

Ask Jeff 9.26.18
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All right, ladies and gentlemen, it is time to begin and it is 6:30. I know it's unusual for Baptists to start on time but we're going to. Hopefully you have your Circle of Concerns otherwise known as your prayer sheet. Let me draw your attention to this and give you a couple of pieces of information. I know some of you are seasoned veterans but some of you are new to us. If you have somebody or a situation that you want lots and lots of people to pray about, then let us know and we will put them on this list, whether they're in a medical facility, whether they're at home, a member of the military, mission field, whatever it may be, we just want to join alongside of you praying for whatever needs to be prayed for. Secondly, don't throw this away. Hopefully you'll make this a part of your life throughout the days to come as the Lord brings these names and situations to mind. You will notice that there are those that are in medical facilities, those that are at home. At the bottom of page 1, you'll see those that are even in some type of capacity out of town, not our immediate or local area.

On the back, two sections that we always want to call attention to, the congratulations, something about the Opelika water, there's a lot of babies around here and there are two babies that we're celebrating. But unfortunately, you'll also see there are four families in our church who have suffered a death in some capacity, in some realm, some of them close, some of them far away, and we want to be praying for them in this time as they go through this oftentimes the emotional roller coaster of going through that experience of life. You'll see at the bottom those that are serving on the mission field as well as those that are in the military who, even though they may be thriving in their respective areas, oftentimes they are away from family, they are away from what you and I would just call the comforts and the creatures of home and so we want to pray for them as well.

Let's pray and we'll get started.

Lord, tonight as we gather as a family of faith, what a small representation this room is to what's happening on this campus whether it be our children's ministry, our student ministry, our college ministry, our music ministry, our men's and women's ministry, Lord, and then for those of us that are gathered here. Thank you that we not only have a place to gather but the people that you have brought to gather. And Lord, right at this time we come as your word says boldly before your throne. We know there are many people not only on the sheet but often in our hearts that are struggling, they're struggling with diagnoses, they are struggling with physical incapacity, oftentimes struggling spiritually,

emotionally, or even mentally. Lord, we pray at this time that you would bring healing where healing is needed, you'd bring restoration where restoration is needed and, Lord, that you would just be the peace, the comfort and the balm that these individuals need.

Lord, for those who've lost loved ones, Lord, we hurt for them and we know you do as well so we pray that you would wrap your arms around them, that you would love them through this time of life, that you would give them the comfort that only your Holy Spirit and your word can. And for those who are not with us locally but serving across seas, whether it be military or the mission field, Lord, may you be in their presence, Lord, and may you be the one when they don't have anyone to talk to or they're so homesick, may you be the voice in their ear, may you be the comfort in their heart. Lord, may tonight even as we are in this room, Lord, may they be enjoying fellowship with you. Lord, as we walk through the word tonight, may it not be about us, may it not be about a certain perspective or an agenda, may we just read your word for what it says and may you increase our belief. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

All right, welcome to Wednesday nights at First Baptist, Opelika. For those of you that are newbies with us, allow me to very briefly share with you what Wednesday nights typically look like, and by the way, typically is going to come into play tonight. We typically begin with a time of Q and A, a time of question and answer where you have the opportunity to ask any question you want. Now you can raise your hand like some people do and you lose your anonymity but you can just go anywhere you want to go, any subject you want to go. Some of you have selected our website, you go to fbcopelika.com/askjeff, you submit your question there with your email address and when it is answered, you hopefully will get a link back that shows you the video or has the audio of the answer to your question just in the event that you were not here.

That being said, allow me to clear up something. When you submit a question on the "Ask Jeff" page of our website, it does not go directly to my email account, okay? It goes to a database that I do not see until I push the button on Wednesday night. So if you have a question that you need answered, want answered, or you want dialogue with me personally, either A come up and talk to me, or B email me directly, okay? So I just want you to know if you put it on the "Ask Jeff" section of the website, it goes to the database, it does not go directly to me. If you submit a question to me directly, it does not go to the database. Does that communicate? So if you want it for all of us at some point, go to the "Ask Jeff" section of the website. If you just want to ask me a personal question, please do so through my own personal email jeffm@fbcopelika.com. I'd be glad to interact with you. I just want that clarified so that you'll know kind of how the process works.

Toward the end of the hour, we walk through our systematic Bible study as we walk through the book of Revelation as we currently are in chapter 13. Now remember, I said that's typically what it looks like. Tonight we're going to reverse it, all right? The reason we're going to reverse it is a little after 7 o'clock I have to make myself available in another place on campus tonight. Alan Jones is going to come and share with you an exciting mission activity that's in our upcoming future. He's going to be here for a few moments and then I'm going to be back, okay? So there's this window of time that I've

got to leave and come back but that being said, I wanted to go ahead and do our Revelation study because that way if you have any questions when I get back, hopefully we can address those.

So tonight Revelation 13, one of the two chapters that have the most consistent and comprehensive information in the Bible regarding a character that we commonly know as the antichrist. Just a reminder, the term "antichrist" is not used in the book of Revelation, the term we see is the term "the beast." The term "antichrist" is only utilized in the book of 1 John. But there are some other names for him. There is "the man of sin, the man of lawlessness, and the son of perdition." All those are titles that are utilized for him.

