

## Ask Jeff 1.9.19

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**Crossroads Ministries**

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It should already be on. Is it on? All right, good evening. Good to see all of you. Well, I'm excited, look at the number of folks that have gathered together on a Wednesday evening. We have a number of adult Bible studies that are also taking place, separate women's Bible study, a number of them, men's Bible studies, youth, children's ministries, so I am excited about the wonderful kickoff that we've got in 2019. By the way, wasn't Sunday services encouraging to see some people follow the Lord in believer's baptism. We heard the preaching of the word of God. I was excited about that. By the way, from January to December 2018, that 12 months, we had 64 people come forward for believer's baptism. Isn't that a blessing? That's a blessing, isn't it? I saw that and I got excited about that and then Sunday morning we started off right to be able to watch some folks get baptized, we have some other folks that are scheduled to be baptized Sunday. So I am excited about that. God is doing a work in our church, and more importantly, I pray that God is doing a work in our hearts, amen? God is doing a work in our hearts.

Take out your Circle of Concerns, our prayer sheet, and I'm going to just read through it very quickly and then we'll pray and then we'll began our Bible study for this evening. You notice we have some folks that are at East Alabama Medical Center. I've been told that even getting in to visit people at the hospital is very difficult. The medical folks at the hospital are really trying to clamp down on people even visiting with their colds and the flu. So please be mindful of that. You'll notice some folks in Arbor Springs, some folks that are at home. You'll notice on the back page some folks that are hospitalized out of town. Of course, we have some births and we are congratulating some folks. We're thankful for that but look at the list of those that we are extending sympathy to. By the way, folks, this is not just to let you know for informational purposes, it's to let you know so that you can go to the Lord in prayer and beseech the Lord on behalf of these that God will extend his comfort, his care, that the Holy Spirit of God will be very sensitive, that people will be sensitive to the Holy Spirit in their lives as the Holy Spirit meets all of our needs. So notice our missionary prayer partners, members that are serving in the military. Let's keep this in our Bibles as we pray about it every day, pray for people by name, that God's power and his grace would be manifested in his life, and that we will be aware of his power. Oftentimes God expresses his power, he expresses his grace but we don't notice it because we're not sensitive to the needs of others around us but God is meeting needs and we're thankful for it.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer, shall we, and we'll begin.

*Heavenly Father, you are so good, you are so gracious, so kind. Lord, your word says that you are all sufficient for all of our needs that we need to live life and to live in godliness. And Father, we're thankful for the word of God, we're thankful for the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives, we're grateful, Father, that you have done everything possible to provide for your children. We're grateful. Father, we pray for those that are on our prayer list. We pray, Lord, that you would extend to them in a very real way the consciousness of your presence. Lord, we know that you are present everywhere all at the same time. We pray that we might be consciously aware of your presence, your power, your knowledge, Lord, that we might be always aware of your presence in our lives. We do pray that you would bless these that are on our prayer list. We pray you would strengthen them, comfort those that need to be comforted, give sympathetic ears to those that need to hear. We pray, Father, that you would now prepare our hearts, prepare our hearts for the teaching of the word of God. Lord, give us ears to hear that we might hear and understand and, Lord, more importantly that our lives might be changed, Lord, fashioned unto like the Son of God. We're grateful to you in Jesus' name. Amen.*

All right, as we get started tonight, kind of getting back in the groove of a new, I call it semester, so to speak, before we get to the serious stuff, let's have some fun. You all know in about a month we have a Christian comedian by the name of Tim Hawkins who is coming here, probably most known for his Chick-fil-A song, so to speak, you know, the official chicken sandwich of the Baptist convention. But we have been advertising on social media that we are going to give away two free tickets, and then it was announced that it was going to be done tonight. So we're here and here we go. So just to verify, front row, that is sealed, is it correct? It is sealed. It is sealed. There is nothing in here that has been manipulated. The winner is Gina Ivey. Is Gina Ivey here tonight? Here's the good news, you do not have to be present to win, so Ms. Megan is going to take care of that but congratulations Miss Gina, and we only have a few tickets left so if you want to be a part of that fun night, we want to encourage you to do so.

Kind of in that same stream, I want to welcome a new audience tonight. You say, "A new audience?" Starting last week, you may not be aware of this but on Sunday mornings we at First Baptist, Opelika now have a two hour block on 97.7 FM. From 10 to 11 AM is going to be a replay of our Wednesday night Bible study and Q and A, questions and answer session that we call Ask Jeff. And then at 11 o'clock, it is a live broadcast from the worship center. That does not mean y'all get to sleep in on Sunday morning, all right, just because we're broadcasted live. But I just wanted you to be aware that this ministry that takes place on Wednesday night is now going to be replayed on Sunday morning in our community as well. So just to let you be aware of that.

Now as we get in, if you are brand-new with us tonight on Wednesday night, let me kind of let you know how Wednesday nights typically go here at First Baptist. Our adult Bible study is divided into two sections. The first section is the Q and A time where you have the privilege and the opportunity to ask any question you want. You can do so by way of

our website, I'll talk about that in just a moment, or you can do like some of you who are completely brazen and have no filter, you can just raise your hand and say, "I want to talk about this," and that's great. We want to facilitate whatever you want to talk about. The second half of our Bible study, we are continually going through a book of the Bible of which now we find ourselves toward the end of what we know as the book of Revelation. And for those of you that were concerned are we actually going to get through this book of the Bible before Jesus comes back, yes, one of my New Year's resolutions is to finish up this calendar year, okay? So we are going to get through the book of Revelation this year, I promise. In fact, tonight we're going to cover an entire chapter in a few moments. You're thinking, "How?" It's an easy chapter.

