

## Ask Jeff 7.26.17

By Dr. Jeff Meyers

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301 S. 8th Street  
Opelika, Alabama 36801

**Website:** [www.fbcopelika.com](http://www.fbcopelika.com)

**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/jeffmeyers](http://www.sermonaudio.com/jeffmeyers)

*Gathered in this place, I pray that our time together this evening will be uplifting, will be encouraging, will be challenging and will be fruitful, Father, and help us to be more like the Lord Jesus for having been here tonight together. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.*

And here's Jeff.

Hey, alright, how's everybody tonight? Woo-hoo, alright, good deal. For those of you that may be guests or visitors, I want to welcome you to Wednesday night at First Baptist, otherwise known as Ask Jeff, the Bible study that you get to determine what we talk about, that means everything we discuss is a question that you bring up. But tonight, we're going to do things a little backwards. Typically we do our Q&A time and then we go into our Bible study where we're walking through the book of Revelation. Tonight, I want to start with the Bible study and here's why, I believe that tonight's Bible study is going to bring up a lot of good questions and so therefore I want to give you the opportunity. Now we may do the Bible study and you don't have a single question and that is okay because in the database we have over 100 of your questions. We can go for a long time. Do you know what that database is? That's job security for me because there's lots of questions in there and we're good to go.

But the subject matter tonight is based on the book of Revelation 4:9-11. If you've been in our study, remember chapter 4 and chapter 5 in the book of Revelation, very distinctly different from the main content of the book of Revelation. The majority of the book of Revelation deals as we're going to see in chapter 6 with the wrath of God begin poured out on the rebellion of mankind. In chapters 4 and 5, we have a view, a picture, a scene of the throne room of God, very unique as we get a picture of pretty much what the Apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians 12, being caught up into the third heaven, the throne room of the Lord.

There in chapter 4, John is taken up. He sees, as we discussed last week, these famous four beasts that surround the throne of God, and in verses 9 through 11, there is a passage. The reason I wanted to focus on it tonight is it is this passage of scripture that one of the most famous lines in our hymnody comes from, the famous hymn, "Holy, holy, holy." I'm going to test some of you to see what your Baptist roots are. How many of you grew up, "Holy, Holy, Holy," was hymn number 1 in your hymnal? That's right, "Holy, holy, holy," and it says, "Casting down their golden crowns before the crystal

sea." That is from this passage of Scripture, one of the most famous lines that has been sung for hundreds of years comes from this passage. It says,

9 And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, 10 The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, 11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

Now the reason I want to discuss this section at length tonight and allow you the opportunity to ask questions thereof, is I believe the subject matter tonight is one of the most misunderstood concepts in Christianity, and it is the idea or the concept of what we know as being "rewarded for or acknowledged" for our obedience to our Savior Jesus Christ.

Now the Bible makes two very big distinctions. We have what we call the great white throne judgment, that's in Revelation 20, that's where we see the lost, the rebellious, those who've rejected Jesus Christ, we see them come and judged, in fact, those in Revelation 20 are cast into the lake of fire for all of eternity. And then the Bible speaks in 1 Corinthians 3 that there is no foundation that can be laid except the foundation of Jesus Christ, and upon that foundation we can build gold and silver and precious jewels, wood, hay and stubble, but when the Lord appears, we shall be judged yet so saved by fire. The Bible speaks of a time where we even as believers give an account of ourselves to the Lord. Now oftentimes people see this as a very bad experience but I'm going to see tonight that this can be a very good experience for a believer in Jesus Christ.

So the personalities that are here in Revelation 4, you've got the beasts and I'm not going to elaborate about what we discussed last time, but based on Ezekiel 1, Ezekiel 10, Ezekiel 28, the Bible speaks of the throne of God with these beasts, these creatures, these characters around the four corners and in the case of one who used to be Lucifer who is now Satan, he was the cherubim who covered the throne of God.

The four and twenty elders are the 24 elders, it is not conclusive. We don't know. Tradition says that it is the representatives of the 12 tribes of Israel as well as the 12 apostles. The problem with that is when you get to the book of Revelation 7, the names and the numbers of the 12 tribes varies from the Old Testament and when you start studying the apostles, you started with 12, Judas went his way, Matthias entered in, and then Paul was the apostle out of due time. And so one day when we get up there, it may be 12 representatives of the 12 tribes and it may be 12 of the apostles, but we just don't know.

What we do know is this, based on this passage, the beast or a cherubim angelic creature, but the 24 elders, those are believers. This is representatives from humanity. And it says when the beasts worship, the 24 elders follow. And the thing that the 24 elders do, I believe, is representative of the opportunity that each and every one of us as believers in

Jesus Christ has the opportunity to do one day. Why? This is a picture, this is a picture of what it will look like in heaven. This is what it's going to look like when you breathe your last breath here and breathe your first breath there. And it says they cast their crowns before the throne, and I want to walk through tonight these famous "crowns" that the Bible speaks of, these "rewards," this ability to be acknowledged for one's faithfulness to Jesus Christ.