Now as we discussed last week, you see the dragon whom we know as Satan empowering the beast, the antichrist. Satan is called "the devil, the red dragon," and so you see different names utilized for Satan proper than for the antichrist in particular, and tonight in chapter 13, I'm going to read the first eight verses and we're going to spend the majority of our time in verse 2, and I'm going to address what I put on your outline here, some possibilities. Now I want to be clear from the very beginning, I am not being dogmatic this evening because there have been a whole lot of people that have made a big fool of themselves by saying the antichrist will be this guy and will do this activity and will be located here, and then later after we've read their book or seen their documentary, we find out they didn't know what they were talking about, all right? So we're going to talk about possibilities.

Revelation 13, beginning in verse 1. It says,

1 And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. 2 And the beast which I saw [this is critical to the antichrist] was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority. 3 And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast. 4 And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him? 5 And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. 6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. 7 And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. 8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

Now I began on your outline by giving you what I call the possibility of a description. Particularly in verse 2, we have this description that utilizes a lion and a leopard and a

bear, and I want you to notice that the term "like" is used. That's a simile, and so it says he is like a leopard, he is like a lion, he is like a bear, and notice it gives different attributes regarding a leopard, a lion, and a bear to what areas of which he would be like regarding those elements.

Now the absolute best way to interpret Scripture is with other Scripture, and so when we're going to look at the possibility of this description, we've got to go back to the book of Daniel. Now two places you may want to look at with your own eyes as I write up on the board here is Daniel 2 and Daniel 7. In Daniel 2 there is a dream that is interpreted for Nebuchadnezzar, and in Daniel 7 we have a night vision that Daniel himself has, and as you walk through those chapters, this dream that is given is broken up into four parts. There is this famous image that Nebuchadnezzar has in his dream.

Now just a quick little back story. Remember that Nebuchadnezzar had the dream and it was so frightful he couldn't remember the dream, and he came upon his soothsayers and all the magicians and said, "I need the interpretation thereof." And they said, "Well, tell us the dream and we'll give you the interpretation." He said, "If you really are who you say you are, then you can tell me the dream." They said, "Nobody but the gods can do that." Do you remember what he said? "Then you're all going to be killed, all of you." And he sought out to kill them all but Daniel raised his hand and said, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, timeout. Give me one day." He has Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego pray for him through the night. He spends all night toiling before the Lord. He wakes up or he gets up that next morning and he has the interpretation as well as the content of the dream, and you will remember in the content of the dream there was a head that was made of gold, there was, shall we say, just a shoulder section or shoulders and arms that was made of silver, there was a torso, if you allow me to use that term, that was made of brass, and then there were legs that were made of iron. Does anybody know what little particular part that I have not addressed yet of this image? The feet. The toes, shall we say, which were a part of the legs, were a mixture of iron and clay, all right?

The interpretation thereof is critical to Revelation 13, I promise. Remember when he tells Nebuchadnezzar, he says, "You are the head of gold," okay? So Nebuchadnezzar is this head of gold. Then the arms and the shoulders, these two branches of power has been utilized prophetically that this was the Medes and the Persians. The torso, the brass, this is what we know as the Greeks. And then the iron are the Romans. As you look at the prophetic message of Daniel and, by the way, just in case you're curious, this is one of the reasons that some who are critical of Scripture do not believe that the book of Daniel can truly be dated the date that we date it because there is no way – listen to this – there is no way that Daniel could have ever known about a people known as the Greeks who didn't even exist when he was given the prophecy, but this is the same man who the Lord gave the dream and the interpretation of another man when he had no idea what it was. So when you look at the context of the book of Daniel and when you look at the whole record of Scripture, this is not beyond how the Lord operates, all right?

And so here is Daniel 2, we have Nebuchadnezzar, the Medes, the Persians, the Greeks and the Romans. When you get to Daniel 7, the night vision that Daniel has is not an

image per se, as he sees these beasts rise up, all right? And hopefully I'll get these right in order. The first beast is the beast of a lion. Did I get that right? I got that right. The second one is a bear. It is a leopard the first one? I'm sorry. What is the first one? I had it right, okay? Right now it's a Leon, do y'all see that, that's Leon. So we have a lion, tiger and bear, no, I'm kidding. Lion, bear and leopard, is that right? Okay, just double checking. Okay, phew, man, you're all scaring me.

[unintelligible]

We're not in Revelation right now. We're in Daniel. That's the point, all right?

Now so we have a lion, a bear and a leopard, but that's not the last beast. There's a fourth beast, right? The fourth beast, the word I'm going to use, it's unique. It's not given an animal representative. It's said that it is different than the other three beasts. So allow me to use the term it is unique, all right?

