

Ask Jeff 10.25.17

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We thank you for that. Lord, we lift up all these who are on our prayer sheet this evening. I pray that you would work in each one of their lives to effect your will and work and purpose. May you gain honor and glory through everything that is done in their lives, Lord, and may all healing point to you. And we recognize that there are really smart people that are medical teams that take care of these folks who are struggling so much but, Lord, we know that all healing comes from you because you are the Great Physician. Now bless us during our time of study and we pray that you would just help us to gain knowledge and understanding that would help us to be better disciples for you, and we look forward to what you're going to do in our lives together this evening. In Christ's name. Amen.

Here's Jeff.

Alright, thank you, Mike. I appreciate you for filling in. For those of you that may be new to First Baptist or guests or visitors with us... Okay, oh well, never mind. I'm just going to have to be short tonight. What we know as Master Life, many of you have heard that term throughout the last couple of months. It's a discipleship Bible study that we're going to do as a church family beginning January of 2018. Right now we've got our leaders going through it. That's where I was preparing them before I came down. I'm excited to share with you right now that we are just a few people shy of having 1,000 people signed up to go through that beginning in January. So if you're not yet signed up, you can go on the website fbcopelika.com/masterlife or if you're with us on Sunday or even tonight on Wednesday night, we've got some clipboards with some yellow pieces of paper floating around the campus. Just give us your name, email, phone number, and we'll take care of all the rest.

I do want to welcome you to Wednesday nights here at First Baptist where Bible study kind of has two parts. We're going to have kind of a Q&A session to begin with and then we're going to continue in our Revelation study. Now for those of you who have never been here before, the Q&A, we call it Ask Jeff. Why? You get to ask questions, my name just happens to be Jeff.

Now the way that we do this is most of you submit your questions by way of our website fbcopelika.com/askjeff. When you submit a question, you're able to give us your email address. Now you remain anonymous. I have no idea who you are. It doesn't tell me who

you are. And when that question is answered and when I push the "answered" button, it sends you an email link to the video of the answering of the question just in case you were not here when you asked it. By the way, it's not just you asking question, we get questions from people in other states, other countries, all over the world because we are being broadcast by way of the internet right now.

So that being said, we have a database, we'll pull from the database and we'll start from there. Now that's when it gets interesting because you have the ability and the right to raise your hand. When you raise your hand, you lose your anonymity but you can take it anywhere you want to go. Sometimes some of you say, "Hey, I want to talk about that a little more." Others of you say, "Well, I know we're talking about this but I'd rather talk about that and let's just do it." So that being said, what we're about to do is all your fault. You're the ones that ask the questions, I just get the privilege of answering them.

So a little database here that is not in any time of chronological order. Alright, here we go. Oops, that one I messed up. I apologize. You always get told that all you have to do is believe in Jesus but in the Bible, like with Nicodemus, he didn't just want him to believe at night, he wanted him to follow him and Jesus said not to be lukewarm. So is it possible to believe in him and to have gotten saved but not actually be saved if you're not truly following him? Does that make sense?

That's a really good question and, by the way, whoever asked it, I appreciate the "does that make sense" part of it. The question that's being asked primarily allows us to differentiate what we see in the gospels versus what we see particularly in the writings of the Apostle Paul. So if you're going to allow me to tonight, I'm going to use my board here because the question is what about when Jesus said, "Just follow me"? By the way, it wasn't just Nicodemus that he told him to do so. Bartimaeus, the blind man who was healed, he said, "Follow me," and various folks all throughout what we know as the gospel story.

So what I'm going to do here just as far as a simple graph, is I'm going to draw a line. This is going to be the beginning of what we know as the ministry of Jesus, the beginning of his ministry roughly 30 years of age at this point. We have approximately 3 ½ years of his ministry. Then we have what we know as the cross event, that is the death, the burial and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Then shortly thereafter we have Pentecost. By the way, Pentecost, and I love my Pentecostal brothers, Pentecost is not a denomination, it is a Jewish celebration and festival. But nonetheless, Pentecost happens 50 days later. At Pentecost, we have the coming down of the Holy Spirit, we know that they were filled, we have the whole tongue experience and such, and the majority of people claim that this is when the church visible became noticed and we have the church of Jesus Christ, the body of Christ probably for a better word, that begins at this point going forward.

