

Ask Jeff 10.4.17

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Preached On: Wednesday, October 4, 2017

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I do want to welcome you to Wednesday nights here at First Baptist. If this is your first time with us, allow me to kind of share kind of how Wednesday nights work here. Our Bible study is divided into two sections. There is a Q&A session which means that you have the opportunity either anonymously or by way of raising your hand to ask any question you want about any subject you want that is biblically related to Christianity and/or anything else that is involved in our culture, and the second part of our Wednesday night study involves us walking through currently what we know as the book of Revelation. We try to give equal time to those and oftentimes we start with the Q&A, sometimes we start with the Bible study. Tonight, I wanted to do what I would call it in reverse. I want to start with the Bible study tonight and the reason is this, I believe the section of Revelation 6 that we're going to read is not only interesting and intriguing but I think it may cause us to have some questions that we may want to spend some time on, and I don't want to end on it so that there's people wanting things answered and we've run out of time and have got to go and pick up our kids.

So tonight, we turn to Revelation 6. We find ourselves, if you're new to our study, in the midst of a time period that Jesus referred to in Matthew 24 as the great tribulation. Beginning in chapter 6, verse 1, through chapter 19, verse 10, we have this time period that the book of Daniel speaks of being seven years in length, a time period where the wrath of God is being poured out on the earth on the rebellion that humanity has instituted within their heart and also lived out in their lives. As we open chapter 6, there is a book that was described in chapter 5 that is sealed with seven seals. It is the lion that as if is slain, the tribe of Judah, Jesus himself who opens up this famous book. The first four seals that we've addressed are the famous four horses of the apocalypse. We've discussed those and when we come to the fifth seal, when we come to verse 9, there is a, not really a break in the action, so to speak, but the fifth seal being opened gives us some interesting commentary on what's happening to those who are being affected in the world environment, in the world scenario.

So beginning in verse 9, it says,

9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: 10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that

dwell on the earth? 11 And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

Now that last sentence I find probably the most intriguing of this passage but I want to walk through this fifth seal because we see those who are of faith. You see, most of the passages regarding the great tribulation, most of Revelation 6 through 19 is dealing with the rebels, the rebellious, those who are shaking their fist at God and the wrath of God that is being poured out. However, there are these little sections throughout this bigger section where we get into the lives of the believers, those that are staying true to their faith and how are they affected by the world around them, and in the fifth seal it talks about these martyrs, it talks about these that lost their lives for their faith and they're under the altar and they're crying out, "O God, when will you avenge our blood?"

Now one of the things I want to do tonight is just kind of walk through this and deal with their martyrdom, not only those who were martyred but the means of which they're martyred and the place of their martyrdom. Let's begin with those that were martyred. They have a certain what I want to call structure. Now notice what it says here in the fifth seal, that their souls were under the altar. Now we know where their bodies were, right? Their bodies were in the ground. They were dead. They had been killed for their faith and yet we're going to see in a moment, their souls are active, they're speaking, they're talking.

1 Thessalonians 5:23 says that, "I pray your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." You remember back in Genesis 1:26, God said to man, he said, "Let us make man in our own image and after our own likeness." You look at the image of God and tonight is not the night to discuss the entire concept of Trinitarian doctrine but I believe we see God as Father, as Son, as Holy Spirit, yet Deuteronomy 6:4 says, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one God." So why is it surprising to us that a one single God who manifested in three personas would not create us in his image as one person with three sections, so to speak?

Now I know it's not a perfect illustration there but the Bible speaks that we have a spirit, we have a soul, and we have a body. In Genesis 2, kind of a little more color commentary, the Lord comes to the dirt of the ground and, by the way, the first man's name was Adam. Adam just simply means red dirt. That's what it means. I believe that Adam was actually formed here in Alabama. I had no idea that so much red clay existed in all of the world until I moved here, and having three boys in my house, it's just lovely. Please note sarcasm. Yes, but that being said, it says that he took the dirt of the ground and he formed and he fashioned him, right? Then it says he breathed into him. So you have a physical structure, you have the Spirit of God, and remember what Genesis 2:7, he became a living soul, alright? So what's important for this study is when we deal with these martyrs that are under the altar, I want to be very clear, it says that the souls of them are under the altar. We know where their bodies are, their bodies are dead, alright? So one of the things we're going to discuss toward the end is there isn't a concept biblically

known as soul sleep, this idea that when we die we just kind of hang out in the ground until the Lord returns for us. These individuals had been killed for their faith and they're actually crying out to the Lord saying, "When are you going to avenge our faith?"