Now that being said, in the book of Revelation 13:2, it says that the antichrist is like, notice what it says, that he is like a leopard, his feet were as a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion. You'll notice that it is backwards, okay? But then it goes on to say the dragon gave him his power. When you look in Daniel 2 and Daniel 7 in relationship to whom we know as the antichrist, this is critical not only for a chronological understanding but in just a moment when we look at who this person could potentially possibly be. When it comes to Daniel 2 and Daniel 7, there are two streams of thought. One thought is this, that you have these four items here or four world rulers and kingdoms, and that the night vision that Daniel has is merely a duplication thereof. And so what some people say is, well, Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians are the head of gold and they're also the lion. The Medes and the Persians were the silver, they're also the bear. The Greeks were the brass, they're the leopard. The Romans were iron and so therefore this unique unusual beast must be the Romans. That's one of the interpretations. I put that on your sheet.

The other interpretation says not so fast because when he interprets the dream, notice I did not write Babylon up here. He said, "You, Nebuchadnezzar, are this head." When the vision is given in Daniel 7, there's another Babylonian ruler by the name of Belshazzar, all right? And so the second thought is that when Daniel has his vision, that what you see here is, if you'll allow me to do this, you kind of have a crossing here that the lion is actually who will come after, and so that is the Medes and the Persians, the bear is the Greeks, the leopard is the Romans, and the unique one is the ruler/kingdom antichrist that has not yet been revealed.

So when you look at those two ideas, either A, they are a cross-section 1:1, 2:2, etc. Or because it's Nebuchadnezzar in particular and not Babylon and Belshazzar is here, that you're actually skipping the Babylonians and going straight through. You say, "Well, why is that so critical?" Because in Revelation 13 it alludes to Daniel 7, not to Daniel 2. It alludes to these items, the leopard, the bear and the lion, and not Daniel 2.

So as I put on here, one of the things that you have is either way the beast, the antichrist, is both pluralistic and syncretistic. What that means is this, that the antichrist character and figure and we're going to see more of this in just a moment, he not only takes differing and opposing items and ideologies and combines them together, but he also borrows from all. What we're going to see in chapter 13 is he is truly a man who at one point in time will rule all peoples from all backgrounds under his single agenda, so therefore he is able to pull all types. Notice it says that he is like a leopard. He is like a leopard. Now that's interesting, a leopard is yellow with black spots and a white underbelly. It's a combination of a lot of different ones when you look at appearance. It says that he moves like a bear and he speaks like a lion. So when you see that combination, you see one who is borrowing from the image and bringing them together and yet borrowing from all the same as well.

Now the reason I went through all of that is because as you study, as you read study Bibles, commentaries, you're going to find one of those two opinions, either A, Daniel 7 is Daniel 2 just revisited, or B, it's a little bit different. When you get to Revelation 13, the image that is "utilized prophetically" is the image of Daniel 7. Now if and I don't want to labor this point, if you say that these are just duplications of each, then when you get down to the antichrist, then you're going to have one of a revived Roman empire. If you say that they're a little bit different, then you're going to have an antichrist that may have aspects of but also a combination of others as well. Do y'all see how that kind of differs somewhat? But nonetheless, pluralistic, syncretistic.

Here's the next thing, the possibility of what I call resuscitation. This is an interesting verse in verse 3. It says, "I saw one of his heads." Now remember, we read earlier about the number of heads that he had. He said, "I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast." Skip over to verse 12 for just a moment, "he exercises all the power of the first beast before him, he causes the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed."

Now two aspects about this deadly wound being healed of what we know as the antichrist. The first aspect is this, that it is an individual. One of the heads. Not multiple ones, but one of them. And I put a reference on your outline here. Do y'all remember the, I hate to say classic, do you remember the classic 1970s eschatology movie entitled "Thief in the Night"? Scared every teenager in church across America half to death. It is the story of the book of Revelation very personified in particular with the concept known as the rapture and the coming reign of whom we know as the antichrist. In that movie, it was portrayed that the antichrist, this man, would personally he himself receive a deadly wound, he would die and be resuscitated to life, that he would "overcome the grave." Do you notice a parallel there anywhere? That's what was portrayed in that movie and that is a view that is seen by many. However, when you go back into chapter 12 and when you read what we've read in chapter 13, when it talks about that this antichrist figure has many heads, it says one of his heads. And so there are two schools of thought. So now do you understand why I said possibility? One school of thought is the antichrist himself will actually receive some type of deadly wound and he as an individual will be resuscitated

back to life. The other view is that one of these entities of the past will resurface again and be ablazed with power, that it was put to death, it was no longer impactful, it was no longer significant and now all of a sudden is back. And so two different views but the key is it's individualistic, it's either an individual person or it's an individual entity that is resuscitated. Now y'all know why I use the word "resuscitation" right? To be resurrected means to be raised to never die again. Resuscitated means to be brought back to life but you will experience death again. And so whether it be the antichrist as an individual character or an entity that is revived, there is still an ending to their authority and to their power.

