

## Ask Jeff

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By Dr. Jeff Meyers

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**Crossroads Ministries**

301 S. 8th Street

Opelika, Alabama 36801

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

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

Good evening. It's 6:30 Central Standard Time here in Opelika, Alabama. It is my privilege to welcome you to the large group adult Bible study here at First Methodist Church of Opelika. If this is your very first time with us, either in person, online, or by way of radio, I want to welcome you to a Bible study where you have the privilege, you have the opportunity of guiding and directing the entire conversation. Every question we address, every passage we turn to, every concept we discuss is because you have the opportunity to, I guess, instigate or initiate that process.

Before we get to tonight though, let me remind each and every one of you that Monday through Friday we have a YouTube channel where we answer a question of the day. There are two means or two ways by which you can submit a question to our YouTube channel. Both of them are website-based. You can go to askJeff.net or fbcopelika.com/askjeff. Either one of those websites will get you directly to that portal. Now, the reason that's important is because when you answer a question a day, Monday through Friday, you get to go through a lot of questions. Now, we typically spend 90 seconds to three minutes per question. It's not like on Wednesday nights, but you can submit it there to go ahead and get it addressed, and you can submit it on Wednesday nights.

Speaking of Wednesday nights, for the last couple weeks, we've been doing things just a tad bit differently because you have submitted so many questions, we've had a backlog of sorts. So tonight, what we're going to do is we have four questions left, that you submitted that were a part of this huge queue of questions that I'm gonna address in somewhat of an expeditious manner. We will take follow-up questions that are by way of hand, but once we get through these final four, then we'll quote open it back up again. And when I say open it back up again, we have a text messaging system area code 334-231-2313. The absolute best way to submit a question, a concern, a comment, a passage, whatever it may be because you can remain absolutely 100% anonymous. We have no idea who you are. Your name doesn't show up. Your phone number doesn't show up. But your question does. And by way of text messaging, you can submit a follow-up question. If we're dealing with a certain subject matter, whatever it may be, if you submit a follow-up question, it will then show up on the screen, a different font. I know we're staying on topic. And of course, if you're in the room, you can raise your hand. Now, when you raise your hand, you lose your anonymity in the room but not on the radio and not online; your

image nor will your voice be heard or seen outside of this room. But hey, we're all family here so it's all good.

With that being said, we've got four questions to empty out the queue and then we're gonna get back to quote business as normal. It says quote, "Can you explain the difference between sin and abomination in biblical terms?" This is a really insightful question because every abomination is a sin, but not every sin is an abomination. A sin is to violate, to trespass, to go beyond the bounds, the regulations, or the prescription that the Lord has given. Now let me remind you in James chapter 2 verse 10 it says if you've broken one of the laws, it's as if you've broken all of them. In other words, quote-unquote sin is sin, they may have different consequences but a sin committed is a quote sin. An abomination I don't want you to think in forms of an extreme form of sin because there are no quote levels of sin, but that which is abominable by definition means something that is a vile and when you begin to study quote abominations in scripture, those abominations are sins that are contrary to or go against the nature of who God is. So for example, the Bible makes it clear that lying is a sin, correct? But when you lie or you bear false witness, you are not vilely misrepresenting God's character, okay? You are still sinning, okay? However, one of the abominations in the Bible is to offer up children to Molech, okay? Sacrifice. That is an abomination because it goes against the character of who God is, the author, the sustainer, the preserver of life. What you may find interesting is the very first time the word abomination is actually used in your Bible is actually in reference to the Egyptians. This is fascinating. At the end of the book of Genesis it says that what the Israelites did, their mannerisms, their behavior, their belief were seen as an abomination to the Egyptians. That seems like the script's backwards, right? But it really does define for us what the word means because to believe in one true God was completely contrary to the nature of the Egyptian deity system. So therefore you see it really does give us a good representation of what that word means. It is contrary to the nature of, the character of, of whom we're dealing with. So remember, every abomination is a sin, not every sin is an abomination. That make sense?

Any clarification on that? Everybody's pretty good? Easy? All right, we're good. Can I just suggest don't do either? Okay, here we go. It says, "If our soul came before our body and our spirit and experienced hell before the flesh was ever birthed, could our soul have come from the fallen and fooled from hell to be given life and a chance to be okay?" Here's what I think that question's asking. In the book of Genesis, when God creates humanity remember he forms Adam of the dust of the ground and breathes into him and he becomes a living soul, that does not mean in sense he was a dead soul of being hell bound and being a resident of hell, and it doesn't mean that there was an existence prior to that moment.

Now go back to Genesis chapter 1 for just a moment. I'm going to show you a very very important word not just in relationship to this question but kind of a host of questions that are somewhat derived from. In Genesis chapter 1, I'm going to begin in verse 26, but 27 is the key verse, okay? This is the creation narrative. This is day 6. I mean, we're walking through all the different things. It says, "And God said, let us make man in our image after our likeness, let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the fowl of the

