

## Ask Jeff – What is Paradise?

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If you are new to us as far as these Ask Jeff sessions whether here in person or as a part of our internet and television audience, everything that happens tonight is directed through this box. You can go on Facebook and Ask Jeff or you can email me at [pastorjeff@gsbcla.com](mailto:pastorjeff@gsbcla.com) and the questions that we receive ultimately get into this box. I have no idea what's in here. We pull them from the box and then we go from there. However, tonight we're going to start off a little bit different. Why? Because every question we have brings a bunch of follow-up questions and last week we ended with a question that was asked that just to give it 2 or 3 minutes would not have given it justice and so we were discussing a multitude of issues and the question that was brought up that I want to start with tonight is this: what did the Bible mean or what can we know when Jesus made this statement, "Today you will be with me in paradise"?

Now, let me go ahead and share with you where to go. We need to go to Luke 23. That is where this statement takes place. In Luke 23, "Today you will be with me in paradise," is actually the third of 7 statements that Jesus made from the cross. Now, before we get into the specifics of this one statement, let me just deal with the 7 statements as a whole. Please understand that when Jesus Christ was hanging on the cross, the death on a cross in normal circumstances with a normal thief or a normal crook or a normal malefactor, to use biblical language, was death by asphyxiation, by literally losing one's breath. The extreme agony and pain and physical wherewithal that took to continually, if you don't mind a very frivolous illustration, to continue to push oneself up to be able to catch their breath, was strenuous at best and taxing at worst. That being said, when Jesus speaks from the cross, there are 7 very simple statements but behind every one of them, I mean, it is packed loaded with rich, biblical theological truth. So everything he said, almost, you can break almost every single statement apart word by word and just go for days with it.

The first thing that he says from the cross is, "Father, forgive them they know not what they are doing." The second statement he makes is between whom we know Mary and John, the apostle, when he says, "Woman, behold thy son." He says, "Son, behold thy mother." The third statement is the statement that was brought to our attention at the end of last session, not dealing with the statements from the cross but in the context there we have to deal with it, "Today you will be with me in paradise." Let me give you the context here. By the way, this is the statement right before the 3 hours of darkness. As soon as the 3 hours of darkness passed, Jesus comes back with the famous, "My God, my

God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Then he says, "I thirst." Then he says, "It is finished." Then he says, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Most people naturally assume the last thing Jesus said on the cross was, "It is finished." It's actually the sixth of the 7 statements.

Here in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 23, we have this statement, "Today you will be with me in paradise," and a few verses later we have the, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Now, kind of a little background here. Remember, there were 2 thieves that were crucified with Jesus, one on his right, one on his left. Then they get into an argument not only about who Jesus was but they get into an argument about the validity of them being in the situation they were in. Remember, one of them is just mad and cursing and literally spitting at Jesus saying, "If he's the Son of God, let him take himself down." The other one basically says, "Who do you think you are? We're the ones who are really deserving of this position. He is not." Jesus turns to him upon his profession and says this statement, "Today you will be with me in paradise." I believe it's verse 43, yes, Luke 23:43. Let me give you a little context here. I'm going to begin in verse 39. It says, "And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise. And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened," etc.

So, we take this statement and before we get into the questions of this statement and kind of dig through it because it's one of those that has confounded people literally for centuries and years, I want to get to the very important practical spiritual element. Jesus did not say tomorrow. Jesus did not say next week. Jesus did not say at some point in the future. Jesus used the word "today." The reason that is significant is when we call on the name of the Lord, something happens in our life immediately. It's not a process. We don't have to wait. Jesus is not a debit card or a credit card that comes in installment payments. He's not lay-away. He is instantaneous. He said, "Today thou shalt be with me in paradise." So just kind of a spiritual truth from the beginning: Jesus' response to him was a confirmation and an affirmation that what he was going to do in his life would take place immediately, not just at some distant time in the future based on something else. Which also verifies the fact that salvation is Jesus plus nothing. It wasn't confession plus time. It wasn't confession plus this, minus this or multiplied or divided by something else. He made a profession. Jesus said today.