Now why is this critical to the question? Because what was asked is why do you see all this verbiage in the gospels of, "Follow me. Follow me. Follow me," and then all of a sudden when you start reading the rest of the New Testament, you hear, "Believe in me. Believe in me. Believe in me"? I believe the answer to this question is a very simple

chronological question and I'm going to ask it with a rhetorical question. How many people before the cross, how many of them were born again believers in Jesus Christ? Zero. None of them. Not one single person was what we would call born again or saved because they could not be. The blood of the lamb had not been shed. The resurrection had not taken place. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit has not been realized. And so I believe what you see as was referenced in Nicodemus, Bartimaeus, the woman caught in adultery, we could go through almost every single character, yes, there was an acknowledgment that Jesus was the answer, remember the Samaritan woman who said, "Come and see. Come and hear the man who told me everything about myself." She grasped that he was the Son of God. She believed that he was the answer. Even Zacchaeus acknowledged who he was. So, yes, there is an assertion, "You are the Messiah, you are the answer to sin's problem," but what we see coming from Jesus in response is, "Follow me."

Now where are they following him to? They're following him to the cross, and what he was communicating to them was, "Hey, I am the Messiah. Come follow me. Let's walk this way." And in just a little while and, by the way, most of what we know as the gospel accounts take place in the latter half of the ministry of Jesus. The last half of the gospel of Luke is the last seven days in the ministry of Jesus, so most of the communication we see is not on the front side as much as it is on the backside where Jesus is literally telling them, "Hey, in just a few weeks, in just a few months this is all going to be completely clear to you what has taken place." By the way, back in the gospel of John in the early part of it, remember Jesus turns water into wine, and after that incredible miracle it says there were many that believed on him, many that didn't, and it said that their eyes were not opened until later they received the Holy Spirit and they grasped what Jesus was speaking about.

So Jesus is saying, "Follow me. Follow me. Follow me." We then have the cross event. We have his death. We have his burial. Three days later we have his resurrection. He says, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you." Then when we get to this side of the equation, notice particularly in the book of Romans, whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. Acts 16:31, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Over and over and over again. The only time that you see the phrase "Follow me" is in 1 Thessalonians when the Apostle Paul says, "Follow me as I'm following Jesus." He's communicating to people who are already saved. He's communicating to people who are already believers, "Hey, if you want to see what it looks like to walk the Christian life, do what I'm doing because I'm doing what Jesus told us to do."

So in reference to our salvation, in reference to our sins being forgiven, you don't see the phrase "Follow me. Follow him," on this side of the resurrection, you see it on the other side which leads me to believe that it is an instruction of that you must – listen – you must go through the cross for salvation. Salvation isn't about, "I was at the right place at the right time and I did the right thing here and there." All of that teaching was to show people their need for the cross. By the way, and maybe this is just kind of a personal thing of mine. The Sermon on the Mount, incredible, incredible teaching obviously from the mouth of Jesus, probably the most famous "sermon" that's ever been preached, but as

you read through the Sermon on the Mount, one of the things that you will notice is that for three entire chapters of scripture Jesus tells us every way that we think we can be righteous but we can't be. "You say you've done this, but what about this one? You think you're good because you've never done this, but what about that?" And then you get to the end of the Sermon on the Mount and what does Jesus say? There's two men who build a house. One builds his house on the sand, one builds his house on the rock. What are you going to do when the storm comes up? Which of the houses will survive? And obviously we know later the Bible declares Jesus as the rock of our salvation, and I believe what Jesus is communicating even in the Sermon on the Mount which is at the beginning of his ministry, is saying, alright, here's the deal, no matter how good you've been, no matter how much you've done that you shouldn't have done and not done that you shouldn't have done, we all need the cross, we all need his resurrection, and so he says, "Follow me." By the way, he tells blind Bartimaeus who probably had never been to the synagogue in his life, "Follow me." He told Nicodemus who ran the synagogue, "Come and follow me." Jesus did not differentiate between the religious and the non-religious in their need for what we know as his cross, his burial and his resurrection.

So hopefully that makes it a little more clear. It's a great question to ask because as you read through the gospels, "Follow me. Follow me. Follow me." You get into the letters of Paul and you don't see that phrase as much and you begin to question why do we see a difference here? Hopefully that helps a little bit. Any follow-up clarification, what about, thoughts, issues? Yes.

[unintelligible]

Absolutely.

[unintelligible]

Oh, I apologize for the lukewarm part. Okay, so the lukewarm part is an allusion to the church of Laodicea. If you have your Bibles, Revelation 3. And yes, let me piggyback on what he said. We do call ourselves followers of Jesus, absolutely, in fact, in the book of Acts when the Apostle Paul was Saul, on his way to Damascus he said that he was attempting to go and to incarcerate and to imprison and to hopefully kill those of "the Way." We, Christians, we got our names in Acts 11 from the pagans, "Little Christ," meaning those who imitate Christ, act like Christ, follow Christ. And so he's absolutely correct that as a believer in Jesus Christ, on this side I can say I follow Christ, I can say I'm following him, but it's because I've been through the cross that I'm able to say so.