Okay, that being said, our Q and A time, what typically happens is this, you have the privilege of going to the website [fbcopelika.com/askjeff](http://fbcopelika.com/askjeff). You put in your question, when you do so if you submit your email, when we answer the question we push a little button and it sends you a link back to the video just in case you weren't here with us in person to receive the answer. Here's what typically happens is I push a button that says "random." There are 200+ questions in the database that you have sent. There is some kind of algorithm, it's not based on chronology, it's not based on timeframe, length of question, it just pulls one at random and we go for it. However, we do have a group of people here who screen your questions just to make sure they're legitimate questions, they're real questions, okay? They have noticed that over the past couple of months there is a high percentage of questions that are coming from the Bible reading plan. You know, right now we're in the book of Exodus. We've been in Matthew and in Genesis and the book of Acts, and so kind of went and talked and such and so I've made an executive decision, I know Baptist don't panic, we're changing something, it's okay. Are y'all ready for this? For at least this time period and we'll see how long it goes, instead of just picking a random question, I'm actually going to pick the questions that were submitted the closest to the time that we gather together. I got a, "Woo!" out of that, so that's okay. So what that means is that the questions that I'm going to pull from our going to be questions that have been submitted in the last couple of hours, maybe the last couple of days, weeks and such because a lot of them are going with our reading plan. Now I know what some of you are thinking. I asked a question two years ago, it still hasn't come up and now I've got to wait another who knows how long. Resubmit it. It will go back to the top. Do you see how that works? So don't be scared.

So that being said, I just wanted you to know if you have a question from the Bible reading plan we're going through or anything else, if you submit it in these next days, it's going to immediately go to the top and I'm going to start pulling from the top. That way hopefully we can address some of these questions because if you're asking a question from Exodus and it doesn't come up for 18 months and we're in Jeremiah, it doesn't help anybody, if that makes sense. So just thought I'd let you know and let's see how many of you have submitted questions in the last 90 seconds.

All right, here we go. Question number one tonight: can you explain, I don't know, Exodus 4. That goes back about two weeks in our Bible reading plan. Exodus 4, why

would the Lord plan to kill Moses after telling him to return to Egypt and then let him alone?

Now I'm sure you are all familiar with this passage in the Bible, hopefully you've read it recently in our Bible reading plan. This is and I don't know why it kind of scares me, this is one of my wife's favorite passages in the Bible. In this passage Moses is preparing to go "let his people go." Now let me give you a little interesting age spin here. Moses' life can be divided into three 40 year sections. The first 40 years, he is raised in the schooling of the Egyptians in the home of the Pharaoh. Even though he is a Hebrew by birth and even the weaning of his mother, all of his exposure is to Egyptian culture and such. As he approaches about 40 years of age, hopefully you're familiar with the story that he sees an Egyptian kill a Hebrew and he goes and kills that Egyptians. Then Pharaoh finds out and there's all kinds of chaos that ensues. So he runs out to the wilderness. For the next 40 years of his life, he not only serves his father-in-law, raises some children, herds some cattle and such, but he is wandering for 40 years until he sees that famous bush that is burning but not being consumed. Now I want you all to think about that today. At 80 years of age he began his ministry. Some of y'all just went, "Oh, seriously?" At 80 years of age he began his ministry. So then he is sent back to Egypt with his brother, you know the famous story with the plagues and such, and then his last 40 years were spent in the wilderness wandering, hitting the rock, speaking to the rock, having all kinds of issues with the rock, but that's a whole other sermon.

So but in Exodus 4 we've got an 80-year-old Moses, give or take a year or two, with his wife and his children about to go back to Egypt and beginning in verse 22, it says, "And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn: And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn." So that's kind of what Moses is going to go communicate. Verse 24, "And it came to pass by the way in the inn, that the LORD met him, and sought to kill him. Then Zipporah," this is where it gets entertaining, "took a sharp stone," not a knife, "and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet, and said, Surely a bloody husband art thou to me." I don't know why my wife likes this passage but she does. All right, verse 26, "So he let him go: then she said, A bloody husband thou art, because of the circumcision. And the LORD said to Aaron, Go into the wilderness to meet Moses. And he went, and met him in the mount of God, and kissed him. And Moses told Aaron all the words of the LORD who had sent him, and all the signs which he had commanded him."

Now here's the question: why would God want to kill Moses, the one who he met at the burning bush, the one who he was going to go and send and let his people go? Well, unfortunately the Bible does not have commentary later on to the specifics to this question. You say, "What do you mean there's not specifics?" For example, we hear of Abraham and Sarah leaving, we hear of Cain and Abel and their offerings to the Lord, and later in Hebrews it tells us why the Lord did what he did. There is no other passage in Scripture that tells us specifically why so allow me to give hopefully my best words of wisdom here. Why would God get so upset with Moses, calls him out to let his people go and says, "I'm going to kill you"? And here's my answer, without the covenant of God

and his people, it is worthless to free them out of Egypt. What good is it to come out of Egypt if you're still not a part of the covenant, if you're still not believing in the promises of God because it was the circumcision that was the sign of the Israelites that was given to Abraham. So therefore it is of no use to deliver them if they're just going to be in bondage in a different place. You say, "Well, they wouldn't be in bondage to the Egyptians." No, but they still would be outside of and apart from the covenant and the agreement with the Lord.

