a big difference between being the bride and being a part of the party. The difference is where you sit and what you get to do. You know if you're the bride you get to eat the cake first. If you're not, you gotta wait in line. Correct? In other words, the bride of Christ isn't a guest at the marriage supper. The bride of Christ is at the chief table of the supper. Why? Because we've come back with him. Does that make sense? So the hardest part about what I just told you is unpacking everything they taught you in Vacation Bible School. I'm not joking about this. You're not going to the marriage feast of Christ as a guest. You're going as the bride and that's a big difference. If you want to test out my theory, then next time you attend a wedding, next time you go, try to eat the bridal cake before the bride and see how it works out because the guest is different than the bride. We often, I think we mean well, I think we often miscommunicate the marriage supper of the Lamb as for, we're not the guest, we're the bride. We're the bride of Christ. So this parable cannot be for you and I, only in the sense of we will be there presiding over with the groom, not as guests of the groom. Hopefully that makes a little sense. I know it's a whole lot of information on a special day, but we put black table cloths out, so it should be good.

Questions, comments, thoughts? We're just going to lay to... Oh, on the back row! Yes, sir!

[unintelligible]

Back to the thousand years. Excuse me, one more time. Yeah. Yes, sir. Ah, okay, let me clarify. I'm not going to repeat the question word for word, I'm going to simply summarize. This young man has asked the question of, you like how I designated you young man? Yes, thank you. That's what friends do, brother, I gotcha. All right? Is basically what is the chronology for us from quote, prior tribulation to after Jesus reigns. That's a good analogy, right? All right, so all I'm about to do for you, by the way, I know when it comes to the book of Revelation, if you get three people together, you're gonna get 14 different opinions. I realize that. All I'm going to do for you from my perspective,

is account for you the chronology of these events as the Bible lays them out, okay? Not a specific theological or denominational opinion, okay? So, if you're in the book of Revelation, okay? This is going to be a high-level flyover. Does that make sense? Now, we're going to fly over at 30,000, 40,000, or if you're in SR 271, you're at 80,000 feet, however high you want to go, right? So, you begin Revelation chapter 1. You've got an introduction. We're on the island of Patmos. Basically, Jesus tells John, "Write down that which was, that which is, and that which is to come." In chapters 2 and 3, you have seven churches that are mentioned. It begins with Ephesus. That's a good decision because Ephesus is a church of great theological integrity, solid doctrine. They're weeding out false believers. I mean, everything's good. But remember, Jesus says, "I have one thing against you, you're losing your first love." In other words, you're forgetting why you're doing, even though you're doing all the right things. The second church is small in number, but heavy persecution. They don't believe that they're headed the right way because they're so small, and Jesus says, "Oh no, no, no. You're doing good." He never condemns the second church. He says, "Everything is great. You are stronger than you think because you're trusting in me." The third church, the church at Thyatira says that they're literally sitting in Satan's seat. The fourth church says they have the spirit of Jezebel. I mean, it gets bad, right? The fifth church is small but strong and yet there are those that are compromising. The sixth church is the church at Philadelphia. The church of Philadelphia, again like the second church, is not condemned. They have the word of God, whatever God has opened stays open, whatever he closes is closed. And then we end with the church of Laodicea. It's a lukewarm, literal, hot mess. How's that? Okay? They're doing everything that looks like church, the only problem is Jesus is on the outside. He's not on the inside.

You say, why did you walk through all those? Because yes, those were specific local churches in Asia Minor and yes, the Lord gave them a direct message in their time, but if you look at it from 30, 40,000 feet, it eerily is a history of the church. The early church, strong doctrinally, started to lose some of its faithfulness. By the time you get to the second and the third centuries, we got small in number because the persecution was abundant. Then in the fourth century, we started compromising with the secular world. We became merged with the secular world. Then we get into what we know as the Dark Ages, and we were a disaster. But then you know what happened? About, I don't know, 500 years ago, we decided to print the Bible, read the Bible, study the Bible, and all the great missionary movements that you and I have benefited from were because of the word of God, church of Philadelphia. But I would argue today, it's pretty Laodicea out there, is it not? There's a whole lot of church going on but there's not always Jesus. There's a whole lot of singing and performing and ritual, but there's not always Jesus. Why'd I tell you that? Because chapter 4 of the book of Revelation begins with this, John going up into heaven. Isn't that interesting?