air, over the cattle, over all the earth, over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." Verse 27 is key, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them." The word created is used three times in one verse and that word for create means to establish or originate something that has never existed prior to that moment. So for example, I do understand, and it says it in chapter 2, that he breathed into Adam and he became a living soul. That does not mean that that soul existed in some prior existence. It doesn't mean that it had a prior life. What it means is that he formed, he fashioned, that process he created, man, that that process was the initiation of something that had never been before. Okay, so don't get in the concept and I don't think it's done arbitrarily of thinking that somehow there's this cyclical life pattern meaning from this earth, this existence to another existence, to another one. By the way, I'm just... whomever submitted the question, it's a great question but really that concept that there's this some type of creation existence that then terminates and really begins again and starts over, it is really at the core of what you and I call Scientology. By the way, you want to understand Scientology, you're going to think I'm crazy. You ready? If you want to understand the religion of Scientology, the religion of all the celebrities in Hollywood, you know how you want to understand it? Watch "Transformers." I'm not joking. "Transformers," the movies, the cartoons, all that stuff, those are all based on the theology of Scientology produced by L. Ron Hubbard. And so you begin to look at this concept. I'm just going to do 30 seconds. In the movie, life somewhere else has ceased. They find a new place to originate. They thrive. When it ceases, they find another place. That's exactly what he taught or teaches in that religious concept and that's exactly what's propagated in those movies. Do you find it interesting those movies are always marketed to young children? In other words, get them to think something before they have the critical processes to understand what they're actually thinking. I know this question had nothing to do with that. I know that. I just want you to know that sometimes we can take concepts or curiosities and when we allow them to go too far, they create mechanisms such as that. I know this question didn't mean that. All I wanted to communicate to you was when Adam was formed of God, he was the first man. He nor mankind had ever existed prior to. It was an initial concept.

Anybody on Adam? We're good on Adam? Good deal. It says, "Was the Battle Hymn of the Republic written by a post-millennialist?" Yes. No, it absolutely was. So when we say the term post-millennialist, I know a lot of times, particularly on Wednesday night, we deal with eschatology, end times, book of Revelation, etc., when we use a term millennialist, it's back to Revelation chapter 20, that passage in verses 1 through 6 that talks about the Lord reigning on the earth and a pre-millennialist believes that Jesus descends physically first and then reigns, a post-millennialist believes that earth is purified in a sinless condition and then Jesus comes to reign. Now, I think it's easy to determine which of these positions you should hold. You say, why do you think it's easy? Because in Revelation chapter 20, Jesus reigns. In Revelation chapter 19, Jesus comes back. I don't know about the math courses you took growing up, but where I was, 19 comes before 20. So his coming is pre-millennial, if that makes sense. A post-millennial theology in theory subscribes to the idea that the gospel is making such progress sin will be eradicated, the concept of lostness will be unfounded, and that this utopian kingdom of

God everywhere on planet earth exists and in celebration of that the Lord returns because of that.

So why would that song be a post-millennial song? It has nothing really to do with the era of warfare and such as much as it does this, that song was written in a time period where missionary and evangelistic movements were gaining such strength that people actually began to believe that what we know is the eradication of sin was actually going to take place prior to Jesus' coming back. And so this whole concept of the Lord's return as described in that song is very quote-unquote post-millennial, okay, that he is coming to celebrate that which has taken place. So interesting fact that it actually was written by somebody who believes sin would be eradicated prior to Jesus' return. So pretty well-known song but it was written by somebody with that theological predisposition. There it is.

It says is this the right one? Where am I? There we go alright It says, and the reason I know that is because there is a subtitle here that says "back to normal." It says, "Last Sunday you talked about Joseph and Jesus being crucified. Was he present at Jesus' trial?" Ah, Joseph of Arimathea. I remember this famous story, particularly in John chapter 19, where when Jesus is taken down from his cross, Joseph of Arimathea actually goes to Pilate to request the body. Now, I want you to go to John chapter 19. I want to show you a passage and you and I are going to have some fun tonight, and I like when we're going to do what we're about to do because we're gonna read a passage of scripture and I'm gonna go ahead and state in advance that as much evidence as you or I could present to the table, as much as we could discuss this ad nauseum, there's not a single solitary person here or whoever has been here who can definitively say they know who this person is. So I don't want anybody leaving saying, "Yep, it's got to be that guy." Nope, but it leaves open the door for some interesting conversation.

Verse 15. I'm sorry John chapter 18. I apologize, John chapter 18. We're in what we would formally call Peter's denial. Remember we've been in the garden of Gethsemane. Jesus is taken into captivity. He's there at Caiaphas's house and verse 15 of chapter 18 it says, "And Simon Peter followed Jesus and so did another disciple. That disciple was known unto the high priest, went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest." Now let me tell you what the Bible does not say. The Bible does not say one of the apostles. It says one of the disciples, okay? And when you began to disseminate between those different words, we know about the twelve apostles, obviously, but we also know there was a group of seventy that Jesus sent out two by two that are called disciples. We know about the hundred and twenty in the upper room of Acts chapter 1 that are referred to as disciples. Apostle was a specified title for those select twelve. Obviously we know about Judas and Mathias and all that. Disciple was someone who was a quote follower of. And so nobody really knows who it is, but let me give you the options. Option one, it's the Apostle John. You say, "Well, why would it be Apostle John, he used the term disciple?" Because he speaks of himself in this gospel in code. At the end of the gospel of John, he refers to himself as the one that laid on Jesus' breast. He referred to himself as the beloved disciple. He never calls himself John, okay? And so because he said another disciple, that he was basically indicating to us this was him. What's interesting though is,

what does it qualify this guy as? Someone who is known to who? The high priest. Now I don't know about you, but do you really think the high priest would see favorably to one of the twelve apostles of Jesus? Most likely not. It is possible. John is on the table.