Now the lukewarmness. Revelation 3. The church at Laodicea, a very famous passage here because this is the church... Okay, Revelation 3 beginning in verse 14 it says, "unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art

wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

Now this is one of those passages we're somewhat familiar with but at the same time, let's be honest, it grieves us to say because anybody who would be completely honest with themselves as a believer in Jesus Christ, no matter how long you've been a Christian, a follower of Jesus, you mess up, right? I think there's times we all look back and go, "Oh, wasn't a real hot day today." Maybe it wasn't a real cold day but it wasn't a real hot day. Lukewarm day. I want you to notice, though, in the strict literalness of this passage, where is Jesus? He's on the outside. He's not on the inside. But even applying this what I would call spiritually or devotionally, one of the things that Jesus is communicating is you need to be in or you need to be out. You pick, it's up to you. I'm from Texas. You have family in Texas, sir. Don't ride the fence, all it's going to do is hurt you, right? I mean, anytime you ride the fence, all it can do is hurt you. In other words, one side or the other and one of the things that he's communicating to the Laodiceans is, "Hey, if you're riding the fence, you need to get the raiment, you need to get the eye salve." I think the thing that's important to this passage for us tonight is this, he's not saying if you're lukewarm you're lost, he's saying get with it. Get the eye salve. Get this. Get that. Get things together because he says "to the church of the Laodiceans," okay? He doesn't say to the pagans of the Laodiceans, he doesn't say to the lost ones, he says "to the church of Laodicea," which is a collective term much like we'd say the church even though we're First Baptist, the church at Opelika. You mean to tell me that every single one of them were believers? Probably not. There were those who were really serious about their faith, probably some that weren't so serious about their faith and he's communicating very clearly, "Hey, if you are lukewarm, you need to get really excited or really not so real quick."

Does that help at all? Not really? Not really?

[unintelligible]

And Jesus said not to be lukewarm, so is it possible to believe in him and have gotten saved but not actually be saved if you're not truly following him, which goes back a little bit to what we were saying. I want you to go back a few pages to the left to 1 John 2 and I know what this question is asking and whoever asked it, I apologize if I didn't read it real well. It's a great question because what you're asking is, "Okay, I believe in Jesus. I know I'm a sinner. I believe in the cross. I believe in the resurrection. I've asked him to save me. But when I look up, I kind of look like Laodicea. I kind of look lukewarm. I'm really

not what I should be and so is there the possibility that maybe I'm no longer what I thought I was, or maybe I never was what I thought I was."

1 John 2, beginning in verse 18, says, "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." One of the phrases I like to use is a faith that fickle before the finish was false from the first. Do I need to say that slower? A faith that fickle before the finish was false from the first.

Now I love using this illustration because Jesus used it with Nicodemus, you must be born again. A second birth. The Apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5, we have become a new creation. And I think we all understand for those of us who have either been children of somebody else, parents or somebody else, grandparents or somebody else, that in the physical growth process we have good days and bad days, do we not? In the spiritual growth process, we have good days and we have bad days. What I don't want any of us to get trapped into is actually a theological treatise that was formed about 150 years ago called perfectionism. Perfectionism can be taught one of two ways. One of the ways that perfectionism is taught is that when you get saved, you become perfect so no matter what you do, it is holy. Wow, that's a dangerous doctrine. On the other side of that equation, it says that I'm in the process of and will attain perfectionism at some point in my life. I have yet to meet anybody who has met that goal in their life, you know?

So at some level if we're going to use a continuum here, there is a level of lukewarmness, so to speak. The question was I claim to follow Jesus, I say I believe in him, if I then find myself in a lukewarm position, does that mean I'm no longer a follower of Jesus? What did he tell the church at Laodicea? Repent. Turn from. Go the opposite direction. That's why 1 John 1:9 says if we have sinned, we confess our sin, he is faithful and he is just to forgive us of our sin.

Now one of the best analogies that I've heard and you can use your last name, I can use my last name or anybody's last name. Have you ever had one of these conversations with somebody in your family where it goes a little something like this? What's your last name? They say it. Act like it. In other words, you're not representing us the way that we should be represented. You're not acting the way that we expect people in our family to act. The same thing can be said for our relationship with Jesus. What is your last name? Christian. Then act like it. Obey, serve, etc.

Have I helped at all? I know it wasn't your question. He's like, "It wasn't mine. I didn't do anything."

[unintelligible]

Ah, I love that. Yes. Salvation is an event, sanctification is a process.

[unintelligible]

Salvation is an event. It is a one-time. I'll tell you a phrase that is not in the Bible that we use all the time that I cannot stand. The phrase is "I became a Christian." No, you didn't, because when you use the term "I became," it basically communicates a process or over period of time. No, the Bible says you were saved, you were born again, you were reconciled, you were redeemed, you were bought. Those are all events as you mentioned.

