

Ask Jeff 8.30.18
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All right, ladies and gentlemen. As we begin tonight, please forgive me in advance. We've got several announcements that we need to share with you that I think you'll want to take note of. The first one is this, on September 14, many of you are aware that we have a gospel concert coming in, Big Daddy Weave, and we are in need of adult volunteers. You did notice the word "adult" volunteers that would be interested in helping with the doors and the merchandise and such, and if you're willing to be a part of that and assist on that evening, Ms. Dawn Flanagan in the office would love to hear from you. That's on Friday night, September 14.

Speaking of gospel concerts, you saw the advertisement this past Sunday for an individual known as Tim Hawkins who will be coming in. I want to clarify something, that is sponsored by the men's ministry but it is not a men's ministry only event. We wanted to make it clear it's welcome to anybody and everybody. In fact, I was told men, women, children and even dogs and cats are invited. So we just wanted you to know it is the men's ministry that is sponsoring that event, it is not a men's only event.

And the last announcement I have before we get started is many of you are aware that as we started kind of our fall Wednesday night programming, one of the most exciting ministries we have is with our children, what we know as AWANA, and on the top floor of the children's building they are in need of what we call listeners. Let me tell you what a listener is, exactly what I said, someone who just listens to children recite Bible verses. Now I know sometimes you get nervous and say, "Well, I don't want to mess up." You don't have to prepare anything, all you do is receive a book from the kids, they're going to say, "I'm going to quote a specific verse," the verse is right in front of you, you just have to help them with the words on the page versus the words that come out of their mouth. So if you're willing to put in a little time and energy without any preparation in advance either A, you can go ahead and slip on out of here and go to the top floor of the children's building, or contact Taylor Teal, our children's pastor directly and he will help you get plugged in. But we are in need of listeners, I want to be clear, we don't need teachers, so to speak, as in preparing a lesson in advance, just people to listen to Bible verses being recited. So if you are willing and able, we would love to facilitate that.

Now transition, the Circle of Concerns otherwise known as our prayer sheet. Allow me to call attention that we have those that are in medical facilities both local and afar. You'll notice that there are those toward the bottom that are even out of town as far as medical

concerns. I do want to call your attention to one specific one just because so you'll know, Dr. David Bentley, he is able medically to be discharged but they are awaiting a rehab facility for him to go to, and so he's been there for several days. We just wanted you to know he's well enough to leave but there's not a place for him to go to and so people have been asking how he's doing. He's doing fine per se, just needs a place to go to. So he's still listed there even though medically he could be somewhere else.

On the back, obviously we've got some thank you's from our families who have lost loved ones and y'all have reached out and served them in a variety of capacities. And as always, those who serve on the mission field and those in our military oftentimes overlooked as far as the sacrifice that they give of their time and energy. We always want to remember them in prayer.

Last but not least, you may be aware of this but as you're exiting in an hour or so, or for those of you that like to sit around and talk and hour and a half or so, you may notice that in our main worship center, a steady stream of college students who will be making their way to our campus. Let me just share with you one of the most amazing things I see every Wednesday night is hundreds of college students at 8 o'clock on a Wednesday night who come to a worship service. And number one, I celebrate that every time I see them. Number two, as you're walking to your cars and you see that stream, just pray for those students. You do realize they could be anywhere else tonight but here and they are making it a point to go across town to be a part of a worship service on a Wednesday night, and I just think that is valuable enough for us to really consider. A lot of our children tonight, they were drug here by their parents. A lot of our teenagers were told you don't have a choice by their parents. Those college students, they have a choice and they made the decision to be in this environment tonight. They gather up about 8 o'clock so as y'all are trying to kind of pull out of the parking lot, they may be, you know, coming in Mach 2 with their hair on fire. Don't get frustrated with them, just be thankful to God that they're here because they could be anywhere else.

Let's pray.

Lord, as we gather tonight, Lord, we hurt for those that are hurting and, Lord, we are sad for those who are experiencing loss. Lord, we do pray for healing, we pray for comfort, we pray that in the midst of not only physical pain but oftentimes emotional pain, that your healing touch would be greater than any doctor or nurse could ever prescribe. Lord, we pray for caretakers tonight, oftentimes those beside the bed or those who are at home assisting are so emotionally and even physically and mentally taxed with the situation. Lord, would you do as Isaiah says, would you lift them up on your wings as an eagle and would you comfort them as they comfort others. Lord, for those who are serving on the mission field, for those who are in the military who find themselves oftentimes in strange places and strange lands but with a very clear directive and a very important purpose, Lord, may they know that they're not alone, may they know that you are there to protect and to guide them, to direct them, and ultimately to see the light of Jesus Christ go forth. So Lord, we pray for them and tonight on our campus whether it be the college students, the high school, junior high students, even our

grade school in our AWANA ministry, our worship ministry and even our adults who are all over this campus, Lord, may your word go forth and as Isaiah says, may it not return void. Guide us, lead us, direct us as we walk through your word so that we're better equipped to live it on the way out. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

Alright, tonight as we gather up, I know many of you may be here for the very first time. A lot of you are seasoned veterans, but allow me just to kind of give a recap of how Wednesday nights at First Baptist roll. What typically happens is this and I say typically because you'll see in a moment, sometimes y'all get a little carried away, but typically the first half of this Bible study is a question and answer time. You have the opportunity to ask any question you want in regards to a biblical passage, a biblical concern, a Christian position, whatever it may be, and I will do my best to lead you to where the answer is found in Scripture. Notice I said where the answer is found in Scripture, not in tradition, not in man's philosophies but what does the Bible say about what you're curious about.