Your second option is Nicodemus. You say, "What do you mean Nicodemus?" Chapter 3 of the gospel of John, Nicodemus comes by night to Jesus, gets in a conversation about being born again. He doesn't understand it. When you get to chapter 7 of John, this same group of people that would have been known to the high priest are arguing about who Jesus is. Jesus is rebutting them. And before they do something, Nicodemus speaks up and says, "Why are we condemning a man without listening to him?" And they ask him, "Are you one of his disciples?" Well, guess what happens in chapter 19? Nicodemus shows up, does he not? And he helps Joseph of Arimathea. Nicodemus, was he a disciple? We don't know. But we do know he would have had a relationship with the high priest because of him being called a master of Israel.

Last but not least, Joseph of Arimathea. Why? He went into Pilate's palace and in one simple conversation got the body of Jesus. He was Jewish by background, so most likely with as much money and influence that he had, he would have easily known who the high priest was. So again, we don't know exactly, quote unquote, if he was present at the trial. We know Joseph of Arimathea was present at the crucifixion event.

Now, there's one last option. So we've got John, Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea. You ready for the last one? Lazarus. A lot of y'all looked at me real strangely. Rightfully so. You say, "Well, why do you look at me strangely?" Because Lazarus is raised from the dead in chapter 11 and in chapter 12, it says the Jews sought to kill him as well. Now the reason some people choose, quote, Lazarus, there is a what I call a tin foil hat theory. You all know what that means? All right. There's a tin foil hat theory that when Lazarus raised from the dead that he, quote, spooked the Jews and they were scared of him and therefore they gave him access to things they would not normally have because he was one that had come up from the dead.

Now do you see the order I put them in on purpose, the reason that I did? But it's fun to go out there and research. Now here at the end of the day, nobody really knows who this person is. It sounds a lot like John because of this encoded language. However, would John, an apostle of Jesus, really have been known to the high priest, have been allowed in? We don't know. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea obviously would have qualified to the high priest, but were they disciples? Do you see where we get in there? So it's an interesting question that we just don't know. What we do know is this. In chapter 19, when Jesus Christ breathes his last breath on the cross, it is Joseph and it is Nicodemus that take his body down and prepare it and put it in the grave. That part we know. We really, really don't know about this one.

Now, again, I know that we do this a lot in life and we really have no bearing to it. Have you ever asked yourself the question, one day when I get to heaven, there's some questions I'm going to ask? One of the questions I would love to ask is, who's this guy? I want to know because we don't know who this guy was. Now, here's going to be the

funny part. If the Lord allows me to ask that question, it's probably not going to be any of those four choices. I'm just going to let you know because we do not know who this guy is.

Any follow up on Joseph, we're good? And it's time to get back to normal. Are we ready? Here we go. That means the text messaging line is wide open to be anonymous. Not that y'all put your hands in there anyway tonight. It says, "Lucifer was cast out of heaven and banished to earth. Does this mean he would not have access to any other planet?" Ooh, this is a really, really good question, right, because we know biblically speaking, we know Lucifer prior to his fall according to Ezekiel chapter 28, he is called a cherubim over the throne of God. We know that according to Isaiah chapter 14 in his rebellion where he ends up becoming Satan, the devil, all those titles that we have for him in Revelation chapter 12, we know that it said he wanted to ascend above the clouds to get quote to the throne of God, arbitrarily saying he must have been below the clouds. We know that in Luke chapter 9 it says that when he fell he was quote cast to the earth. We know in Job chapter 1 verse 1 and 2, we know that when the Lord asked him, "Where have you been?" You know what he says? "Walking to and fro in Neptune." Thank you. I'm just making sure you're awake. He says, "No, I've been walking to and fro in all the earth." There is no reference, no mention, nothing that he is hanging out at Mars, Venus, Mercury and the reason is why? Because what would be the point, right? His despising, his hatred is toward the Lord primarily and to his special creation, humanity, secondarily, and where are we? Here. So it makes perfect sense that his reign of terror, for lack of better terms, would be among the one who loved us and created us and those whom he created who are to love him in return so why would he go anywhere else?

Now, does that mean he can't? No, he could. I mean, why could he not, right? If he is able to go to and fro, if he is able according to the book of Job to present himself in the presence of the Lord of Hosts, then we could conceive he could have access to and he could travel amongst, but I don't see really a purpose for an end game there. The Bible doesn't mention anything related to that. We do know he is very active here on planet Earth and we know he is very active among humanity. So that's just what...

Anything on Lucifer's fall? We're good? Okay, no more spaghetti Chris. They don't ask questions when we do spaghetti Here we go. It says, "The Catholics believe," oh boy, here we go. I'm not Catholic. Okay. It says, "The Catholics believe that in Luke 10:16 through 20, Acts 1:15 through 26, Matthew 16, 17 through 19 etc., all show evidence that Jesus gave his apostles authority to establish their sacred tradition and to forgive sins and to pass down this authority to successors. What is the Baptist's answer to this claim?" Well, who cares what the Baptists think? What's the Bible answer to this question? Because just because you're a Baptist doesn't mean you're right.