Now, the question at hand: what did Jesus mean, the question was asked last week, "You will be with me in paradise"? If you were not with us last week, we were dealing with the question back from Luke 16 about the rich man and Lazarus. Remember, Lazarus was in Abraham's bosom and the rich man was in hell and the great gulf fixed between them and then this transition into this question: what did Jesus mean when he said, "Today you will be with me in paradise"? Well, let's talk about that word "paradise" for just a moment

because it's actually found only in 3 places in your Bible. It's found here in Luke 23, also if you want to, turn to 2 Corinthians 12 and Revelation 22. The reason I want to go to these 3 specific places is this is all we have in the Scripture and so I think to get a complete understanding of what Jesus meant about paradise, we have to see what the Bible says about it. So in Luke 23, Jesus makes the statement that paradise will be a place or be an item that he personally will occupy. "You will be with me," correct? He didn't just say, "You will be in paradise," he said, "You will be with me there." So in Luke 23, Jesus, and I'm putting in quotes the word "resides" because obviously as we'll deal with in a moment, this is not a permanent basis, okay? Then we've got 2 Corinthians 12 and then we've got Revelation 22.

Now, in 2 Corinthians 12, feel free to read but just for the sake of time, let me give you what has taken place there and then we're going to specifically read Revelation 22. 2 Corinthians 12, the Apostle Paul is struggling with what we call or what he calls his thorn in the flesh. Remember, it's this item, this messenger of Satan that continues to buffet him and he says, "I prayed 3 times to have it removed but the Lord said in your weakness I," speaking of the Lord, "am made strong." Prior to the discussion of that thorn in the flesh, he says there was an occurrence in his life, he doesn't know if it was in the flesh or out of the flesh, in the body or out of the body, it says he was caught up into the third heaven and it very specifically mentions there, I believe it is in verse 3, I could be wrong where it says that he was caught up into paradise. Verse 4, I apologize. One off. Not bad out of 31,000 verses, I was one off. So in verse 4, he was caught up into the third heaven, he was caught up into paradise and when he is there, he makes the statement that he heard literally words that could not be uttered, could not be explained. It's this unbelievable, incredible experience. That being said, in 2 Corinthians 12, this was a, and I'm going to use the word, a present reality for Paul. This was something that he experienced, something that he actually attained, something that he sensed, something that he actually was a part of. Now, he makes it very clear and we've talked about this before, he doesn't know if it was a dream or a vision. He didn't know if he actually died and came back. He literally says, "I don't know but I experienced," and what he calls it is, "paradise."

The last one and this is what's going to make this study intriguing. Go to Revelation 22. This is the last chapter of your Bible. Let me go back just a little bit in chapter 21. Chapter 21 follows what we know as the great white throne judgment. At the end of chapter 20, beginning in verse 11 through 15, it says, "I saw a great white throne there in there he was being Jesus on the throne." The books of works and then the book of life. We discussed that a couple of weeks ago. The judgment takes place. Beginning in verse one of chapter 21, it says, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth and a new Jerusalem." Basically, this is the fulfillment of the prophecy in 2 Peter 3 that at some point in the future, the Lord is going to utilize the element of fire to engulf what we know as the physical world to eliminate it and to re-create it. Alright? This is why over in the book of Matthew 19:28, Jesus uses the word "regeneration" speaking of this event that literally what we know as the physical world will be regenerated, reborn, made new.

Now, that's critical to chapter 22 because paradise in chapter 22 is in a different genre as the paradise that it is over here. Why? Because according to chapter 20, verse 10, the

heavens and the earth have been destroyed by fire and re-created in chapter 21. So but the same word and the same concept is used. About halfway through chapter 21, the Bible begins to explain, I begin about verses 9 and 10, the dimensions, the elements and the composition of a thing known as new Jerusalem. This city as a bride, literally brought out of heaven and it touches down on planet earth and there is a whole study around that with the 12 foundations and the different elements. But in the midst of that, when you get to chapter 22, it says, "Then he showed me," this is in new Jerusalem, geographically this is what's important to our study, it is on the new earth. It is in the new Jerusalem on the new earth in the new creation. "And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him."

