

Ask Jeff

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Good evening, everybody. It is 6:30 Central Standard Time here in Opelika, Alabama. It is my privilege to introduce you, or welcome you, not just introduce you, but welcome you to the Wednesday night First Baptist Church of Opelika large group adult Bible study. And this will be the last night that I make this public service announcement for this semester, because this is week two of our other Wednesday night Bible studies that are available. I promise I'm not trying to get rid of you, I just want you to know that there are Bible studies that are men, women, couples, all ages, all stages. If that is something that you are interested in, you still have the availability to get on it by next Wednesday night, or you might can sneak over there tonight. I just want you to know it is available. That is the Public Service Announcement for this evening.

Now tonight, we have gathered to do a Bible study that if this is your very first time, may be a little bit unique, because everything we do tonight, every topic, every subject, every scripture, every concept will be derived by your initiation of the question and/or your concern. I'll get into that in just a moment, but allow me to share this with you, that on September the 6th, that's two Wednesday nights from tonight, we're going to do what we call a clean out. The reason we call it a clean out is because y'all ask a whole lot more questions than we can ever answer on a Wednesday night. It is on that night that rather than having a dialogue and kind of an open dialogue, what we'll do is we'll take all the questions in, we will clean them out, we'll address them all at some level, but you can still resubmit them. Speaking of submitting, we have a daily YouTube question Monday through Friday. Every week, we answer one question of the day, typically two to three minutes in length, a little bit different than what we do on Wednesday nights. The way that you can submit to the, quote, YouTube channel is two ways. You can go to askjeff.net or fbcopelika.com/askjeff. If you go through the web portals, it goes to the YouTube channel.

Tonight, there are two ways you can submit questions or ask follow-up questions or express concerns. The primary one that most of you utilize is the anonymous text messaging system, area code 334 231-2313. You can be on the front row, you can be on the back row, you can be on another continent. It doesn't matter where you are, you can submit a question and you can be a part of the Bible study in real time. Now, you remain completely anonymous, your phone number doesn't show up, your name doesn't show up, it's just your question. The second way, and some of you like to participate in this

manner, is just by the simple raising of your hand. Now, it's kind of hard to do that when you're online, you need to be in person, but you have the floor and you have the ability to take the conversation any direction you would so like. But let me remind you of something: you lose your anonymity in the room. We obviously know who you are. But your image or your voice will not be heard or seen online or on the radio. So you're anonymous to the world out there, you're not anonymous to us, but it's okay because we're all family. It's all good.

So, without further ado, let's do some Bible study. Here we go. Question number 1. "Is God all-powerful, all-knowing, or both?" Yes. Allow me to take that question and actually expand upon it just a little bit, okay? The concept that God is all-powerful, there's a word we use called omnipotent, okay? The fact that he is all-knowing is omniscient. And then there's another phrase we use called omnipresent, which means that he is everywhere. And so when we describe the attributes of who God is in comparison to who we are, he is all-knowing, he is all-powerful and he is everywhere. So he has all those attributes that none of us nor does any other entity possess. There are levels of knowledge we possess, there's levels of presence, and there's levels of power, but he is the only one who possesses all three of those, not just those two respective ones.

Any follow-up on the omni's? We're good? At this rate, we may clean out the queue tonight. Here we go. Question number 2. It says, "If there is no sin in heaven, will we have free will and be able to make decisions?" That's a really good question. So let's go back to the book of Genesis chapter 2. You say, why are we going back to Genesis chapter 2 because this is about heaven? Well, I want to take you back to the last time that you and I as humanity know of where we were not, shall we say, laden with sin, we were not depraved in our nature and destined toward death. Genesis chapter 2, the Lord is going to give instructions to humanity. Specifically, by the way, these instructions are given to whom we know as Adam. Essentially, God is giving, these are the rules for engagement for the Garden of Eden. Okay?

Now, verse 16, "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die." Now let me draw some distinctions here. In the Garden of Eden there's obviously these trees that are great and this one that is not and the choice or the ability to decide is given to man between that which is of God and what we discover later to be that which is not of God. Here's the distinction between, quote, heaven, when we get there one day, when we've been there 10,000 years, as "Amazing Grace" says, there is no tree of knowledge of good and evil. There is no option that is contrary to God. So if you will, just kind of ignore verse 17 for a moment and just look at verse 16, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat." Do you see what word's in there? Free. Do you see what's also there? Options. Basically, the Lord said, "Of all that which is of my creation, that is of godliness and holiness and righteousness, go for it. Enjoy it as you so choose." The reason I went to Genesis 2 is I think this is the best picture that you and I have one day of the new heaven, the new earth, the new Jerusalem. Everything is of God. The whole creative order has been made new. It's been regenerative. There is no Satan. There is no temptation. There is no sin.

And what we see is of every aspect of the creation we may enjoy, which defaults into the ability for us to freely decide among that which the Lord has given us, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat." So again, you go back before sin, encapsulated humanity, we had the opportunity to do as we chose among the Lord's creative order but a really insightful question regarding the days that are coming ahead.