Now one verse that I would use to support this is Psalm 127:1. It says, "If the people build not the house with the Lord, they build it in vain." What good is it to build it apart from the Lord, you need to build it in line with what the Lord is doing. So here the Lord says, "All right, Moses, I'm done with you. I'm not going to do it." Zipporah comes in, does what she does and obviously there's a reinstatement here. I'm of the belief that reason that the Lord acted the way he did because it is more important to do it the way God asked you to do it than to be in freedom. It is better to be on the Lord's side in bondage than it is to be in physical freedom and not to be so, and Moses was going to deliver physically but it's of no use if you're not in covenant and relationship with the Lord. And it would be the Israelites, remember when Moses goes into Pharaoh, his request is, "We want three days to go into the wilderness and to worship our God." That's of no use if you're not in covenant with God. It's of no use if you're not identifying yourself with the promises of God that were initiated from Abraham.

So any questions about Moses and Zipporah, and please don't ask me to go into detail about what she did? Yes, ma'am.

[unintelligible]

Yes. Yes. You are correct. Jethro and the whole crew comes back.

[unintelligible]

For those of you who could not hear, that was an excellent commentary on that passage. Did she just say, "I'm not going back, you're getting on my nerves." That was a great commentary. I love that.

[unintelligible]

That's a great question. The question is in chapter 18 is did Zipporah go back with her dad for protection and not to go into the land with Moses and Aaron because of what was taking place? When you begin to look at the story, you look back kind of at, I like say a 30,000 foot kind of looking over the top, so to speak, you see that where Zipporah was in chapter 4 is where the Israelites were going to be when they came out. So it's almost, now it's not identical but remember when Abram takes Isaac on the mount and tells the servants, "Stay here. We will return." There was no need for them to go on the mountain and take care of the business, they were going to come right back where they were. I get the idea that she's like, "Okay, this is where you're coming when you cross the Red Sea.

I'll stay here in the camp. I'll be ready. I'll have everything fixed up for you. Go do your business." And 10 plagues later and a lot of dead stinky stuff, he was back, if that makes sense. And then you've got Jethro and, of course, Jethro comes on the scene and says, "Boy, you've got your hands full." You know, there's a lot going on here. And then, of course, we have the rest of the story.

But that's a great question. I don't think she was tired of him, if that makes sense. Although for those of you that have been married longer than I have, you might say, "Well, it's a possibility. I don't know."

[unintelligible]

The Egyptians, the God-deniers, the rebellious ones, and so what we see from the very first mention of baptism as a picture, it is being immersed completely submitted to but does not necessitate getting wet, okay? For example in Romans 6 it says that we as believers are baptized unto Christ's death, okay? It's a picture of. It is symbolic of being buried and raised to newness of life, and as he was buried and three days later raised, the picture of the water is a picture of that death and burial.

Now in Matthew 3, Jesus submits to baptism not because he got saved. Hear me clearly. Not because he had sin in his life. Remember John the Baptist, he says, you know, those of you who have fruits for repentance, come and be baptized. Jesus shows up and he says, "I don't need to baptize you." He recognized, "You don't need what I'm doing." And he said, "Let us do it so scriptures might be fulfilled." You say, "What Scripture must be fulfilled?" In Deuteronomy 18:18 it says the Messiah, Jesus Christ, would come as a like prophet to Moses. Moses under the water, out of bondage into newness of life. You get the picture here?

So what we know as baptism is a picture, an immersion of being completely surrendered to, coming out of sin and into freedom as pictured in the book of Exodus, also demonstrated by Jesus as a fulfillment of being Moses or Moshe, one who delivers us out of. When you get into your New Testament, particularly the book of Acts 10, there's a bunch of Gentiles out in the field just like you and I, and then we've got a lot of guys out there preaching and teaching, and these Gentiles believe, filled with the Holy Spirit, and it says that they then are baptized. So it is a picture on the other side of salvation of what Jesus did in order to provide your salvation. The water is not necessary, as I joke in our baptistery all the time, it's just good old 92 degree Opelika tap water. It doesn't wash anything away from us, it demonstrates what's been done on behalf of us.

Any baptism questions? We've got that one? We're good?

All right, the next one is about tithing. Now what I'm about to say may not sound Baptist it's going to be biblical. Go to the book of 2 Corinthians 9. Now as you're turning there, I joke all the time that I'd rather be biblical than Baptist and there are some things that are Baptist that aren't biblical and there's a lot that's biblical that's not Baptist, so just endure with me for a while. The most famous passage in your Bible about "tithing" is found in

Malachi 3. Malachi 3 says bring all the tithes into the storehouse. By the way, the word "tithe" means 10%. We actually get the definition from Isaiah 6. In Isaiah 6, the Lord says that when Isaiah preaches that there will be a tithe or 1/10 that pay attention to him. So the definition of a tithe comes from the Scripture as 10%. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse.