So hopefully you have a Bible in hand or on your phone, and hopefully you are quick of finger, so to speak. I'm going to begin in 1 Corinthians 9. For those of you that were here on Sunday, this is actually the passage that I was alluding to that my professor went topsy-turvy with in class about a word that was used. 1 Corinthians 9 beginning in verse 25, it says,

25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. 26 I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: 27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

Now it speaks of a crown that the world whether it is in a physical race or even in the business world striving for deals and such, all the crowns of this world are corruptible, one day will erode and rust etc., but the crown he speaks of, this reward is one that is incorruptible and it is a crown it says for running the race.

I gave you a little example on your outline. It's one of my favorite statements that I've heard some famous individuals say, that the tortoise wins the race every time. Remember the story of the tortoise and the hare? Famous children's story, right? That here's this little hare, he sprints and then he stops, he sprints and he stops, but the little tortoise, he just keeps on trucking and he finishes the race strong. One of the things that we discover when we go through scripture, of all the individuals both men and women who are designated as leaders in scripture, only about 25% of them actually finish the race strong. And so it says that there is a crown, there is a reward, there is an acknowledgment given when you finish strong.

Now remember the parable of the sower, and we could go through all four, but the one that really grips my heart is the third seed. It said that it produced and it was doing well and then, listen, it became unfruitful because of the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lust of other things. The picture that we get is that this crown of incorruptibility, that it can be dismissed, and I'll talk about that in just a moment when we "don't finish strong" and we allow the cares of this world to distract us from finishing strong.

So there's what is called the incorruptible crown. Now go over to 1 Thessalonians 2. By the way, 1 Thessalonians, if you're curious, chronologically speaking is the first communication or letter from the Apostle Paul. I know it's not in that order, but 1 Thessalonians 2:19. It says,

19 For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? 20 For ye are our glory and joy.

Now I know I read that somewhat out of context but this entire chapter is talking about these who have come to faith in Jesus Christ through the ministry of the Apostle Paul and those that he is operating through.

And so oftentimes we call this the crown of rejoicing. Sometimes people call this the witnessing crown, that when we share our faith and when people come to know Jesus as their Savior, that that is rewarded, that is acknowledged, that based on 1 Corinthians 3, that's kind of the gold, the silver and the precious jewels, definitely not the wood, the hay and the stubble that would be engulfed by fire of judgment. Now one thing I want to remind you, in John 4 immediately after Jesus is speaking to the woman at the well, remember his disciples come back with lunch and say, "Hey, aren't you hungry? We brought lunch." He says, "I have meat you know not of." And then he goes on to talk about the field being white unto harvest and he says, "He who reaps and he who sows shall rejoice together." And I want to encourage you that the crown of rejoicing isn't just an acknowledgment of those who see people saved, but who share their faith and let other people know the truth in Jesus Christ. My favorite example of evangelism or definition is this, that when we share our faith, it is one beggar telling another beggar where to find food, and that's exactly what this is talking about.

The third "crown" is found in 2 Timothy 4:8 and, by the way, the reason that we're flipping to all these pages and reading them is because I don't want you to think I just made this stuff up. This is actually what the Lord has given us. This is actually found chronologically in the last communication of the Apostle Paul. The one in 1 Thessalonians was his first, this is his last. In fact, many times people call this his last will and testament. Chapter 4 of 2 Timothy, in 2 Timothy 4:8 he says,

8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

The crown of righteousness. It says given to someone who anticipates and desires to see the return of Jesus Christ. Now it does not say someone who knows all the details and all the time frame and can draw up charts and stuff, but someone who longs more for the return of Jesus than the prolonging of this earth.

The other day Alan Jones, our minister of missions and education and senior adults and many other hats on our campus, he and I were talking and he said he was behind a vehicle the other day in town and it had a bumper sticker on it and it said, "Jesus is coming back. Look busy." Nothing could be more false from the truth. 1. Looks aren't what is really happening, it's the heart of the matter that matters. But what is important about that is that bumper sticker was saying Jesus could come back at any time and what

this crown of righteousness is saying is that we would rather have Jesus return than we would have this earth prolonged, and that's an attitude of our heart. And it says if that is how you operate, if that is how you function, the Lord will honor that and reward it.