So we have all these churches. John goes up into heaven. While he's in heaven, the Great Tribulation takes place. In chapter 19, heaven opens up and he comes back down with Jesus. I think that's a picture of us. I think as soon as Laodicea is over, whenever the Lord wants to shout, we go up. All the tribulation happens. We come back with him. We reign for a thousand years. After the thousand years, it says that Satan is loosed out of the

bottomless pit and he goes out and he deceives, I believe, per a previous question, those who were raised from or born during that time of the thousand years that had not yet made a decision between Jesus and anything else. Then you get to chapter 21. Here's where it gets beautiful. Everything that we know is burned up. New heaven, new earth, new Jerusalem. And no remembrance of former things and it is eternity and glory forever.

Does that help a little bit? Good deal. Appreciate you. Anybody else? We're good? We've got two minutes left. Why did Jesus teach in parables? Now, I'm going to quote for you what he said. It may be hard to hear, but it's absolutely true. It's found in Mark chapter 4, the parable of the sower. Here's what Jesus said, "I'm teaching in parables so that they that can hear will hear and those that cannot will not." That sounds harsh, doesn't it? Basically what Jesus was saying is this, "For those who are really interested in what I'm teaching, I'm gonna communicate it in a way that they will get it. Those who are only trying to trap me or trick me or condemn me, they're going to walk away clueless."

Now this is actually based on a prophecy in Isaiah chapter 6. Now Isaiah chapter 6 is a famous chapter because if you've ever been to any type of missionary commissioning or missionary conference, we love Isaiah chapter 6 because that is the passage where God asks the famous question, "Who will go for us and who will I send?" Remember what Isaiah said? "Send me." You know the one problem with Isaiah is he didn't ask the details. God then tells him, "All right, here's what's gonna happen." He said a tenth, he literally uses the word tithe, "A tenth of the people will hear what you say. The rest of it will fall on deaf ears," okay? And what does he say? He says, "Those who will hear will hear and those who won't won't." Now think about Isaiah's message. What did Isaiah say? Isaiah said if we do not repent and turn to the Lord, we're going into captivity. Guess what happened? 90% of the people said that's not the message I want to hear. It's much like the priest in the book of Amos who said go take that message somewhere. That's not what sells books. Y'all notice that current, you know, analogy, right? Guess what happened? They ended up in captivity. When Jesus is, when he is ministering and when he's telling parables and he told 32 of them, you know what you discover? The apostles come to Jesus, this happens in Mark chapter 4, this is the parable of the sower. They come to Jesus and they say, "Jesus, man, that was a great story. We didn't get it. Help us out." You know what Jesus does? He says, "Fine." And he explains it to them. The Pharisees didn't even ask what it was about. They didn't care what it was about. All they cared about was, did Jesus give us something we can trap him with, and if he doesn't, we don't care. So for those, per Isaiah, that have ears to hear, he will tell us and for those who do not, he will not. That is why, and I'll conclude on this, anytime you're reading, you're studying, or you're memorizing scripture, always come to it with this attitude, "Teach me, God. Whatever difference I have, you're right and I'm wrong." And he will speak into your life.

Well, the alarm has gone off. All right, let's pray.

Lord Jesus, thank you that tonight, Lord, even as we literally go from Genesis to Revelation and everything in between, there are so many constructs, so many ideas, God, thank you that we're never going to exhaust the study of your word. And God, I thank You

for 1 Peter 3:15 says that we're always to be prepared to give an answer for the hope that is within us and, Lord, I know that it's not just us in this room that have questions, our family has questions, our friends have questions, there's a whole lot of people out there that just want to know what the Bible says. So God, thank you for tonight but at the same time, thank you for the simplicity that is found in Christ Jesus. May we never lose sight of that. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.