Now do not throw anything at me yet, okay? This Baptist church and no evangelical church in the world has a storehouse. We don't have a bunch of dead animals offered to the priest in storage for future sacrifices. We don't have a storehouse. We don't have Levites as a tribe like they did in the Jewish day. And so because of that, there has been this erroneous teaching that what we know as tithing does not apply to us because we're not under the law, we are not Old Testament, we don't have a temple, we don't have the Levites. Okay, I'll walk with you a few steps but you may not like the next step. Are you ready? 2 Corinthians, New Testament. 2 Corinthians, a bunch of Gentiles. 2 Corinthians, the Apostle Paul who was Jewish before he was a believer in Jesus Christ. Verse 6, "But." Uh-oh, if you've got a "But" there, that means you've got to read the previous part, right? In this passage of Scripture he's talking about all the ministry needs, all the things that are happening among the churches in Macedonia in particular. Verse 6, "But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work."

Now let me unpack that for just a moment. I've heard people all the time and there are websites out there dedicated to this all over Google searches that are saying that it is not biblical to mandate a born again Christian to tithe. They're right because the tithe in the Old Testament was the end of the game. In the New Testament, it's the beginning of the game. If you sow sparingly, you go reap sparingly. You sow bountifully, you'll reap bountifully. And let me tell you what's happening here. Here's what the Apostle Paul is saying. It doesn't end with 10%, it starts with the 10%. Here is a man from the Old Testament law who grew up saying, "Hey, you can give sparingly. Don't give out of grudge. Don't give out of duty. Give cheerfully, abundantly." Here's what he's saying, "Don't let it be the end of it, let it be the beginning of it." And all throughout your New Testament, you're not going to find any passage in the Scripture that says you're born again, you're saved, you're going to heaven, cut a check for 10%. You're not going to see it. But do you know what it says? If you sow things to the Spirit, you'll reap things of the spirit. You sow to the flesh, you're going to reap things of the flesh.

So what you see in your Old Testament may be doctrinal precepts for the Israelites that serve as life principles for born again Christians in Jesus Christ. That being said, I just want to be honest, I don't think according to this passage it is not a duty to tithe, it is a privilege. It is not mandated, it is an opportunity to sow bountifully in your life. In that last verse I read that God is able to make all grace abound toward you, you always have an all sufficiency in all things. When we give bountifully, when we give abundantly, we glean the principle from Malachi 3. Now I only quoted part of it. Remember Malachi 3

says bring all the tithes in the storehouse so that the windows of heaven might be opened, and that the blessings may come and press down in your life. That in light of this passage is saying quite simply and this is probably the best illustration for those that are watching online or listening to the radio, just imagine this. If I have a closed fist and I have in that fist whatever it is, you're absolutely right, nothing can get out but nothing can get in. If I open my hand to the Lord and say, "It's all yours," not only do I give bountifully but he can put in it whatever he wants.

So one of the struggles that I have with this question is it seems like we always want an excuse not to do something. "Well, we're not under the law. We're not under the Old Testament command." You're right but Jesus said that none of the scriptures would be done away with until heaven and earth, and so it's all inspired by God. What we have doctrinally in the Old Testament serves as life principles in the New Testament. And let me challenge you just as in my own home, I'll challenge you, you're never going to out-give God. You're never going to. You're never going to.

And I'm going to tell you a little practical side now. This isn't Dave Ramsey, you know, financial peace 101, but we're going to go there for a moment. Let me tell you something about getting to the Lord. When you give first to the Lord, it forces you to do something you may have never done before. It's called a budget. I'm not joking. If you have 100% of whatever you have and all of a sudden you only have 90%, all of a sudden you've got to pay close attention to what you've got because you don't have what you had and all of a sudden you find out it wasn't that important, it wasn't that necessary. And I've discovered just from a monetary perspective, I'm not one of those that says, "Well, if you give God \$100 you're going to get \$1,000 back." I don't believe that one bit, but I'll tell you what I do believe. I believe that when you yield your resources and your life to the Lord, he blesses you more than money could even count for. He takes care of you. He facilitates things. He opens doors for you and basically, let me tell you what "tithing and giving abundantly" does, when you do that you're saying, "God, I trust you. I trust you."

One of my favorite stories from a friend of mine years past, this individual was very successful, had done very well in his secular business. He was about my stage of life. He was probably in his mid to late 40s and it just so happened that some unfortunate circumstances came on his business and he found himself not just broke but owing money. I mean, he went from being on top to being below. He was in bad shape and he was leaving the courtroom because he had been sued for some things and that's how he got in that situation, and he was on his way back home and he was faced with this task, "How do I tell my wife that we're broke? How do I tell her it's over? All the stuff that we built all these years is gone." And this individual told me a story that he's sitting at a stop sign and he's weeping because he's about a mile from his house and I wouldn't ever want to have that conversation with my wife, none of you would. And he said here when he's crying out to God, here's what he heard the Lord say, are you ready for this? "You trust me with your soul and you don't trust me with your money." And he said at that point, he said, "I got it. I got it. If I can trust the Lord with 100% of my soul, I can trust him with all my money too. If I can trust him with 100% of my eternity, I can trust him with 100% of my financial resources."