Next is 1 Peter 5:4. 1 Peter 5, this is a unique crown and when I say unique because there are some who claim that this crown is only for a certain select few and I'm going to disagree with that tonight. In fact, many people have called this the pastor's crown. 1 Peter 5:4, actually I'm going to begin in verse 2. It says,

2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; 3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. 4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

Many people say, "Ah, this is a crown given to those in the ministry, those that are pastors that feed the church of Jesus Christ and do so faithfully." I want you to go back to verse 2, "Feed the flock of God which is among you." That might be your children. That might be coworkers. That might be employees. That might be a Sunday school class. That might be the nursery babies that you rock so faithfully. So I know sometimes we call this the pastor's crown but I want to stretch it because the flock, those who the Lord has entrusted for us to raise spiritually is not always a position of church leadership but it is a position of relationship leadership, and it is a position of home leadership. When we teach our children, when we teach those who we have opportunities to have influence in, I believe this is when the Lord acknowledges and recognizes.

Last but not least, the book of James 1. Hopefully, y'all have noticed I've helped you just by going in order, so to speak. The book of James 1:12 we have what is called the crown of life. James 1:12, by the way, this one is also mentioned again in the book of Revelation 2. But in James 1 it says, verse 12,

12 Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

Now in Revelation 2 and for the sake of time I'll just allude to it, it talks about those who endure tribulation, those who are being not just martyred for but persecuted for their faith. And so those who resist temptation, those who resist tribulation, they receive a crown of life. Now I think in our culture at least, oftentimes we are exposed to, I don't want to call it a false concept but maybe it's just maybe a not managed well concept. How many times have you heard somebody say, "You know, the Lord won't give you more than you can handle." And sometimes you go, "I feel like it right now." That concept is actually found in 1 Corinthians 10:13 that says there is no temptation that has come to man that has not come to man but that the Lord will give an opportunity to escape it. That passage of scripture doesn't say that life won't be too hard on you, it is saying that if you are presented with a temptation to sin, if there is an opportunity for you to decide to go

against the things of God, he always provides an opportunity for you to decide for righteousness every single time. And here it talks about this crown of life, it is this opportunity to be acknowledged, to be rewarded because when it would have been easier to choose the world, we made the decision for Jesus Christ.

So just in brief here allow me to summarize. There is a crown for finishing strong. There is a crown for sharing one's faith. There is a crown for desiring the Lord's return rather than the earth being prolonged. There is a crown given to taking care spiritually of those who the Lord has put in your sphere of life. And there's a crown for resisting temptation and standing up for the truth of Jesus Christ in the light of a world who would love to persecute us at every turn.

Now that's all of the "information" about these famous crowns. Now back in Revelation 4, they cast their crowns. It's the process, that which I've got at the bottom of the sheet that I think is the most important. In fact, I'm going to advocate in just a moment, I don't think knowing the passages of scripture and the definitions of these crowns is as important as it is your attitude toward them.

When does this happen? When does the Lord reward? When does the Lord acknowledge and say, "You were faithful unto the end. You resisted temptation. You share your faith." When does the Lord do this? Well, it's all based on how you view verses 1 through 3 of chapter 4. For those of you who have not been with us in our study, one of the things that we've shared is when you enter chapter 4 of the book of Revelation, a door opens in heaven and there's varying views on how the church of Jesus Christ gets into the place of which it is the armies of Jesus Christ coming back in chapter 19, kind of the chronology of things, but I think the thing that's critical for us to know is in chapter 4 the person of John is a representative, a picture of the church of Jesus Christ when he is immediately caught up into the presence of the Lord. You know, there is a famous passage that says that in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, we'll be caught up to the Lord. He is caught up to the Lord and immediately in chapter 4, there is the opportunity for a crown to be cast and so I'm of the belief that one receives acknowledgment or the rewards, for lack of better terms, for their faithfulness when this famous "event" takes place. So when we, the church of Jesus Christ, are caught up into the air with the Lord, then this time of acknowledgment or reward takes place.

The second question is where does this take place? What's around the throne of God? It's just laid out there in chapter 4. What takes place? The crowns, the rewards, the acknowledgment. How? This is what I think is the most critical, how. Notice that the reward, the acknowledgment, the understanding of one's faithfulness to their faith, whatever is given as a reward is not kept throughout all eternity. Notice and here's what I want you to hear, that the crowns of reward are not so you can get but so you can give. You know, as adults or as we become adults or hopefully as we mature in life, one of the things that we acknowledge hopefully is with our maturity we receive more pleasure in giving than we do getting. As a young child, Christmas was all about getting something, right? Now as an adult there's more joy in seeing others get by you giving than you

getting yourself. And that's why the Bible speaks in 2 Corinthians 9, talking about giving with a cheerful heart.

So when we look at these crowns, here's what I want you to hear from my heart tonight. The reward for sharing your faith, the reward for finishing strong, the reward for resisting temptation isn't so that you can walk around for all eternity with a bunch of crowns and jewels and say, "Aha, look at who I was." But it's so that when you're in the presence of the Lord, you can actually give them back to him as a gift of gratitude for what he was and what he did on your behalf. All of these rewards aren't so you can get, it's so that you can give.