Now it's just like Jesus said you must be born again, birth is an event, okay? I had the privilege with all three of my children of being there to cut the umbilical cord. I mean, that was a momentary... you are now born. You are no longer tethered to, it is done. The rest of life is a process. I had the opportunity today to share with a young man and his dad talking about the opportunity to be baptized and we were talking about the salvation event in his life and I was asking him, "When did this happen? When did it take place?" And we had the privilege as adults of sharing with this young man about when it happened in our lives as well. Nobody communicated, "Well, in the spring of this year over about 90 days." No, each and every one of us said it was at this place, at this time I called on Jesus and he saved me. It was an event.

Now by the way, let me go ahead and caution some of you because I've heard people say, "Well, if you can't name the date and the time and the exact second that you called out to Jesus, you must not be saved." No, you may just be old. Think about that for just a moment, alright? So don't get legalistic. Don't get legalistic because I've heard some people say, "Well, if you don't remember exactly the exact date and the exact time, you must not be." Well, do you know what? Here's the deal, it's just the blind guy in John 9, "I used to be blind but now I see. I used to be lost and I think it was this date but now I'm found." It was still an event in one's life and last time I checked, I don't see anywhere in scripture regarding judgment and such where a calendar and a clock must be presented. In fact, it is what is one's relationship with Jesus. But absolutely, salvation is an event, sanctification is a process.

Now let me make this clear too before we go on. I think sometimes we accidentally, that's probably a bad term but we accidentally teach and preach salvation by faith, sanctification by works. It's not I do more to get more holy, it's I'm growing in my faith and becoming more like Jesus that makes me sanctified. It's not sanctification by doing more, it's sanctification by growing. How does a human being grow? It's real simple: they eat and they sleep. Isn't that the basics of it? Well, what do we do? We eat and we chew on the word of God and it grows us up spiritually. And so just like a tree that bears fruit, pretty biblical analogy there, you know, you never see a tree out in your backyard going, "Bear fruit." What happens? It is a natural process of rain, sun and the food of the ground naturally grows that tree into what it is, and you and I have all had this experience where we go to somewhere that we haven't been to in a while and all of a sudden, "Wow, that tree's gotten huge." The same thing can be said for our spiritual lives over a period of time of naturally growing. That's the process of sanctification. It's not by works we're sanctified, it is by growing in him, but it is a process of growth.

Anybody else on this one? Hopefully I haven't confused us too much tonight. I feel like I haven't and if I have, I apologize. Nobody? We're good?

Alright, on to the next one. It says what is the best way to respond to someone that says they don't believe the Bible because it was written by man?

It's real simple, then don't believe the newspaper because it was written by man too. Do you see the double standard? So many times we want to use a standard for scripture that is different than or above that which we would accept basically a question, a response about any literature piece. This is a providential, I promise you these are complete random questions that come to this database. You can talk to Todd M. and he'll prove it. He's got the algorithm. I have no idea. But I'm not kidding, I had a conversation this morning with somebody on this very issue and they sent me an article that was written. This article took place in Newsweek Magazine where an individual was claiming that the means by which the Bible was put together, the way in which it was compiled throughout history and time is evidential or proof that it's just a bunch of man-made documents and there's no way there could be any divine inspiration at all. Allow me to use a very simple response to that. The Bible was composed over 1,500 years, on three different continents, in three different languages, by over 40 people, and it all communicates the same message. Now I dare challenge any of us to get 40 people and play the telephone game. Y'all know what the telephone game is? Where the first person tells the second person a story and you go all the way around the circle and by the time it gets back to you, does it sound anything like the original story? Never.

So oftentimes people say, "Well, it was written by man." Well, the scripture testifies, 2 Timothy 3:16, it says all scripture was inspired or breathed by God, and from Moses in the first five books of the Bible to John on the island of Patmos, you see a consistent record of God speaking into the lives of these individuals and telling them to communicate the message to humanity as a whole. There are what we call apparent contradictions in the Bible. Did you notice I said "apparent"? Because what happens is we see one story here, we see another story here and we say, "Aha, the Bible's got an error." For example, I mentioned Bartimaeus earlier. Bartimaeus is mentioned in Mark 10 as a man who is healed of his blindness as Jesus is on the road to Jerusalem. In the gospel of Matthew, same story, same healing, two men. So people say, "Aha, Bartimaeus over here, two men over here. Must be a contradiction." Here's the problem: it did not say Bartimaeus and only Bartimaeus and Matthew never gave a name. So doesn't it make reasonable sense that Bartimaeus was one of the two guys in the gospel of Matthew.