Now if you have a Bible question or a question about Christianity, the best way to submit that question is on our website fbcopelika.com/askjeff. You can submit your question and you have the opportunity to put your email address in. If you put your email address in, you still remain anonymous. When I pull up the questions in a moment in the database, I don't have any idea who you are so you're anonymous but when you put your email address, when I push this submit button meaning it's been answered, you will get a link to the video which it was answered just in the event that you were not here. So that being said, that's the best way to submit a question. Some of you are old school and you'll just hand me a piece of paper. We'll take that piece of paper and we'll put it in the database because everything tonight is random. There is no sequential chronological order. It just goes in some type of algorithm formula and the computer spits it out.

That being said, you may get frustrated and say, "Well, I have a question and it hasn't come up. I want to talk about it." You have this thing called a hand that you can put in the air and when you put that hand in the air, you lose your anonymity but you can take the conversation anywhere you want to and some of you take great liberty with that. We can go deeper into the subject, we can change subjects, we can just abandon all things together. So just letting you know that whether it be in an anonymous position or forthright position, tonight is all about you, what do you want to know, what do you need to know, what should you know, and then we'll transition in a little bit to kind of our systematic Bible study that we are walking through the book of Revelation. It is our goal to get through Revelation before Jesus comes back.

So that being said, let me push the button here. Now there is a thunderstorm brewing outside so I don't know if technology is going to do as well. Okay, here it goes, it worked. All right, question. Now whoever you are, you took liberty because you put two questions within one. But here we go. It says why don't Protestants believe in transubstantiation? Some of y'all are going, "What?" I'll explain that in a minute. Is the bread to be taken literally as Jesus' body and the wine his blood or should it be taken figuratively? Question number two: was Mary sinless? How could the sinless one, Jesus, be born of a woman wasn't sinless?

Great, this is a wonderful series of questions of why approximately 500 years ago the world split in two, and when I say the world split in two, in 1517 a little monk by the name of Martin Luther changed the world forever. He was what we would call a Roman Catholic monk. He began to study the Scriptures and on October 31, 1517 when he tacked his 95 theses on the door of the Wittenberg church in Germany, it changed the world forever and we became, those who separated from, we became known as "Protestants," okay? But the question is why do Protestants, that would be those of the Christian faith system that are not Roman Catholic, okay, so can we just for the sake of ease just kind of lump everybody else into one big chunk, and even though even among those, lots of differences. Even among Baptists, two Baptists, three opinions. We get all that, but nonetheless, transubstantiation, boy, that's a lot of points in Scrabble, I'm just here to tell you. But if you can spell transubstantiation, it is the belief that during what we would call the Lord's supper, what the Catholic tradition would call the Eucharist, it is the belief that the bread literally becomes, it transforms into the actual body of Christ, and that the wine in the Roman Catholic sense, actually transforms into the actual blood of Christ. So transubstantiation is the belief that the bread and wine become the actual elements of the body and blood of Christ at that moment as a means of what the Roman Catholic tradition calls a sacrament. That word means it's bestowing grace, okay?

Now they would take, they being the Roman Catholic tradition, they would take that belief system from what I would consider an over-literalization of John 6 but we're going to see in just a moment why the Protestant tradition does not believe in that. But transubstantiation is the belief that the bread and the wine become the literal body and blood of Jesus. Consubstantiation, the word con means with, is a belief system that some Protestants actually believe. Some of your Lutherans, Anglicans, Church of England, and some of those, consubstantiation does not believe the body and blood, that the bread and wine become the body and blood but they do believe that when the Lord's supper is taken, that the presence of God is greater at that moment than other moments. Then we've got the Baptists, all right? Now y'all know Baptists, we've got three of us, right? Some of y'all are Bahptists, some of you are Baptists, and some of you are Baaptists, you know what I'm talking about? But no matter whether you're a Baptists or Bahptist, nonetheless it is seen as a memorial and what that means is that it remains the element of which when it was poured in the cup or when it was put in the basket. It's simply bread. It's simply wine or juice and therefore does not change substance nor does the presence of the Lord increase greater when that has taken place but it is done as a memorial.

Now the question was why do Protestants believe this? Not because we want to but because we are of the belief that's what Scripture says. So go to 1 Corinthians 11 and let's find out about what we know as the Lord's supper. 1 Corinthians 11 and I want to give you the biblical, shall we say, evidence for a memorial interpretation of the elements of the Lord's supper. I'm going to begin in verse 23 of 1 Corinthians 11 just for the sake of context here. Now you'll notice earlier in this conversation I said an over-literalization of a John 6. In John 6, Jesus talks about his body and he talks about his blood and he talks about he who eats and he who drinks. Jesus also said he was a door but I don't think any of us are asking was it steel or wood, okay? In other words, Jesus often times used

metaphors and illustrations to describe the message he was portraying. The reason that's important is because I think in 1 Corinthians 11, the Apostle Paul clarifies this. It says, "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup," now why am I pausing there? Because he didn't say for as often as you eat the body and drink the blood, "ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." Now what's important about that passage is it says "do in remembrance of me," not as a replacement of or instead of me. So the Protestant "tradition" of seeing the Lord's supper elements as symbolic or as a memorial is based on a reading of Scripture rather than an interpretation or just a differing view of.