I want you to think about some of the parables that Jesus told. The parable of the talents. Do you remember the story? One had five, one had two, one had one, and the Lord gave them the talents and said, "Hey, when I come back, I want to see what you've done with it." And he rewarded them based on what they had done with it and they had expanded, and the one who held onto it and said, "Oh, I didn't want to take a chance. I just held onto it." Do you remember what was happening? It was taken away. Which leads me to Revelation 3. Revelation 3:11. Interesting that this is the passage of scripture to the church of Philadelphia which is one of only two churches in the book of Revelation that there's no condemnation for, everything's great. But in verse 11 it says, "Behold, I come quickly. Hold that fast which you have that no man take your crown." Now I don't think that means that you can "get in line ahead of me or you can steal a crown from me," I think what that is saying is that man's opinions, man's ideas, man's encouragement can lead us to think that the things of this world are more important than the things of God so that we don't live and finish strong, so we don't share our faith, so we don't desire the things of Jesus.

I want to share with you a story tonight. Many of you may have heard this before but it's just one of those stories that so resonates on this concept and then we'll open it up for questions. Years ago, I found myself way west Texas, I mean like almost New Mexico west Texas, and I was out there doing a revival Bible conference and oftentimes in communities like that where there's not a whole lot of restaurants, the team that comes in, they just feed us in homes which is wonderful because Baptists, y'all know how to cook, and so that's always a good thing. And so I'll never forget, I was in this home and I had announced the night before at this conference that this following night, this current day, that I was going to be speaking on or teaching about the Second Coming of Jesus. Usually that attracts a lot of people. We want to know about these things, the book of Revelation and such. And we're eating in this home and this woman has put out a spread and the whole team is there, there's probably two dozen people in her house and it's just a wonderful time.

In the middle of this meal, the woman who prepared all this was so gracious and generous, she looked at me and she said, "Jeff, can I ask you a question?" I said, "Sure." She said, "Are you really preaching about the Second Coming tonight?" I said, "Yes, ma'am. Why?" And she goes, "Well, I appreciate you being in my home but I'm not going to attend." I thought that was kind of strange. I said, "Well, do you need help picking up?"

I mean, we can help, you know, clean things up so you can go." She goes, "No, I just, I'm not interested in hearing about it." I thought that was odd, and she said something I'll never forget. She said, "Honestly, Jeff, I kind of like things the way they are. I don't want them to change." I heard a, "What?" Yeah. But I think that is a perfect example of somebody who when they get to that place of Revelation 4 doesn't have anything to give because they were more satisfied with what the world gave than what the Lord offered. They desired more the things of this world than the things of the Lord.

Now I want to encourage you tonight, don't go home and put a checklist on your bathroom mirror what kind of crowns you've gotten and what kind you're getting, okay? Because I'm of the belief that if you're trying to get them, you're not going to get them. In other words, it's your dedication and your surrendering to the Lord. Don't worry about these five. Don't worry about, "Well, I'm doing good in this area, but not..." Don't worry about all that stuff, just live your life with the reckless abandonment for the Lord so that one day when you're in the throne room, you'll have the opportunity to say, "Thank you, Lord, thank you," as you cast your crowns before the crystal sea.

Any questions, comments, thoughts, remarks, concerns, issues before we go to the database? And there is absolutely nothing on one of the most controversial subjects in all of the Bible. Great. Okay. That's fine. We need to start feeding y'all again, is what we need to start doing. So you know, Baptists work better with food. That's okay.

Alright, back to the database. It says many of David's Psalms are addressed to the "Chief Musician." Who is the Chief Musician? Is it God?

That is actually a really good question, in fact, open up to the book of Psalms. That should be easy, open up to the middle of your Bible and you should get pretty close and I think, let me, okay, Psalm 139. I just opened up completely random there and Psalm 139, 140, actually let me go back up to 138. Now 138 begins with, "A Psalm of David." Psalm 139 begins, "To the Chief Musician, A Psalm of David." Psalm 140, "To the Chief Musician, A Psalm of David." 141, "A Psalm of David." 142, "Maschil of David; A Prayer when he was in the cave." 143, "A Psalm of David." Understand that what you see under that Psalm number is a title. What we know as the book of Psalms is exactly what it sounds like, it's a songbook, is what it is. These were songs that the Lord inspired not just to David, primarily to David but to others for the people of God, the Israelites, to sing in their worship services, oftentimes they sang when they went into battle. This was the thing they did when they gathered. That's why when you get over to the book of Colossians, it says when you gather, it says, sing hymns, Psalms and spiritual songs to one another and encourage each other. Many of you heard me say this, you know, Christianity is the only faith that sings. We're it because nobody else has anything to hope for but Christianity does, and we know that Judaism and the Jewish people were the precursor to Christianity because Jesus was of the tribe of Judah. And so they're anticipating the Messiah, they're anticipating how God is going to move. The Chief Musician was actually a position in the people of Israel. It was the song leader, for lack of better terms. It was the band director. In other words, what we see there is that the Lord

inspired David to write words and he gave those words to the Chief Musician who put it to song.