Now as far as their substance, interesting that when you begin to look at those who have walked through the door of death, there's very few passages in scripture that give us insight to those who have experienced the afterlife. This is one of the key passages to discuss that. The other one is found in Luke 16:19-31. This is the passage where Jesus tells the story of a certain rich man and Lazarus. Now by the way, Jesus told, in my opinion, Jesus told 32 parables. Some people would disagree with me and say he told 33 parables. They classify the rich man and Lazarus as the 33rd parable. Now if that is the case, then it's the only parable in scripture where characters talk to each other within the parable, it's the only character of which other biblical characters who are since deceased talk to characters in the parable, and it would be the only parable which somebody has given their proper name within the parable. But the reason, the reason that some people believe it is a parable is because it begins by, "A certain rich man." And I want you to know, I just heard, I heard in a message this week, by the way, I know I preach a lot of sermons, I listen to a lot more than I preach. I heard someone give this theological nugget this week I'd never thought of it, never even considered it but it makes perfect sense. He was preaching on this subject and he said, "Why did Jesus not call this rich man by name?" He said it's because of Matthew 7. What do you mean, Matthew 7? Remember the story where Jesus said broad is the road to destruction and narrow is the way to righteousness? Remember what Jesus said when the door was shut and many said, "But we did wonderful works in your name, we did this in your name," what did Jesus say? "I never knew you." And I was listening to this message and this guy said that's why Jesus said a certain rich man because he didn't have a relationship with him. He called out Lazarus because he did. Now let's all pause for a moment and let that sink in for a minute. That's good, isn't it? I wish I could take credit for it but it was somebody else.

Alright, moving on. What's important about the story for tonight's study? When we see what is happening in that story of the certain rich man, we see that he is able to taste, he's able to talk, he's able to feel, he's able to hear, and in fact, Abraham says that Lazarus is out running around having a good time. In other words, what we see post our last breath, that the soul, and this is what I want to communicate tonight, you don't have a body that is infused with a soul, you have a soul that is covered by a body. Who you are is your soul, your body just shows us that outward representation and here in this passage in Revelation 6, notice what these souls under the altar are doing. They're talking and they're able to wear a robe which means there must be some type of substance to our soul.

Now I'm not about to go into figuring out what that looks like, could be or not be, but I think biblically speaking when we do enter what we know as the afterlife, when as believers in Jesus Christ we're in the throne room and these guys are here under the altar, they're communicating, they're hearing, they're talking and they're wearing robes. And so I just want to begin tonight by saying I don't think that we're soul-filled bodies, I think we're body-covered souls.

That being said, moving on to their martyrdom. This is kind of the key part of the passage here. Why were they martyred? We could get into the whole aspect, well, maybe these were the ones that did not take the mark of the beast. We can infer to that and probably be very accurate, but more importantly it says because of the word of God and their testimony. Now when you go over to chapter 12, chapter 12 is one of the parenthetical chapters of the book of Revelation, meaning you're kind of stepping out of the chronology of the, you know, of the seven seals and all the trumpet judgments, and there it talks about spiritual warfare from almost a supernatural cosmic level, and it says there in chapter 12 that those who lost their life for their faith did so for the word of God and the spirit of their testimony. So you see a consistency here not only in chapter 6 but in chapter 12 of those who give their life for their faith.

The "how" part is what I find intriguing, alright? This is where I want to kind of spend a little time here because at the end of this passage it says, "as they were killed," or as they lost their life, killed as they were. Go over to Revelation 21 and chapter 20, I want you to see this with your own eyes or hear with your own ears that we find in the book of Revelation, particularly during what we know as the great tribulation, a unique description of how people of faith lose their lives.

Revelation 21:11. Wrong verse, I apologize. That's not the one I wanted. But chapter 20, verse 4 is. It says in chapter 20, verse 4, it says,

4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them [listen to this] that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

Now let's take that passage back into chapter 6 where you have these individuals who have lost their life. We are not told specifically in chapter 6 that they did not receive the mark of the beast but I think we can go back to chapter 20, verse 4 and get the idea that they did not receive the mark of the beast. But what's important to our study tonight is not just what they were doing but how they lost their lives because in chapter 6, verse 11, it says "that they should be killed as they were." Do you find it intriguing or is it just me, that we're in the 21st century today, supposedly we're the most advanced that humanity has ever been, and on a regular basis there is video put on the news of people having their head removed by other people? Folks, we're getting closer and closer. We're actually going back. People would say historically we're going back to the Dark Ages, so to speak. I would argue we've never evolved to begin with. We are the same sinful depraved people that we've always been.

Now if you go to Revelation 11, we have the famous two witnesses. Now these are the two men and we'll talk about who their identity is later, but these individuals come and for 3 ½ years they speak the truth. They speak in the face of the beast and, in fact, it says that when those who come to oppose them do so, they breathe fire out of their mouths. So

nobody can kill them, but there is a time after 3 ½ years where they are allowed to have their life taken. Now beginning in verse 7, it says,

7 And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast [that's the Antichrist] that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. 8 And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. 9 And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves. 10 And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another [it kind of sounds like Christmas, doesn't it?]; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth. 11 And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them. 12 And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.

Now what you see here in Revelation 11 are two men that the Antichrist and all of his minions despise with an ultimate, they just cannot stand them. When they finally are killed, they celebrate, they send gifts to each other. This is, I can only imagine with technology today, this would be a worldwide televised event. This is a celebration of the Antichrist as he celebrates these two men being dead.