This concept and this attitude in chapter 22, it describes and talks about paradise. Some of your Bibles will actually use the word "paradise." The reason that is important is that is the only 3 places in all of the Bible that refers to this concept or idea known as "paradise." The difference is, here in Revelation 22, even though it is a new creation, it is on the earth. So here's the question I have for you as we deal with this question: when Jesus uses the word "paradise" is he talking about necessarily a geographical location or a quality of atmosphere? Is he prescribing or describing? Maybe you've never heard those words in relationship to biblical studies. If you talk about something being prescriptive, that means it has to be done exactly as it was done or if it's not done in that way, it's done in error. If it is descriptive, then it is describing the manner or the attitude or the concept in which it should be done or seen as. So the question I have when Jesus says, "Today you will be with me in paradise," is he specifically mentioning a place, a geographical place, a location known as paradise or is he using a descriptive term of the environment in which he will be in which is very much contrary to where he currently is on the cross? "Today you will be with me in paradise."

You say, "Jeff, why do you draw those lines?" Because nowhere else in the ministry of Jesus does he mention paradise. I mean, you think about that: all these comparisons of heaven and hell, why does he not say between hell and paradise? Why does he not say, "All those who believe on me, they will have everlasting paradise"? He mentions heaven a lot. He mentions hell a lot. This is the only time from the mouth of Jesus the word "paradise" comes out.

Now, am I opposed to the idea that it may be a literal, physical location like we dealt with in Luke 16 where it talked about the rich man and Lazarus? I have no problem calling that "paradise." The only issue you come up with is by the time you get to Revelation 22, the "location" of it is very much contrary to what even Jesus would have been speaking of or what the Apostle Paul experienced in 2 Corinthians 12. So when Jesus says, "Today you will be with me in paradise," the question we have to answer is: was he actually speaking or mentioning by name a geographical location or was he simply stating a means of life and what he would be experiencing? I don't know if that's helps the specific

question that was asked. I'm sure there is some follow up there when he says, "Today you will be with me in paradise."

Comments? Thoughts? Concerns? Issues? Yes sir. Yes sir. Yes. And do you know what? I'm glad you said that because I messed up because when I took you to Revelation 22:1-3, I was trying to show you the description of Revelation 2:7. Forgive me for that. In Revelation 2:7, it is the church at Ephesus, this is the first of the 7 churches, it says there in verse 7, "whoever overcomes, I will grant of him to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God." Then I took you to Revelation 22 which mentions the tree of life being eaten in the paradise of God. Forgive me for overstepping that. I got ahead of the curve. Forgive me for that. So basically in Revelation 22 and I apologize if I've added confusion to a confusing issue, we also have Revelation 2:7 which mentions the tree of life which is mentioned again in Revelation 22 as being in paradise and when that tree of life is actually partaken of which was prophesied by Jesus, it is partaken of in the new creation "on the earth." Thank you, sir, for the clarification. I got ahead. Forgive me for doing that. Thank you. Hopefully that helps and clears up some things.

The criticalness of that, though, is demonstrating that this paradox that Jesus speaks of, there is really no way possible that it could be the same geographicalness as this one because, "Today you will be with me in paradise," at some point between here and there, there is a re-creation and so do we default to the descriptive vs prescriptive, I don't know. The point is: Jesus is saying, "Guess what, buddy? Things are going to get a lot better than they were. Your condition is going to be lot better off with me than it's going to be apart from me," which is obviously the spiritual lesson.

Any other thoughts about that, though? The paradox? Yes ma'am. Okay, she mentioned the third heaven. In 2 Corinthians 12, the Apostle Paul mentions this concept of the third heaven. Now, this is not what you will hear typically from the voice of the church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints which advocate 3 different types of heaven. The Bible speaks of 3 heavens. It speaks of the heaven in which the birds fly around in, the birds in the heavens. It speaks of the heavens in which the stars and the planets reside in. And it speaks of the heavens in which the throne of God is and where the crystal sea is before. I think what the Apostle Paul is describing is when he had this vision or when he actually experienced death and then a resuscitation, that he was actually caught up to the third heaven. He wasn't among the stars, he wasn't among the birds, he's literally saying, "I'm in the throne room of God," and he called it paradise. Does that make sense?

Yeah. That's the question I knew that was going to come out of this. So was he telling the thief on the cross that's where he was about to go? Welcome to one of the great, fun questions of biblical nature. We know that Jesus of Nazareth, we know a lot of specifics, I mean, concrete, biblical, historical, you can't argue with it. I mean, you are smarter than a 5th grader when you get these things right because you are. We know it was prophesied and he was born in Bethlehem. We know that he was raised physically in a place called Nazareth. We know that he died on a cross in a city known as Jerusalem. We know he was buried in a tomb known as Joseph of Arimathea's tomb. We know that 3 days later he appeared to the disciples in Galilee. But what about those 3 days in between? Who?