Now this has been duplicated throughout the eons, in fact, for years and years and years and it's just recently just altered just a bit, used to, when I say used to, boy, that makes me sound old when I say that, doesn't it? Used to. Back in the good old days, pastors and preachers and theologians would write the words and the musicians would put them to music. In fact, one of the greatest examples, two brothers, John and Charles Wesley, what we know as kind of the founders of Methodism. John Wesley was the pastor and the theologian, Charles Wesley was his brother. Charles Wesley penned over 5,000 hymns in his lifetime but Charles was a musician. And so John would give him words, Charles would put it to music. If you look at a song whether it be a "hymn" or even a contemporary piece, you'll notice at the bottom it will say "Words by. Music by." That's exactly what's taking place here.

So when you read, you know, "To the Chief Musician," what's taking place there is we have the idea that the Lord gave David the words and then this musician would put it to music. You say, "Well, why did in some places does it not say that?" Well, guess what? David was also a musician and so you get the idea that some of these Psalms David actually not only wrote but he composed and others he gave to the Chief Musician so that for the people of Israel to be able to do so.

Any questions on Psalms and music? And strike two. You know I played baseball, one more and I'm out, just to let you know there.

Next one. Since heaven is a perfect place, how was Lucifer able to sin and to be cast out of heaven?

For those of you who may not have been here a couple weeks ago, we actually looked into this quite extensively but just for the sake of the fact that you may not have been here that week and this is your question, I don't want to say go back and just watch it. So go to the book of Ezekiel 28. The book of Ezekiel 28 is one of the best accounts that we have in scripture of what we know as the fall of Satan. By the way, the other account is in the book of Isaiah 14:12-14. Both of these passages, the Lord is doing something very strategic. He's using contemporary events and he's reading into those events actions of the past. In other words, there are times where the Lord will use somebody's behavior and say, "This is very picturesque of what's going to happen in the future," speaking of future prophetic events. There are times, though, that the Lord uses an event and says, "This looks like something that has happened in the past." For example, the book of Jeremiah 4 speaks of an event in the past in a contemporary picture of God's judgment. Same thing in Ezekiel 28. Here we have the Lord condemning the king of Tyre. Now the reason we know it cannot be spoken of about the actual king of Tyre is because it says in this passage that this individual walked in the garden of Eden. Well, unless the king of Tyre was Adam and is about 3,500 years of age, there's no way it can actually be somebody who walked in the literal garden of Eden. Who walked in the garden of Eden other than

God himself? Adam, Eve and Lucifer. Yes, he was there. He tempted them. He questioned the things of God. He was there.

We pick up the story in Ezekiel 28. I'm going to begin in verse 14. It says,

14 Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. 15 Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. 16 By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.

I think what's important in that passage for the question that is at hand because the question is asking a very important concept, since heaven is perfect, how is it that sin was found in this person known as Lucifer, the lighted one who eventually became Satan, devil, that old dragon, as Revelation 12 says? I think the key is in verse 15, "till iniquity was found in thee."

Now I shared this with you a couple of weeks ago and so those of you that were here, you have a heads up, you already have the answer here but kind of a series of somewhat rhetorical questions. I've gone through these but I'm going to go through them again because I think sometimes it's important to hear things a second time. If you go into the dictionary and you look up the definition for "good," do you know what it says? It does not say "not bad." It says "that which has inherently positive qualities." Okay? So if I made this statement, "Boy, I had some good cooking tonight," y'all know what that means? Y'all understand what that means, right? What does the word "bad" mean? "Not good." In other words, you can only define "bad" as a comparison to "good."

Now let me get a little more academic, alright? Let's use the concept of light and darkness. What is darkness? The absence of light. So in other words, when the Bible says in 1 John 1:5, God is light and in him is no darkness at all, you take that illustration, go back here into verse 15, till iniquity was found in thee. I think oftentimes when we look at what Lucifer did according to Isaiah 14, his desire to go on the top of the mount of God, his desire to be in charge, his desire to usurp the throne of God, I think oftentimes we think of sin as that which we do. By the way, the Bible speaks of this as the sin of commission, we actually do something. You know, the Bible also speaks of the sin of omission, meaning that which we did not do that we should have, or that which we withheld that we were supposed to be a part of.