Now before I open it up, in your New Testament there is no direct black and white commandment that as a born again Christian you must give 10% but I will say this, as a born again Christian who's going to spend forever in heaven, why would you not want to? Why would you not want to say, "Lord, it's all yours, particularly this part"? And here is the great things, all sufficiency. It's a way of opening up your hand and saying, "Okay, God, I get to see you move. I get to see you work. I get to see you operate." And I've just been amazed. The more we give, somehow the more the Lord just shows up in our life and it's rarely monetarily based, it's just the blessings of God oftentimes are just not financial but you know the hand of God is on you. So there's my two cents there. Did y'all get that pun, my two cents? Okay.

Any questions on the tithing issue? Everybody's good? Nobody's good? Somebody's good? Everybody. That lasagna weighed heavy tonight, that's all I know. Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

All right, so the question is: what percent of the church gives 10%? Let me give you national statistics. Here's what I've learned about national statistics, national statistics are made up of local churches of which we are in one today, all right?

Now I will tell you something before I answer your question. I do not have access nor have I ever looked at anybody's giving record here except for mine, okay? So that being said, I can do math, okay? And I can read statistics. Nationally across the United States of America, the average person who gives to a local body, a local church, gives on average 2.4% of their income. That's the national average. Now that's not good. Let me tell you how that's sad. During the Great Depression it was 2.9. We actually give less now percentage-wise than we did during the Great Depression.

So take that number 2.4. I'm not a mathematician but I'm pretty good at numbers. That means that the average local church, the average body of believers should have four times more resources to do ministry than they currently do. Four times. I'm going to ask a rhetorical question. Do you know what we could do here with four times what we've got? Anything we want. I'm not joking, and the beauty of it is, it's not that it's not there, it's just that we've got closed fists instead of open hands. So I don't know exactly the local statistic, there are people who probably do and I don't, but there's your nationwide statistic, 2.4%. Aren't we doing good? Please note the sarcasm.

So I will tell you that I can tell who does. You say, "What do you mean you can tell? You don't look at the numbers." No. Anytime I talk about money, people who tithe look at me like, "That's right, pastor. Get 'em! That's right. Keep it up! Woo! Yea!" Coming from an accountant. And those who don't, you can tell.

One day, now jokingly say I'm going to wait until I'm dead to publish it, I'm going to write a book one day called "View from the pulpit." Oh yeah, I see everything. I see when y'all fight. I see when you fight with your kids. Oh, I see it all. One of my favorite

things to see is when I'll make a statement and see one part of a married couple elbow the other one. Oh, that's one of my favorites because I know it's coming. It may not happen here but it's coming at lunch. I know what it is. But one of the parts I want to write about is when you talk about giving. The view from the pulpit is I will tell you there is less people smiling and saying amen than not which I would say verifies that statistic on a national level.

Does that somewhat answer your question, sir? I don't have the specifics. I don't have the specifics but, you know, there's very few amens when you talk about giving. But the people who holler amen and say get 'em are the ones who've opened up their hands and seen God move in their lives. And if you tonight whether in this room or another side of that camera or somewhere on this campus, if you are one of those who's had a closed fist, you know the interesting thing about that Malachi 3 passage, now understand, I understand it was the storehouse, I get, but do you know what the Lord says to them? "Prove me. Prove me. You think I'm not big enough for this, you don't think I can take care of this. I've got this." And every person I've ever met who had a closed fist and then went to an open hand has come back and said, "I can't believe how God has blessed us." And they don't usually mean with money, they just mean the favor of God, the blessing of God, the freedom in their lives to live for the Lord. So let me challenge you: prove him. Prove him. There is, I mean, I've got an old buddy of mine that says this, "If it's God's will, it's God's bill." That means he's got it. He's got it.

Any other tithing questions, giving questions? Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

That is correct.

[unintelligible]

No, sir. Of those that do give, it's 2.4.

[unintelligible]

Which means it's probably worse than that.

[unintelligible]

Yeah. If you want specific data on this concept, there is a website called [generousgiving.org](http://generousgiving.org) that has all kinds of statistics and numbers about the American church and their giving practices, and challenging to be faithful givers not because of Malachi 3 but because really 2 Corinthians 9, give cheerfully, give abundantly, see what God does. Watch him move, you know? But that's the national statistic. I hate to name-drop, I don't know these individuals. George Barna, his website has a lot of statistics on giving that's out there and basically all your resources say the same thing, right at 2.4-2.5%.

So not a pretty picture, but for those of you who are, you've seen the Lord move. Let me encourage you that aren't to watch the Lord move. It's absolutely amazing and I will say this, it is harder the later in life you start. What I mean by that is, those principles were established in me as a young child, they've been established in my children at a young age, and it's a whole lot easier giving a dime out of a dollar than it is 10% out of a paycheck just because of the sheer numerical value that is there. The principle gets put in place and when the principle is in place, it becomes a part of your life and not a duty, if that makes sense. And by the way, as life goes ebbs and flow, if that income goes lower for whatever reason, then it's the same principle, you know? But I will say this and this is when people are going through economic hardships and such and it's a rhetorical question, do you know what 10% of 0 is? 0.