What? When? Where? Why? There are creeds, there are comments, there is all kinds of commentary on this and so since you brought it up, let's have some fun, alright? I want you to go to 1 Thessalonians 5:23 first. Then we're going to go to some other passages in the Bible. The question is: when Jesus said, "You will be with me in paradise," obviously the question is descriptive vs prescriptive, was he describing geography or was he describing environment of which the question at hand now regarding Jesus' actual physical location is hedging to the, "Okay, is he speaking of geography, where is that location? Where is the latitude, where is the longitude if we could even do so?"

1 Thessalonians 5:23. Some of you may be looking at that verse saying, "What does this have to do with Jesus in the tomb?" The statement is made and, by the way, 1 Thessalonians is the first chronological letter of the Apostle Paul that we have to the churches. He makes this statement, he says "I pray that your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." That's the comment or the statement that is made: your spirit, soul and body. One of the things to answer this question that is rarely done is to actually look at what did the biblical passages say about these aspects about who Jesus Christ was. You see, when we speak of Jesus, I think there are 2 camps that people typically fall in: one camp is they see Jesus as so human they forget the God-ness of who is; the other side sees him as so much of God they forget the humanness of who we is. Jesus is 100% God. He is 100% man. If he was any percentage less of either, he was neither. That's how that one works.

Now, as an historic Baptist, let me share with you and I know many of you don't come from that background particularly on television, as an historic Baptist, the cliff by which most Baptist Evangelicals fall off of is we love to talk about Jesus as being God. We love the miracles: walking on water, the breaking of the bread, the feeding of the 5,000. But we struggle with him having indigestion. Don't we? "I'll tell you, no, no, not Jesus. He's God." But he was flesh and I'm here to tell you: I don't believe he was ever gluttonous because that would be sinful but every now and then you get a bad piece of fish, right? We struggle with the fact that it says that at times Jesus wearied. We struggle with the fact that it says at times that he was thirsty and I don't mean on the cross. He was 100% flesh. He was 100% God. He was both. That's why oftentimes we call him that God-man. That's why he's called the Son of God. He's also called the Son of Man. You say, "Jeff, why is that so critical?" Because I think as being 100% in the "flesh" he also possessed the same makeup physically, though sinless, as us. 1 Thessalonians 5:23, speaking of the believers in Thessalonica, he says, "Here is my hope. Here is my prayer for you, that as you go forward in your faith, I pray your spirit, I pray your soul and I pray your body be preserved unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

So let's apply the same criteria to Jesus during those 3 days and I think you may be somewhat surprised what the Bible actually says. Now, let's deal with the body. This is the easy one. We're going to start with the easy one and work our way up to the hard one. When we talk about the actual body of Jesus, the flesh that was pierced, the flesh that was whipped, it was placed into the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea and you remember that the ladies came back on early Easter morning to anoint the body. The body was there. That's

where the body was until his resurrection. His body did not transfer anywhere. His body was physically in a tomb. We can all agree with that one. This is the easy one, alright?

So his body is in the tomb. Now the question becomes: what about his soul? Turn to the book of Acts 2:31 and 33 if I'm not mistaken, is a quotation used in the sermon by Peter on Pentecost. It's a quotation if I'm not mistaken, from Psalm 16:10. In Acts 2 and I think it's 31 and 33, if I'm wrong then that will be twice within 30 minutes and I'm setting a record, here we go. Just laugh at me, please. 31 is correct, 33 is wrong. 27 and 31. I'm going to speak beginning in verse 25. Remember, this is Pentecost. This is what we know as the formal initiation of the church of Jesus Christ. Remember, we talked about this last week: all nations under the earth, the Jewish people were there. Remember, the tongue experience and all those things that happened. Verse 25, "For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope." Listen to verse 27, a quotation from Psalm 16 speaking of who Jesus was, "Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." Verse 31, "He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption."