Why is that important? Because I think what we find in the person or the character of Lucifer is not a "sin of commission" as much as it is a sin of omission and his desire to not serve the Lord, his desire to not surrender himself, his desire to be about himself and not about the Lord, that sin of omission, that retraction from the light, I think that by simple definition, iniquity was found in thee. You say, "Well, how could sin be found in

a perfect place?" It wasn't that he did, I think more importantly may be what he didn't. John Milton, the great American author who wrote a book entitled "Paradise Lost," made this statement, putting the words into the mouth of Lucifer, that his mentality was it was better to reign in hell than to serve in heaven. In other words, he would rather be about himself than about the Lord. So it's a great question because it begs this idea how could sin be present in a "sinless environment."

Now y'all aren't very good at raising your hand tonight so I'm going to raise one for you. Okay, Jeff, you've got a question. What's your question? Then if that's the case, one day when I'm in heaven, what keeps me from doing the same thing? How many of you were thinking it? Come on, you know you were.

Alright, go to Revelation 5. You're going to get a head start here. Alright, so here's how Ask Jeff works, if you don't ask questions, I do. Revelation 5. We're going to pick this up here in a few weeks as we continue our study, so when this day comes some of y'all are going to get a five minute nap. It's going to be good stuff here.

In Revelation 5, there's a book brought out that is sealed with seven seals and in verse 5 of Revelation 5, now remember this is a chapter in the throne room of God, that sinless environment that the question presupposes, which by the way is absolutely factual and true. It says,

5 And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.

Who is that? Alright, just making sure you're awake. Verse 6,

6 And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb [who is this?] as it had been slain,

This is Jesus after he has ascended. This is Jesus after he has resurrected. You remember the story the story with "Doubting Thomas" when he said, "I will not believe unless I see the marks." And remember that when Jesus appeared in the Upper Room on that eighth day after his resurrection, when Thomas saw him, he fell on his face. I think what is absolutely significant about Revelation 5 is that we have a picture that in all of eternity Jesus Christ still bears the mark of the cross.

And so the question is, well, in a sinless environment, Lucifer was in a sinless environment, you're absolutely right but you and I have been redeemed, we have been bought, we have been saved, we have and I'm going to use human terms, we've been given a second chance, and for all of eternity every day, every moment, when we've been there 10,000 years and on, we have the privilege of seeing not just the person of Jesus but, listen, we'll see the how we got there every single day. By the way, the Bible says one day when we're there we receive a new body, a body that is no longer tainted, no

longer grows old, no longer wears and has aging and pain and agony. I want you to think about this, from a human optics perspective, the only entity in heaven who has the appearance of a lack of perfection, appearance of, is Jesus himself. He's the one still bearing the marks. We have perfection.

So the question of, well, one day heaven is going to be perfect, what keeps us from doing the same thing? 1. We've been redeemed. 2. We've been sealed. 3. Humanity got in trouble the first time when Satan entered the garden, correct? He's not going to be entering the throne room of God for all of eternity because he's bound in the lake of fire for all eternity. So there is no tempter, there is no temptation, and we are in the presence and in the midst of Jesus seeing the means by which we got there for all of eternity. Do not read what happened to Lucifer in the past into what could potentially happen into your life in the future.

Alright, now I had to ask a question. Yes, ma'am.

[unintelligible]

Great question. Those of you who couldn't hear because of soft-spoken was what about the angelic beings who in the past we know have sinned, they have rebelled? Is there still the potential that one day they, angelic beings, will rebel again, in other words, additional angels? The Bible does speak of a time past where the angelic beings with Lucifer fell. 2 Peter 2 talks about this, the book of Jude, verse 6, talks about this. One of the few places in the Bible that John Milton and I disagree, John Milton, the great author of "Paradise Lost," in Revelation 12 when it says that Lucifer was removed out of heaven and the stars with him, which by the way, according to Revelation 1:19, the stars are the angelic beings, do you find that interesting that Hollywood has stars? Just something interesting there. Just saying. But what we discover is that those stars, those angelic beings that are removed with him, John Milton believed that Revelation 12 was a past event. I believe that Revelation 12 is a future event. But even if it's past, let me give John Milton credit, let me say John Milton's right and Jeff Meyers is wrong, it could be absolutely correct, okay? He died hundreds of years ago and one day I may show up to the pearly gates and Jesus may say, "Jeff, here's John Milton. He was right and you were wrong." I don't know, it could happen, and it's no big deal because we're both there and it'll be good.

When you get to Revelation 20, the very end of your Bible, there is an event, a time period known as the millennium. It's called the millennium because that's the Latin word for a thousand years because seven times in six verses the Lord, it says that the Lord will reign for a thousand years. Beginning in verse 7 of Revelation 20, this thousand years ends. Now let me remind you, for these "thousand years," the devil has been cast in the bottomless pit the whole time. In other words, he doesn't have the ability to influence and to tempt and neither do his demonic minions, so to speak, alright? So beginning in verse 7,

7 And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, 8 And shall go out to deceive the nations [that's humanity]

which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. 9 And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.