The second thing is this, it's an invitation. No matter which view you take, it's still an imitation of Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 15 says that according to the Scriptures, Jesus Christ was buried, he died, he was buried, and he rose again from the grave and was seen by 500 witnesses. So remember we talked about this last week, that the only play in the devil's playbook is imitation. He takes what the Lord has already done or is desiring to do and he twists it and he turns it to make it either look like his own or like he is original in his thoughts and in his practice. And so it only makes sense that the hinge point of Christianity is a resurrection. You do realize that, right? If there is no empty tomb, we might as well just go home. I mean, that's why we exist. That is the criticalness of our faith. If the tomb is empty and Jesus is risen, we're good, if it's not, we're not. So our entire faith is based on an empty tomb. That's why Easter is such a big deal, okay? Well, on the antichrist, you see that the people marvel because one of the heads that was wounded comes back to life. So whether it be an individual, whether it be an entity, what we discover here is he is taking from the same playbook as the Lord and that people will surround themselves around one who is resuscitated.

Let me give you a contemporary example. I had the "privilege" of living in central Texas back in the early '90s when a group known as the Branch Davidians and David Koresh had their standoff. Do y'all remember that? Some of y'all remember? Interesting time period in life. I won't belabor all that. It was interesting when you actually saw it with your own eyes but nonetheless, you know that was many many many years ago, right? Did you know that there are still people today who not only hang out, live, camp out and go to what we know as Waco, Texas expecting him to raise from the dead. Now y'all can laugh at that all you want but that's real and the reason is because there is something powerful behind a raised body. When somebody comes back from the dead, that is something that is so significantly different than anything else. And so what we know is that that group of people in our contemporary day are hoping for a resuscitation and they're willing to put on hold their entire life to see it.

Well, guess what? Not only did Jesus Christ raise from the dead which changed not only us but all of the world for all of eternity, but the antichrist at some level is going to display a resuscitation and all the world will surround themselves and give him, what does it say they give him? Power, authority and they worship him. Which leads to the third aspect, the possibility of religiosity. I'm going to kind of go to the side and then I'll come back for just a moment. There are those in our culture who claim that they are atheists, they believe in nothing. There is no God. There is no heaven. There is no

afterlife. There is no eternity. It is the belief of nothing. Atheism means no God. But I would advocate based on behavior that atheism is a religion. It is a religion. Now they'll claim it's a philosophy but they have their sacred texts, they have their books of philosophy that they hinge their whole belief on, they gather in communities and they celebrate their common aspects of belief. Is that not a religious behavior, so to speak?

That being said, the antichrist actually displays a level of religiosity. Look in verses 4 and 5, they worshiped the dragon. They worshiped the dragon. They gave power unto the beast. They worshiped the beast saying, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?" And then it talks about the mouth that spoke blasphemies. And one of the things that I put on here is this prominence of a religious environment. They worshiped, that term is used multiple times, and then it says, "who is like the beast?" They place him in a status above everybody and everything else. Even down in verse 8 where we finished, it says, "And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him." Three times in this passage it says that he, this antichrist figure, will receive worship.

Let's go back to Daniel 2 for just a moment. What did Nebuchadnezzar do with this image? He built this large image and he said, "When the music starts, I need you to," what? "Bow down and worship." This is pure paganism at its finest. What we know as the antichrist is pure Satanism at its finest. But worship is not exclusive to Christianity. Worship is when we ascribe our being as being submissive to or in allegiance to somebody or something that is greater than us, and when the antichrist shows up, it is a religious experience. Now it's not like the guy I used to have on my staff, a church I served a couple of years ago, where we would go to one of these all-you-can-eat buffets and he'd just start chowing down and he'd go, "Woo! That's a religious experience!" Not that kind, Baptists. This is the real kind of religious experience where you see a gathering, an honoring, an adoration.

Now think about all the aspects of religion. Those who worship in any type of religious behavior, they give their time, they prostrate themselves, they give their resources. Notice later in this chapter the mark of the beast, that they cannot buy or sell lest they take his mark. They're giving him control over their finances. They're giving him control over themselves, their time, and their lives.

The second thing is there is power, who can make war with him. Then it says that his length of power is 42 months. Now for those of you who have been a part of this study, as we enter chapter 6 of the book of Revelation until we get to chapter 19, there is this time period that Jesus himself called the great tribulation, and in the book of Daniel, again Daniel 9, it describes this time period as being seven years in length, okay? And it says that the people of God will actually have an agreement with whom we know as the antichrist for one week but that will be broken in the midst thereof. So this great tribulational period that is seen as seven years is divided into two three and a half year time periods.

Notice it says he makes war with the saints for 42 months. That pivotal event that is right in the middle of that chronology is what Jesus called the abomination of desolation

described in 2 Thessalonians 2. Basically the antichrist is going to walk into the temple that we studied in chapter 11 and he is going to declare he is God. In very simplistic terms, the first half of the tribulation though not fun is livable, the second half is hell on earth. I use that phrase biblically not crassly because it says in a couple of chapters there are going to be entities that come out of the bottomless pit and torture people. So the picture that you get here is that this antichrist figure though he may be in control, he may be in power, he may be in authority for all of this time period, he turns on humanity and it's the last 42 months that he truly shows his colors. So they worship him and then he turns on them.