This is why in how the Apostles Creed before Vatican II said what it said, that 3 days he was buried in the tomb and then it talks about that descended into hell and rose 3 days later from what we know as the Apostles Creed. By the way, speaking of that, just because you may or may not agree with a specific denomination and/or branch of faith, does not mean that everything they say is wrong. A broken clock is right twice a day. And don't ever get into the trap of thinking that everything that your particular affinity says is always right. If you are a part of a group of faith that always thinks it's right and nobody else is, you're in a cult because we are simply living according to Ephesians 2, by faith.

Now, I do realize that many of your Bibles will say in verse 27 and verse 31, will use the word "Sheol." We addressed that a little bit last week. Technically speaking it's a Hebrew word which means "the place of the dead; the abode of the dead." Those that have translated it into the English most oftentimes use the word "hell." Here's the point: Jesus' soul was not in the tomb. It wasn't there. It very specifically mentions this word "Sheol/hell" and there's a whole study just behind that alone, alright?

Now, go back to Luke 23. We were there in verse 43 earlier and we were speaking of this concept of, "Today you will be with me in paradise," but the last statement from the cross is contained in verse 46 of Luke 23. This is number 7. Now, you may be thinking to yourself, "Why is statement number 3, like 3 verses in front of statement number 7?" Because the other statements are contained in John and in Matthew and in Mark. So you put all the pieces together. "And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." The Father's hands. Wow, isn't that nice and clean cut and easy? His body, no question about it, was in that tomb. The Bible says his soul

according to prophecy was not left in hell, was not left in Sheol but Jesus said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit."

So, "Jeff, definitively tell us exactly about everything and aspect of Jesus' physical location on those 3 days." I do not know. Why? Because I think the Bible gives us enough that we need to know to be assured of what we need to know but I think oftentimes it sometimes doesn't give us all there is because if we knew all there was, maybe sometimes we'd mess it all up. I think one of the struggles that we have and we dealt with this a couple of weeks ago when we talked about this rapture event, I think oftentimes rather than dividing the word of God, we submerge the word of God and we put all our eggs in one basket. There are some people who say that every aspect of who Jesus was was in the tomb. According to the traditional Apostles Creed, everything of whom Jesus was was in hell. According to others, people would say, "Well, everything who Jesus was was in 'heaven or paradise,'" back to the original question. Here is the problem: when you go to the Gospel of John 20, Miss Mary, not his earthly mother but one of the Mary's comes to Jesus in the garden and tries to bow down and worship at his feet and what does he say to her? "Don't touch me." Why? "Because I have yet to ascend to the Father." Oh Jesus, please just make it a little more clear. What? Do you understand here? Now, the struggle that we have because he said, "I have yet to ascend to the Father."

Now, here is the question and this goes for every single one of us as human beings: what are you? What makes you you? And I go back all the way to the book of Genesis 2, it's in verse 7, where the Lord breathed his Spirit into Adam and he becomes what? A living soul and I think the focus of this question and a lot of what you ask, ma'am, is that this aspect here according to his confession to Mary, had not yet ascended to the Father. The question: so was his spirit with the Father those 3 days? I'm going to be honest with you: I do not know. He says, "Into your hands I commend my spirit." Was he saying, "At this point I relinquish my breath and I take the sacrifice of humanity"? Oh, absolutely. Was he even saying more than that? I don't know and I'm not trying to avoid the question. I'm just being honest with you. I think if you have somebody who stands before you that says they know everything, then they are a cult leader and I am not. So I think what I've tried to show you in light of this question, ma'am, is the Bible makes it clear that this isn't as clear as we thought it was. Have I helped your question at all? Not really, have I?

Here's how you know that Wednesday nights here are working: when you leave with more questions than you came with. You see, you know, the old adage about school is this, particularly when you get into the higher levels of education: that a challenging course ought to make you work outside of class than inside of class. Hopefully this will cause you to study more away from here than just in here and I can see the question marks rather than the periods in people's faces. Maybe you've never thought about it in this manner but that's what the Bible says.