Any follow-up, concerns, thoughts about the days that are coming? We're all good? All right, Chris, we're cleaning it out. Here we go, question 3. That means that September 6th will have to be different. You do realize that. Okay, here we go. It says, "During the early tribulation, some did not take the mark of the beast. Why were they not taken up with the rapture? Are people saved after the rapture?" Okay, we just got bogged down. Here we go. All right so for those of you who hear that question and go, okay, that's a whole lot going on, I don't know exactly what's going on, allow me to remind each and every one of you of this concept that we know as the quote-unquote Great Tribulation. This is not a Baptist thing, this is not a Protestant thing, this is not a Jeff thing. This is a Jesus thing, okay? In Matthew chapter 24, Jesus made the statement on the Mount of Olives there would come a time period in the future, this time period would be worse than any other time period since the creation of all things, and he called it the Great Tribulation. Okay? Now what's interesting is, in that same passage in Matthew 24, he referenced the prophet Daniel and he said, "As Daniel spoke of." So he's correlating the prophecies of Daniel with what we know as this term known as the Great Tribulation. What's interesting is in the book of Daniel chapter 9, there's this prophetic element that talks about these times of judgment and the wrath of God that is coming, and what's being specifically spoken of is what Jeremiah calls Daniel's 70th week. It's this last quote-unquote seven-year time period that Jesus called what we know as the Great Tribulation.

So, just for the sake of illustration, we're going to call this event the Great Tribulation, as we should. Now here's the Great Tribulation, which is spoken of in Daniel chapter 9, and it's also spoken of in Matthew chapter 24, just for the sake of ease, and according to Jeremiah's interpretation, it would be, quote, seven years. Now, layered in this question is the concept of what about people who are early in this time period that take what we know as the famous mark of the beast? Okay, according to Revelation chapter 13, do not make the sound because we didn't turn there yet, according to Revelation chapter 13, it states that whom we know as the Antichrist figure will make everybody small and great to receive a mark in their forehead or in their right hand so that they might not buy or sell without it; basically says that you cannot live life apart from having this item. The question says, early some did not take the mark of the beast. Okay, so early. That would be before this big line. You say, why did you draw a line down the middle? Because in Daniel chapter 9, it talks about that there will be a key moment in the middle of this time period that's called the abomination of desolation. It is that event that not only Jesus spoke of in Matthew 24, but 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 talks about, where that Antichrist figure goes into the temple of God and he claims that he is God.

Now, the best way I can describe it, I know it's somewhat uncouth to say it this way, but after this event to the right, basically all hell breaks loose. And by the way, for some of you going, is that, is that pejorative? No. According to the book of Revelation chapter 9,

it speaks about entities coming out of hell. Okay? I mean, it literally is that horrific of an event. The question is, well, what about at the very beginning, these people, I'm just going to use the X here, pretend it's quote year one, that they take this famous mark of the beast, why were they, quote, not taken up with the rapture? Now this question presupposes, as I agree, that prior to this event, according to 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, 1 Corinthians chapter 15, that what we know as the bride of Christ or the body of Christ is caught up to be with the Lord. And so the issue is, okay, what are we doing here because we've got people that did not take it early, because the Bible says there will be some that reject it, why were they not, quote, taken up prior to?

2 Thessalonians chapter 2. Turn with me, please, because again, Bible study, not a Jeff study. 2 Thessalonians chapter 2. There's a fascinating passage, beginning in verse 10, that speaks about how this Antichrist figure actually sells the mark and what I mean by that, how is it that he gets all of humanity on board with what's happening? It says, "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved, and for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." Now the reason that's important is that because before we enter this event, per these passages of scripture, every person who's a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is caught up to be with the Lord. So when this famous event begins, you have an entire world of lostness, is what you have, okay? But just because you have a whole world of lostness does not mean that you have an entire world who has somewhat heard or is aware of the gospel message because according to what we just read, it says there are people who are living in this side of things, right here to the left, that are fully aware of the gospel, they've heard the gospel, they've rejected the gospel, and according to what we just read, it says they're going to die in their sins but there could be, and there will be people, who when all this stuff begins to happen, they may not be aware of the gospel, they may have never heard the name of Jesus, but they see a guy doing what's described in Revelation 13 and say, I'm not going for that. Okay? And so, again, you will have people who never heard the name of Jesus, were not saved prior to this event, but will then see what's happening and reject the scenarios that occur.

Now, the final question, are people saved, quote, after the rapture? Absolutely. Go to Revelation chapter 7. [fanfare] Well, ooh, 1, 2, 3, 4. I like that. Alright, Revelation chapter 7. For those of you that are first-timers with us, it just happens every week. So, Revelation chapter 7 beginning in verse 1. Now, just for the sake of understanding, there are several chapters in the book of Revelation that are what we call parenthetical, meaning as the story's being told about the famous seven seals and about the judgment of God, the wrath of God, all these things, there are certain chapters that kind of pull us out of that chronology and give some backstory. Revelation 7 is one of those. Even though it's in the midst of this, quote, great tribulational period, even though it's in the midst of all this judgment of God, we're given a kind of a, not just a backstory, but a little color commentary on what's happening. And it is there beginning in verse 1. Notice what it says. It says that out of the 12 tribes of Israel, it talks about that there will be 12,000 specific people that are, quote, set aside. We find out later in chapter 14 that all of these

individuals are male in gender, Yes, the Bible's specific about that, and have not been defiled with women. Kind of an interesting designation, okay?

Now, later in chapter 7, verse 9, notice what it says, "And after this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hand. They cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." These are individuals that are not necessarily a part of those 144,000 that talk about being, quote, experiencing salvation according to the Lamb, who we know as Jesus Christ. So, yes, there are people in the midst of this horrific event that will, in our terminology, be saved. They will experience what we know as salvation.