The third thing is a historical comparison. There is this deadly combination of when religion and politics marry each other. Now it's one thing to live amongst each other, it's one thing to have respect for each other, it's one thing to allow accommodations for each other, but in the fourth century the Roman empire declared Christianity the official religion of Rome and it went real bad for a real long time because you had, well, they weren't elected but you had the political figures appointing the preachers, you had the preachers appointing the political figures, and what you got was nothing but debauchery and corruption. That's all you got. That's why we call it the Dark Ages. Interesting, this is what you see happen with the antichrist. You have a temple, is that not a building of religiosity? You have people worshiping him, is that not an act of religiosity? And yet he has absolute total control and authority over the world, is that not political? And so what you see and again I'm putting it back to the board, you see a picture of what we had here taking place not in exact duplication thereof but a picture thereof.

The next thing is the possibility of secularism and what I mean by that is even though there's religiosity, in verse 6 and 7 it says he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God. Just because you're religious doesn't mean that you're honoring the one true God. Blasphemy against God, he blasphemes his name and his tabernacle and those that dwell in heaven. It was given unto him to make war with the saints, to overcome them, and power was given over the kindreds, and the tongues, and the nations. I want you to notice two aspects about the secularness of the antichrist's reign.

The first aspect is this, he is absolutely completely anti-God. Anything that even remotely is a reference to the things of God, he is against. He blasphemes his name. He is not one that just says, "Okay, those of you who believe in the one true God, just go over there and be quiet." It says he blasphemes his name. It also says, I put on there he's anti-"religion" even though he is religious because it says he blasphemed his tabernacle, the place where the people gather, the place where they worship together.

And what I want you to see here is that the antichrist and if our world is not getting set up for this, I don't know when we are because our world thrives on hypocrisy. Have you noticed that? So you've got a character who demands religious obedience but blasphemes those that are religious. You've got an individual who demands that you worship him and follow him but you're not allowed to follow anybody else. And so the hypocrisy is that all the attention, all of everything is to be directed toward him and none other yet he uses religious practice to promote a completely secular pagan concept. Is it just me or does it

seem like we're getting close to that mentality every day we wake up? That we live in a world where it seems like we can speak out of both sides of our mouth and nobody seems to have a problem with it, and that's the exact same thing that the antichrist will do. And I would say this and I'm not trying to get all spooky on you, but I will say that we are becoming conditioned as a culture to embrace this character. In other words, when he shows up, we're going to go, "Oh, he's just like us. He promotes what we want to be promoted. He advocates what we want advocated." I want you to think about the contrary to this. When Jesus Christ showed up, those in power and those in authority couldn't stand him because he called them out for their hypocrisy and yet what we see in the antichrist, even though he is a ruler and he is authoritative and it's religious and it's secular, he is the poster child for hypocrisy. He demands one thing to be directed toward him and doesn't allow anybody else to act that way toward anything else. So we see he's not only religious but he is secular.

At this time, I'm about to take off to another location. I'm going to invite two good friends of mine on this platform, Alan Jones and Mr. Ben Cohen. They're going to come and share with you about a ministry opportunity. If all goes well, I'll be back in just a few minutes. We'll wrap up the antichrist, the beast, and all things related to that. Guys, you get the privilege of cleaning up all this.

Alan. Got it. Got it. If you wonder why there are two of us, it takes two of us to talk half as fast as he talks to get those words out. This is kind of like an intermission, it's kind of like in the movies when they used to show cartoons, right?

Actually, we are excited about a great opportunity that's coming up and we wanted to share that with you. First, we want to take our Circle of Concerns and I want to bring you up to date with that. Pastor Jeff has been to the hospital two times today so we've had a lot of things changing at the hospital. Jack C. has moved to Arbor Springs. Some of you know Jason G. Jason had surgery and he had his kidney removed so let's continue to pray for him because there are still some other complications going on with that. Ms. Shirley S. had a heart cath today and she has requested no visitors at this time. The medicines are kind of working her over but, you know, no bad news with a heart cath. That was a very successful procedure there. And then Nancy M. had stomach surgery. So we want to remember her and her family. Any others that you might want to bring to our attention that aren't on the Circle of Concerns?

Okay, let's pause and pray for these, okay?

Father, I thank you for your word. Lord, I thank you for Pastor Jeff and the way he opens it each week and, Lord, just makes it come alive. Lord, thank you for what we've already learned tonight and, Lord, we want to pause and lift up these in the hospital, Lord, these that are at home that are suffering. Lord, there are so many things going on and, Lord, we know that you care about every need and, Lord, we know that you can take something horrible and make something beautiful. So God, I pray that you work in each of their lives and draw them closer to you than they've ever been. Lord, I pray for these families, that you would help them to understand and, Lord, for doctors and nurses, that you'd

give them wisdom to know what is best for each of these patients. Lord, for the ones that are home and that are lonely, Lord, I pray you'd draw near to them. And Lord, help us as we go along our way to look at these names, Lord, and pick up a phone and maybe even stop by and just to take a few moments to visit and to spread love in your name and, Lord, we will be careful to give you the glory. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, this is Ben Cohen. Ben has been on our staff as part time for about a year now and for about the last six months, he's been helping with missions and at the first of the year, it's exciting to me that Ben is going to come on full-time with us and he is going to help in missions but he is going to be evangelism and a lot of other things around here, taking new members and assimilating them in.