Now, that being said, the theory or the concept of tradition is that Jesus passed primarily to Peter but to the apostles and vicariously throughout time, not just the traditions, but the authority to not only have successors of the faith, but to, as it says in the question, to forgive sins, okay? Now, I wanna take you to John chapter 20 for just a moment. Now, I know what you're thinking. It's not one of the passages. You're right. But every one of

these passages that's mentioned is leading up to, we'll get to Acts chapter 1 in just a moment. But in John chapter 20, we're gonna have a very interesting conversation here beginning in verse 19. This is Jesus after he raised from the grave, okay. Now by the way back in Matthew 16, it says he gave Peter the keys to the kingdom. I get that, okay, we'll talk about that in just a moment. It's there but I want you to listen about this interaction verse 19 of John 20. "The same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut, where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and he said unto them, Peace be unto you. And when he had thus said, he showed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord. Then Jesus said unto them again, Peace unto you, as my Father has sent me even so send I you." Verse 22, "And when he said this, he breathed on them and said unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost, whose soever sins you remit they are remitted unto them, and whose soever sins you retain, they are retained." Now, this is a troublesome, problematic passage. Now, again, go back and look at your Bibles. There are actually two different words that your Bible will or will not use in this passage. Some of your Bibles will use the word remit, like remittance. Some of your Bibles will use the word forgive, okay? Now, let me share with you the problem with that because it says whose ever sins you forgive will be forgiven them, the reason that that is problematic is the Bible says that God and God alone is able to forgive sin. Right? And so what has happened is, if you want to go back and get a quote unquote, and I'm not meaning this disparagingly and I'm just being honest, if you want to go back and get a quote unquote Catholic Bible, I'll let you guess what word they use. Forgive. And you say, "Well, I don't have a Catholic Bible, but I have a different Bible. It says forgive." You might be surprised how many Bibles that you have right now in front of you that the translation committee had a significant number of Catholic academicians on the board. Yes. In other words, wanting to retain some of these things. Now, I'm a little bit of the old school, so to speak. I've got me a good old fashioned King James Bible here. I do. Do you know how many Catholics were on the translation committee? Zero. None at all. And guess what word, oh by the way, do you know how many Baptists were on the committee? Zero, none at all. So this isn't a Baptist question, really it's not. And the word is remit.

Now let me distinguish the difference. To forgive somebody is to absolve. To remit is not to account for. Let me remind you how this comes into play. Go to Acts chapter 7. Acts chapter 7. I'm gonna show you the difference here. Acts chapter 7, this is what we know as the martyrdom of Stephen. Stephen's being martyred. Begins in verse 54. I'm not gonna read the whole scene because of the sake of time. Fast forward to verse 59, "And they stoned Stephen calling upon God and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Listen to verse 60, "And he kneeled down, he cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep." Did he forgive them? No. He remitted. To remit is not to lay charge to you. To remit is not to have an account for. His prayer, he's basically saying, "God, do not charge them with what they've done," because only the Lord can truly forgive, correct? And so when we go back to this concept of apostolic authority and the ability to forgive sin or in today's tradition where someone would go into a confessional and have another person do something to forgive them, right, that is not a biblical concept. That's a man-made tradition. Unfortunately, there are

passages of scripture such as these that have been taken and turned, twisted and looked at differently to make it appear that one can quote, absolve as the Lord does absolve, okay?

Now, here's the difference, okay? If you, I don't know, I'm speaking on you, bro, you're right in front, this is the problem being in the front row, here you go. That's why Baptists never sit on the front row, here you go. If you were to, and I'm not saying you have or you ever will, but if you were to do something contrary to me, and I say, I quote, forgive you, right, does that mean you're innocent before God? Absolutely not. You and I are right together, right? When you go back to John chapter 20 and it says, whose soever sins you remit, they will be remitted, this isn't talking about between you and I. this is about humanity and God is what it's doing, and we actually see a biblical evidence later of it being put into practice. So it's an interesting distinction there. As far as apostolic authority is concerned, we could spend a whole lot of time on this. There is like zero evidence in the Bible that somehow, someway there are special successors to the apostles that have more of a presence of the Holy Spirit than anybody else on planet earth. It's just not in the Bible. It is in tradition but it's not in the Bible.

Clarifications, concerns, what abouts? There's no follow-ups here. Yes, sir?

[unintelligible]

Yes? Say that one more time? Okay, there is a translation of scripture that Southern Baptists as a denomination commissioned. Yes.

[unintelligible]

I would have to ask you all to look that up for me because I do not know but it's gonna be interesting. So what we call it the CSB, Christian standard Bible, which used to be the HCS, be the Holman Standard Bible which prior to that was actually the New King James Bible. Boy, it's hard to keep up with, I tell you what. But look at the CSB. I don't know. Now what's interesting is I don't know the answer to this. I really don't. Are you looking it up for him?

[unintelligible]

Oh, I'm sorry, if I could remember the verse. It is John chapter 20, John chapter 20, and it is verse 23. You're going to be my research assistant. All right? It says forgive. That's right. I know what you're thinking. "Well, every translator on that committee was a Baptist." You're absolutely right. You're absolutely right. But here's the thing that you don't know is that when translations go into play, one of the things that they do is and we've talked about this at length sometimes on Wednesday night but it's been a while, is there are what we call families of manuscripts, okay? Now I'm gonna do this really quickly tonight. Okay, cuz I know some of you are like, "Man, thanks to you, Jeff, I already have a master's degree in this." But some of you have never taken the first course so here we go. All right, four manuscripts. The first one is what we call the Textus Receptus, okay, or the Received Text. This is where we get what we know as the King



James Version from, okay? Other than that we have one called Sinaiticus. I'm gonna abbreviate. That's an "A," I apologize. We have Alexandrian and we have what we call Vaticanus. Okay? Now, what's interesting is, and if you want to go in and dig, and I'm being honest with you, sir, I did not know the answer to the question, but I was scared I did and here is why, because as you start researching how different translations are put into play, if you go and you kind of dig down deep of how they're doing what they're doing, what you see is they will identify where they lean coming what we call manuscript evidence, okay? So for example, you go get an old-fashioned King James like I've got, here it is, it's all Textus Receptus, it is what it is, okay? Now, by the way, I joked a while ago about the different translations, right? Coming out of that was what we call the New King James, okay? You say, "Oh, the New King James, they just cleared up the thee's and the thou's and made things easier." That's not true. What they did was they went back to some passages and they looked at kind of what these said and they made some changes here and there. Okay, and then out of that came the Holman Standard Bible and they went they dug a little deeper and they made a few more changes, and then they made a few more change, then they made a few more changes. So ultimately what happens is over a series of events it becomes more this side of the equation than that side of the equation.