Now the number 1 thing, he says what do you say to somebody who claims the Bible is man-made, full of errors, etc.? Here is the best response you can give. Are you ready? It's real simple. Anybody can do this. You don't have to have any formal education. When someone says, "Ah, it's just man-made. There's a bunch of errors." Say, "Show me one. Show me one." You know, it's amazing how people look at me when I ask them that. They're like, "Ah, really?" I say, "Okay, where is one?" And then my next question is, "So have you read the Bible? How can you claim that something has a problem that you've never bothered reading? So one of the things, we call these investigative Bible

studies, that if someone wants to claim that the Bible is erroneous or that no way it could be compiled the way the Bible claims it was compiled, at least you could do us a favor of reading what you claim is wrong and pointing out what you think is wrong.

Now I want you to know that I'm not just the president of the company, I'm a client as well, for those of you that remember that commercial. When there are certain individuals who frequent our houses on some of the days of the week wanting to propagate their religious material, some of them are on bicycles, some of them are in cars, whatnot, I am always eager to take their literature. I want to receive their literature. I want to read their literature and then I want to make a second appointment and ask them why does this say this because it doesn't make any sense. Doesn't it just make sense that if I'm questioning theirs and I'm willing to ask them, that if someone is questioning us, shouldn't they be willing to read what we're giving them?

So the easy answer is or easy question, "Have you read it and where are the problems?" So what do you say to somebody who says, "Ah, the Bible is just written by man"? First response, "So is the newspaper." Second response, "Have you read it?" Third response, "Where are the problems?" Always put the burden upon those who are skeptical. I have learned throughout the years if someone is willing to actually read the Bible, they will discover that what they thought about the Bible was not exactly what is true about the Bible.

Now some of you may have heard this story and I want to share it with you because it's one of my favorites. When I was a freshman in college, many of you know I went to Baylor University which at the time, and it may still be, the largest traditionally Baptist college in all of the world. One of the things that we had to do as a student, we didn't have any choice, you had to take New Testament and you had to take Old Testament, alright? You didn't have to believe it but you had to pass it if you wanted to graduate, okay?

There was a young man that lived across the hall from me. He was originally from El Paso. His name was Ryan and Ryan knocks on my door about week, I think it was week four, maybe week five of the fall semester. He knocks on my door and he says, "Jeff, can I ask you a favor?" I said, "What is it?" And he said, "You got a Bible I can borrow?" Now it did strike me odd that somebody, I mean, the way I grew up everybody had a Bible somewhere. This young man didn't have a Bible. I said, "Well, yeah, why?" And he goes, "Well, I'm in Old Testament and I have to read Genesis through Judges by Monday." Yeah, I did the same thing, I went, "Boy, you gonna have a long weekend." I said, "Okay. You don't have a Bible?" He said, "No." I said, "Have you ever read the Bible?" "No." I said, "What do you think's in the Bible?" He said, "I don't have a clue." I got a copy of the Bible and I said, "Have fun, my friend."

Sunday night. Knock on the door. Ryan comes back and gives me my Bible back. I said, "Don't you need it for the next part of the test?" He goes, "Oh yeah, I'll keep that. Thank you." And I said, "Well, what did you think?" He said, "Man, it's the best weekend I've had in a long time." I said, "What do you mean?" He goes, "Man, this book is awesome.

You've got brothers killing brothers, people sleeping with people they shouldn't have been sleeping with, people sleeping with everybody. They're killing people. This is better than tv." Throughout the course, he read all throughout the Old Testament. Guess what he had to do in the spring? Read the New Testament. The semester or two after we graduated, he fell in love with a young lady and she led him to Jesus four years later. He had already read, he had already compiled and he was ready to receive. Oftentimes when people are critical, they've never read, they've never compiled, and most of what they think that is erroneous about the Bible is things they've heard about the Bible and not that which they've actually read from the Bible.

So any questions on that one? Thoughts? Concerns? Issues? What abouts? Y'all got all that? Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Oh, boy, this ought to be fun.

[unintelligible]

We don't know. The question is how many wise men were there? We don't know. Now there's two answers to this question, there is the Bible answer is they brought three gifts and that's why we traditionally say three, the gender-based answer is none because ladies say there are no men that are wise. Thank you, ladies. So just remember we're about to get to Revelation 8, you know what happens there, right? Revelation 8, the seventh seal is opened, it says there was silence in heaven for 30 minutes, proof there are no women in heaven. Oh, I can go all night long if y'all want to. Ladies, so you don't get upset with me. Psalm 116:11, memorize it. "All men are liars."

Okay, Revelation 6. Boy, that flew over well. But to the question about the wise men, the Bible does say they were men from the east. It does say they were magi or "wise men." They did bear three gifts but to his question or statement, it does not say that there were only three of them. By the way, and I know the spirit of that statement and question. There are a lot of times people say, "Well, that's a contradiction of the Bible, that y'all believe there's three wise men. The Bible doesn't say there's three wise men so the Bible must be wrong." No, the Bible's not wrong, you're wrong because you thought that it said something that it did not say.