So we're excited to have Ben with us on staff. Ben is newly married and Ben is going to be a father on Thanksgiving day, how about that? So they're expecting their first, him and Miss Cindy. But right now one of the projects that Ben is really taking the lead in is something we call "Cup of Nations." So Ben, tell them first where Cup of Nations comes from and the reason you haven't heard anything about this yet is because October 6 is "My Jerusalem," okay? And on the seventh, all you're going to hear is Cup of Nations, okay, even from Pastor Jeff because it's going to be a churchwide thing. But tell them where that came from.

Ben. Well, we've been praying for a while about the international students in our community, how to engage them, how to get our church, every generation from our church, how to give them an opportunity to get involved in ministry to internationals. So I've got a friend named Johnny B. who was actually born in Uzbekistan and he became a Christian in Uzbekistan which is a closed country. You can be killed for being a follower of Jesus there. Somebody handed him a gospel tract, he read it and he gave his life to Christ. Well, at that time they were not allowed to gather in homes. If you gathered any more than two people in a home, you could be killed. So what they did, they used sport and so the "Cup of Nations" is a play off the World Cup. And Johnny B. moved here in 2005, he relocated to Houston after he was kicked out of Uzbekistan, and 9 years ago they started this concept and it's a great way to bring together the diversity and to celebrate diversity by magnifying the fact that we are united and we are one in Jesus Christ. So that's where the idea comes from.

Alan. And in the deep South, we don't know a lot about soccer, do we? We are either for Auburn or Alabama and it's all about football, but the rest of the world is very excited about soccer and it is growing here. In fact, in the world the top five highest-paid athletes are soccer players except for LeBron James. So that kind of puts it in perspective. That's just different than what we hear every day.

So we're going, we have 84 nations at Auburn University and this is a great way to make an international thing. So we are going to meet at the Opelika Sports Plex. We have that reserved on Sunday afternoon, the 28th from 2 o'clock until 6 o'clock and we're going to have the inflatables, it will be a very festive thing, festive carnival-type atmosphere. We're going to give out hot dogs, all kinds of things are going to be going on out there

besides the soccer but we're going to have seven on seven soccer. Now Ben, talk to them about how everybody can be involved in that and adopt some people.

Ben. Yeah, so we really want everybody to start, one, just praying for this event. You know, transportation is a huge issue for a lot of these internationals so we're going to provide transportation, but just start praying that Christ would be lifted up because the Bible says when Christ is lifted up, that he will draw all men to himself. So that's the first thing.

The second thing, we would love to see seven different families from each generation within the church pray about adopting one of these countries. We're going to cap the "Cup of Nations" at 50 teams, okay? And we would love to see 50 teams from 50 different countries. So pray about that. And what that means is, you know, a couple of weeks before the event, if you're one of those people who say, "You know, I feel like the Lord is leading me to get involved in this," we're going to contact you, we're going to reach out to you and say, "Okay, here's your contact person for the country of Russia or Saudi Arabia or Egypt." And mind you, a lot of these countries are places that you cannot get a missionary visa to, so literally God has brought the nations here to us and whether it's just reaching out to them and sharing a meal with them, inviting them into your home, whatever, and just establishing a relationship with them. And so many of them have questions about what it is to follow Jesus, you know? And there's a statistic, 86% of them, okay, they come here, they get their degree at Auburn, they spend a year, two years, some of them four years, and 86% of them never step foot into an American home, and that's just a shame. So it's a great opportunity to get involved and obviously the event is big, but follow-up is huge and we want to see just deep relationships develop so that we can express the love of Christ both in word and in deed.

Alan. And we've got posters going in particularly on the Mexican grocery stores and restaurants and things around town, anywhere that we think we can penetrate into that audience. For each country there is somebody at Auburn University in charge of that. Ben has made contact with all of the leaders of those countries. They are very excited about this and we're expecting a great turn-out. In fact, Ben and I and Pastor Jeff had lunch last week with Pastor Hernandez from Casa De Dios. Have you seen that on 280 at 143 there? That is a Hispanic congregation of like 250-300. He is very very excited, in fact, they did something on a smaller scale and Ben went to it last week and they had all the different Latin American countries had their food presented, you know, so Ben got to try all of that stuff. He wants to bring his congregation and come alongside of us and do those kind of things. So we'll serve hot dogs and they'll serve rice and beans, I guess. But he really lit up when he found out the purpose behind it. He said, "You mean y'all aren't starting a Hispanic congregation?" We're going, "No, no, no, that's for you. You know, we just want to be out with the kingdom." And folks, I cannot tell you how that man lit up.

So we've identified five Hispanic pastors and if you go around and you see a lot of soccer around Opelika, in Auburn a lot of people play, so they'll be working also to get people there. There will be a lot of sign-ups in some of your schoolrooms. You will have opportunities if you want to help with something. If you're going, "Hey, I just want to

pray about this." Mike will be teaching that night but as far as everything else, the other activities will be canceled on that Sunday evening because we'll be at the park.

We printed 5,000 cards. Over 2,000 have been given out personally already to internationals. Our college students are going to get some this week and be challenged and I think you have some for them too, Ben?