Now I know you're thinking, "Okay, why is that a problem?" Okay, per this question. This manuscript called Sinaiticus, it was found in a Catholic monastery on Mount Sinai. Does that communicate? How about Vaticanus? That's the Vatican. Do we see a theme happening here? And then we got one last one, it says Alexandrian. Well, that's not Roman, that's not Catholic. You're absolutely right. That's in Egypt. Ah, that's never good, right? And so what you have here is the very first mass-produced non-King James English translation of scripture in 1884. It's called the Revised Version, okay? The Revised Version is the adopted text of the Roman Catholic Church and almost every other translation either derives from it or combines thereof.

So again, going back to John, you, I, we don't have the ability to make somebody right before God. Only Jesus can do that. But we see biblical evidence of we can pray and say, "God, don't charge that one to their account." Now, did that happen in Acts 7? It did. You say, "What do you mean? How do you know it happened?" Because you remember what was said right before then? It said there was a man by the name of Saul who was in charge of the trial. Can you imagine in what happened there in Acts 7 if God had brought down the hammer? By the way, this is just me. I think Acts chapter 7 is one of the most powerful prayers in all the Bible because whom we know as Stephen said, "God, don't charge him with this one." And what do we see happen next? The same Saul of Tarsus that was over that became whom we know as the Apostle Paul later. Judgment did not take place of them immediately. You see a remittance. Does that make sense?

So again, I know we can get in all the weeds here and all the textuality, but what I want you to see per this question is that these other texts that we have out there, heavy, heavy Catholic tradition and heavy, heavy influence which leads to some of these traditional things kind of creeping in when sometimes we don't notice it, if that makes sense. Does that help out a little bit with that one? Anybody else? Yes, ma'am.

[unintelligible]

Luke 23:34. I'm going, I'm going, I'm going. Yeah, Jesus said, "Father, forgive them," because he's God. Yeah, yeah, yeah, Jesus said, "Father, forgive them." Yeah. Oh, absolutely. Jesus can forgive your sins, Jeff cannot. All right. Yes, sir?

[unintelligible]

James 5. Here we go. Yep. We're gonna talk about praying. Are we talking about fervent prayer? Are we talking about anointing with oil, which one you want to go with? Both of them. Why not James 5?

[unintelligible]

Yes Yes, all right, here we go. We're actually gonna be in verse 15. I'm gonna back it up. It says in verse 13, "Is there any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is there any merry? Let him sing songs. Is there any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church. Let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord and the prayer of the faith shall save the sick," by the way, that means the faith of those praying is on trial, not the sick person. How many times have you heard of or been told about somebody who was sick, went to somebody to pray over them, and they said, "You don't have enough faith"? That's not biblical. The person praying didn't have enough faith. But that's a whole other story, because that's not your question. It says, "and the Lord shall raise him up. And if he committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another and pray for one another that you may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Now, in the context of the passage we just read, who does the healing? God. They pray for him. So in the context of God is doing the healing, God is doing the forgiving. The elders in this context are the means and the mechanism and their faith is calling on the Lord to act. I don't think we see a context of because sins were confessed to them they were forgiven by them; in the totality of all this, it's dealing with someone sick, sin and all that. That help out a little bit? Yep, because I got news for you. If you go to another human being for forgiveness of your sins, you're going to be eternally highly disappointed because we don't have the capacity to do it because we're not, to your point, ma'am, when you quoted Luke, you're absolutely right. Jesus said, "Father, forgive them," because he has the capacity to do that. Stephen said, "Don't lay this to their charge." That's a remission, not a, yes ma'am, again?

[unintelligible]

Oh yeah, oh, Mark chapter 2. Okay, go to Mark chapter 2 real quick. By the way, this isn't a Baptist study, it's a Bible study. Mark chapter 2, I'm glad you brought this up, ma'am because this is what caused Jesus among many things to get in the proverbial hot water. Mark chapter 2, this is the famous scene where the friends put the man on the roof and they lower him through. Mark chapter 2. Alright, he comes down, verse 5. Let's begin in verse 5 for the sake of time. "When Jesus saw their faith," this is the friends by