Before we get to the Mary question, any Lord's supper, communion, Eucharist issues, concerns, thoughts, what about? Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Ah, great question. So when did that begin as a, shall we say, a practice of norm within the Catholic tradition? We, the church, by the way, when we use the term "Catholic" I think we need to differentiate between a little "c" and a big "C." The term catholic just means universal. That's why you'll notice when I'm speaking about a denominational inference, I usually use the phrase Roman Catholic as to differentiate. So there is catholic, little "c," which means all the church, the body of Christ. There is the Catholic big "C" which we would typically call the Roman Catholic Church. The church, little "c," we were good for about 300 years. Now don't worry, we had our issues and we had our struggles and we had our theological differences but as a whole everything was fine. In fact, as you begin to not only read the Scriptures but as you begin to read what we call the early church fathers, and there were some issues there as they are talking back and forth, but what we know as transubstantiation, the body and blood actually transforming, that was not a part of anything, and then in 313 when the Roman Empire took their scepter and declared Christianity the official religion of Rome, everything went south and what took place is the state and the church married each other and when that happens the state always wins, and the state won and as you begin to study the doctrines and, shall I say, even the dogma of the church, it began to morph into what the book of Colossians calls the traditions of men versus the traditions of God and not only on this issue but other issues as well. For example, having a representative that they would claim would be the true representative or the Vicar of Christ, what we know today as the pope, you know, they'll make the claim all the way back to whom we know as Simon Peter. However, the first official pope wasn't until late fifth century and so, again, there were 200 years from

the 3132 about 476 where all of a sudden they morphed into leadership that was extra-biblical, interpretations of the Lord's supper that were extra-biblical. Do you get the trend here? And pretty soon by the time you get to 1517 when Martin Luther goes to that church in Wittenberg, what he is essentially saying in those 95 theses is that Christianity that's being portrayed by the "institutional church" doesn't look anything like the Christianity of the Bible.

So what we know as the Protestant Reformation wasn't a revolution of anything new, it was a revolution of going back to where we started and, for lack of better terms, it was Christianity 2.0. Now Martin Luther wasn't perfect and neither are any of us but at least we got back to Scripture being the authority and not tradition and/or how as he said in one of his famous statements, synods and councils and popes aplenty, meaning the words of man.

So does that help with that question at all? So but those are generic statements about large bodies, of course. Any other ones on the Lord's supper issue before we get to Mary? Yup, yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

All right, great question. The frequency of taking the Lord's supper. I get asked this question all the time, believe it or not, because there are some people and I know Baptist churches that take it weekly, I know Baptist churches that rarely take it at all. I could go through all types of denominations but generally speaking when we move into what we call that Protestant Reformation period, if you've ever been in a Roman Catholic tradition, allow me just to describe the setup of the church, okay? In the middle of the Roman Catholic Church is what they would call the Eucharist table or the Lord's supper table. That's in the middle. That was the centerpiece and hopefully the camera will allow me to do this but if y'all were the congregation and I'm at the front of the platform, the pulpit would be on the side over here, and so the centerpiece were the elements and the Scriptures were second-place. Does that make sense? And so in the Protestant tradition, we brought the pulpit back to the center to say this is critical and even in our context here where we have a Lord's supper table, the pulpit is above the table. It may just seem like symbolic but it's really real.

Now I know what some of you are thinking, "But Jeff, you don't use a pulpit." Did you know that there is only one reference to pulpit in the Bible, it's in Nehemiah 9, and it says that he stood on the pulpit. Not behind it, he stood on the pulpit. So technically this is a pulpit because it's a raised area for proclamation. Does that make sense?

Now the reason I said that is because almost every single soul who was saved during that time period came out of that ecclesiastical dogma. Their entire lives, every time they went to "church" it was the Eucharist. That was the center point and so there was this pullback by the Reformers to say we should do as often as we meet, however, we don't want it to become the primary thing again, we want to make sure that it is secondary to Scripture. So what happens over time is there was a guy by the name of Ulrich Zwingli,

that wasn't very good German but I tried, that he had the idea that he thought that you wanted to do it enough for it to be regular but infrequent enough for it to be a true remembrance and a celebration, and he just came up with this idea, this is mid 16th century, of about four times a year, seasonally, and for some reason most, not all but most Protestant traditions grabbed a hold of that formula and have subscribed to. So typically most Protestant traditions, 4-6-8 times a year. There are some that will do every week, every other week, once a month. It is up to the local congregation as they so see fit. In 1 Corinthians 11 it says as often as you meet, not meaning every time you meet but as often as you so desire. So the good news is the Lord didn't say if you don't do it this many times, you're in trouble. He said if you do it with the wrong motive or attitude, you can be in trouble. But that's kind of where the history of that comes from.

I have a dear friend of mine, he pastors a Baptist, a Southern Baptist church and they take the Lord's supper every single week and I asked him once, I said, "Do you think it loses its meaning?" And he says unfortunately for some it has, and he said, but you know, we're Baptists so we can't stop it. Please tell me y'all see the humor in that. Please tell me you see the humor in it.

But does that help on that question? So again, I think the criticalness of the Lord's supper when done in a true memorial fashion, it's not the frequency but it's the motive and the intent in which it is done.

Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

When you say who should or who should not.