[unintelligible]

Okay, okay. Anything else you need to tell them?

Ben. Just pray. I mean, again, God has given us an incredible opportunity and to be able to share Christ and to have these students come to faith in Christ and to send them back to their countries as missionaries to their own people, I don't know of a better way to fulfill Revelation 5:9. So every tribe, every tongue, every nation worshiping at the foot of King Jesus. Amen?

Alan. What an incredible opportunity. You know, we get to see a couple times of year y'all get to see the testimonies of students who have gone all over the world and think of the expense that it takes to do that, and our teams that go to central America. And this is not an expense, they are here, and you look at the people particularly the ones at Auburn University, these are graduate students, these are professors and their families, some of them are world-renowned, well-written and published. These are people that are world-changers so why can't we get them involved and encourage them and disciple them and then send them back? What a great way to multiply the kingdom. We are excited about that.

Then we're going to follow it up with something. There's nothing like the power of prayer. Y'all believe that? And you know, we say that and we say it so much that it becomes almost trite. But, Ben, we're going to follow that up with a prayer for the persecuted. So let's tell them about that.

Ben. So worldwide there is a day of prayer, it's called IDOPP, the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted, and I just want to read a verse of Scripture. It comes from Hebrews 13:3. It says, "Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body." So again, I don't know how many people will show up. If two show up, praise God, but we'll do it on a Friday night. November 2. We'll start at 6 and I'm going to share testimonies from around the world from our persecuted brothers and sisters in Christ, and we'll have specific prayer points from each country and we're just going to get down on our knees and our face and we're going to pray for these countries and these Christians in these countries. So if you want more information on that, that's coming. We'll have it in the bulletin and let's get involved and let's lift our voices for these brothers and sisters who have suffered so much for the name of Christ.

Alan. What questions might you have about the "Cup of Nations"? I know it's just hitting you out of the blue, it's the first you've heard. Anyway you can be involved, anything? Anybody want to volunteer right now for cotton candy? Run! We're going to have all of those kind of things so we're excited about that opportunity.

I see Jeff has come back in so we will welcome back to the stage the head noodle, the senior pasta. Oh, that was bad, wasn't it? That was so bad. Dr. Jeff Meyers

Jeff. Who is thirsty, hold on. Head pasta. All right, so, you all have heard about the "Cup of Nations" that's going to be on October 28. I don't want to duplicate everything he has shared but I will, did you give the stats about soccer players? You did? Well, there goes my thunder.

Okay, back to Revelation. Revelation 13. Again, we're back to the beast. I'm going to sum this up real quick and we'll get to kind of the Q and A section.

Last but not least, the possibility of organized and sanctioned martyrdom. So we've talked about this character who is a religious, resuscitated, secular monster is what he is, and at the end in verse 7 it says he makes war with the saints, he overcomes them, power was given him over all kindreds, tongues and nations, and I think the aspect that I want you to hear when it comes to antichrist and this is going to be picked up more when we talk about his famous mark in verses 16 through 18, is if you are not for him, you're not just against him but it is his desire to eliminate you. His enemies are completely eradicated. That is why the Bible talks about in the letters of Peter that he is a roaring lion, interesting, we've got a lion right here, seeking whom he may devour. So what we see is those who oppose him, those who do not take his mark, those who do not worship him are eliminated by him. That's why in Revelation 6, remember talking about the martyrs that were under the throne?

Now let's go back to our Daniel picture. Remember what Nebuchadnezzar did. There were three individuals who would not bow down and worship. What happened to them? They were thrown in the fiery furnace. Does anybody know what the antichrist, what his means of execution is in the book of Revelation? Decapitation. He cuts their heads off. Now is it just me or is it interesting that here we are in the 21st century and every now and then we get video from the other side of the world where groups are cutting people's heads off? We are getting conditioned to this. That's what we see happening so that when the antichrist does arrive on the scene, you have an entire world that says, "Yes, we've been waiting for you."

All right, that being said, I know those are short, I guess, period on the end of what we've done tonight. Questions, concerns, thoughts, antichrist stuff, Revelation 13? Front row. Yes, sir. Go.

[unintelligible]

Going back to Daniel.

[unintelligible]

Yes.

[unintelligible]

All right, great question. If you couldn't hear him because he was on the front row, the question was when you read Daniel 7, the lion has the wings of an eagle on it so it's not only a lion but it's pictured with great speed, and the bear has the arrows and is crushing the arrows, and the leopard and such, and because Revelation 13 has them in reverse order, the question is, is the antichrist going to operate almost the reverse of? Is that the question? I think the key and I want to go back to verse 2 and I don't want to overdo it but I think it's the key, "the beast which I saw was like." I think the antichrist is a combination of rather than a progressive revealing of because he's described as being unique. Remember, this fourth beast is different but yet similar to all the others, so I think what you've got in the antichrist is don't think of leopard, then bear, then lion, think more all of them all at the same time. So he has the voice of the lion, the movement of the bear, the look of the leopard, and so if you take this as just one, I guess, entity, you've got a very pluralistic, multifaceted entity who's incredibly aggressive and speaks with great volume. Does that make sense?

