

Ask Jeff

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It says does Revelation, here we go, chapter 21 verse 23, does it fulfill Jeremiah chapter 31:35 through 36? Will Israel be a part of Jerusalem after the millennium? Ok, so let's begin in Jeremiah. Ok, let's begin in Jeremiah. We're going to go to Jeremiah chapter 31. It says, "Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divided the sea when the waves thereof roar, the LORD of hosts is his name. If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me forever." Now basically, what Jeremiah is saying is, I want to paint the picture of Jeremiah. He's a unique character and I know most of you are familiar with this. When you look at the prophets, the overwhelming majority of them either spoke what we call pre-exilic about the Babylonian captivity, exilic during the captivity, or post-exilic after the captivity. We define a prophet as either pre-exilic, exilic, or post-exilic. However, Jeremiah, he's a unique one. Jeremiah is both pre-exilic and exilic. Okay, so he's telling them we're going into Babylon and then he prophesies while they're in Babylon. So when you get to these verses in chapter 31, here's what Jeremiah is saying under inspiration of the Lord that until the sun goes away, until the moon goes away, Israel is never gonna go away. In other words, by the way, this is kind of relevant to today's modern vernacular that the sun, did the sun come up today? Is the moon out there? Then guess what? Israel's not going away. All right? That's what God promised, correct?

Now, go to Revelation chapter 21. Here's where it gets interesting. There it is, I knew it was coming. Yes. 31 minutes, there you go. For those of you that are here for the very first time, it just happens every week. Here we go. Revelation chapter 21. Now, let me, well, let's go ahead and read verse 23. Actually I'm going to go back up to verse 22, "And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it." Now, chapter 21 of the book of Revelation along with chapter 22 are very unique sections because it begins in verse 1 of chapter 21, "I saw a new heaven, I saw a new earth, and I saw a new Jerusalem." Now remember, previously to this, what we know as the creative order has been engulfed in a flame of fire, i.e. 2 Peter chapter 3. Remember the famous passage where it says there's coming a day where the creative order will be engulfed by fire? Then you get at the end of chapter 20 of Revelation, it

says, "I saw the throne of God and everything else was diminished." It was gone. So essentially, the earth, the heavens, and anything we know of a material earth is vanished. It is gone. In chapter 21, God... resurrection chapter in the Bible. That's one that says if Christ be not risen from the dead our faith is in vain. A lot of people don't realize that's chapter 15. When you go to chapter 16, it's a business meeting, okay, and it's asking questions about this decision and that decision. So what we just did is a rare but very biblical practice as a local church because there are just some things that we have to put in place and make sure that they're in order, and so I want to personally on behalf of our deacon body and our communities, thank you not only for your research in advance prior to tonight but your expediency tonight as we gather together.

So let's do some Bible study. That sounded like a good idea? For those of you that are here for the very first time here in person, watching online, or listening by way of radio, you are at our large group adult Bible study here at First Baptist Church of Opelika where every question, every concern, every discussion point is originated by you. This is a true participant-driven Bible study. And so what that means for this evening is if you want to participate, if you want to be a part of tonight, you have two options. Our most frequently used option is text messaging. Area code 334-231-2313. You can be on the front row. You can be on the back row. You can be on the other side of the camera. You can be down in Florida at an RV park hanging out. It doesn't matter where you are, you can text us an original question or a follow-up question. If we're discussing a certain subject matter, passage, whatever it may be, you can follow up on that in an anonymous format and it will show up on the screen. What we know as text messaging is the quickest way and the most anonymous way.

Now for those of you that are in the room physically, you have a special opportunity. You can raise your hand. When you raise your hand, you have the floor. You can take the conversation any direction you would like to do so. However, you lose your anonymity. We know who you are, but your name or your image or your voice will not be heard and/or seen on the other side of the camera or by way of radio. So you are anonymous to the world at large, but you're not in the room. But hey, we're all friends. We're all family. It's all good.

So you ready do some Bible study. Let's do some Bible study. Here we go. Question number one. "What does the term apocryphal mean?" That's kind of an interesting sounding word and I'm sure throughout time you have heard a group of books that are called the apocrypha. It literally means that which is not recognized or that which has been called into question. That's what it means. And so when we discuss historically what we know as those 13 books known as the Apocrypha, those are literary works that have not been historically traditionally recognized as scripture, they're not received as scripture, so per the definition they are called into question. That's simply all the word means. So, any follow up on that? At this pace, we're gonna do 45 questions tonight.