I think what's important when Jesus said, I'm going to go back to the original question that I know was asked over here, when Jesus said, "Today you will be with me in paradise," can we just make this simple because I've got little kids in my house? I would



never explain it exactly like this to them. Let me tell you what Jesus was saying: "Right now, because of what you just said, you're good." And that is what 2 Corinthians 11:3 means when the Apostle Paul says, "Do you know what? One of the things that I struggle with is some of you have forgotten the simplicity of Christ Jesus." To answer this question and to get into the minutia which, I'll be honest with you, this is kind of fun to me because you kind of look at it and you go, "Man, could it mean? Does it mean? What does that really mean?" Let's not forget that this was a man on a cross, the thief, who was a sinful being, who knew he was sinful, was 5 feet away from God in flesh and said, "Is there any chance for me?" And Jesus said, "Today you are with me in paradise." So let's not forget the simple parts in the midst of the not so simple parts.

Any...yes sir, here we go. I didn't even answer your question, did I? Not really. You see, I'm doing my job really well here. How did we get to the rapture? Okay, when the rapture happens... Yes. His question, let me state this for everybody, the famous rapture concept, the statement he's making is: those who are asleep in Christ, those who are dead in Christ, it says that they shall come out of the graves first, then those who are alive will meet them in the air.

Yes sir. Ah, great question. His question was: so where is the spirit? In other words, let's just say, I'm going to use an example. I don't want to get too personal with the y'all so I will use me. Let's say that tonight I die. Let me tell you what's going to happen: I'm in a better place and Tracy is rich. It's a great win-win situation. If you see her riding around in the Porsche she's always wanted, I'm in a much better place. She is just going to wave at me. That's our joke right there. The only request I've made to her is if it's every from a terminal illness, I just want to go and help her pick it out. That's all I'm asking, baby.

Back to the question: so tonight I die. My physical body is going to go in the ground, hopefully you will take care of me. At that point, I have no choice. I mean, it's over so I don't know what y'all will do to me but I'm there. I go down to the ground. That's where my body is. According to 1 Thessalonians 5:23, I don't just have a body, do I? I have a spirit and I have a soul, in fact, Hebrews 4:12 says that the word of God is a two-edged sword able to divide the soul and the spirit as if bone and marrow. My answer to that question is, back to Revelation 6. By the way, as we go to Revelation 6, you asked about my soul or you asked about the spirit, it was the Spirit of God that gave Adam life, okay? According to Ephesians 2:1, a lost person is walking around with the spirit of disobedience. Now, the very fact that you have a life in you is because God allowed you to be alive but then it goes on to say that we have been renewed, we have been born again by the Spirit of God that obviously replaces the spirit of disobedience.

In Revelation 6, this is the 4th and the 5th seal. Well, there are a lot of seals but the 5th seal particularly in verse 9 says, "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." Now, specifically here, let me get specific and then we're going to get general. Specifically, this is mentioning those martyrs during that tribulational time period. But I think we could even go broader than that, that this is describing not just a specific group who died during a specific time but what happens to Jeff Meyers when he dies? I mean, after all, 2 Corinthians 5, beginning

in verse 17 talks about being a new creation and it says, "to be absent from the body," is to be dead in the ground. No, absent from the body is to wait around a couple of thousand years until the Lord comes and gets you? No, "absent from the body, present with the Lord." Alright, that's what it says.

Now, it says, "I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice." Have you ever thought about that? This is a fleshless soul. This person is dead. Their body has been martyred and possibly decapitated, possibly disintegrated. We don't know what happened to them physically but it says, "they cried with a loud voice," and it speaks about what they cried. Verse 11, "And white robes were given to them." You cannot wear a robe unless you have some structure to wear that robe or it will not be upon you. It says, "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." In this passage, these individuals have died physically on the earth but they are present with the Lord, conversing with the Lord, wearing white robes and the picture you get is it's not a bad deal.

Now, what are they awaiting? They are awaiting the new body. So let me phrase this as if it were to happen to me tonight. If tonight I were to physically die, my body would be deceased. According to the word of God I believe that somehow my soul and my spirit would be caught up into the throne room of God. There I would be praising the Lord, celebrating the Lord and in his time, I would meet those of you who were still here at the rapture event in the air to receive my new 6' 5" body right there in front of you all. That's how it works.