Now again, I think we could dig further into that if we wanted to. I don't want to see it more as it's just leopard, then bear, then lion, because you see him show up on the scene at one time. I think he's all of them combined. So what you really do when you look at the prophecies of Daniel, this famous fourth beast, it's like everything that we've seen in history is all going to be combined at the end, not reversed. Does that help at all? A little bit, maybe, kind of, sort of?

Now again I remind you and I've said this before, if you show up one night and go, "Man, the book of Daniel, the book of Revelation, I've got it all down. It's easy." You didn't get it, okay? You didn't get it because it does produce more questions than answers.

And one of the things that I'll share with you real quickly before we see if there are any more hands, is you understand that back in the 17th and 18th centuries, really the 18th and 19th centuries, we had this incredible mission movement across the Western world and because we saw so many great revivals and so many different awakenings and we saw so many incredible movements of God, we allowed what was happening in our midst to taint our perspective and it brought up this theology that said, "All that stuff in the book of Revelation where everything is really bad, nah, that's not gonna happen. It's actually a story of what happened in the first century." Well, now that we've had World War I and World War II and all these other wars, we realize, oops, it is describing what will happen in the future. So we can't let what's happening in our contemporary culture dictate our view of Scripture. We fell into that trap in the past and I think it's easy to fall into it even today. That's why we have this trap when people sit there and write these books and say that is the antichrist and those are the 10 kings, just don't buy it because, I'll be honest

with you, until they show up, none of us are going to know. Now it's different if the author says based on what I've read, it looks like it could be. That's a whole lot different than saying it is, if that makes sense.

Any other antichrist, Revelation 13, famous beast issues, questions, Daniel? None of those? We're good? Yes, ma'am.

[unintelligible]

You've been raptured before this?

[unintelligible]

Oh, yes, ma'am. I thought you meant before tonight. I was like, wow. I want to hear about it.

[unintelligible]

Okay. So the question that she's dealing when she talks about this famous rapture event, there is this passage in the Scripture, actually there are two, 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4, that talk about those who are dead in Christ and those alive in Christ being caught up together to be with Christ. All of these events that we're describing up here and everything in chapter 13 happens during this time period known as the great tribulation and the views on the rapture, either A, that the rapture happens before the tribulation, it happens somewhere in the middle of it or it happens toward the end...

[unintelligible]

Okay, the question, who are the people who refuse to take the mark? Whatever your view of the rapture and, by the way, I'm with you, I'm going up before this gets bad. Now, hey, if y'all want to hang around until the middle, that's y'all's problem, okay? But I'm going up, okay? That being said, even though I believe Scripture attests that there is a rapture, a catching up of the saints, okay, even during these seven years there are those who are what we might call believers. They realize what is happening, they realize that guy is not the guy worth following, they see the temple being built, they hear the 144,000, they see the two witnesses who have that incredible spiritual gift of eliminating people with fire, and they say, "Wow, that is the truth. This guy is not." Those are the ones who in Revelation 6, they're called the martyrs. Those are the ones who don't take the famous mark of the beast. They are the ones who, for the most part, lose their physical lives in the midst of the antichrist's reign of terror. Does that make sense? And so there are believers, in fact, we read earlier in chapter 12, it says they overcame him by the blood of the lamb and the word of their testimony and they loved not their life. And so there are believers but I do believe there is scriptural evidence that there is a catching up of the saints but there is also a time of those who are followers, believers and such during this horrible time period.

Does that help at all, maybe, sort of, kind of? But we're going up, right?

[unintelligible]

You're gone. That's what I like to hear. So I do have a friend of mine, though, who does not believe that we will be raptured up. He believes in what is called a post-tribulational rapture. He believes that the church will have to go through all of this horrific stuff we've described but here's what he says to me, he says, "Jeff, I don't think you are but I really hope you're right." Did you hear that?

I want to end on this. Go to the book of Titus 2. Yes, good old Titus. The book of Titus. I want to quote my friend and then I'm going to read Scripture and then we'll close. He said I think there's evidence that we have to go through all this but I hope you're right. Beginning in verse 11 of Titus 2, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." What does it say in verse 13? We are to look for the blessed hope which is the appearing of Jesus Christ. And so I'm just going to get real personal. If I've got to go through all of this, I don't see the hope. Maybe it's just me. I don't see a whole lot of hope there. The hope I see is the appearing of my Savior who calls me home, if that makes sense.

So anything else on this? We're almost wrapped up of time. I apologize that I had to be dismissed for a commercial break. How was the cartoons? When I left you said it was the cartoon break. So I thought I'll go back on Facebook and see what really happened. So let's pray and we'll be dismissed.

Lord, as we depart from this place, Lord, though there may be a multitude of opinions and different ideas, thank you for Titus 2:13, that you have given us through Jesus Christ a blessed hope that we are to look for your appearing. And Lord, I do pray that our eyes would be lifted up as Psalm 121 says, to the hills where our hope comes from. Lord, in the midst of a dark world, in the midst of a world that seems to be just becoming more and more conditioned to what we studied tonight, may we walk in the firmness and the surety of our faith in you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Go get your kids, unless you didn't bring any, then don't.