So the beauty of giving is, if you don't have any the Lord doesn't ask of any. That's what you call grace, guys. It's not like he says, "Well, I know you haven't gotten paid in six months. Give it anyway." No. It says give willingly out of a cheerful heart. What you have give to him and I promise you, if you give abundantly you'll get blessed abundantly. It's amazing how it works.

Any other tithing, giving issues, questions, thoughts, concerns? Yes, ma'am, back row.

[unintelligible]

Charitable giving meaning auxiliary ministries, non-profits, those types or....?

[unintelligible]

Yeah, ministries that are connected to, related to the local church but not the local church. Again, I'm going to give you the Meyers' family approach to this, okay? We give 10% to our local church. I just happen to be a member of this one, okay? 10%, but we give above that to other organizations, ministries that we support, we're a part of. You know, that's how we do it. Now let me tell you what's going to happen if you do that. You're going to get audited. Am I lying?

[unintelligible]

I want you to know and I don't mind being on tv saying this, my wife and I have been audited twice and both times were for excessive charitable giving. Excessive, meaning that they know that the average person only gives 2.4% and if you give 15%, somebody lying. You keep your receipts, you're good.

Now I told you I was audited twice, right? My good friend who happens to be my CPA sent a certain organization a letter that said, "I've been a CPA for 20 years. This is a pattern of his life. It's not going to change. You do it a third time, we're suing for harassment." I haven't been audited since until this program goes out and here it comes. But I have all my receipts. They're all in the attic and they're all good to go.

So but again I think this passage here, the 10% is not the end game, it's the beginning of the game and so I encourage there are several ministries that we give to above and beyond whether that be Lottie Moon and Annie Armstrong here, whether that be independent ministries such as you named and others, you know, one of the things that I love about this time of the year and it's going to sound really maybe corny to you, you know there are ministries we've supported and given to that we've forgotten about. I mean, there's a cause that comes up, a letter that comes in, "Oh, we want to support that," and we do and you give a one time donation and you forget about it. But then the receipts start coming in and you're like, "I didn't realize... Wow." You realize how much you were a part of throughout all the year, if that makes any sense. And that's just a neat thing personally in life. We got one of those this past week. I had completely forgotten that we had given toward this specific mission project that was taking place because it was early last year until they sent us a receipt and I was like, "Oh wow, that was neat. We were a part of that." And I say what does it matter if you forgot about it? Well, I didn't give it to get the receipt. I gave it to be a blessing. I happened to get a receipt but that happens to be... and I'm going to keep it for a long time.

All right, we have got to go to Revelation 15, folks. Here we go. I titled Revelation 15, "The Calm Before the Storm." Let me tell you why I did that. Have you read chapter 16 yet? Chapters 15 through the end of Revelation are going to go a lot faster than the first 14 chapters. I know some of you are thinking, "Praise the Lord." No, they're going to go faster because it is in those first 14 chapters that we're introduced to the antichrist, we're introduced to the two witnesses, we're introduced to this time of the great tribulation. When we get to chapter 15, we're wrapping this thing up and almost everything that's going to happen from this point forward you're going to see coming. It's not going to be a real surprise to you because it's almost, it's the final product of what's been building for the entire book of Revelation.

Now in chapter 15, it's only eight verses. It says,

1 And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God. 2 And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. 3 And they sing the song of Moses [that's going to be important in just a moment] the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. 4 Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest. 5 And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened: 6 And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles. 7 And one of the four beasts gave unto

the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever. 8 And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.

Now for those of you who have not been a part of our study, for those of you who it's been a long time since we've been in here and you've somewhat gotten a little foggy about things, up to this point there have been two series of judgments. There has been the famous seven seals and there were what we call the trumpets. In the midst of those series of judgments, we were introduced to a whole section on the witnesses, a whole section on the antichrist. We also had two chapters, chapter 7 and 14, that dealt with those who would become believers during this time period. We dealt with the famous 144,000 and their story and their saga and such. When you get to chapter 16, you have the seven vials, the third series of judgments that is going to take place in the book of Revelation. Chapter 17 and 18 are going to deal with this famous Babylon and the identifying of it, Mystery Babylon, and being taken out by the Lord. Then we get to chapter 19, then we get into Armageddon. Chapter 20, we get the millennium. Chapter 21 and 22, we got into eternity and then maybe the Lord will come back, I don't know however the timing is.

But nonetheless, chapter 15, what is about to occur, the seven last plagues. We are at the end of this time period known as the great tribulation in the book of Revelation. You've had the seals, you've had the trumpets as I've mentioned, and even if – now this kind of goes way back in time. There are two ways of looking at these judgments. Some people see them as duplication, that the seven seals are the seven trumpets, the seven trumpets are the seven vials. It's just three different ways of telling the same story even though that's not the position I subscribe to. I subscribe to the one called succession, meaning the seventh seal opens up the trumpets, and the seventh trumpet opens up the seven vials. It doesn't matter which approach you take, we're at the end. I mean, we are at the end at this point in chapter 15. It says "filled up the wrath of God." That means we've come to a conclusion. What did I put on your outline? Enough is enough.

In 1 John 5:16 it talks about that sin unto death, that if you've committed it, don't bother praying about it because the Lord's had enough. In the book of Daniel, it talks about this famous week, this 70<sup>th</sup> week, and that it will come to an end. In chapter 15 when it says the last plagues, the wrath of God has been filled, we know that these are the very last days of this event, this time period known as the great tribulation.