Now it says their dead bodies lay in the street for 3 ½ days. If the martyrs in chapter 6 lost their lives by having their heads taken off, and in chapter 20 it says those that lost their lives had their heads removed, does it not make perfect sense that they would have experienced the same thing? Their dead bodies lie in the street. The mode, the mechanism because in chapter 6, verse 11, like we just read, they said, "How long?" And he said, "Until your fellow servants and brethren are killed as you were." What we find as the means of instrumenting death at the hands of the Antichrist is a beheading, a removing of the head off of the body. This is the future of those who are faithful. This is the cost of rejecting the means of the Antichrist. These are those that are celebrated as the martyrs.

Now just so you'll have a little background here. In the Old Testament, in the book of Leviticus 1:8 and 15 it speaks about those who had rebelled against the things of God and the Lord made it very clear that their head was to be removed. Beheading is in the Bible as a means of those who have tarnished the land and sinned upon the land. John the Baptist in Mark 6, how did he die? He had his head removed, put on a charger, right? Okay, the first apostle that was martyred was the person of James in Acts 12, take a guess at how he was killed. He had his head removed, correct? And the final apostle martyred, the final apostle martyred, not the final apostle that died, that would have been John whom the Lord gave the book of Revelation, but the Apostle Paul who died in Rome, we do not have scripture to support this but tradition says that his head was removed off of his body.

So at the very first chapter of Leviticus, what we know as beheading is mentioned. John the Baptist is beheaded. The first apostle is martyred by beheading. The last martyred apostle is done by beheading. Do you see a common theme that's happening here? The enemy, listen, the enemy has not invented himself over, he's still using the same tactics, we just fall for it the same time in the same way. So by the way, the Apostle Paul, history, legend has it that the enemies of Christianity so hated the Apostle Paul they took him on such a high building to cut his head off that when it hit the street, it bounced three times. Now did it actually bounce three times? We don't know but the point was they so despised him they wanted to make sure he was at the highest point that they could do so.

Now who are these individuals? Notice in verse 11, they cried out saying, "How long, God, until you avenge our blood?" He said, "Until your fellow servants and until your brethren." Now the reason I want to differentiate between those two terms is because particularly in the book of Revelation, you see a distinguishing between those who are Jewish believers and those who are Gentile believers. When we get to the famous 144,000, they are of the tribes, the 12 tribes yet two verses later in chapter 7 it says, "And I saw those of many nations from every tribe and tongue etc. who believed." And so they're still of the same faith, still of the same Lord, but God is just differentiating that there are those who came from a Jewish background, those who came from a Gentile background.

Why is that important? Because the martyrdom of the saints, the beheading of the saints doesn't just happen to the 144,000 and it doesn't just happen to the Gentiles, it happens to all who call on the name of the Lord. Also in Revelation 7, this famous passage about those who are "saved." It says that they wore white robes. What do we see in chapter 6 in the fifth seal? It says and they wore or had upon them white robes as they were under the altar.

Finally, the place of their martyrdom. Interesting, this passage, it says the altar, they were under the altar. I want to go down two streams here. I'm going to teach this as I believe it's being laid out but then I want to give you an interesting nugget of thought, okay? Back in chapter 8 of Revelation, verse 5, if you'll turn back to chapter 8 or turn forward based on wherever you are. By the way, if you don't know, if you've read through the book of Revelation, it's really not a very long book of the Bible. It's actually very short compared to many other books. But in Revelation 8, verse 5, it says,

5 And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.

Can we all agree that that altar was not in the earth because he cast it into the earth? And so the picture we get in Revelation 8:5 is biblically speaking there is an altar in the heavens, okay? When you enter the throne room of the Lord in what 2 Corinthians 12 calls the third heaven, there is an altar of some type. Here you have an angel with a censer with the prayers of the saints taking those prayers and casting them into the earth.

That being said, turn to Revelation 11. By the way, when we get to Revelation 11, that may take us a while. I'm just going to be honest with you. It's so filled with incredible teaching but here in verse 1 it says,

1 And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. 2 But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months [or 3 1/2 years].

Then it speaks about these famous two witnesses. Revelation 11 talks about that during this tribulational period, that there is in Jerusalem this famous temple which is of such great discussion even today in our context and in our culture. But notice what it says: it has the courts just like the Old Testament temple, it even has the altar like the Old Testament temple, and if you will go back and you will read through the book of Leviticus where it talks about how they built all these buildings and all these structures, and you go to the book of Hebrews where it gives you this vision of heaven, one of the things that you see in scripture, and I think this is an important theological truth, is what the Lord has us do on earth is to simply represent or give us a picture of what is in heaven. Think about the Lord's prayer for just a moment. "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." In other words, that very famous prayer is saying, "Hey, God, help us be here what we know is there."