Alright, Revelation 6 beginning in verse 12. This is the sixth seal. Now if you were not with us last time, we got halfway through this and we ran out of time. One of the most famous parts in the book of Revelation because this is when the sun is going to go dark, the moon is going to go red, and all types of cosmic activity is taking place. I want to reread these verses and then get into something what I find fascinating tonight. Verse 12, it says,

12 And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the

moon became as blood; 13 And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. 14 And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. 15 And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; 16 And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: 17 For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

Now allow me a little bit of liberty just to kind of recap what we talked about last week just in case you weren't here with us. In this famous sixth seal, we know that there are seven seals. There are seven trumpet judgments. There are seven what we call vial or bowl judgments. And one of the issues of debate or, for lack of better terms, discussion is are these seven judgments of God that are repeated three times in the story as far as giving us more information or are they successive, meaning that the seventh seal opens up the trumpets, and the trumpets open up the vials. And one of the ways that I adhere to the belief that they are successive and not just a repetition is that because when you get to the sixth seal, you have an earthquake that takes place and that earthquake takes place, there's different places in the book of Revelation where there are earthquakes and I specifically put on your outline there are five different earthquakes and the one that is in the sixth vial is very different than the one that is at the sixth seal, and then there's one in the seventh seal, and then in all types of places.

So what we see here with the sixth seal being opened is an earthquake does take place. We see the sun go dark. We see the moon go red. And the reason this is one of the most famous passages is because it describes a prophecy in the book of Joel that was referenced in the famous Pentecost sermon that Peter preached in Acts 2, and this leads us tonight to a very good discussion regarding the chronology of eschatology, the time frame of end time events because as we're about to read in Acts 2, Peter makes a statement when quoting Joel that this is now, alright? And so that has led some to believe that the book of Revelation and its contents actually took place in the first century and it's not prophetic or futuristic but is actually past and reflective.

So for the simplicity tonight and for the sake of time, I've actually written out or typed out for you the content of these passages, and so back in Joel 2:28-31 it says,

28 And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: 29 And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. 30 And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. 31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come.

Do you see the parallel to the sixth seal here in Revelation 6?

Acts 2, this is Pentecost. Per the discussion earlier, Jesus has lived, Jesus has died, Jesus has been buried, he's risen from the dead. He has taught the disciples for some 40 days, then he ascends up on high. They wait in the Upper Room for seven days. The Holy Spirit descends and this sermon is preached.

16 But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; 17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: 18 And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: 19 And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: 20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come:

Now you will notice in those two passages that I have taken the liberty to underline two specific phrases, alright? In the book of Joel it says "before the great and terrible day of the Lord come." So what we're reading in Joel and what we've read in Revelation 6 will occur before Jesus comes back, physically when he returns to earth, what we know as the battle of Armageddon, the establishment of his kingdom, okay? So these things, the sun and the moon, will occur before that event. Obviously, Revelation 6 qualifies. No problem. We got this, alright?

Now look in Acts 2 at the very end, "before the great and notable day of the Lord come." But look at the very beginning, "in these last days." Thankfully the Lord gives us at the Pentecost sermon, he gives us a chronology here. He shares with us that the context of Joel 2 which Peter says is now, in these last days. That being said, I want you to look at Hebrews 1:1-2 which, again, I put on your sheet just for the ease tonight.

1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, 2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

Now here is what I want to convey this evening. Whether it is in Joel 2, Acts 2, or Hebrews 1, I think that we can agree that that term "the last days" is from the ascension of Jesus until the return of Jesus. Those are the last days. I think oftentimes we say, "Well, the last days are those days immediately before Jesus comes back." Look at what I underlined, "before the great and terrible day of the Lord." The term "these last days" was mentioned in the book of Hebrews describing since Jesus ascended. "These last days" also will take place all the way up – listen – until the last day which is the day of the Lord. And I think the confusion comes in particularly in Acts 2, is when we take the phrase "last days" and say, "Aha, that must mean those last seven years. That means that

Peter was saying the end is here, Jesus is coming back. It's going to be just a couple of months, maybe a couple of years and it's over." The book of Hebrews said, "Hey, the last days have been since Jesus." Guess what? You and I are living in the last days and we've been living in the last days for 2,000 years. We are in the last days but – listen – it is not the last day because according to what I know, and that is the great and terrible day of the Lord.

Now what I think this will do or at least I hope it will do, is help us to clear up some confusion in regards to these statements because when it says that the sun went dark and the moon went red, and Peter makes this statement in Acts 2 referring back to Joel, there are many who take this passage and go, "Aha, that all took place way back then. Why are we worried about tomorrow? Why are we looking forward? This is all an account of the past." Well, not so fast because we've got to get our biblical chronology.