the way, "he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." Now the friends didn't forgive the sin, Jesus did. Jesus is God, right? Verse 6, "But there were certain of the scribes sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, Why does this man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sin but God only? And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said to them, Why reason these things in your hearts? Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy thy sins be forgiven or to say arise, take up thy bed and walk? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins, he said to the sick of the palsy, I say to thee, arise, take up your bed, go your way into the house." So essentially what Jesus said is he said, "All right, guys, what is harder to do, to heal physically or to heal spiritually?" Obviously spiritually, correct? Well, he said your sins are forgiven. They didn't like it. They questioned it. So basically, he said, "All right, here's the litmus test. If this guy gets up and walks under my authority, it means what I said previously happened under my authority." And so when he got up, and by the way, the Bible says he ran, and by the way, that's fascinating. You say, "What do you mean it's fascinating?" Today, I don't know if you know this, but today there were three astronauts who came and landed from the ISS, the International Space Station. I, this morning, was watching it. You say, "Seriously, you're that much of a nerd?" No, not really. The reason I was watching it is there is actually here at First Baptist Church of Opelika, we actually have a family that is connected and related to one of those astronauts. So I was watching. You know what's interesting about all three of those astronauts? Two were cosmonauts, one was a NASA astronaut, that every one of them was pulled and they were carried on a stretcher because for three days they're going to have to learn how to walk again. Now, they did two and a half hours of physical exercise every day when they were up in space, but not in a situation of gravity where you had to bear or load weight, right? So you think it's interesting that one year in space, man, we're going to be real cautious and have to teach you how to walk again. One touch of Jesus, a man who hadn't walked in 10 years goes running down the street. No three-day quarantine necessary. Pretty fascinating, isn't it? But the reason I share that story with you, to your point, is they questioned his ability to do it. He says, "I've forgiven you," and then heals the man to confirm that the first one was true because the second one took place. Again, Jesus is able to forgive.

Did I see, doubts, we're good? All right. Here we go. "Where is tithing talked about in the Bible?" All right, here we go. Go to Genesis 14. I know it's, what, huh? Genesis 14. So, one of the things that we talk about a lot, particularly on Wednesday nights, is what we call the law of first mention. The law of first mention is any time a concept, an idea, a word is used for the first time in scripture, it helps us to understand what it means the rest of the time. Okay? So, Genesis chapter 14, this is the story of Abram. He's not Abraham yet, because Isaac hasn't been born. He's Abram, okay? Remember, he goes to a land he knows not of. In the process of doing that, there's all kinds of wars and battles and conflicts. And here in chapter 14, he has won a battle, and he meets a man of, I can imagine the follow-up questions are coming, by the name of Melchizedek. Alright, he meets a man by the name of Melchizedek, verse 17. It says, "And the king of Sodom went out to meet him after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer," or however you say that word, "and of the kings that were with him in the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's dale. And Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine. He was

the priest of the most high God." Push pause. We can chase the Melchizedek rabbit trail if we want to. This is the only man in your Bible that is a king and a priest at the same time. That's it. You can be a prophet and a priest, you can be a prophet and a king, but you cannot be a king and a priest. Remember, this is what got Saul in trouble. Remember Saul was king and he tried to be a priest and God said, "We're not going there," right? Okay, that being said so we've got a very unique character and in Hebrews chapter 3 Jesus is parallel to Melchizedek.

All right, all that being said, verse 19, "He blessed him and he said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God possessor of heaven and earth, and blessed be the most high God which has delivered thine enemies into thine hand. And he gave him tithes of all." Now, the word tithe means 10%. That's all it means. You say, "Well, why did you run to Genesis chapter 14? Because the Ten Commandments had not been written yet. The law had not been written yet. In other words, we have a man who, for lack of better terms, is pretty representative of the Lord himself, or at least a representative of the Lord, and when this man has won a victory on behalf of the Lord, his natural response is to give 10% away. That's what he does. And then you get into the law and you start seeing this established. Probably the most famous scripture we have is in Malachi chapter 3 where it talks about bringing all the tithes into the storehouse, where we robbed you, God, with tithes and offerings and it's all there.

However, I want you to go to Isaiah chapter 6. Go to Isaiah chapter 6 because typically when we talk about quote unquote tithing we go to all these quote money passages. I don't want to. Let's go to Isaiah chapter 6. In Isaiah chapter 6, we have the famous call of Isaiah, very famous passage, love it. He basically says, "God, I'll go anywhere you tell me to do without knowing what the details are in advance." In Isaiah chapter 6, so we see in Genesis chapter 14, the concept of tithing is a gracious response to what God has done on your behalf, okay? Now we get to Isaiah chapter 6, here is the commission of Isaiah, verse 9. He's already said, "I'll go." He said, "Go and tell this people, hear you indeed, but understand not, and see you indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat. Make their ears heavy. Shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and convert and be healed. And I said, Lord, how long? He answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate and the Lord have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land." Look at verse 13. "But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and it shall be eaten." He goes on and on.

You say, "Why is that important?" Because essentially what the Lord is saying the word tithe just means a tenth, that's all it means, okay? And so what we see in Genesis is this was a natural response by a man of God to the activity of God in his life before the law was ever commissioned, okay? Then you get into Isaiah chapter 6 and this tenth is seen as a remnant, okay, those that are faithful in spite of the rebellion that is taking place. And so basically what you see the concept of tithing is really, I guess, responding to the Lord how he's graciously and what he's done graciously on your behalf, and also saying, "In spite of other's rebellion, I'll be faithful." Okay? Now I know what the question is inferring or somewhat inferring is this is all throughout the Old Testament but you don't

see it in the New Testament, and you're absolutely right. It's not there, okay? There is no place in the New Testament that mentions tithing at all. But you know what it says in 2 Corinthians chapter 9? It says give with a cheerful heart. All right, it talks about giving out of the goodness and the generosity of your heart.