[unintelligible]

Correct. So the great question there is not necessarily how often but the who. Yeah, so who should take of the Lord's supper? Okay, so you mentioned a member of the church or not, that's a difference in what we call closed and open communion. That's just the simple terminology. Closed communion is practiced by some churches, which means if you're not a member of that specific local church, then you're not allowed to partake of the Lord's supper with them, okay? Don't get nervous. We practice open communion. What that means is if you claim to be a believer in Jesus Christ, when we participate in the Lord's supper and it comes by and you feel that you are in a position to take, feel free but that's between you and God, if that makes any sense. That's what's open.

Now the other question is can anybody, should anybody? I think there's a pretty clear understanding here that since it's written to the church at Corinth it's for believers because you can't remember the death of one whom you don't believe in. But there is a warning if you take it unworthily, some are sick and some have even experienced death or fallen asleep. That being said, I don't take it lightly. Now, if you ask me do you know anybody who has taken the Lord's supper and because they have taken it, they ended up in the ER

sick with cardiac arrest. I cannot personally tell you a testimony thereof but I'm not going to take a risk. In fact, I'm going to go ahead and be honest with you as your pastor, that's why I am not a huge fan of doing the Lord's supper on Sunday morning because your Sunday mornings are like my Sunday mornings, right? The devil showed up in the car and in the parking lot on the way, and you're in a bad mood, you're yelling at your kids, everybody is rushing. You finally get to church and you're like... It's like, "Oh, the Lord supper, yeah, why not. Yep, we're good." Not a whole lot of thought. That's why often times we do it at special events whether it be a Christmas eve service, other times, or on a Sunday evening so as to say between now and then please prepare your hearts, please take this seriously. It is something that should be taken with a grave reverence, if that makes sense.

Does that help the question at all? So again, I have not personally experienced but the Apostle Paul says there are some people whose deaths and sicknesses have been linked to this issue. It does open up the question, I've heard it debated, does that mean they were nonbelievers who were taking it? Does it mean that they were backslidden believers? The Bible doesn't say. I just use it as a healthy warning that make sure you're ready when you do it. And can I say this, be prepared. Your salvation is not based on whether you drink that juice or not. It's not so there is nothing, and this is where peer pressure, there is nothing horrible about not taking it if there is something between you and the Lord. It's okay. It's okay. So I tell people if you're not prepared, if you're struggling with something, if there is something going on of a sinful nature in your life, don't add sin to sin. It's okay. Deal with the Lord. Deal with it. That's why oftentimes when we take the Lord's supper, you know, we give a time for an invitation prior to. That's not just if you need to make a decision but also to prepare your heart if not already. So take it seriously, don't take it too seriously. Make sure it's important but not the main thing, if that makes sense.

All right, second question was about Mary. There is the belief within the Roman Catholic tradition that in order for a sinless one, Jesus Christ, to be born of the virgin Mary, that she had to be sinless because only sinlessness can come from sinless. Here's the only problem" they don't subscribe that Mary's mom was sinless. I mean, at some point the logic breaks down. And allow me to show you the biblical because, again, the Reformation came back to the Bible, let me bring you the biblical answer to this question. Go to the gospel of Luke, if you go to Luke 2, no, sorry, Luke 1, I apologize. Luke 1 is what we oftentimes call the Magnificat, which is the praise, the adoration, the declaration of Mary. This is the story, remember Mary goes to Elizabeth, John the Baptist leaps in her womb, there's this discovery the Messiah is going to be born, and in verse 46 of Luke 1, I want you to hear the words of Mary herself. It says, "And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." If you're sinless, you don't need a Savior. She didn't say in God "the Savior," she said in God "my Savior." When she makes that declaration that she needs a Savior, she is declaring, as we all know, the Bible is true for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. And so therefore this concept and what we know as the perpetual virginity of or the original virginity of Mary coming from her mother, it may be tradition and it may sound good but there's no biblical basis to it.

Now on the other side of the equation is the perpetual virginity. Go to the gospel of Matthew 1, there is subscribed within traditional Roman Catholic tradition that not only was Mary sinless to conceive and give birth to Jesus Christ, but that she remained not only sinless but remained a perpetual virgin, okay? Here's the issue. Matthew 1, I'll begin in verse 21. It says, "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And knew her not," you know what that is in Bible language, right, "And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS." Now I'm not a genius but if you have a firstborn, that means you have a second born, and it says he knew her not until, which means he did at some point afterwards. So again, allow me to summarize somewhat of a theme here. Anytime we are asking a question in regards to the tradition of an ecclesiastical body, in this case particularly the Roman Catholic Church, in regards to what do others possibly believe or not believe, hopefully you've seen a theme that whether it be on the Lord's supper, whether it be on Mary, what does the Bible say, not what does tradition say.

Now allow me, if you'll let me, allow me to do a little defense of the Roman Catholic people. Notice I didn't say Church. People. In 1517 when Martin Luther established what we know as the Protestant Reformation, you do understand that even though the Gutenberg press had come out a few years earlier, that the Bible not only in print but readily accessible to the average person had not been so for over 1,000 years. And so when you show up to a "worship service," you have no Bible, you have no Scripture, and somebody tells you this is what is true, and it's what your parents believe and your grandparents believe and your neighbors believe and everybody else believes, you just assume, well, it must be true. That's what happened with Martin Luther. Martin Luther didn't just decide, "I'm going to do it different," he started reading the Bible and said, "This doesn't match with what I'm hearing being taught." And he made the decision, as we all should, that the Bible is the absolute standard for truth, not man's tradition or councils, synods, popes appointed, as he said. So there's your theme when it comes to these issues.