So, again, hopefully we've kind of laid out all these questions in line, but it's a really insightful question because at the heart of it is this famous mark of the beast, and if one does, if one doesn't take it, and when they take it, versus when they do not. Anything I need to clear up, make easier, and/or less confusing? Okay. It appears, okay, I started to say it, it appears that dinner tonight has sat heavy upon you.

Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Ah, yes, if you'll continue, as our friend has said here, to verse 14, "And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest, he said unto me, These are they which came out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Yes, these are they, is verse 9, those that have come out of tribe and nation and tongue, etc. Does that help out a little bit? Yep. Don't you love how the Bible, these are they. It is what it is. Yep, absolutely. Anybody else? We're good?

It says, follow up, it says, "Chronologically, doesn't the mark of the beast get fully implemented at the 3.5 year mark, according to Revelation 13, after the abomination of desolation, rather than immediately when the tribulation starts?" Ah, really good insight. So, in Revelation chapter 13, as we've alluded to, is this famous mark of the beast. There is, in this midpoint, the abomination of desolation. Now, the term, or the word that whomever submitted used on the follow-up question, "fully implemented." You do understand that it is easier to catch with sugar than it is vinegar, right? And you do understand that we live in a society where... I'm just going to go there. You know there's two ways to rule the world. You know that? I can solve everything you took in political science I'm about to solve right here. You ready? There's only two ways to rule the world. You either starve people or feed them. That's the only way to do it. You either starve people into giving you the power you want, or you feed people and they give you the power you want. That's the only way to rule the world, right? The Antichrist doesn't starve them. He feeds them, is what he does. In other words, he says, "Hey, you can continue, you can do."

Now, when we read the term you cannot buy or sell without it, it makes it sound somewhat of a negative from our perspective, but really, I think the way we're kind of seeing things in the world, it's more of a, hey, you get to, or you have the privilege of, if you do, quote, this. And I don't think, you know, it's going to be perceived as this negative experience. I think it's going to be a, everybody's doing it once you get on board, if that makes sense. Fully implemented, you have humanity taking it, and I'm going to go ahead and use this word, there are going to be many people who take what we know as the mark of the beast in absolute ignorance. They're just trying to feed their kids. They're just trying to survive to the next day. They don't have a clue spiritually what's happening. They don't understand what's happening prophetically in scripture. They're just trying to get to the next day. They're trying to feed their kids. They're just trying to do the best they know how to do. Per the question, when that event happens midway, it's like all of a sudden the blinders come off, okay? In fact, it's like all of a sudden, "Oh my, look what is before us." That's why Jesus said in Matthew 24, when you see the abomination of desolation, when it happens, he said run for the hills. "Woe unto those who have babies. Woe unto those that have these circumstances." It gets bad and it gets bad quick.

So when you use the term "fully implemented," I think you have humanity on board with the concept. They don't realize the significance of it until this event. Now here's where it gets interesting. Turn to chapter 16. Chapter 16 of the book of Revelation. And by the way, if you're new to us, once we hit Revelation, sometimes we don't get out. Revelation chapter 16. Remember that we talked about the different judgments? There's the seven seals, there's the seven trumpets, there's the seven vials. I want you to hear, I'm going to read verse 1 and 2 of chapter 16. This is the first of the vial judgments. It says, "And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth. And the first went and poured out his vial upon the earth and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his name." Isn't that interesting? Now, two things. Number 1, that gives evidence when you go back to chapter 13 that what we know as that famous mark of the beast is going to be a very subtle thing, but yet you can't do commerce without it. Secondly, we're about to find out everybody who took it.

It says a noisome and grievous mark, so something that is very evidential, which is visible, which makes them known. So again, to use the term "fully implemented," I think there's a mass acceptance. Then at the midway point, there's going to be those who realize what's really happened. But then at some point, there is going to be a judgment of God where whoever has it within them, it is going to be exposed to all that are around. So there's kind of a staging of this, so to speak and I know the question wasn't asked, but I like to go there because tonight is Ask Jeff, and I'm going to ask Jeff a question. I can ask a question too, right? Is that okay? What about somebody who realizes, "Uh-oh, this was a bad idea"? Go to Matthew chapter 6. Anybody watch the movie or seen or read the book "Hunger Games"? They had no idea how biblical they were being. Here we go and I know some of you are thinking, it's biblical? Eh, kind of.

Here we go. Matthew chapter 6. Hold on. I'm looking for it. I apologize. Matthew 5. I apologize. Matthew chapter 5. In what we know as the famous Sermon on the Mount, in chapter 5, Jesus is laying out all the ways that we transgress, we violate, we sin against one another. Then in chapter 6, it's all the ways we sin directly against God. But notice what it says in verse 29. I don't find this ironic at all. I don't call it accidental or coincidental. It says, "And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee, for it is profitable for thee, for one of the members should perish, and not that your whole body be cast into hell. And if your right hand offend thee, cut it off, cast it from thee, for it is profitable for thee, that one of the members should perish, and not that the whole body should be cast into hell." Do y'all find it interesting that in Revelation chapter 13, the famous mark of the beast is in the forehead and it's in the right hand, and Jesus says, if your right eye, which last time I checked, your eye sockets are technically a part of your forehead, or your right hand, offend thee, better to cut it off or pluck it out than end up in hell. I don't find a coincidence because I've seen and I've read "Hunger Games," and you know where they put that famous tracking device? In their right hand. And guess what they did? If you've seen it or read the book, there came a point where they cut it out so they couldn't be tracked. Isn't that funny that here we were watching some, what we call sci-fi show, and it was literally telling us the description of scripture.