So when you see the construction of the temple, when you see the construction of the garments even of the priests, what you see on earth is a representation of what is in the heavens. Now that being said, back to Revelation 6. It says, "I saw the souls of them that were under the altar." I believe that those souls are in the presence of the Lord. We'll talk about that in just a moment. But the thing that I find interesting is in 2 Thessalonians 2. 2 Thessalonians 2 is primarily a chapter about the soon one-day coming Antichrist, and it says there particularly in verses 3 through 8, that he walks into the place of or the temple of God and he declares that he is God. According to Matthew 24:15, this is the famous abomination of desolation.

So let me kind of lay this out for you. At some point during this horrible great tribulation, most people believe pretty much in the middle of it, this Antichrist figure, this rider on the white horse of chapter 6, verses 1 and 2, who makes it appear that he's the answer to all the world's problems but we end up finding out much the opposite, he is going to walk into the temple of God, he is going to declare that he is God. It's at that point Jesus says in Matthew 24, "Run for the hills."

Why is that important for this study? They're under the altar in heaven, okay? They're crying out to God, "How much longer until you avenge our blood?" Is it possible that particularly the two witnesses and the others, that they were killed for their faith, they he takes them into and slays them under the altar in this building in Jerusalem? What was

the purpose of the altar? For the shedding of blood. And here is a man claiming to be God, we know he is a false representation thereof, doesn't it make sense that to prove his point it is possible that he might kill those and he might martyr those in that place as a false representation and sacrifice? Now I'm not saying that's the way it's going to look one day, I just think it's interesting all these pictures in scripture that you have the things on earth designed to imitate what is in heaven. Here you have a picture of these souls under the altar in heaven, wouldn't it be interesting if that's because that's where they were actually killed and martyred on the earth? The key thing is we know how they're martyred, we don't know exactly where they are martyred but we do know why.

Last but not least, what I call the location of the martyrs. 2 Corinthians 5:8. I don't care if you're today or if you're in the great tribulation, it says to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. These individuals whenever they lost their life for their faith, I think there is great and ample biblical evidence that they find themselves in the presence of the Lord and what we see when this fifth seal is being opened up is not just a picture of things on the earth but we see a picture of the things that are happening in the heavens. Not only that but it says in chapter 6, verse 11, that they enter into a rest. When you go back and read Hebrews 3 and 4, 12 different times it says "enter into my rest, enter into my rest, enter into my rest." Well, where is his rest? Where he is. So I think we've got evidence that these individuals who were martyred and killed and most likely beheaded for their faith, that they find themselves in the throne room of the Lord under the altar of God, crying out, "How much longer until you avenge our death?"

But last but not least, what does the Lord say? "For a little season." In other words, these individuals who are crying out for the Lord to avenge their blood, the tribulation is still going on. One of the things we've been discussing the last couple of weeks are these famous judgments. You have the seven seals, you have the trumpets, you have the bowls or the vials. There are some that believe it's the same seven judgments just recounted three different times. I'm of the opinion that the judgments are exponential, that we go through the first six seals, the seventh seal opens up the trumpets which eventually opens up the bowls or the vials. Even at that, if we find ourselves in the fifth seal, you are still approaching toward the middle, toward the end of this time period known as the great tribulation, and the reason I address that is because the abomination of desolation involves the beheading of the two witnesses and here you have an account of people who have been beheaded for their faith. Are people going to be beheaded the entire period? Absolutely.

And so that little season, I think what that means is that we find ourselves chronologically more toward the end of the seven years than we find ourselves toward the beginning of the seven years, which leads us to think and/or believe that those first four horsemen may be a very elongated period and the final judgments may be a very rapid period of judgment where it's almost as if something happens and they look up and, wow, something else is happening too. It's almost exponential. It's a pounding upon a pounding upon a pounding of the judgments of God.

So when we come to the sixth seal next week, guess what's going to happen? You're going to have the stars and the moon and all kind of cosmic things that are happening, and so what we see is almost an amplification or a ramping up of the judgment of God upon those who have rebelled against him, but here in the fifth seal there's this little pause. Those who have believed, those that have not received the mark, those who have stayed faithful, that though they lost their physical lives, we see that eternally they are in a place and with a person that cannot be bought and/or matched by anything that is on the earth.

So the famous fifth seal has nothing to do with famine, it has nothing to do with disaster, it has to do with those who have stayed faithful to their faith. All right, that being said, questions, comments, thoughts, remarks as we transition to the Q&A time? Anything about these guys? Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Yes, 1 Corinthians 6:19 makes it very clear that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost, "for you have been bought with a price." I believe that completely, absolutely. In reference to this passage or this study, where are you going with that?

[unintelligible]

Ah, that's a great question. Now the temple of God, now when I speak of the heavenly representation versus the earthly, when you look at the earthly temple as it is built, okay, you've got the basin of water that is in the front where the priests enter in where they wash, well, you've got a crystal sea in heaven. There's not an actual temple temple, the picture is a representation. The Lord had them build a physical building to represent physically walking into a physical building, a picture, a metaphor what it looks like when you walk into the throne room.

[unintelligible]

The man of lawlessness, to your point, sir, the Antichrist, I believe Revelation 11 is teaching there is coming another temple one day. There have been two, they've both been destroyed but chapter 11 of Revelation talks of a temple.