Any Mary questions? Concepts? Yes, ma'am

[unintelligible]

The question is do Catholics actually pray to her? That is an absolute yes. They are of the belief that because of her not only sinlessness but because of her perpetual virginity and her place in the equation of God's economy here, that she has the special ear of her son, and that your prayers can get to the Lord quicker and better and more effectively if done through her. For those of you like possibly myself who have lived in communities that had a majority of Roman Catholic adherents, not only are there the prayers to but there's the statues of, and I was told at one point that if you really wanted to sell your house, you

bury a statue of Mary in your front yard and it will sell faster. I'm not joking. That's actually practiced. You laugh at that but that's not laughable in those communities because they believe that that representation of who she is actually gains you greater access.

There are some, and when I say some, you know, some means less than half, there are some who would even go as far and there have been some pretty prominent ones to say this, that Mary should be considered a co-redeemer with Jesus, that she can provide salvation as he can because of her sinlessness. The difference is she did not offer a blood sacrifice for the sins of the world. If you're curious where did all of that originate, you have to look no further than Ephesus. Remember the church at Ephesus, the book to the Ephesians, the church in the book of Revelation? It is commonly known that the Apostle John, remember the Apostle John was the only one, actually he was the only male but he was also the only apostle that was at the foot of the cross in John 11:35. There were four Mary's and John. That does sound like a band, doesn't it, John and the Four Mary's? But nonetheless, John is there and Jesus makes this statement, he says, "Woman, behold your son. And John, behold your mother." You do know that Jesus never called her mother. Read your Bible all the way from front to back, Jesus always called her woman. He made it very clear never to call her mom. But he said, "John, behold your mom," okay? "Woman, behold your son." John the apostle, remember Jesus at the end of the gospel of John said, "What is it to you if one of you stays to see the kingdom of God when it appears." It is the Apostle John who lived the longest tenured life of any of the apostles, most likely until about 96 or 97 A.D.

You say, "Why is that important?" He was the one that was the physical caretaker of whom we know as Mary. It is believed through not just tradition but the early writings of the church fathers that he was the pastor at First Baptist, Ephesus. Please note the humor, okay? When you read in the book of Revelation when it says to the church at Ephesus, the Lord is inspiring John to write, that's the church he pastored before he was on the island of Patmos. That is where Mary would have been and Polycarp, who was one of the disciples of the Apostle John and others, writes that it was there at Ephesus where she was still alive, John was deceased, that people began to venerate her and make more of her than should have been which brings new light into that passage in Revelation 2 where it says, "You have lost your first love"? We often teach that they had lost their evangelistic zeal, their passion for the gospel but it's possible in light of that that he was saying instead of focusing on Jesus, you're starting to focus on somebody else and it could get you wayward pretty quickly. But that's where it originated, what we know as Ephesus, what we know as the Maryology, so to speak, and all the tradition therein.

So any more on that one? All right, now, we're going to transition to our Bible study tonight and we've got a special transition for you. This is a special Bible study. I mean, you being here tonight, I mean, this is important. Are you ready? So we're going to set the mood tonight. Y'all ready? So as we prepare to study Revelation 11:19, cue the music. [Theme music from "Raiders of the Lost Ark."] Yes, I did not bring my fedora hat or my whip, but we tonight are going to be the Raiders of the Lost Ark. That's right. If you're a guest, please come back.

Revelation 11. Allow me to set kind of the context here. I've said that since the very beginning, when you study the book of Revelation and I know all of the themes that are in there that are very apocalyptic end times, but the book of Revelation really truly does open up the Old Testament. Over 250 either quotations or references to the Old Testament are found within the book of Revelation, and so oftentimes I think our misunderstanding of the book of Revelation isn't because we can't read what's being written, it's that we don't understand that it's pulling out of an Old Testament context and not our contemporary culture, so to speak. But in the book of Revelation, I am convinced that Revelation 11 is the most critical of the chapters not just because it's in the middle but because it just so much wraps up some stories and sets the scene for others.

In chapter 10 and in the first half of chapter 11 and in chapter 12, this will be important in a moment, we have what are called parenthetical passages, that means they are not in the chronology of the book of Revelation. When I speak of chronology, by the time you get to chapter 6, we have the beginning of the famous seven seals. We have those seven seals opened up, by the time we get to chapters 8 and 9, we are now opening up the seven trumpets, okay? When you get to chapter 11, verse 15, you now have the seventh trumpet that is opened up. This is the only event, in fact, verses 15 through 19 are the only events within chapters 10, 11 and 12 that are in the chronology of Revelation. All the rest of it is giving us some back story and when we come back next week into chapter 12, we're even going to go all the way back to Genesis to see the story that is wrapping up in Revelation.

So that being said, the seventh trumpet sounds. Verse 19, we talked a little about this last week, it says, "And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail." If you were here last week, we went on the search, we walked all the way through the Old Testament not only of the promise of but the building of, the contents of what we know as the ark of the covenant, and eventually we got to the end of its physical known existence. So tonight on your outline, we're going to talk about where is this famous ark of the covenant because in Revelation 11:19 it mentions the ark of the testament in the heavens in the temple of God, and I want to discuss tonight the three main theories that have been and are propagated about where this famous ark of the covenant is, and most likely what is the "best one" to subscribe to not based on tradition but based on the biblical evidence.