That being said, the order that I put on your outline. The last days begin. This is where it's going to get fun, alright, and I've put these in italics in the passages that I've alluded to. That's why I wanted to write them out for you tonight so you could see them all before you. The last days begin, Spirit poured out on all flesh. Alright, go back to Joel 2, the very first line, "And it shall come to pass afterwards I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." What does the word "all" mean? All, thank you very much. Acts 2, "But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel and it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." So everybody got saved in Acts 2? No, but there is coming a day. As we read through the book of Revelation, as the Lord is pouring out not just his wrath but as we're going to see in chapter 7, it's going to be a very special chapter in a minute as we kind of take a step back and look at the salvific plan of the Lord through this great time that Jesus called the great tribulation, it says on all flesh his Spirit was poured out. Last time I checked, in Acts 2 the Spirit wasn't poured out on everybody but it was poured out on those 3,000 that were saved that day.

So when Peter is alluding back to Joel that this is happening, this has begun, he wasn't saying right now in this 24 hour period it has started. What he was saying is these last days that will include all of this have now officially begun. That is why he says in Acts 2, "that which was spoken by the prophet Joel and it shall come to pass in the last days." Peter wasn't saying it's all fulfilled right here at Pentecost, he was saying it has begun. You and I today have the privilege of looking back on 2,000 years of history and that which has been described has not yet occurred. The sun hasn't gone dark and the moon hasn't gone red and, by the way, it's not talking about an eclipse and it's not talking about a blood moon and all those other books that have been written. One of the things we need to understand about prophetic scriptures is it will happen just the way God said it would, alright? Jesus was not born in the suburbs of Bethlehem, right? He was born, where? Bethlehem. He said he'd be born in Bethlehem, correct? Jesus came out of Egypt not out of somewhere in Africa. The Bible is very specific. When it says – listen – when it says that the sun goes dark and the moon goes red, I don't think it's talking about 20 minutes on a given afternoon. It is dark and it is red.

So the order. Last days begin. Spirit poured out on all flesh. Dreams and visions. Cosmic signs. The day of the Lord is initiated. Now here is, to antiquate myself, here is the \$64,000 question or due to inflation, here's the \$250,000 question, okay? Where are we in that chronology? If I were to have to write my name down in concrete and tell you my response, I would say we're somewhere between the last days beginning and Spirit poured out on all flesh. And it's going to happen but it hasn't occurred as of yet. So what we see in the sixth seal has not technically prophetically occurred.

Why is this important? Because just the other day, I was reading an article on the internet, that was my first mistake, and someone was declaring that an event that had occurred in recent days was the sixth seal. The problem is according to the passage in Joel and in Acts, before the sixth seal takes place, the Spirit has to be poured out on all flesh first. Notice how the chronology is given both in Joel and in Acts 2. By the way, the article about the sixth seal, when I looked at the bottom it was copy-written 2004. I think it's been a little longer than seven years since that article was written.

Alright, now the interesting thing, the stars. We've got two choices here. This is either physical or it is spiritual. It says that when the sixth seal is opened, it says one of the things that happens, it says that the stars fall, that they come out like fig tree that shakes its fruit. Two options. Either A, what we know as physical stars that are who knows how far away from us actually fall out of the sky, there is an absence of their light, many have claimed maybe even what would appear like a giant meteor shower or such. Or, here's where it gets interesting, is this the time that Revelation 12 occurs?

Go over to Revelation 12 for just a moment. Now Revelation 12 is a parenthetical chapter. I know I use that word all the time. Parenthetical simply means this: out of the chronology. As soon as we get done tonight, next week we're going to roll into chapter 7. Chapter 7 is going to be our first parenthetical chapter of Revelation. It does not take place in the chronology of Revelation. We're about to close up the sixth seal, chapter 8, verse 1, is the opening of the seventh seal. Chapter 7 is parenthetical. Chapter 10 is parenthetical. And chapter 12 is parenthetical.

In chapter 12, we have this history of spiritual warfare. We have the birth of the Messiah, the warfare of the enemy against the Messiah, all types of things. But in chapter 12 of the book of Revelation, verse 7,

7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, 8 And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. 9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out [where?] into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

Now I don't want to take this rabbit trail too far but in the book of Job it mentions that Satan himself has an audience with the Lord in the heavenlies. It says he goes, he present himself, he dialogs about the person of Job, and the Lord says, "Where have you been?"

He says, "Oh, I've been going to and fro in all of the earth." When you get to Revelation 12, it says there is a day coming, or as John Milton believed, a day that has occurred that Satan has been removed from access to the heavenlies and has been or has descended permanently to the earth. John Milton, the great English author, in his book "Paradise Lost" believe that Revelation 12 was a description of the fall of Satan, that he fell at that moment, no longer had access and this is an event of the past. I claim the position that this is an event of the future because immediately before this passage, it is the description of the birth of Jesus and Satan's hatred for him, and after this passage is a description of the people of God running from the antichrist in the end times. So to me it just makes perfect chronological sense that this event came after the birth of Jesus and before the return of Jesus.