[unintelligible]

Yeah, well, he is going to defile our bodies by cutting our heads off but in Revelation 11 it says an angel comes with a rod and he measures the temple and he measures the courts thereof, and it's this square measurement by this square. And so I do believe, yes, we are the temple.

[unintelligible]

No, sir. The one coming out of heaven which is pictured in the book of Ezekiel and in Revelation 21, that's on the other side of all this horrific stuff that's happening. That brings up a great interesting thought because Ezekiel talks of a temple. Let's talk about temples for just a moment because this is always in the news, so to speak. Temple 1, the first one was built 10th century BC, okay? This was desired by David, fulfilled by Solomon, correct? So we know about that temple, 10th century BC. That was destroyed in roughly 586 BC when Nebuchadnezzar came in, ransacked the place and took it to the ground. They went into exile for the famous 70 years and you have the prophet Ezekiel and all these folks. Then the temple, second temple was rebuilt in the 5th century BC. This was the temple that was standing when Jesus went in on what we know as Palm Sunday, that was the physical structure. It was eradicated in 70 AD. That is when General Titus and what we know as Nero and that time period when they burned Jerusalem to the ground, what we know as the dispersion of the Jewish people where they were scattered for almost 2,000 years until roughly mid-20th century. And so we had building number 1, we have building number 2. I believe based on Revelation 11, there is a building 3 that is coming.

Now building number 3 that is coming, I'm not going to put a date on it, I'm just going to say Revelation 11. Is that okay? Because I don't want to dare to put a date on it because there's a lot... by the way, if you don't know, there are groups and organizations right now who are not only investing their money but actually they are fabricating materials to build such a structure. I mean, there's active groups such as the Temple Institute and others that are very interested in this. One of the questions that people ask me all the time is do I think that this is going to happen before the tribulation begins, while the tribulation? Again, I go back to that famous statement, nothing has to happen before Jesus comes back for us, a lot has to happen before he comes back with us. Some of the things that have to happen before he comes back with us may happen before he comes back for us. So did y'all get that? Okay. Sure, I heard a "sure." Let me repeat myself slowly. You know, I had someone the other day pull me aside and say, "You know, you're the fastest talking Texan I've ever met." Nothing has to happen, this is prophetically speaking, no prophecies have to be fulfilled for Jesus to come back for us to call us home, alright? A lot has to happen prophetically before Jesus comes back with us. That's in Revelation 19. Some of the things that have to happen before he comes back with us may happen before he comes back for us. In other words, they don't have to happen before he comes back for us but they might. So I've had people say, "Well, you believe based on Revelation 11 that there's going to be a temple in Jerusalem, a third one one day?" I do believe that. They say, "Well, is it going to be built during your lifetime?" I don't know. It may happen. Now I'm going to tell you, if you see a construction project in Jerusalem with a temple being built, you'd better be ready to fly, that's all I've got to say, because you realize that... I mean, you talk about getting close, I mean, you are getting there.

Now this third temple is going to be built in Revelation 11. What he's referring to, the temple that comes down out of the sky, so to speak, is in the book of Ezekiel and forgive me if I have it wrong, I believe it's in chapter 40 and 41, do I have that right, sir? Possibly? Feel free to Google it and tell me I was wrong. But in Ezekiel, it speaks of a temple that is of a permanent status and a permanent stature, and there are those that

believe one of two thoughts: that either A, the Lord comes in in chapter 19 and he purifies this structure, or this one again has a destruction as well and a new one is created here that comes down.

So to his point, the "temple that is seen as coming down," is that the Lord coming down and purifying this building, or is it a completely new structure? I hate to say this, I just don't know. But the Bible does speak of when you get to the very last chronological pieces of the Bible, it does speak of a temple. But when you get to new Jerusalem, it says there's no need of it because he is the light thereof. So some have speculated that these structures here will be present during the thousand year reign in chapter 20 of Revelation but what happens after chapter 20? It says, "I saw heaven and earth engulfed in a fire." And so I hate to say this to you, sir, and all others, I don't really know because it gets kind of confusing, but I do know this, according to Revelation 11, there is a third one coming. I don't know if the Lord is going to purify it, I don't know if it's going to be destroyed and a new one comes. I don't know all those details but this thing is coming and when it does, the Antichrist will go in there one day, he will claim he is God.

Now to your point, sir, you and I right now as believers in Jesus Christ, my body according to 1 Corinthians 6 is the temple of the Holy Ghost, right? That is why this temple right here in Matthew 27, what happened when Jesus breathed his last breath? The veil, what happened? It got torn, right? That physical temple was no longer a valid necessary demonstrative place of the presence of God because right now it's in us. There is no reason for you and I to have this building. We don't need it. But guess what? If we are there's nothing that has to happen before he comes back for us, if we're raptured out, the temple has been removed and the new one.... Does that make sense?