So the ark and its captivity. It was prophesied in 2 Kings 20, Isaiah prophesied that when the Babylonians came from that point forth, and they came in 586, that the ark would disappear, that it would be hidden, that it would be gone from sight. So it was actually prophesied to disappear, but it would also be protected. In 2 Chronicles 35, Josiah, one of the leaders of Israel, he orders the ark out of hiding into the temple for 23 years prior to 586. If you were here last week, remember when the Assyrians came into the northern kingdom in 722, they got nervous it was going to happen to them so they took all the valuables including the ark and they hid them, then they realized, okay, it's going to be safe, so they brought them back out, and so for 23 years prior to 586, what we know as the ark of the covenant was within sight, it was utilized, it was there. In 2 Chronicles 36,

the Babylonians destroyed all the valuable vessels of the temple. Here's where it gets interesting because what we have to piece together tonight is this, we know it was brought out of hiding and it was within the temple and we know in a very short amount of time later the temple was ransacked and destroyed, the question is was the ark destroyed as a part of the invasion, was it hidden as a part of the invasion, or was it taken as a part of the invasion.

So here's the locations. There are three options and we're going to walk through these and we're going to start with the traditional option. Now remember what we talked about tradition, right? Tradition is that it is in Ethiopia in what we know as Eastern Africa, that in Ethiopia there's a church over there and it is because of the relationship with the Queen of Sheba and her son Menelik I. Now here's what I'm going to do with these three basic concepts, I'm going to tell you both the probability of it being true and the problems that arise if you subscribe to it being true. Here's the probability. There is a distinct biblical connection with Solomon and Menelik who ruled in 950 BC. In other words, we do know of Solomon's relationship with the Queen of Sheba, we do understand and know that there was some type of not only an engagement of transferring from one location to the other, but that she actually came to listen to the wisdom of Solomon and there is evidence that her son would have been a part of this as well. Here's the problem is when you begin to read the tradition of the Ethiopian protection of the ark of the covenant, the tradition says that it was taken into Ethiopia to protect it from Manasseh who was this awful heretical pagan king though he would be the king of Israel, that it was to protect it, okay? The problem, as I wrote, is Manasseh, who it was supposedly protected from, he didn't rule for another 250 years afterwards, and so you have a real historical discrepancy here that supposedly the young man, Menelik I who was protecting the ark from Manasseh but Manasseh didn't live for another 250 years so you have a real historical disconnect there.

The second thing is this, the tradition of it being in Ethiopia did not rise until the 13th century A.D. So none of the early church fathers, none of the early church, it was never spoken of, talked about, and all of a sudden about the 1200s, all of a sudden these legends and stories come up that within Ethiopia there is the ark of the covenant.

Now there are Coptic Ethiopian churches not only in Jerusalem but also in Ethiopia who celebrate this fact. They will sell little trinkets or mementos of the ark and they celebrate. They claim that it is there. It is a wonderful tourist attraction and a great fundraiser, but nonetheless, and there was a book written if you're interested in kind of following this tradition, some years ago in the early '90s there was a guy by the name of Graham Hancock wrote a book called "The Sign and the Seal." Now this book is important for two reasons. 1. It's probably the definitive work from a secular perspective of saying that the ark of the covenant is in Ethiopia. 2. Is Graham Hancock makes this statement, now understand he's not a believer in Jesus Christ, he's a historian, he says that the Bible is the most accurate historical book in the world. Interesting, and what he does is he follows the passages that I gave for you last week and he just marches his way with tradition and he ends up in Ethiopia. He ends his book by believing it is in Ethiopia but nonetheless all the traditions, there's a historical disconnect and there's a time disconnect with 13 centuries before anybody ever even talked about it.

So that's the traditional one. Now this is the idea of the hidden one. This is the one that's most often propagated among evangelical circles and those that are interested in prophetic events in Scripture. This is the idea that the ark of the covenant is still on planet earth but it is hidden under the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, that it is there not necessarily just buried but it's being preserved for a later date, okay? Now that idea, Isaiah's prophecy again in 2 Kings 20, we alluded to that earlier about the Babylonian captivity, but also we know in 2 Chronicles 35 that when Josiah had this great revival, that the ark was there. Now allow me to connect these dots with previous dots. These two passages give us evidence that the ark of the covenant most likely was in Jerusalem in the temple days before the invasion of Babylon. In other words, years before they didn't go and put it in hiding, that it was actually being participant and it was a part of their worship environment right up until this invasion.

So what's the probability that it's hidden? It had been hidden before. You know the one thing about history, right? It does repeat itself. They had hidden the ark before in Josiah's day when they were fearful of the Assyrians and so, in other words, the ark had been placed in a secure location before and so there's a probability that maybe it was utilized in that manner again. Here are the problems. The historical evidence from the life of Jeremiah is found in an apocryphal work. Now let me share with you what that word "apocryphal" means. By the way, tonight I've given you some very good Scrabble words. Take them, use them, get some points. Apocryphal means noncanonical or nonbiblical. They may have a historical validity but they do not have a divinely inspired credential. In other words, Genesis through Revelation, inspired by God, preserved by God. Apocryphal works may give us insight into history, characters and events, but they're not biblical, okay? 2 Maccabees and for those of you who may have a "Roman Catholic tradition," the Apocrypha is a part of their scriptural context. 2 Maccabees 2:4 through 5 and can I just daresay this may be the only time I've ever quoted the Apocrypha in a public Bible study but here we go. It says in these verses referring to the ark of the covenant, it was also contained in the same writing how the prophet being warned by God commanded that the tabernacle and the ark should accompany him until he came forward to the mountain where Moses went up, he saw the inheritance of God, and when Jeremiah came there, he found a hollow cave, he carried it there, the tabernacle of the ark and the altar of incense and so stopped the door. In the apocryphal work known as 2 Maccabees in which, by the way, the Maccabean apocryphal works, if I had to, if you forced me to choose of the apocryphal works which ones would you like more than others even though they're nonbiblical, I would choose the Maccabean ones because we have the story of what we now know as the celebration of Hanukkah with the Maccabean revolt which is significant in the Jewish tradition in 167 BC, and you also have this account that it is written, it is believed that Jeremiah the prophet took the ark of the covenant and he hid it.