So again, hopefully that clarifies a little bit with that follow-up. Anybody else on that? And then I've got another follow-up here. Yes.

[unintelligible]

Ah, great question. I know what you were trying to ask, and then you changed your question. Yes, you did. Because she asked, ultimately, is it going to be apparent that it is the mark of the beast? Let's kind of reverse engineer this for a moment. Whom we know as the beast, or the Antichrist, is a worldwide benevolent dictator. Remember, you win with sugar, not vinegar, right? He is a worldwide, he's got everybody under his tutelage, everybody, and he basically says, "If you want to live, if you want to survive, if you want to buy, you want to sell, you have to have my mark in you." Okay, so at the same time, it's not a matter of ignorance, but people may not quite understand what's really behind the scenes. Like I said, some people are just trying to feed their family, right? Some people are just trying to get to the next day. The pre-question that you almost asked was, what about, quote, Christians, okay? Which is why this is so important up here. If the Bible says there's coming a day where those who are dead in Christ and alive in Christ are caught together with the Lord before this, then you don't have to worry about it as a believer, and I don't have to worry about it as a believer. I will tell you, I got no concern at all about what we know as the quote-unquote mark of the beast. But I will tell you this, there are times, thanks to medical profession, where I need to be inoculated, I need a shot, whatever it may be. I'm not letting anybody put anything in my forehead or in my right hand. Now, I don't think it's going to be the mark of the beast, but I've just read that passage too many times and I'm nervous. I just want you to know. Hey, guess what? You can put it in the left hand. It'll be just fine. Right? Or just, they've never offered to put it in my forehead. It's usually the hand or another side.

All right, here we go. I'm just telling the truth. Yes, ma'am. I'm sorry.

[unintelligible]

If you're a believer in Jesus Christ right now, I wouldn't give a second thought to the mark of the beast other than the fact that the world is kind of being played out to where we can kind of see the pattern that's being established for when it will one day be implemented. Other than that, yes.

[unintelligible]

So these folks here that become believers, yes ma'am. I think that, quote, on this left side of the line, I think there's going to be a whole lot of people that take the mark of the beast in absolute ignorance, not realizing the end game, for lack of better terms. They just want to feed their family. They just want to get through the day, okay? But then the abomination of desolation happens, and this individual who has won them over with charisma and prosperity reveals who he really is, and I think the light bulb comes on, and like, "Uh-oh, this is not good."

[unintelligible]

Yes. Yeah, I think after this middle event known as the abomination of desolation, I think you'd be hard pressed to find somebody that doesn't really understand what's happening. But prior to, that's why Jesus talked about it, Matthew 24, of when you see this. In other words, you didn't see it coming. Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

That's correct. If you could not understand, he said, quote, left of the line, it's really from a perspective of a bystander, not really mark of the beast, because you don't see him as the beast. Afterwards, oh, there's no question who we're dealing with. And remember, not only in 2 Thessalonians 2, but in Revelation 13, it says the way he wins over humanity is with signs, wonders, and supernatural activity, everything we want to see, and then he turns the tables. Yes, sir?

[unintelligible]

We'll go one, two. Yes. Ah, yes. Right. Yes, so those of you who couldn't hear him soft spoken, and you're right, in Revelation 13, what we know as the mark of the beast is associated with worship. You're correct. What's interesting about that is according to 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, when this famous event happens, that's when he declares he is God. In other words, that worship component, I think, is post that abomination of desolation, not pre. Does that help a little bit? In other words, I think we could advocate ignorance on the front side, but willful disobedience on the back side. That's where the worship, and by the way, the good picture of that, it's not good, but an accurate picture, is in Daniel chapter 3 with Nebuchadnezzar and the famous statue. Remember where he

said, hey, when this instrument plays, bow down and Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego said, "We're not doing that." That was a true worship opportunity, which again will take place after what we know as the abomination of desolation. Did that help out a little bit with the worship side? Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Ah. What about the babies? Great question. Now, one of the concepts that we have talked about frequently on Wednesday night that has some to do with this, but a whole lot more to do with everyday life, is what oftentimes we refer to as the, quote, age of accountability. Okay? The age of accountability, according to Deuteronomy 1, verse 39, is not knowing the difference between right and wrong, but knowing the difference between good and evil. Okay? The best way I can describe it is, you and I as humanity cross that threshold when we grasp a true understanding of what sin is, and the gravity of the consequences of sin. Now, some of you may have heard this before. I know when I crossed that line. I remember it because I remember, I was a young man, but my eyes opened up and I realized the truthfulness and the gravity of my sin and the eternal consequences of it, okay? What's interesting is, quote, sir, I crossed that line, it had been more than seven years of my life. This is only a seven-year time period. So I do believe you're going to have a whole lot of children, babes, etc., who are just infants, literally, during this stage who really don't know what's going on. Makes sense. Which is why when Jesus physically returns in Matthew 25, remember he talks about those on the right hand and those on the left? I think a whole lot on the right are going to be really young. Does that make sense?