Now this is where it gets interesting. In verse 3 it says that these who have victory over the name, the number, the beast, the antichrist, that they sing a song. It is the song of Moses. Now that's interesting because that's very different than in Revelation 5 when it pictures you and I around the throne of God. It says we sing a new song, one that nobody has ever sung before, that worthy is he of all these different descriptive adjectives. But here it specifically says the song of Moses.

Now just kind of walk through some questions. Where is it sung? Notice it says it's sung above the glassy sea. Remember back in chapter 4 of Revelation where the Apostle John

is taken up into what we know as the third heaven or the throne room of God? It says that there was a sea of glass that was before him, so this song is being sung by these individuals who overcame the antichrist but they're above the sea of glass. In other words, they're in the heavenly realm. This is not a song they're singing while running from the antichrist. This is a song they're singing after they have, for lack of better terms, escaped him coming after them. Verse 2 says all the things they've done.

Who is it that sings it? Those who've had victory over the beast and over the mark that he put forth. Now this is where it gets a little interesting for chronology's sake because when you look in the Bible, there is a word that people love to use but a lot of times we love to use it in wrong ways. It is the word or the concept known as a rapture. Anytime you use that word, you're going to get a good fight among folks, right? It's not because we don't believe we're going up, we just want to fight about when we're going up and who's going up and what's got to happen before people go up. The term rapture simply means to be supernaturally transported from one location to another by God himself. That's all it means. In Acts 8, Philip is raptured from the Ethiopian eunuch to another place a couple of miles away instantaneously by God. So the term does not necessitate going up into the heavens, but it oftentimes does.

Now that being said, one of the big disagreements that people have all the time is when is this going to take place and we could speak for hours on this but allow me to summarize what I put here on your outline. There are these agricultural terms that the Lord uses for the catching up or the taking up of saints. The firstfruits, the harvest and the gleanings. In Matthew 27 when Jesus Christ rose from the dead it says many of the saints of old rose from the grave and walked in the holy city with him. It's a pretty good picture of the gleanings, those who were in the grave being caught up with the Lord. The harvest, which would be the greatest numerical count of any agricultural scenario or analogy, 1 Corinthians 15, 1 Thessalonians 4, says there is coming a time, there's coming a day where those who are dead in Christ, those who are alive in Christ will be caught up together to be with the Lord. They are caught up. That's literally what that word rapture means, supernaturally caught up. However, there are passages in the Bible such as Matthew 24 that address a rapture scenario in the midst of a tribulation event. That is why there are some people who look at 1 Thessalonians 4 and say there's nothing cataclysmic going on around here. All is just about business. The rapture takes place before the tribulation, all that during the tribulation stuff, you can't handle that. Then you go to Matthew 24 and there's folks that go, "Look, there's tribulation stuff everywhere. He just mentioned the abomination of desolation and then mentioned the rapture. It takes place at the end of the tribulation."

I've got news for you. I don't think it's either/or, I think it's both/and. You've got a harvest of the believers since the ascension of Christ before this event known as the great tribulation, but these folks who are singing the song of Moses, they got up there somehow. They've been taken up. They are above the glassy sea. It says they overcame the beast, not that they were killed by him. In other words, by rejecting what he had for them and being faithful to the Lord, they overcame, they were not killed for their faith.

Now in chapter 6 we have people martyred for their faith, but yet they are above the glassy sea.

Why am I going into such great extents? Because when you get to this point, this is what's critical for our timing, there is possible evidence that all of the believers who've rejected the mark of the beast have all been caught up in the air with the Lord at this time. When you get to chapter 16, look at what the very first vial does, it takes the mark of the beast and it pops it, in other words, it's exposed for what it is. And in chapter 16 and 17 and 18, it gets nasty, is what it does. So when it says that they're singing the song of Moses, they've overcome, I think there's biblical evidence that at this point the firstfruits, the harvest, the gleanings have all been taken up and we're at the very last days of the wrath of God being poured out. It just said it's the last plagues, the last ones being poured out.

Now what is sung? The song of Moses. That's interesting. Why would they sing the song of Moses? Well, the song of Moses is actually mentioned two places in the Bible. It's mentioned in Exodus 15 and it's mentioned in Deuteronomy 32. By the way, for those of you that attend our services, that this is one of the songs that's going to be sung this week called 10,000 Reasons. That song 10,000 Reasons is actually based on the song of Moses. But in Exodus 15 and Deuteronomy 32, you have the song of Moses but they're worded just a tad bit differently.

Now notice here in Revelation 15 when they sing the song of Moses, they call him a king. They call the Lord a king when Revelation 1:5 it says that today Jesus is the Prince of the kings of the earth, awaiting his reign but not yet. In Revelation 11:15 when that trumpet sounds, it says now the kingdoms of this earth have been the kingdoms of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Here they're singing the song of Moses and they're declaring Jesus the King. You know, it's just a couple chapters over where Jesus comes back as the King of kings and the Lord of lords, and so when you look at this and what they are singing, I put a bunch of asterisks on your outline, could this be?