Now this is important because Jeremiah has a very unique function in Scripture. He is one of the only prophets who his prophecies came both before and during the exile. Most of the prophets were either before or after. There is one in particular in Ezekiel in the middle but Jeremiah prophesied going into exile and while they were in exile, so

therefore you have this unique situation that you have an individual used by God who not only proclaimed the captivity but went through the captivity, and so the thought that he actually helped the ark going into captivity is somewhat credible, if that makes sense. The problem is this is an apocryphal work, there is no mention in Scripture of where the ark was taken or if it was hidden, so to speak.

Now the other thing I want to make note of this passage, notice where it was supposedly hidden, the mountain that Moses went up. Mount Sinai is not the Temple Mount and most people who believe that the ark of the covenant is hidden believe it's in the Temple Mount, not in the mount of Moses. The mount that we know as the Temple Mount was the mount where Abraham went to sacrifice Isaac. Moses was a whole different mount and a long ways away, shall I say, and so one of the discrepancies here is the one historical document that we've got that claims it was hidden claims it was hidden in a different place where most people believe it was hidden. Does that make sense? But it's a very valid argument, in fact, today in the archaeological processes of life, there's much taking place under the Temple Mount in Jerusalem and there is the belief by some that they will eventually as they continue to dig not only find the cornerstone for what we know as the temple, but that they will find the artifacts known as the ark of the covenant and such.

So but let me remind you as we studied last week, the ark of the covenant has not been seen or verified with human eyes since Nebuchadnezzar went into Jerusalem. It has not been verified. It was not there when they rebuilt the temple under Ezra/Nehemiah. It was not there when Herod refurbished the temple. It wasn't even there when Jesus turned over the tables in the temple. It was not there. So the ark of the covenant has not been seen and verified for 2,500 years unless you believe it's in a church in Ethiopia but we still don't have access to see. They could solve all these problems if they'd just take a picture of it, post it on social media and say, "We've got it. Y'all quit worrying about it." But they don't.

But nonetheless, the third option is that the ark of the covenant is not in Ethiopia, it's not hidden in the ground somewhere, but that it is actually "in the heavens." It is in the throne room of God. So that being said, here in Revelation 11:19, that's what it says. So what is the probability that that is the case? If you'll notice, on all these probabilities there are Scriptures out beside them and for the sake of time we won't go back and read all the Scriptures but Jeremiah, remember who is said by 2 Maccabees to be the one who hid it, he made this statement in Jeremiah 3:16 that the ark was never to be seen again, that when it left, it was never to be seen by man again. The book of Ezekiel, which by the way is the exilic prophet, he was the one as they were in Babylon, he's the one as all those things were taking place was writing about how they got into this position and how it was foreshadowing a greater captivity that Jesus called the great tribulation. He said, listen to this, it was not needed again.

In Ezekiel 41, we find ourselves in this very unique section of Scripture. There is a temple that is constructed and worship that takes place in it. I'm going to go ahead and confess to you tonight this is one of the most difficult passages in all of the Bible because

in Ezekiel 40 and 41 and 42, we have the building of and the construction and the implementation of this temple, but it is just difficult to figure out when is this temple utilized and what does it mean. So for example, remember the earlier part of chapter 11, there is during this great tribulation, there is a temple in Jerusalem. That temple, not only its measurements but its construction, does not match the temple in Ezekiel 40 through 42. It doesn't match and so the question is, is this temple in Ezekiel chapters 40s, is this temple one that is utilized during the millennial reign of Christ, or is it one that will always be in the new heaven and the new earth? And there's a lot of great debate on this and you can go and research it and have a lot of fun. Here's the thing I want you to take note of though, in the temple that is talked about in the book of Ezekiel, we know for a fact that it is described being a structure that is prophetic, in other words, post, you know, this event. The ark is said not to be needed. It's not necessary and so I think based on Matthew 27 when the veil was torn and the earthquake occurs, I think it is speaking of a temple experience post Jesus' resurrection which means that for you and I today as fascinating as this subject matter is, we don't need the ark of the covenant, and even in the temple of days future that will take place in Jerusalem, it is not a necessary item to its construction.

And last but not least is the idea that the original ark that we described last week in the book of Exodus was simply a duplication. You say, "What do you mean by duplication?" Hebrews 8:5 as well as other verses in the book of Hebrews say that the origination, the construction of the temple from the way in which it was laid out, its dimensions, the various items, structures, the brazen laver, the water, everything that was taking place, that they are a picture on earth of the heavenly construction. In other words, the Lord in a physical tangible building allowed for us in the Old Testament context to have a physical picture of the heavens on the earth, and the idea that the ark that was in there, the mercy seat where the blood was sprinkled is a picture on earth of what would take place in heaven with the eventual sacrifice of Jesus Christ. And in that case, if it was a "duplication of" with the resurrection of Jesus there is no need for one on earth again because the true one has already taken place. So when you look at all these concepts, biblically speaking, biblically, no matter how many books have been written and no matter how many smart people have a conversation, biblically speaking the greatest evidence is that the ark of the covenant is not in Ethiopia and it's not in the ground, that it is actually "in the heavens."