So that being said, go back to Revelation 6. It says, "And I saw the stars shaken as the fig leaves." Alright, that's what it says there when the sixth seal occurs, correct? Alright, now go a few pages back to the left to chapter 1. Now I know what some of you are thinking, "It's been a long time since we've been in chapter 1." It's been about a year. But in Revelation 1, I want you to notice the description of Jesus. Verse 16,

16 And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

So in Jesus' right hand are seven stars, correct? Go down to verse 20.

20 The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches:

Now is it just me or is it strange that people who live in Los Angeles are called stars? Y'all ever thought of that? It is strange, isn't it? Los Angeles means "the angels," and the people who are well-known there are called "stars." In Revelation, by the way, that is proof all the devil can do is steal from God. That's all he can do. In this passage, Jesus holds seven stars. In verse 20, they are called the angels of the seven churches.

Why am I putting all those scriptures together? Back in chapter 6, it says that the stars fall from heaven. It could be a physical phenomena, it could be what we know as the literal stars, those bodies, those matters of mass descending, or is it possible that when the sixth seal is opened, it's telling us at that point that's when that battle is fought, that is when Michael the archangel wages war with the devil and all of those entities, all those angelic beings who rebelled with him time before, at this point they are now descended.

Remember where it said they went? Into the earth. Here's where it gets intriguing. When we pick up the seven trumpets, forgive me for saying it this way but it's the best way I can say it, all hell is about to break loose. It's about to get really bad which would make perfect sense if all of a sudden all of the rebellious angelic beings, all of a sudden all the demons, all of a sudden it's Satan himself. Now where is he commissioned to? He is now

commissioned into the earth. So when it says that the stars were shaken, we've got two options. I just find it interesting how the term "stars" is used all throughout the book of Revelation, and what we see happen after the sixth seal, particularly with the activity of Satan himself. It's about to get incredibly vile and violent with the seven trumpet judgments.

And last but not least and we sing this when in the great old hymn, "How Great Thou Art," when the heavens will be rolled back as a scroll, we talk about the Second Coming of Jesus, in this passage in Revelation 6 it says, "And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come." But before that in verse 14, "the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together." In this passage of scripture, it's intriguing to me for multiple reasons. Number 1 is this. The Bible describes three heavens. Now by the way, I didn't just go Mormon on you, okay? That faith, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, they promote that there are three levels of heaven, those that barely get in, those that did a little better, and those that were superstars, okay? The Bible speaks that there is only one throne room around the throne of Jesus but it does describe three heavens, the heavens of what we know as the birds fly in, the heavens in which the stars and the planets are in, and the heavens of which the throne room of God is in. That's why the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 12 says, "I was caught up to the third heaven." In this passage, verse 14, "And the heaven departed as a scroll." The question is which one of those three? It can't be the throne room of God because by the time you get to chapter 19, the throne is seated there. So either A, what we know as the cosmic universe, or B, what we know as our immediate atmosphere of some type. I don't know which one it is but it's not good, is it? It says the heavens are departed as a scroll, and notice what happens here, it says, "said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne." Phew, the picture you get, it's almost as if when this occurs, that humanity can finally see what they've always been trying to get a glimpse of and it's right before them. And what did they say, they say, "from the wrath of the Lamb, the great day has come."

Here's what I find in conclusion interesting. Is there any evidence here in the sixth seal or later in the book of Revelation that these individuals who are hiding from the Lord ever repented of their sins? In the presence of the Lord, they see the heavens rolled back, the stars, whatever they may be, the sun has gone dark, the moon has gone red, and what do they do? Do you know what they do? The same thing we've always done. Let me take you back to the garden of Eden and we'll close. Adam and Eve eat of the forbidden fruit. What's the first thing they did? They hid. They hid from the presence of the Lord. The only way that we can be made right with the Lord, the only way that we can be in a right relationship is not to hide from him but – listen – to come clean before him, admit we've messed up, admit we've sinned, and ask for his forgiveness on our life.

Incredible passage. Next week when we come back, chapter 7. We're going to talk about the nations and the 12 tribes and those who believe on Jesus. Let me pray us out of here and then y'all go get your kids.

Lord, tonight as we close, Lord, thank you that we have been demonstrated from your word that you are all-powerful, that you are sovereign, that you have all authority, and we are humbled tonight that in all of your power, you would reach down out of your grace and mercy and you'd be willing to forgive us and save us. Lord, I pray as we walk out of here, we wouldn't just talk about it, we wouldn't just believe it, help us to live it. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Go pick up your kids. We don't want them left here.