[unintelligible]

Yeah, so, but once you get over here, and by the way, anytime you're reading Ezekiel, if you read Ezekiel and you close your Bible and say, "I got it," you didn't get it, okay? If you read Ezekiel and say, "I'm confused," you may have it. I'm telling you and particularly when you get to these last parts of Ezekiel.

Now here's what's interesting about Ezekiel, he was the prophet of exile. When the Israelites went into exile in 586, he preached during the exile so doesn't it make sense that his prophecies of these seven years will also have a double fulfillment in this context over here because what are the Israelites in? They're in exile here too, right? They're running from the Antichrist, they're being fed supernaturally by God. It's the same picture, same story, second verse. It could be better but it's going to be worse, is what they're experiencing.

Did that help at all? Sorry for the question mark. Anything else on this one? I thought it might open up a few doors. Everybody is like, "I ain't touching Ezekiel." Y'all good? You got all that? All right, well, if you've got all that, we'll go to what we know as the database.

Those of you who are new to us, I have a database here. What? What? I heard somebody. No, we're good? Random questions that you have submitted, you are completely anonymous when you submit these questions but when you raise your hand and do a follow-up you're not.

All right, the question says we know that the God of the Old Testament is the same God of today, in the Old Testament God used plagues, flood, illness etc., as forms of judgment and discipline to turn his people away from sin and towards him. Does he do that today? And if so, how can we determine if what is happening as an allowance of God or sent by God? Are there any times in the New Testament that God used plagues and the like other than in Revelation? It's random, I promise you. We were talking about there it is right there.

So that begs us to do a timeline here. Let's go back and I'm just going to go back to the book of Genesis. From the book of Genesis all the way to what we know as the New Testament, the New Testament begins, you've got Matthew through John, the gospels. I'm going to put the cross event here because can we all agree it's at the end of the gospels? All right, in all four of the gospels, the cross is at the end. Beginning at this point per what we just discussed, the temple, the presence of God is completely different over here than it is over here, right? Completely different. It was structured in a building in Jerusalem, now it's in the body of a believer, all right? This time period is going to end at some point. Some people have called this the church age, some people have called this the age of grace, various terminologies for it, and I believe that what we've been discussing in the book of Revelation at some point is going to pick up after, we call it this famous rapture or catching up event but there is a time period coming later. We have this tribulation we talked about, we know we're going to have this reign of Christ, this millennial period, and eventually, actually we have the descent of Christ here, eventually we have the beginning of what we know as eternity.

Now that is thousands of years of history eight feet wide right there. Notice I couldn't measure the whole thing but that's okay. All right, so what's important here for the question, beginning here all the way through here, you're absolutely right, whoever asked this question, when the Lord wanted to get his people's attention, boy, did he get it, plagues, disease. Did you know that the first instance of healing in the Bible is with a prophet and servant of God, Moses. I mean, that's the first case of healing of a disease is one of God's own. We see the Lord allowing or, shall we say, commanding his people to die in the wilderness because they would not believe in him. I mean, there's story after story after story all throughout the Old Testament of plagues and cosmological events as a response of God even to his own people, not just those that reject him, okay?

When you get to this side of the equation, you see God moving in the same capacity however you almost see it like Goshen. Remember Goshen over here? Goshen was that time period during the great plagues where even though the events were happening around in Egypt, they were not happening in Goshen. You get the idea that on this side of the equation as the wrath of God is being poured out, the judgment of God, that those martyrs we've talked about prior to their martyrdom, you get the idea they're being

protected, you get the idea there's a supernatural covering over them. The question, though, was the plagues and all the judgments here, does it happen here? Here's why oftentimes people call it the age of grace or the church age: you don't see it. You don't see anywhere in the New Testament where God just brings a plague as a judgment of his people. Do you know why? Because if it happened, it would have happened to the church at Corinth. Have you read about those guys? I mean, those guys were messed up. If you ever, if you're a part of this church or any other church and you're ever sitting back and going, "Man, my church is messed up," read 1 Corinthians, it's not as messed up as you thought it was. Those folks, they were doing horrible. They were bringing harlots into the church. Yeah, just like it says. In fact, the Lord says, "You're doing things the Gentiles don't even think about doing." That's pretty bad, and yet God didn't bring any plagues on them, God didn't bring, you know, he didn't bring down fire and brimstone on them.

What I would say, here's the thing that I think is the difference in the answer to the question. The one thing that happens here in these brackets that you don't see happen anywhere else on the chronology of God moving and working in his people is exactly what you talked about earlier, sir, that we are the temple of God and we possess the Holy Spirit of God within us. Over here in the Old Testament, you see the Holy Spirit on people, you see it influencing people, acting through people, but King David never said that the Holy Spirit was inside of him. He said, "O Lord, don't take it away from me." Okay? At the same time, you see on this side of the equation as we continue to study the book of Revelation, you see the Spirit of God moving around and through but you don't see the imagery of the temple of God and the Holy Spirit within us that you do here. Why is that important to the question? Because these folks, even though they believed, even though they sacrificed, even though they had faith, they were never called the body of Christ. These folks, even though they're martyred and lose their life, they are called fellow servants, brethren, they're never called the body of Christ.