So to answer your question, sir: there is a body in the ground but I, who I am, I'm not in the ground. I'm not. Now, this brings up a fun question. Think about John 11 and I know this question wasn't asked so, you know, I get to submit a question, right? What about Lazarus? Remember Jesus says, "Behold, he sleepeth," meaning he is dead. The fourth day in which the ladies go back to anoint the body, remember, his sister says, "Jesus, this is a bad idea. He stinketh." I love that verse in the Bible. That's almost as good as when God tells Job, "Gird up thy loins like a man." Being the dad of 3 boys, I love that phrase. There's something about it. "Behold, he stinketh," and it says that when they opened up the tomb, he said, "Lazarus, come forth." Why? Because if he had said, "Come forth," what would have happened? Everybody would have come out. "Lazarus, come forth," and Jesus said, "Remove the grave clothes." Why? Because they basically mummified them, for lack of better terms. And then beginning in the next chapter, chapter 12 of the Gospel of John, it says that those who sought to kill Jesus sought to kill Lazarus because of his testimony.

Now, was Lazarus just in some a oblivion for 4 days not having a clue what was going on in life? Not according to the biblical record. His flesh may have been rotting in a tomb but his soul and his spirit was somehow miraculously in the presence of the Lord. We can call it paradise. We can call it Abraham's bosom. We can call it whatever we want. Can you imagine the first conversation that Lazarus and Jesus had after chapter 11? Here's

how I think it would've gone. I'm Lazarus. "Lord, are you nuts? Do you not realize what I was experiencing? Do you not realize how good it was?" And I can imagine Jesus saying, "Don't worry, the guys that are trying to kill me are about to kill you. You're going to be back real soon." I don't know if that's how it went but I think that helps in this context of our death is not the end of our life, it's the beginning of our everlasting life. One day we will get the new body and I know the Lord has a sense of humor, I'm going to be 4' 8" probably for all eternity. Just love on me as I walk by, that's all I ask. Use me as an elbow rest. I don't know, do whatever you do.

But I think to your point: the biblical evidence is, my death, your death, anybody's death as a believer, immediate presence with the Lord. Does that help you? Hallelujah. I like that. Yes. Yes. By the way, I really struggle with believers who want to, I understand appreciation for life and I understand wanting to hang out more because we have kids and grandkids and at times there are the emotions of this life but, folks, whatever is coming next is a lot better. It's a whole lot better.

Yes sir. Yes sir. Oh, that's a great question. What he's asking: in Revelation 2, it speaks of those who were overcomers, it talks about the healing of the nations. Alright, let me see if I can unpack this as simply as I can. There are, a lot of times we speak of judgment in the Bible, right? And a lot of people think, "Yeah, there's one big great judgment." No, there's not. There are lots of different judgments in the Bible. In fact, you ought to be under judgment every day of your life. You say, "I should?" Oh yeah, 2 Corinthians 11 talks about the Lord's supper. The Apostle Paul in verse 31 says, "I judge myself daily." In other words, I should make a decision about what is right and what is wrong in my life and hold myself accountable to the Lord every day. That's a judgment. 1 Corinthians 3 speaks that as believers in Jesus Christ, one day we will face the judgment seat of Christ, that we will go through a period where we're face-to-face with our Lord. Romans 14:10 speaks of it. 2 Corinthians, I believe it's chapter 5, verse 10, says, "Do not be mistaken. One day we shall all," speaking of believers, "stand before the judgment seat of Christ to give an account of which we have done in the flesh whether it be good or evil." That's called judgment day for a believer.

Now, 1 Corinthians 3, beginning in verse 10 elaborates on that. Remember, that's that famous passage: wood, hay and stubble. You know, gold, silver, jewels, the fire goes to it and whatever is left is left, whatever isn't isn't, it is burned up. Then in Revelation 20, it speaks of the great white throne judgment and it speaks of the book of the works and the book of life. We dealt with that last week. So let me break this down and I'm getting to your question, I promise because I think your question, oh, I hate to say this way but I am: oftentimes the answer to your question is often applied to other judgments rather than the one it's speaking of, alright? Your judgment, by the way, is spoken of in Matthew 25, the judgment of the nations. So what you have here, when you speaks of judgments that are in the Bible, you have what we might call a daily judgment, this is the one the Apostle Paul was speaking of. We have one for believers, this is the judgment seat of Christ. By the way, if you ever have the opportunity to share your faith or have a conversation with someone of the Islamic faith, be sure to bring this up because one of the number 1 misunderstandings of Islam about Christianity is they believe that we believe that you

"get saved and just live like anything you want to live." That there is no accountability for your life. Well, according to the judgment seat of Christ, there is a lot of accountability for our life.