[unintelligible]

What about their suffering? Well, could God, quote, plop them back up? Yeah. Again, There's a difference, I would say, and I know you're going to say, well, it's easy, it's not your kid. There's a difference between suffering and willfully rejecting God and having the wrath of God poured upon you, if that makes sense. What's interesting is what Jesus said in Matthew 24, he said, "Woe unto them." The actual verbiage is, "Woe unto them that give suck." In other words, those that have babies that are feeding, woe unto them, right? But you and I both know, even in an environment that is this horrific, mom is still going to take care of their babies and men are still going to feed their... In other words, yes, there is suffering, but you get the idea all throughout the book of Revelation, the word men, humanity, you never specifically see the word child or children in the case of the wrath or judgment of God. And by the way, the Lord has the ability, just like he did, remember the land of Goshen in the midst of Egypt? He has the ability of when he does this to know who has willfully rejected him and who is just a three-year-old who's just a part of, you know. Does that help out a little bit? Yeah, we're good.

It says "At the great white throne judgment," again, in Revelation, y'all tend to go there, y'all ask them, not me, "why does God have to judge each person if everyone there is going to hell anyways?" That's a really good question, okay? Great question. Continue in Revelation chapter 20. This is a really good question, you're right. Why does he judge

them if everybody's going to hell anyway? So, the famous passage is found in Revelation chapter 20, beginning in verse 11 through 15 and in verse 13, I believe this is what's being alluded to by the question. It says, "And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them, and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. Whosoever was not found written in the book of life was, quote, cast into the lake of fire." So, you and I both know, biblically speaking, when a human being, right now, breathes their last breath, they are either, as a believer in Jesus Christ, according to 2 Corinthians 5, they're in the presence of the Lord, okay? If they are not a believer in Jesus Christ, according to Luke chapter 16, they're in hell, okay? Here's what's interesting, that if you are a believer in Jesus Christ, the very fact that you're a believer, your sins have already been judged. They were judged at Calvary, alright? If you are not a believer, your sins haven't been judged yet. The sins of a non-believer are judged at this event. Your sins as a believer have already been judged at Calvary. Sin must be judged, and for those who are, quote, already in hell, yes, there's a bringing back up, because the judgment must take place.

Now, on the other side, and you've heard me say this a thousand times, and I'll keep talking about it, how many people do you know that reject Jesus, don't want to have anything to do with God, have said something like this, "One day when I see God face to face, I'm going to tell him what I think about him." Do you see anybody do that in this passage? Absolutely not. So guess what God does give non-believers? He gives them a day in court. He does. Fine. Here's your day. And what do we see? Nobody says anything. But your sins as a believer were judged at Calvary. Non-believer sins must be judged, and they're judged here. So hopefully that helps out with that question just a little bit.

Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Yes. Oh, that's interesting. So, if you could not hear the question, the Bible says in Romans 6:23, the wages of sin is death and when they are judged, just like in our world today, based on a job you do better or worse than others, we get more wages, is there degrees of judgment? Go to Matthew 11. Matthew 11. Here we go. Matthew chapter 11. Jesus actually addresses this, and I will be honest, somewhat specifically vague. Is that honest with you? I say specifically vague, well, it's kind of... In Matthew chapter 11, verse 20. In verse 20 it says, "Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not. Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you." Now, I do not subscribe to, quote, Dante theology. Now, you say, what is Dante theology? Dante was an author who wrote a book called "Inferno" that had nine, quote, levels of hell in it, okay? It's basically mythology with a biblical overlay, okay? However, in the words of Jesus, he did say that some people's judgment would be worse than others. He said that

these cities, if they did not repent, their judgment would be worse than those. So, to your point, if the wages, if that which is due you is a byproduct of sin and you have per this illustration, if you've been more like Bethsaida than Tyre, I think there is a valid point that not there's necessarily compartments or degrees of hell, but some judgment is worse than others. Did I mention it was specifically vague? Now, here's the beautiful thing: you don't have to experience it. That's the beautiful thing. You don't have to be a part of it. I'm not planning on being a part of it.

Did I see a hand? I thought I saw a hand over here. Maybe I didn't. I apologize. And we're moving on. It says, "Are we called to cast out demons like Jesus did?" We've gone Baptical tonight. All right, here we go. Now, this is an interesting question on a whole lot of layers. Let me address the question behind the question. Are what we know as the demonic entities, or demons, do they have access to, the capacity, do they have the authority to infiltrate, to infect, or to possess like they did in the days of Jesus? Because there are some that would advocate that when Jesus Christ went to the cross and when he conquered death, that the demonic didn't have the quote-unquote capacity that it did in days past.

Turn to Acts chapter 16. Acts chapter 16. Whom we know as the Apostle Paul is going to meet a young lady who is possessed by a demon. So we're in Acts 16, which means post the resurrection of Jesus, this is an individual who's demon possessed. All right? So we're not seeing any difference here. Okay? Now, beginning in verse 16 of Acts 16. It says, "And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel, possessed with a spirit of divination, met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying. The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the Most High God, which shown us the way of salvation." Listen to verse 18, "And this she did many days but Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour." So what you have there is a very clear example of a believer in Jesus Christ, just like you and I, the Apostle Paul, confronting the demonic and casting it out of somebody, okay?

Now, go back to Matthew chapter 12 for a moment, and I'm going to read something somewhat interesting. Matthew chapter 12, verse 43. And the reason I want to read this passage is, I want to give a little bit of warning that the practice of, or the ministry of, what we just read in Acts chapter 16 should be done with the most extreme caution on so many different levels. But beginning in verse 43 of Matthew 12, listen to what Jesus said. "When the unclean spirit," is that what was happening in Acts 16? Absolutely. "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out. And when he is come, he finds it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with him seven other spirits, more wicked than himself. They enter in and dwell there and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be unto this wicked generation." What is Jesus saying? You better be very careful, very discerning, and very cautious if you're going to emulate the Apostle Paul in your life because he warned that if you didn't do this in the right spirit, in the right way, it could end up worse down the road than it was in the beginning. So, again, it is there. It's not real frequent, but it is there.