Now what I want you to see in that passage is this, even though I believe that Revelation 12 says there's a time in the future where angelic beings will be deceived again by the person whom we know now as Satan and will fall, not just the ones of days gone by, even if I'm wrong there, there is still another reference in scripture to a future event where Satan is removed from the bottomless pit and he deceives again.

Now in this passage, it only deals with humanity, okay? And so it is possible that the angelic beings do not again rebel, and so I guess the conclusive answer to your question is there is no answer, but there is the possibility of a continued or a future rebellion on the angelic host as well. Because it did happen in the past, Revelation 12 mentions another occurrence that I personally believe is future but even if I'm wrong, there is another deception event by Satan in Revelation 20 that does not specifically mention angels, so we're going to have to go specifically vague there.

And the lovely man to your right has his hand up. Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Okay, so the question is and now we're getting to that point where chronology has coming into place here because let's go back to the fall of Satan, okay? We know that Satan fell and we know that he fell before the garden of Eden, correct? He had to have because by the time you get to the garden of Eden, he's a bad dude, right? Okay. We also know that when Satan fell, we know it, that there were angelic beings who fell with him, correct? Is that a given with everybody? Alright, we got that. It doesn't matter where all your specific chronology is, that one's pretty simple. Alright, to your point, in the book of 2 Peter 2... No, go back to 1 Peter 3, sorry. 1 Peter 3. I was two pages off, forgive me. Again, another controversial passage of scripture because of the issue of baptism but we're not dealing with baptism, we're dealing with angelic beings here. This is in verse 18 of 1 Peter 3,

8 For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: 19 By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison;

Spirits in prison. By the way, Hebrews 1:14 says angels are ministering spirits, okay?

20 Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing,

And so to your point, sir, this passage talks about a rebellious group and, by the way, it's not speaking of humanity, these rebellious spirits and to your point, it says that something took place significant even in the days of Noah. So what you can do here if you want to be very particular, you could say that in the angelic class of creation, that there was a fall of angelic beings at the first instance of sin with Satan, there was another departure of some during the days of Noah. I would say there's another time during the end of a time period known as the tribulation in Revelation 12, and even the potential of one in Revelation 20. At minimum the first two because the Bible speaks specifically to those initial ones.

Does that help with that question? A little bit, somewhat, not much? We're good? Oh, it helps. Yes, ma'am. By the way, we have a question all the way from Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Yes, ma'am.

[unintelligible]

The fallen angels that are bound, yes.

[unintelligible]

There are certain angels that are described as being bound, that's 2 Peter 2:4.

[unintelligible]

Great question. Okay, what she's alluding to is in 2 Peter 2, if you still have your Bible open, a few pages to the right, the passage that I mentioned, then I was wrong from the previous question. It says in 2 Peter 2:4,

4 For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell,  
and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;

Now two theories about this passage. Theory 1 is obviously they are in a place known as hell, a place known as the bottomless pit, and they are chained there. However, understand that angels are spiritual entities and so therefore it must be a spiritual chain, and what we see not only with Lucifer/the devil and the angelic beings/the demonic is that their ground, their territory, their access to do "business" is based on what the Lord allows, okay? And so theory 1 is they are literally in a place that we know as hell and they've never left. Theory 2 is that is their home base and they're allowed to go to and fro just as Satan is per the provision of God.

But to her second question is, isn't there a time in the future where they are "loosed"? That requires us to go back to the book of Revelation 9 and this is one of those passages of scripture that is really interesting, and the reason that it is interesting is because there is a battle that takes place. It says in verse 13 and this is the sixth trumpet, by the way. You say, "The sixth? I don't know about the sixth trumpet." By the time we get here in a couple of years, you'll have all this down in Revelation. It says,

13 And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, 14 Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates. 15 And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men. 16 And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand [or 200 million]: and I heard the number of them. 17 And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: etc. etc. etc.

Now there is this "army" that comes out. When the river Euphrates is loosed and it says that 200 million strong, now could that be a human army? Absolutely, it could be particularly nowadays because there are entities that could produce numbers that big. However when you read all of Revelation 9, there's just a very demonic description to this group, that they have hair like lions and teeth, fangs, and you know, a lot of times people say, "Well, when the Apostle John got the vision on the island of Patmos, he saw things that he couldn't really understand and if he saw 'an airplane in the 21<sup>st</sup> century' he wouldn't know how to describe it in the first century." The only problem with that is these characters in chapter 9, they really sound demonic with the way that they're described, and so there is the possibility that you brought up, that one of the judgments of God in Revelation 9, the sixth trumpet, which by the way, the trumpets come after the seventh seal, is that these angels, these rebellious ones from days gone by are allowed by the provision of God to be instruments of the wrath of God upon those who have been in rebellion to God.