Ephesians 5, a passage that we talk about all the time in wedding ceremonies, right? What does it say? That a man or a husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church, for no man ever hateth his own body but he loves it, he cherishes it, he nourishes it. Can you tell I've done a lot of wedding ceremonies? I've got this passage. In other words, the picture that we have in Ephesians 5 of a husband to a wife as Christ is to the church, we are his body. We take care of our bodies. We nourish our bodies. We provide for our bodies. And so though you do not see in the New Testament God using plagues and judgments to influence and impact his body, you do see that he allows us to bear the consequence of our sin. He allows us to bear the result of our rebellion.

Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Yes, they wanted to.

[unintelligible]

Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Great question. Those of you who could not hear him because he was in the back, there is the story of James and John who appropriately the story is about because they were the sons of thunder, all right? The same ones who their mom, you know, she was the mom of thunder, I mean, she really was. You know, y'all have heard the phrase a "tiger mom"? Oh yeah, she was. She's the one that went to Jesus and said, "Hey, Jesus, do they get to sit on the right and the left? Come on, now, let's do this." All right? I mean, she was. I mean, she was the one that went to him, all right?

So James and John get all upset because they're going two by two, they're going and they're preaching, they're healing, and all of a sudden these folks don't want to listen to a thing they've got to say and they're like, "Hey, God," I mean, they called him Jesus but, "Hey, God, can we just call down fire and hail and brimstone and just terrorize these people and let's get this over with?" And the Lord talks about that and says that the spirit by which they're asking that is not appropriate at the time. What he's referring to and I think you're absolutely right is, and this is where we struggle today particularly in the 21st century, when you're in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, before you get to the crucifixion, there is nobody who is the temple of the Holy Ghost. Nobody. In fact, the reason that I put these brackets over here is these guys are basically not a whole lot of difference than these guys, the only difference is they're walking with Jesus. Until the cross event and the resurrection happens, you don't see the dead raised, Matthew 27, and you don't see the Holy Spirit given like the Lord does in the gospel of John.

[unintelligible]

Exactly. He says Jesus being with them is like the Spirit being on them. In John 14 and in 16, Jesus says, "It's actually better for me, expedient that I leave you. I will send you another comforter." Which literally means one of like substance, okay? "I'm God in flesh. You're about to get God in spirit." Jesus says, "It's better for me to leave you than to stay with you." Why? Because then the Holy Spirit, the Lord himself can dwell within us and not just walk among us, and as you said, the picture you get in the gospels is much like the Spirit being on here, you've got the Lord being with here, but once you get over here, it's not just on and with, it's within and that changes everything. The illustration that I like to give is this, if someone called me up right now, by the way, all my young men, all my sons, they're on another side of campus, okay? They're in an area of what we call the Well, that's our student area. If someone called me right now and said, "Hey, Jeff, your boys are on the Well," I'm going to get real nervous. Why? That means they're on top of the building. Do you understand that? But if somebody calls me and says, "They're in the Well," I'm not going to be bothered at all because they're safe, they're secure and right where they're supposed to be. When you're on the Well, things can be okay but things could also go real bad, real quick, right?

When the Spirit was on them, hey, things went bad real quick, just look at David in Psalm 51. In Psalm 51, David said, "Oh man, I have made a mess of this with Bathsheba. I've got trouble. God, please don't leave me!" I mean, he's begging God not to leave him, okay? Over here in 1 Corinthians 5, you've got a man who's having an active adulterous relationship with his step-mom and the Apostle Paul says, "Let the flesh die so the Spirit can be preserved." Why? Because even though he was committing heinous acts, horrible acts, the Spirit of God was within him and not just on him.

This is why we call this the age of grace, folks. I'm going to tell you what, there has never been a time in history that was easier to get saved than right now. This is the time. I'm serious. I've known people and I've shared this with you before, I've known people who've said, "Well, I just want a little touch of the tribulation." No, you don't. Do you see how bad the world is? Did you see what happened in our world this week? Can you imagine what it's going to be like when the Spirit of God is not moving? 2 Thessalonians 2 calls it the one who keeps or the one who is keeping everything in place, can you imagine when it's released? The Holy Spirit right now is moving and active in our lives. It's within us and it's acting. Can you imagine when the Lord removes and says, "All right, fine. Y'all have at it." How is that going to look.

Yes, sir, this is number 3. You're running out of chances. Here we go. Yes, sir. No, I'm just messing with you.

[unintelligible]

Great question. That's in 2 Thessalonians 2, if y'all want to go over there real quick. We've alluded to this passage several times. 2 Thessalonians is this chapter about the Antichrist and he alluded to the Spirit of God or the Holy Spirit being removed and I completely concur with you, sir. 2 Thessalonians 2:3, we're going to see the relationship between the power of who we know as the Antichrist and the presence of what we know as the Holy Spirit. Verse 3, "Let no man deceive you by any means for that day shall not come except there come a falling away first, that the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped so that he as God sits in the temple of God," that's what we've been talking about, "showing himself that he is God. Remember you not that when I was yet with you, I told you these things and now you know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time." So look in verse 6, something's keeping the Antichrist from being able to do what he desires to do. Verse 7, "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming."