This is follow-up from question 3. "Are there different levels of, quote, awards in heaven?" The answer to this question is yes and no. Let me give you the yes question. Go to 1 Corinthians chapter 3. 1 Corinthians chapter 3. The Apostle Paul is going to speak of what we commonly refer to as the judgment seat of Christ. Now, unlike the great white throne judgment we just read, that judgment in Revelation 20 is the judgment of the sins of those that did not repent and believe in the Lord Jesus, okay? They are cast into the lake of fire for all of eternity. What you're about to read in 1 Corinthians chapter 3, we call it the judgment seat of Christ, because 1 Corinthians is written to the saints at Corinth, and this is written to believers. Verse 11, chapter 3, "For other foundation can no man lay that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, every man's work shall be made manifest for the day shall declare it because it shall be revealed by fire. The fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire." In other words, as a believer, you don't have to worry about going to hell, but there is an opportunity, per the question, for an award.

There are other passages in your Bible, James chapter 1, verse 12; 1 Peter chapter 5, verse 4; 1 Corinthians 9, 27, etc., that talk about or use this phrase, a crown. You may have heard this somewhat colloquially. Have you ever heard somebody, when you or somebody else did something sacrificial or selfless, somebody said, "Well, that's a jewel for your crown"? You ever heard that phrase? That's actually where they're getting it from, are these passages in the Bible.

Now, remember I said yes and, quote, no. Go to Revelation chapter 4. I know we ended up back there. It's okay. Don't worry about it. Revelation chapter 4. We are now in the heavenlies. We're in the throne room of God. I want you to picture yourself there. I know you're not currently there, but just picture yourself there. There is an opportunity in verse 9 where it talks about the famous cherubim or the beasts that are around the throne of God. It talks about, in verse 10, it says, "And there were four and twenty," or twenty-four, "elders that fell down before him and sat on the throne and worshiped him forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne." And so allow me to kind of take this question, kind of peel the layers away. Are there different levels of awards? Yes, but every award received is an opportunity to return back to the one who gave it to us. So you don't have to worry about being in the streets of gold, nervous that your neighbor's got more crowns than you do. Okay? Because, basically, those crowns... So here's the thing you need to understand. You and I should never get caught up in this trap of being what I call crown collectors. I'm going to do A, B, and C so I can get more rewards. By the way, I would probably say you're not going to get the reward you think you're going to get if you do it that way, okay? Secondly, the whole reason for the award is to honor the Lord with it. Not to keep it. These aren't trophies for our shelf, if that makes sense. These are actually that you have the privilege of giving more worship and more honor because of your faithfulness as a believer.

It says, "Why is the judgment necessary? Will their place in hell ever be, quote, overturned?" No. So, just an illustration. All throughout the Bible, you see the term hell, okay? When you get to Revelation 20, you see the term lake of fire, alright? Now, I want you to turn to Mark chapter 9 for just a moment. Mark chapter 9, again, the mouth, the words of Jesus, the idea of hell ever, quote, ending. We're going to begin in verse 42. Jesus gives this warning specifically of a transgression or transgression. He says, "Whoever shall offend one of these little ones that believes in me, it's better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and he were cast in the sea. And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off." We've already read that tonight. "Better for thee to enter into life maimed than to having two hands into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched." Verse 44, "where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee," interesting, he brings this up, "cut it off, it's better for thee to be halt in life than to have two feet and be cast into hell and in the fire that never shall be quenched." Verse 46, did any of y'all just have a problem there? Some of your Bibles don't have verse 46, do they? What does verse 46 say? "Where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." Verse 47, "And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out. It is better for thee to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than having two eyes to be cast into hellfire." Verse 48, some of your Bibles don't have it, do you? It says, "Where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." Verse 44, verse 46, and verse 48, Jesus used the phrase "where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched." Your same Bible in the Old Testament says in the witness of two or three it shall be done, and some of your Bibles just took the witness away because it's only one time. And I know what you're saying. I know. "I've got a study Bible. I've got a reference Bible. And there's a footnote that says the most ancient manuscripts say this verse shouldn't be in there." I've got a theological response to that. Rubbish. Rubbish. Jesus said it would never end and you can take the verse out all you want, that doesn't change anything. It's still never going to end. So it is never going to, quote, be overturned, because Jesus said it a whole bunch of times. He said it will never end, it'll never die out, it'll never come to a close.

Another follow-up says, "Will believers actually witness the great white throne judgment event?" Back to Revelation chapter 20. Boy, the follow-up questions, they're firing away. Here we go. Now do y'all know why we have to have the clean out on September 6th? We won't take follow-up questions that night. Revelation chapter 20. So we know about the famous judgment. We talked about it tonight. We get what it is and it's horrific, right? We've talked about those that are judged because their sins weren't judged at Calvary. They have to actually be judged. But go back to verse 11. Verse 11 says, "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead great..." In other words, we see this description of all those that are being judged. I think the importance of verse 11 is this, verse 11 is the fulfillment of 2 Peter 3:10, which says there's coming a day in a great ball of fire where all of the heavens and the earth are consumed. There is no other place to be. There is no material matter. There's no dirt. There's no planets. There is nothing but the throne of God and those that are being judged in front of him. And the way I conjecture this is, in Revelation chapter 19, when Jesus literally descends, do you remember where you and I are there? We're behind him, right? So it only makes sense we'd be behind him at this experience as well. And so the Bible does say, 1 Corinthians 6,

it says, "Do you not know," I'm sorry, 2 Corinthians 6, "Do you not know that one day you will judge angels?" Well, guess who gets judged here? They get judged too, right? He says, they're all cast into the lake of fire.