Then we have the judgment for the unbelievers which we would call the great white throne judgment. Then to your question, the judgment of the nations. This is found in Matthew 25. Remember, Matthew 24, is this famous passage about the end of the world, the temple being destroyed? When you get to chapter 25 and I will confess to you and I made this statement, I believe last week, sometimes good preaching isn't good doctrine and sometimes good doctrine makes for some pretty boring preaching. In chapter 25 of Matthew, verse 41, Jesus makes the statements that those who are on his right hand, the sheep will go into everlasting life, those on his left, the goats, everlasting condemnation into the lake of fire prepared for the devil and his angels. Great preaching means those who are saved to everlasting life, those who are lost, lake of fire but in context, it's not speaking of individuals, it's speaking of nations. That famous passage that we use a lot, "Whoever brings me a cup of cold water in my name," it's not speaking of people, it's speaking of nations and the idea that we get what Jesus was speaking of, to your point, sir, the judgment of the nations, if I could draw for lack of better terms a chart out, when Jesus comes back, when he sets foot on the earth, this is in Revelation 19. By the way, do you see how just naturally when I write, I go up on my tippy-toes? I don't know why, it's just natural. I don't even have to and I do. That's what happens.

Revelation 19, Jesus steps foot to what we know as the battle of Armageddon. Who is at the battle of Armageddon against Jesus? Everybody. It says the whole world is there. By the way, if you've ever been to the Valley of Jezreel or what we know as the Valley of Armageddon there in northern Israel, that landmass, if you were to put somebody in a very strict military formation side-by-side, in front, behind, you could put over a billion people just on that one battlefield. By the time you study the book of Revelation and when this thing happens and that thing happens and a third of the earth is gone, a fourth of the earth is gone, that's not all that's going to be left. It says they are all there. He comes, remember, the blood goes to the bridle of the horse? In that battle, though, the idea and the picture that you get and this is a slew of questions that could come out of this but it's not your question, immediately thereafter is an event that we know as the millennium. The reign of Christ on earth. It says that we as believers shall reign with him. Who are we going to reign? There has got to be somebody left and the idea that you brought up, sir, is that passage in Matthew 25, is that at the battle of Armageddon when all is said and done, there is a judgment of the nations, those who fought against and those who were in favor of and at that judgment, those entities are judged.

Does that help you at all? No. Okay, I'm glad I could help. It's called the judgment of the nations. The problem is we often apply that passage to individuals. The problem with applying that passage to individuals is it advocates what we might call a works based salvation. If you just clothe people and give them cold water, you're good, right? That's how we get the thing called the social Gospel. The problem is that passage is talking about these entities who said, "No, we're not fighting him. That is God and we don't understand everything but we're backing down." And it says that those who do back

down, he does not destroy, they are then reigned over in this period known as the millennial period.

I gave a 60 meaning thing in about 6 minutes and I'm sorry about that. Did I help at all? That's a great way to describe it. He said, it sounds like a healing after the fact. You know, there is a passage in the Bible over in the book of Ezekiel 39. I know you all read Ezekiel late at night all the time anyways so let me just share that with you. It describes a battle and it's a battle described in the end times and it says it took 7 years to bury the dead. 7 years. Now, is that going to be a part of all this? Honestly I don't know all the specifics there but there is a lot of carnage, there is a lot of death but there are also those who "remain," and he says those on the right, those on the left and that's the judgment of the nations.

So when we speak of judgments, if we take out the individual one just because that's something we as believers should do every day. You have a judgment for believers, you have a judgment for nonbelievers and you also have a judgment of the nations at Christ's return. The problem is when you apply the ramifications or limitations for one to the wrong entity. In other words, the passage is about the judgment seat of Christ. It says we should stand before the judgment seat of Christ and give an account of that which we have done in the flesh whether it be good or bad. If you just take it as that, it makes it sound like, "Well, if your good outweighs your bad, you're good." No, no, no. It's speaking of those who have already placed their faith in Jesus Christ and what they have done with their faith. So you have to have the right judgment for the right entity and oftentimes Matthew 25 and I've been guilty of it as well because it makes for some great preaching for folks to get saved, contextually it's really about the nations, not about the individual. I don't know if that helps.