There is a lot of discussion, there's a lot of debate, in fact, there's a lot of division over this famous rapture event and everybody gets all upset about the timing of it, and I don't think that's really an issue being upset about but nonetheless, what we can concur tonight is simply this, that when a person confesses that they are a sinner and asks Jesus to save them, according to 1 Corinthians 6:19, they were bought with a price, the blood of Jesus,

right? It says that the Holy Spirit then dwells within them, they become the temple of the Holy Spirit. According to what we just read in 2 Thessalonians 2, there is one entity, one person that is keeping the Antichrist from taking over and doing what he's going to do. Who do you think that is? That's the Holy Spirit.

So when it says when he who lets is removed, so when the Holy Spirit's influence, when the Holy Spirit's impact is removed, who do you think's gotta go with it? We do. If the Lord calls the Holy Spirit out, I'm going with it. I'm going with him. I got an amen. That's not bad for a Baptist church. Now I'm going to get nervous if I get a "Come on!"

[unintelligible]

Well, the way I see 2 Thessalonians 2 is that you have the Spirit of God, and I'm going back to my brackets here, you have the Spirit of God moving not just among us but within us, the body of Christ, okay? And that's, by the way, when the Holy Spirit's in you and in you and you and me. We can talk that we're all the body of Christ because he's one Lord, one God, one Spirit, one baptism, Ephesians 4, okay? But then in 1 Corinthians 12, the Holy Spirit, it says, "one Spirit, one God, many parts." That's who we are, that the Holy Spirit is the only thing keeping the Antichrist from being who he will one day be. When the Holy Spirit's influence is removed, it only makes sense to me that those of us who have the Holy Spirit within us are caught up or taken with him. When it is removed, we are removed.

[unintelligible]

He's right. He says it looks like the Antichrist power is increasing, I would say and I'm putting a lot of pieces of a puzzle together real quickly here, the way that I see the chronology of things is there comes a point, we call it the rapture event, it's a famous word for being caught up, but in the context of tonight, when the Holy Spirit is called up and we follow and go with, when that event occurs, then the Antichrist can come on the scene, the Antichrist can reveal himself. And you go back into Daniel 9, it says he even signs a covenant with Israel for one week or seven years, and to be honest with you, when you study this tribulational time period, chronologically speaking the first 3 ½, until you get to the abomination of desolation, it's bad, don't get me wrong but it's nothing like the second half.

So it's almost the frog in the kettle. Do you know about that illustration? You put a frog in a kettle of water and you gradually warm it up, over time it will die. That's the picture we get in the tribulation. Why? Because if that first seal opened and it was a horrific thing and all of a sudden the heat got turned up, people would jump out, right? Now this leads me to this conclusion before we close. People ask me all the time because I believe in this rapture event, because I believe the Spirit of God being pulled out prior to this horrific event over here, people say, "Well, how bad do you think it's gonna get?" I don't think the day before the rapture is going to look much different than the day after. Does that make sense?

So in other words, I think we did a bad injustice, and forgive me, forgive me, forgive me if this hurts your feelings, we made a lot of really bad movies in the '70s about this. Really. Phew, I mean, the cinematography is rough. And when we made these movies, here was our theology, our theology was that when the believers in Jesus Christ are removed, the whole world is going to fall apart. Well, what happens when the witnesses are removed in Revelation 11? Does the world fall apart? What do they do? They celebrate. When that rapture event occurs, the world may not fall apart and go, "Oh, we can't go on without them," the world may say, "Thank God they're no longer here. We no longer have to deal with them." And there is going to be a personality who's going to say, "Now that we've got those guys out of the way, now we can do what we want to do, now we can celebrate what we want to celebrate. We no longer have those bigots, those haters, those narrow-minded Bible-thumpers. We don't have to worry about them anymore."

[unintelligible]

What did you say?

[unintelligible]

You think he's.... Possibly. Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Oh, don't say "if," say "when." Okay, when we're caught up in the rapture, okay, because I'm going, brother.

[unintelligible]

Ah, wonderful question and we've got like one minute so I'll be brief. The question he asked, though, was when we're raptured, why come back with the Lord even if it's a perfected earth, would not be "heaven" much better than earth? Absolutely, even though the Lord says we'll live and reign with him a thousand years. The way I want to answer that question, if I can do it so simply, is if I were to die tonight, okay, and by the way, if that happens, y'all got to help me out, okay, Tracy must get the yellow Porsche convertible. That's my rule, alright? Help me out here, all right? And the second rule is when she rolls through town, I expect her waving at me. That's all I ask, all right? That being said, if I were to breathe my last breath tonight and I were to die, okay, I'm going to be caught up much like the martyrs were in chapter 6. I'm in the throne room of God, okay? Incredible experience, can we all agree?