And so therefore, I know this question isn't asked there, but I'm gonna ask it anyway, okay? Is it mandatory for a New Testament born again Christian to tithe? It's not, but it's highly suggested. Why? Because at no point does the New Testament say quit doing that. The New Testament just says give cheerfully. Give out of the abundance. In fact, it says give double fold. There's all kinds of analogies that are there. And so therefore, you may not be aware of this, maybe you are, there's actually a movement now happening trying to tell people to quit tithing because it's not a New Testament concept. Okay? Well, the problem with that is, you know what Jesus said in Matthew 5? He came to fulfill the law, not to abolish it. And so one of the things that we love to do is take something we don't want to do and do biblical gymnastics to make the Bible prove what we don't want to do is something we should do. And so we found an excuse. So here's my response to this. Abraham did it before the law. Isaiah was commissioned to do it in spite of rebellion. To me, it's not mandatory, but it's a pretty good starting point, if that makes sense. And I'm going to quote my wife. I don't think she's in the room right now. I think she's somewhere else on campus. I might get in trouble for this, but I'm going to quote it anyway. You ready? My wife says one day that this is her, I don't want to take credit for it because that's plagiarism, and I want her to be happy with me, okay? My wife says this, okay, one day when you appear before God there are three things that you're never gonna be reprimanded for, promoting life, supporting Israel and tithing. The Lord is never gonna look at you and go, "Man, you just loved Israel too much. That was a bad idea." The Lord's never go, "Boy, you gave way too much money. Bad idea." In other words, these concepts that we find in scripture, they're just embedded in the totality of it.

And so therefore now, let me get real practical for just a moment. Maybe it's not real practical, maybe it's real spiritual. Is if Jesus Christ gave everything for us, what is giving a tenth back? I mean seriously, I think it's a pretty good deal. If you want to be honest with it, it's a really good deal. And you know what it does on a practical level? It forces you to budget is what it does. I could go on on this all night. I know we probably don't want to talk about it. I just tell you that it is a rare day, if an ever day, to meet someone who gives very faithfully to the Lord who struggles. I didn't say emotionally, relationally, mentally. I meant struggle like getting the light bill paid. I'm just, I've got story after story after story of people who trust the Lord and God just provides, if that makes sense. I just wanted you to see tonight the very first mention of tithing in the Bible was before the 10% mandatory law. It's inside of us to do it, if that makes sense. I doubt we're gonna have follow-ups on that one. Oh, yes, sir, maybe.

[unintelligible]

Great point, I'm going to repeat that so they can hear what you said. Another pastor made this comment, if you were required under the law to give it, why would you not want to give it now that you're under grace? Absolutely, that's a very good perspective. Very

good perspective on that. And you know the old phrase you've heard before, you're never going to out-give God, you're never going to. No, I mean there's a lot of illustrations that are there. I do think though, when we make any spiritual discipline legalistic, then it's not done for the right purpose and/or reasons. There's a lot of people who give more than 10% for the wrong reasons. There's some people that are giving 20% of their income because they think they're buying themselves into heaven and that's not biblical. So just because you give a lot doesn't mean you're giving for the right reasons. Does that make sense?

Any more tithing ones? We're good? All right, here we go. "Does the Bible give guidance on the qualification of someone to perform believer's baptism?" That's a really good question. Go to Acts chapter 7. Acts chapter 7. So when we talk about the ordinance of baptism, obviously there's two ordinances that are mentioned in the New Testament. There's the ordinance of baptism, which is a one-time public confession profession of one's faith in Jesus Christ and then there's what we know as the Lord's Supper, which is a regular occurrence. You say how regular? According to 1 Corinthians 11, it says just keep doing it till the Lord returns. There's no specifics given where we remember his death and his sacrifice.

Acts chapter 7. There's a man by the name of Philip. Philip is one of the first seven deacons. He's on his way somewhere. He meets an Ethiopian eunuch. In the process of doing so, actually, chapter 8, I apologize. I was one chapter over. I apologize. Chapter 8, we were back at Stephen. I apologize. Chapter 8, he preaches unto him, let me begin at verse 32, it says, "The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opening not his mouth. In his humiliation his judgment was taken away, and who shall declare his generation for his life is taken from the earth." Verse 34, "And the eunuch answered Philip. He said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this, of himself or of some other man?" Verse 35, "Then Philip opened his mouth, began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came to a certain water and the eunuch said, See, here is water. What doth hinder me to be baptized?" Push pause. This actually ain't about this question. It's about two previous questions ago. I want you to look at verse 37. Do some of your Bibles miss that verse? Uh-huh. They are, aren't they? Some of them have them in italics. Some of them say they shouldn't be there. Some of them just have it completely gone, right? Verse 37. "And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, you may. And he said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." Now I know what you're thinking, "Why would you take that verse out?" Do you remember these manuscripts we were talking about? That tradition authorizes baptism before a profession. It's called infant baptism, where you take a baby and you baptize them, right, without a profession of faith. If you remove the profession of faith, you can defend the tradition. Does that make sense?