Now right now if you're a part of our Bible reading plan here at First Baptist, we're walking through the book of Exodus, okay? When you read Exodus and you read Deuteronomy, they're eerily similar. Eerily similar but they're very different and one of the things that I would like to just say, could it be, y'all know what could it be means, right? It means don't hold my feet to the fire but go home and research it. Could it be that Exodus doctrinally speaking is the account of coming out of Egypt and Deuteronomy doctrinally speaking is going to be coming out of the tribulation because guess who shows up in Revelation? Moses. It says that water gets turned to blood in the tribulation. Interesting, that parallel. In fact, what we know as the judgments of God that take place in Exodus, most of them are duplicated as the judgments of God in the book of Revelation. And so even though I understand looking back historically they're giving us an account of coming out of Egypt, but if you take right now, you take an Orthodox Jewish individual, someone who only subscribes to the books of Moses, the first five books of the Bible, do you realize that even if they reject the other 61, God has given them the information about how everything is going to wrap up because in Deuteronomy

coming out, Pharaoh who's a type of the antichrist, and you look at the song of Moses about the coming King. In Exodus, the Lord's not called the King. In Deuteronomy, he is.

So that being said, this song of Moses, you know, I understand it's one of those could it be, write it down with a pencil not a pen, but I think you've got the possibility that these individuals who overcame the beast, who stood faithful in the midst of all these things happening with the wrath of God being poured out, that when the Lord caught them up and delivered them, they sang the song of the coming King who rescued them because they're the ones who can sing that song. Now we have the privilege as believers today of singing a song that hasn't been written yet, that one day when we get around the throne.

So just kind of an interesting thing about what is sung. Now this next part I put, "Same song, second verse, could be better but it's probably gonna be worse." Y'all ever heard that statement before? In the last four verses of this passage, there are four references to things we've already seen in the book of Revelation except in this context it's as if things have been escalated a little bit. It says the testimony that is in heaven. We read back in chapter 11, verse 19, that the heavens were opened. Remember when that trumpet sounded, the heavens were opened up and it said they saw the ark of his testimony. We talked about the potential of even the ark of the covenant and its potential eternal location and such, but we saw that temple of the Lord. Well, right now the temple is, what we know there's this testimony in heaven, there's all these things taking place but the difference is this, unlike chapter 11 where those who were staying faithful are seeing the blessings of God, heaven is opening up now and it's the wrath of God that's being poured out. So you have the same imagery with different results.

The second thing you have it says that these angels, that they're clothed in white linen. Their breasts are girded with golden girdles. Eerily similar to chapter 1 of Revelation. Remember when the Apostle John sees Jesus Christ for the first time in this book of the Bible and he says he fell down at his feet as if dead? And it said there that there was this golden girdle around him and all this imagery of the feet of brass and such. Every time you see angelic beings in Scripture, they do not always talk but they do always represent the Lord and what he's doing. So you have this imagery now that they are coming and what they are about to do is representing him. Here's the difference, in chapter 1, do you remember what Jesus said to John? Put his right hand on him and said, "Fear not." What's to come up is something to be very fearful of. So you have similar imagery, much different results and consequences.

It says one of the four beasts. In these three series of judgments, the beasts do not reveal the trumpets but they do reveal the seven seals. Remember in that first one it says, "And one of the first beasts came to me and said here, see the first seal open." Here again right before these seven vials are opened up, the beasts show up again and when they do so, these seals even though the seals are bad, don't get me wrong, the vials are worse. It's almost as if it's just been taken up to another layer, to another notch. So you have the same imagery, worse results.



Then it says the temple was filled. You know, in 1 Kings 8, Solomon had the privilege of not only building that famous temple but dedicating it. When he dedicated it, it said that the smoke of the Lord filled it to such a capacity that they actually had to leave the structure. They left the campus in order to worship because the smoke, the presence of the Lord was so thick. Well, when the presence of the Lord descended in 1 Kings 8, it did so to bless them and to respond to them and there was a blessing. What's about to happen here in chapter 16? It is the unadulterated wrath of God being poured out.

So what you see in chapter 15 here, this kind of calm before the storm is not only this group of people singing a song that nobody else sings for a reason that may be very unique, you see imagery that was earlier used in Scripture to show the blessing of God now being utilized to demonstrate the wrath of God being poured out. So what is this famous storm? Chapter 16. These vials are going to pour out. What's interesting also about chapter 16 is intermingled within the vials is foreshadowing of the battle of Armageddon which takes place in chapter 19 which, again, shows you we are at the very last days of this Revelation account. Here's the good news, chapter 21 and 22 is coming quickly and it is a wonderful wonderful picture, but until we get there, it's going to be pretty graphic but it's going to move pretty quick.

All right, let's pray and we'll get out of here.

*Heavenly Father, as we depart from this place, Lord, even though we read passages like the book of Revelation and even Exodus and others and at times it causes us to have questions, at times it causes us even to be somewhat just taken back by what it says, Lord, I just pray that you would help our unbelief, help us to be faithful stewards of your word, help us to continually just dig in and feast on your word for, Lord, literally for all that is worth for your honor and your glory and for our edification and our ability to minister to those that are around us. So Lord, I pray as we depart from this place, as we go and our families gather back together and as we go off of this campus, Lord, I pray that our hunger for your word would increase but more importantly our living it out would become exponential. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.*

God bless. If not before, I'll see you on Sunday.