What's the problem with this? The problem is and I just want to be fair, is the issues of duplication and if the earthly was raptured, are there two in Revelation 11? Let me unpack that statement. That ark of the covenant did exist in the Old Testament. Was that actual ark placed in the heavens? And if it was a picture on earth of the ark in the heavens, are there now two in the heavens? Do you see where the confusion is there? And I'll just be quite honest with you, what I kind of defer to is Revelation 5 where it says that Jesus was on the right hand of the Father but he sat on the same throne. I don't know how that happens, just to be honest with you.

So even in this concept, there are struggles with the probability versus the problems. Here's the thing I want you to take away from this, that though it was a good series of

movies, don't listen to "Raiders of the Lost Ark" when it comes to biblical concepts. Second of all, if you're up late at night and the History Channel or the Learning Channel is talking about the ark of the covenant, it may be interesting, it may be intriguing but don't take their opinion over the Bible. And last but not least, aren't you grateful that on a specific day of every calendar year you don't have to take a lamb and turtledoves to Jerusalem and have blood sprinkled on an altar? That we don't live by works and we don't live by ritual and we don't live by religion but that Jesus Christ has come, he, not his earthly vessel, he was sinless, he shed his blood, he poured it out on the mercy seat, and he established a covenant with us for salvation and forgiveness, that the ark though small was never actually able to do.

So the ark of the covenant, it's a fascinating study. We're wrapping up chapter 11. Next week we're going to go into chapter 12 and we're going to talk about who is this woman and who is the sun, the moon, the stars and all this wild stuff and we're going to end chapter 12 with this incredible event where the people of God are being chased by whom we know as the beast or the Antichrist.

We've got a few minutes before we have our kids that are still up in those various ministries. Any questions on the ark of the covenant before we wrap up tonight? Anybody? Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Yes. The statement was made, you're going full circle, aren't you, brother? As we started with some Roman Catholic concepts, the idea of 2 Maccabees, the apocryphal works, those 13 works, his question is or his statement is that not where the concept of purgatory comes from? Yes. Purgatory not only comes from apocryphal works, though I cannot quote chapter and verse, please forgive me, I'm not an expert in the Apocrypha though I have read it. Aren't y'all grateful I'm not? But nonetheless, that it also comes from a misreading of 1 Corinthians 3:15 where it talks about that we as believers in Jesus Christ must all one day appear before the judgment seat of Christ and it says we present wood, hay, stubble, gold, silver, precious jewels, and it shall be tried by fire, but yet in verse 15 it says yet we shall be saved from fire. That passage, my friend, is talking about that as a believer one day determined and destined to go to heaven, I still have to give an account of the life I've lived since being saved. Purgatory, hence the word "purge," means to purge one, to purify them and to prepare them for a destination, and the idea that Martin Luther fought so strongly against which is known as an indulgence, an indulgence is a nice way of saying forgiveness of sins in advance. So for example, the study Bible that I have in my office that comes from this tradition, that it contains the Apocrypha, it says that in the very front, I can bring you a copy, in the front it says that if I read the words of this book every day the rest of my life, it will take 500 years off of my purgatory experience.

Now I know what you're thinking, where did they come up with that? We've got just a few minutes left and what I'm about to say is going to sound very harsh but it's very historically accurate. There is a very ornate building in Vatican City today called St.

Peter's Basilica that was built with the theology of purgatory. It was the greatest fundraiser in the history of organized religion. In fact, there was a guy who propagated it the most, who had a very famous statement, he said, "Into the coffer the coin rings, out from purgatory a soul springs." They were trying to make money so what they would say to you is, "Do you know, do you know that your grandfather is in the glories of heaven? If you don't know that he is, then he is currently now burning in the purging fires of purgatory and for \$100 I can guarantee he'll be in the glories of heaven by tonight and you will help us build St. Peter's Church." That's what was preached. That was taught and they had no copy of Scripture, they just believed what was said and they went from town to town to town, and that building where you see most of their activity take place today was built with purgatory money. I've always said and I'm going to end on a humorous note, if I could come up with a Baptist purgatory, we'd never have debt again. But I just can't come up with one because it's not in the Bible. I'm sorry.

Does that help on that question, though? Yeah, but it is not only from apocryphal works but I wanted you to hear it's also from a twisting of Scripture. There is no definitive clear, you know, purgatorial passage in Scripture, if that makes sense. There is no idea. I say this a lot publicly, when a person dies there's only one of two places you go, you go to heaven or hell. There is no third option, you know, there is no third. And so but a lot of money has been raised and a lot of candles have been lit and a lot of prayers have been said in futility, if that makes sense.

As we wrap up, did you, do I need to make an announcement?

[unintelligible]

Oh, the weather is getting really bad outside if you didn't know, and the request is go ahead, there's bigger storms coming. Exit quickly, all right?

Father, as we leave tonight, keep us safe. Lord, thank you for the wisdom of your word. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Get your kids and get out of here. Go home.