All right, now, that has nothing to do with this specific question. I just thought we'd go there. Verse 38, "He commanded the church to stand still and they went both in the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him." Great, now, the question, what local church was the eunuch baptized into? None, all right? He wasn't. What you discover here

is that in your New Testament, by the way, I talked about the law of first mention, this is the first place in your Bible that it specifically mentions an individual coming to faith in Christ as an individual and another individual leading him to the Lord. Now we know in Acts chapter 2 there's 3,000 added to the church and they were baptized. There's a lot of that. I get it. This is the only one-on-one that we see. And the thing I want you to see is that the Bible does not say that a quote unquote pastor or a quote unquote deacon or someone in that respective title is the only person that can quote baptize you as a believer. It does not say that, okay? However, when you get into 1 Corinthians chapter 14 verse 33, it says God is not the author of confusion. You say, "Well, that passage is about tongues." It is. But if you go back earlier in 1 Corinthians chapter 1, you know what they had a problem with? Baptism. And they were struggling, who's baptizing who and for why and what's going on here and all these different things. And so basically what happens is, what we know as baptism, hear me very clearly, there is no mandate in the New Testament that says if you're not baptized by a certain pastor at a certain church, it doesn't count. It's just not there. What you do discover as you walk through the letters of the Apostle Paul, by the way, where did this guy live? Ethiopia way middle of nowhere. You discover that as the local church, by the way there's a lot of local churches in your New Testament, as they began to get established, as they began to get organized, that baptism was an ordinance of that local congregation and therefore, if you were in Ephesus, and all of a sudden you got a job relocation to Corinth, and they would ask, "Hey, what church were you a part of?" First Baptist Ephesus, in theory. Great. How do we know? In other words, it was able for us as believers to migrate among churches and to travel and such and to have a common like faith when we did things in order without quote unquote confusion.

And so what has happened over time is that traditionally baptism has become an ordinance of the local church, however, Baptism does not have to be in a church and it does not have to be by a quote-unquote ordained minister. It doesn't have to be. Some of you served in the military. Military chaplains baptize guys all the time. All the time as a profession of their own faith. It's not necessarily connected to a local church, however, what it does contain is a proper understanding of sin, a profession of faith in Jesus Christ, and an understanding of why they're doing what they're doing. If that person is baptized in a pool of water in the desert in the military, they don't go back to First Baptist, Opelika and got to get baptized again because it's an ordinance of the church. Does that make sense? And so really, it's a both/and, not an either/or, if that makes sense. So again, I don't know if that helps clarify at all, but it is what it is.

Anybody? Nobody? Yes, ma'am.

[unintelligible]

By the military chaplain in the middle of the desert. Yep. Great question. If that person who was saved and baptized in the middle of the desert by a military chaplain rolls up into Opelika, Alabama and says, "I want to be a member of First Baptist Church of Opelika." Do you realize that we really don't care if you've been baptized because baptism has nothing to do with your salvation. We want to know, do you believe in the

Lord Jesus Christ and he's the one you called on to save you? Got that settled. Now let's talk about your baptism. Were you baptized according to the scriptural description? "Oh, yeah, I was done so in the context of a local body so to speak, and I was immersed." Great and we count it, absolutely we do. Not every Baptist church will though. There are some Baptist churches if you're not baptized in their church, it doesn't count. That's why I love being a Baptist. It's called the local autonomy of the church. You say, "Well, I don't like how they're doing it." Then don't go there. It's okay. It's great, okay?

And so again what we do here I'm just gonna speak to here specifically, our primary conversation isn't about your baptism, our primary conversation is why were you baptized, okay, because just cuz you got baptized in the desert by a military chaplain doesn't mean you got saved. Okay? And if you got baptized somewhere else and didn't get saved, and you quote, get saved today, you need to be baptized. Not because we're baptizing you again, but we're baptizing you for the biblical reason, if that makes sense. That help there? Alright? And so then we walk through that, and so when it comes to people coming from other churches, other areas of the world, whatever it may be, we unpack all that and if they truly had a salvation experience with Jesus Christ and then were baptized for the right reasons in the right manner, we do receive and we do accept. We got a lot of folks that are members of our church that were baptized in creeks and in ponds and all kinds of places. But we unpack all that. Does that make sense? The most dangerous thing you can do is somebody goes, "Oh man, can I join the church? I was baptized in the desert." Great, come on, let's go. Whoa! I got news for you. Hey, y'all may think I'm crazy, but we're just being straight up tonight, right? Just because you're coming from another church doesn't mean you're saved. Uh-oh is right. That's why we do follow up. That's why we talk about it because just because you're a member somewhere else doesn't mean you're saved because what if they didn't talk you through it properly? What if they didn't counsel you properly? Right? And so that's why we communicate so there's no confusion. When you go back to the church at Corinth, you know why they're having confusion? It's because nobody knew who was coming from here and would have done what. And he was like, "Whoa, hold on here. Let's flush all this stuff out. What do we have?" So again, at the end of the day, it is not mandated in the New Testament that it has to be the senior pastor of a local Baptist church that baptizes you, however, I think we would admit it creates a lot less confusion if it works that way. But you just got to flush it all out.

Anybody else on baptism? We're good there? Everybody's good? You're good? I'm good? All right. All right, we're gonna roll out tonight. Keep the questions coming 334-231-2313. Next time we have spaghetti, we're going to lace it with something to loosen y'all up. That's all I got to say. I guess the meatball set heavy tonight, is that what it was? All right, let's pray and we'll get out here.

*Lord Jesus, thank you. God, thank you for your word literally from Genesis to Revelation, every concept, every curiosity, Lord, every need of clarification. God, truly as we walk out of here, how good it is to know that in spite of this ordinance and that ordinance and this concept and that concept, that your word makes it very clear that we are sinners destined to a devil's hell if it were not for Jesus Christ. Thank you for his*



*love, for his grace, his mercy and the shedding of his blood and his empty tomb that allows us to be forgiven, allows us to be saved, and allows us to be redeemed for all of eternity. May we never forget it. May we never take it for granted. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*