So the picture that I get is those being judged in front of the throne, those that are a part of him, his bride, his body, us, are behind the throne, he is the judge in the midst thereof. So yes, there's a witness. And if you weren't with us a couple weeks ago on Sunday morning when we talked about Revelation 20, this is why I brought up verse 4 of chapter 21 as being so important. It says there, after the new heaven, new earth, new Jerusalem, all their tears were dried away. I think there are going to be a whole lot of tears that are shed at this event. And I've said it this way, I know there are individuals I personally know, unfortunately, that are on the wrong side but I don't know about you, but I don't want to see anybody go through this. Nobody. I don't like, and I've described this before, I really have a bad case of what we call second-hand embarrassment. In other words, I know, and I do this with ballgames all the time, and that's trite compared to this. You ever been watching a ballgame and you know it's just not going to work out, right? I mean, you've seen it. It's just not going to happen. It's not going to go the way you want it to, and so I just go to the kitchen and start binge eating. That's what I start doing because I'm like, "I can't do this anymore," alright? I don't want to see how bad this is going to go, alright? Well, if I do that at a ball game, what am I going to do here? Now, I can't run into the kitchen, right? But it's going to be an emotional experience, because I do believe I will witness this event and it will be heartbreaking. I may be in a new body. I may have the linen of the righteous. I may have all that but he dries my tears the next chapter. Just an interesting observation there.

Yes, sir. And then you. Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

The Holy Spirit came in Acts. Yes, sir. Ah, great question. Correct. So the question is, the Holy Spirit, we know in Acts chapter 2, descended upon and now dwells within believers, okay? When you read your Old Testament, it talks about the Holy Spirit coming upon people, but after Acts 2, it comes within people. Correct? All right. Now, what's interesting, the question is, what about this whole rapture event, all the second coming, what happens there? Go back to 2 Thessalonians 2 for a moment. I know we were there earlier. We're going to go back. 2 Thessalonians 2. I'm going to begin in verse 3. It says, "Let no man deceive you by any means, for that day shall not come, except there come in a falling away first, that the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped, so that he, as God, sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Remember ye not that when I was yet with you, I told you these things and now you know what withholdeth that it might be revealed in his time, for the mystery of iniquity doth already work, only he who now letteth will let until he be taken out of the way, and then shall that wicked be revealed." And so the question I would have, and I mean this rhetorically as friends, who is the only one who can withhold the Antichrist? God himself, the Holy Spirit. And so I'm of the belief that once the Holy Spirit is removed collectively, then

boom, here he goes. And as you read, even though we just read in Revelation 7 about the salvation of the tribes and tongues, you're not going to find anywhere in the book of Revelation where it talks about the Spirit of God within them. In fact, here's where it's different, it says the name of God is written on their foreheads. The name of God's not written on y'all's foreheads, but the Spirit of God is within you. So it is different, but yet there's still salvation, if that makes sense.

So what I see, Holy Spirit dwelling within, that when he, the Holy Spirit, I mean, isn't that how we kind of go up? If the Lord calls the Holy Spirit up to the throne room, then we've got to go too. And I think that's where a lot of people get mistaken about this rapture event is people say, "Oh, it's just escapism, it's this." It has nothing to do with what you think about it. When the Lord calls the Holy Spirit, you got to go. I mean, you don't, I mean, you, I mean, you can't, you can't stay here. You're going too. So I think that clarifies it.

I saw another, yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Yes, sir. Yes, sir. About repetition? Oh, yes. Well, if it's in there one time, it's still true. Yeah. And if it's in there twice, you can bank on it. If it's there three times, you better not fight it. By the way, you know that famous thousand-year reign of Christ, Revelation 20, the millennium, we call it? It's in there six times. So, you better not go contrary to that either, if that makes sense. Now, again, that was three times within five verses. There's more than three occurrences throughout the totality of Scripture. But the Lord said in the Old Testament out of the mouth of two or three witnesses. Remember, I mean, I'm sorry, Matthew chapter 18? Which, by the way, that famous passage "where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them"? No offense, that has nothing to do with the worship service, okay? It doesn't. That passage is talking about somebody who has sinned against you. You go to them privately, they won't hear you. You take a witness, they won't hear you. Then you go to the quote, church, and then the Lord says, out of two or three witnesses, in other words, that's where we have a consensus whether it be that personal transaction or whether it be what we know is the reality of hell.

Ma'am?

[unintelligible]

Another reason we don't give you a microphone, I'm not going to have you confess that on the air. Is there still what? Is there still a Trinity? There's always a Trinity. There's always a Trinity. Always. Forever and ever. And so, what we know as, i.e. Deuteronomy 6:4 and 5, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord of God is one God," but the person's a Father, Son, Holy Spirit. There always has been, always will be, never without. It's just that the Holy Spirit, which by the way, the first question, the omnipresence of God, that's the Holy Spirit of God everywhere. The difference is, where is he everywhere? In other words, within me, I have the capacity through Jesus Christ and salvation to have the Holy Spirit

within me, whereas King David had the Holy Spirit on him. So the Holy Spirit is still everywhere, but we're dealing with the capacity to be indwelt with versus just impressed upon.