Here's the frightening thing, it says they are 200 million strong. Now later in, well, not actually later but earlier in the Bible in the book of Isaiah 37, by the way, these angels may be fallen angels theoretically but an angel is an angel as far as size, strength, you know, all that. In Isaiah 37, there is an angel that kills 185,000 men in one night with one sword and you have 200 million of them potentially.

So to her question and, again, Revelation 9, is this going to be a literal human army one day that goes westward? I don't know, it could be, but there is the possibility that the angels that are now captive are loosed, and they're utilized for the judgment of God one day when the sixth trumpet is loosed.

Is that what you were going for there? We got that one? Anybody else? Yes.

[unintelligible]

Ah, have I said at any point in time that angels can be redeemed? I have not said that. No, ma'm.

[unintelligible]

Okay that's a great, okay, and she made a great observation, even though they had the choice. In fact, it says they left their own estate. They chose to do it. Here's the difference. Angels, unlike humanity, were not made in the image of God. We are God's crown creation. The angels are called ministering spirits. They're called spirits. We're called a soul. Humanity is given the opportunity for redemption, reconciliation, salvation. There is, in my opinion, and I've searched and you can correct me if I'm wrong, I don't find any scripture in the Bible that alludes to the redemption of the angelic race at all. I don't see it.

Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Well, okay. Alright, the question is but Jesus preached to them. That was back, I told you that was controversial, did I not? 1 Peter 3, beginning in verse 18, it says he preached to the spirits that were in prison. Alright, now this is where I'm going to get very specific with definitions. He preached to them. The word "preached" means "to proclaim," alright? How many of you and, guys, I'm going to pick on us because I can because I am one, how many of you have talked to your buddies one day at work or on the golf course and said, "Woo, the wife was preaching to me last night." Did she give you a chance to get redeemed? Nope. She was proclaiming truth, okay? Or how many times have you said, "Man, they preached to me yesterday," whoever that person may be. We use that phrase they were preaching to us to say they were proclaiming usually very pronounced. You and I today in our world, we think, and by the way, this happens on a regular, when I get up and preach, I proclaim truth but then I give an opportunity to respond, correct? But to preach does not mean to give an opportunity to respond, that's called an invitation, alright?

The reason that's important, it says he preached to the spirits that are in prison, I think the context of 1 Peter 3 is not that during those famous three days between death and resurrection, I don't think he was down there saying, "Hey, guys, do you want a second chance?" I think he was proclaiming he is and was and will always be the truth. He was declaring the truth of who he is, not giving them a "second chance," because that passage doesn't give any allusion to response. So to preach is to proclaim, not to give a response.

Does that help at all?

[unintelligible]

Oh, what a waste of time. Oh, no, no, no, no, no. He said what a waste of time. 1. We don't know how long it took him because, I mean, if the Lord can do it in two seconds, that's not a waste of time in my perspective. But you understand according to that passage we read, these spirits who you brought up, sir, for 120 years they were a part of the rebellion against God, coming up with all kinds, in fact, the Bible says that everything was wicked in those days. They thought they knew better than God. They went against the things of God. In fact, Noah is called a preacher of righteousness and, in fact, the ark

that he built is a beautiful picture of salvation, that the Lord has provided a means to escape coming judgment. If you will walk through the door that he has provided, remember Jesus said, "I am the door. Anyone who enters, come in." It's a beautiful picture of salvation. In fact, he's called Noah a preacher of righteousness. They rebelled, they rejected, they disputed, and I think the preaching is that what they tried to thwart could not be thwarted because God's plan would not be prevented even though they attempted to do so.

So I don't think it was a waste of time as much as it is the Lord proclaiming truth that his plan would not even be thwarted by an angelic rebellion of the highest nature. I could be wrong there but I don't think it was necessarily a waste of time but it may not have taken a whole lot of time. He could have just simply walked up and said, "Boys, told you so." End of story. It just said he preached. Hey, I'm going to tell you what, when someone says, "I told you so," that's a powerful sermon sometimes, is it not?

Speaking of getting preached to, if I don't pray and quit and I don't pick up my son, I'm going to get preached to, if that makes any sense. So let's pray and get out of here.

*Lord, we love you and we thank you for the unsearchable riches of your word. Lord, we could go for hours and hours and hours and we have gone on for hours and we're just grateful that there is so much there that is very cut and dry and there is so much there that you just want us to sink our teeth into. And so, God, I pray that as we sink our teeth into a lot of subjects that sometimes we don't have conclusive answers, that it would draw us to become more dependent on you, that because we won't have and don't have all the answers, we need to trust you even more. But God, I do pray that 1 Peter 3:15 is true in our life, that all that we've looked at tonight would give us the hope that we have in Jesus Christ to provide an answer for those in a world who are without hope. Lord, whatever you've given us tonight, may we go out and may we give others the answers of Jesus Christ. It is in his name we pray. Amen.*

God bless. I've got to go pick up a kid.