[unintelligible]

Right. Right. Yes. Yes. Okay, so the question is, when the Holy Spirit, quote, catches us up to be with the Lord, is there still a Holy Spirit on earth? Oh, absolutely. Now, here's where it gets really interesting, okay? The Lord said in Isaiah 55, his ways are not his ways, and his thoughts are not our thoughts. I cannot personally, I'm going to confess to you, you confessed earlier, I'm going to confess to you. They just didn't hear what you confessed, I heard what you confessed. Alright, here we go. I'm going to confess to you, I cannot comprehend how the Spirit of God can be dwelling upon the earth, but yet the Spirit of God can call me up to the throne room. I don't get that. And I'm okay with that because I just believe what it says. I am not God. I can't grasp how he does it but we see that God is omnipresent. He is everywhere at all times. And by the way, according to the Bible, you may not know this, but he's in hell too. The wrath of God is in hell, right? Then that's the presence of God. A lot of people want to go to hell to get away from God. The problem is, he's still there. You know what David said in Psalm 69? He said, "If I climb to the highest mountain, O Lord, you are there. If I go to the depths of hell, you are there." Now, it's not the loving, sweet Jesus, it's the wrath of God, but it's still the presence of. I can't comprehend that either.

Now, I've given you all this illustration before, I'm going to give it again. There was a theologian years ago, very famous theologian, who wrote a book called "On the Trinity," describing the Trinity, the role of the Holy Spirit being everywhere, Father, Son, all that, and the last paragraph, after 200 plus pages, he said, "I can't explain it." And I concur, I can't explain it either. But I know it's real, and I know it exists. I just know that when he is caught up, I'm going with him, and I'm going to leave it at that. I'm good. I'm going to bask in that ignorance. If that makes any sense, all right? I'm just being honest with you. I'm going to bask in it.

It says, "Could you please explain the differences between biblical priests and Levites?" This is a really intriguing question. We go all the way back to the Old Testament because what we know as the priesthood is actually a descendency of Aaron, the brother of Moses. Okay, remember Aaron was the priest and Moses was who Moses was. He was the prophet, technically, according to Deuteronomy chapter 18. And so you see a heritage or a history of priests. However, when the Israelites go into what we know as the, quote, Promised Land, you may remember when they finally occupied, that when they did so, they divided the land up, right? And when they divided the land up among the 12, one of the things you know is that Joseph was not a tribe; he had two sons that had respective tribes. Remember God said he would have a double blessing? Okay? The reason that's important is, there's actually really 13 tribes, but Levi did not have a possession of land. Levi was a priest. Levi did the functions of atonement and all the redemptive acts and what happened was, this is why we get these famous passages in the Bible about bringing the tithes into the storehouse and bringing all the different things in, is because the other

tribes, their living, their substance was the leftovers of their sacrifice. And if you go through the Old Testament, particularly the book of Leviticus, and I know it's a Baptist's favorite book, but if you go through the book of Leviticus, and you start reading through, one of the things you'll discover is that an individual, I'll just use myself, a man, his household, he would come to one of the feasts, one of the festivals, and he would bring a sacrifice, and he would bring it unto the Levitical priest. And that priest was instructed to place it in a certain item, whether it be fire or boiling water, there's a lot of different things, and then he would take a special spoon or a hook, and he would dish out three for himself, or a different number for different ones, and then he would consume the rest unto the Lord. And so therefore, their sustenance was provided by the other tribes.

And so the Levites now, here's what's interesting, is those Levites are a specific tribe. When you go back unto Aaron, there's kind of a split in the family, so to speak, but the Levitical tribes are what is critical, okay? And by the way, what's fascinating is if you look at the layout, is they're pretty much in the center of all the other tribes, so that nobody had to really travel a long distance, everybody just came to the middle to take care of everything where the, quote, temple, or previous to the temple, where the synagogue, I mean, I'm sorry, where the tabernacle would have been. And so it's kind of about that.

Now here's where it gets fun as we wrap up because we've got less than two minutes left. So Aaron started the priesthood. The Levites were specific. According to Hebrews chapter 3, it says that Jesus was a priest after the order of Melchizedek. Melchizedek shows up in Genesis chapter 14, and he is the king of Salem, okay? And he's also the priest of Salem. You say, why is that unique? Because no other priest anywhere in the Old Testament was allowed to be a priest and a king. And so therefore, many people have questioned, is Melchizedek what we call a Christophany or an understanding or an observance of Jesus Christ, because Jesus has always been, but prior to his physical revealing in the incarnation. And so you have Aaron, you have the Levites, and you also have Melchizedek. According to Hebrews, he had no mother, had no father, had no beginning, and he had no end. Now I'm not the sharpest knife in the drawer, but that sounds a whole lot like Jesus. I'm just going to say.

So with that being said, next week will be normal. When we come back on the 6th of September, we're going to clean it all out.

Let's pray and we'll go home.

Lord Jesus, thank you that you are Alpha, you are Omega, you are Beginning, you are End. And Lord, we confess tonight that from Genesis to Revelation, there is so much that we don't get, we'll never get, and that's just okay. You told us that salvation and a relationship with you was as simple as the faith of a child and so, God, I pray that we would never lose the simplicity, but we would always crave the deeper things of your word. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.