Here we go. Question number two. "Is it important to believe that Genesis 1:1 through Genesis 11:26 are literal historical accounts? It seems more like God is using Moses' knowledge of pagan myths at the time and adapting them to communicate essential

truths." Okay, this is a great question because not only in the first five books of the Bible known as the Pentateuch or the Torah, the first five books of Moses, there's this issue particularly in chapter 1:1 through 11:26 because this is where we have the creation narrative. This is where we have the Garden of Eden. This is where we have Adam and Eve, Noah and the flood, Tower of Babel. Some of the most questioned and debated stories in all of the Bible find themselves in this section. And so, really the question is, is it necessary to believe it as historical? Or could it be in some form of mythological? Now, when you hear the term mythological in this context, don't think Roman Greek mythology, mythological in the sense of a story that is not necessarily historically verifiable. That's all the word myth means, okay, so don't think, yes, Moses had a pagan background understanding but don't necessarily read it through that lens.

So the way to address this question is go to the book of 2 Peter, 2 Peter in your New Testament and allow me to share with you what the scriptures say in regards not just to Genesis 1 but to the rest of the Old Testament. Now, the passage we're about to read is going to talk about prophets, okay? Now, that's a very specifically vague term that could address a whole slew of individuals. However, in the book of Deuteronomy chapter 18 verse 18, Moses referred to himself as a prophet and later in the New Testament, Jesus referred to Moses as a prophet. You say, "Well, why is that so important?" Well, 2 Peter chapter 1, verse 19, it says, "we also have a more sure word of prophecy, where until you do well, that you take heed, as until a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day star rise in your hearts. Knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of any private interpretation." Listen to verse 21, "for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Now the reason that last statement is so important is whether we're dealing with Genesis chapter 1 or we're dealing with Isaiah chapter 6, irregardless, the Bible communicates very clearly that these men spoke as moved by the Spirit of God and even as this kind of question proposes, even though they did not personally observe the events that they spoke of, even though they never personally witnessed the events that they spoke of, they didn't have to because it was the Spirit of God communicating through them that superseded their own personal exposure and or experience.

So that being said, is it important to believe that this section or this respective section is historical? I believe so. The reason I believe so is because I think the general rule of thumb for any scripture is take it literally unless it cannot be. You say, "What do you mean it cannot be?" Well, Jesus made a statement in the gospel of John. He said, "I am a door." Now the question is, is he made of wood or steel? Y'all pick. No, when Jesus says he is a door, obviously he's speaking metaphorically, correct? Alright? So when the Bible says he created them male and female, he created them, why would we question the literalness of that because we know that is completely feasible and completely possible, right? And so therefore, 40 days and 40 nights of rain, an actual Garden of Eden, a tower that was built by the rebellion of man, there is no reason to question its historical veracity because if it is literal, it could have occurred just as it is written. There is nothing written there that could not happen the way that it is and so why would we go back and somewhat recompose it to fit what we thought it could or should be versus what it just says that it is?

So again, this is a great debate, particularly at this section of the scripture. Back in the 1960s, there was an individual who was of a scholastic background that caused a real big stir among evangelical Christians, particularly Baptists. He wrote a book called "The Myth of Genesis," and basically what he proposed is this question that everything in the first eleven chapters of Genesis were not historically accurate and could not be taken at face value, they were metaphorical or allegorical at best and it was simply just a way to explain the unexplainable. Again, I struggle with that because if you're going to do that with the first 11 chapters of Genesis, then are we going to do it with all 22 chapters of Revelation? Where do we stop? Does that make sense? There's nothing in Genesis 1 through 11 that you read and go, it could not have happened that way. It may be difficult to believe it did but it doesn't mean it could not have occurred that way. Hopefully that helped out. Any Genesis questions? We tend to focus either on that or Revelation a lot. I think we slowed the pace down to about 38 questions. Is that good?

Okay, here we go. Question number three says, "In Matthew chapter 18 verse 11, the translations between the King James and most others appear to be starkly different. Please clarify." They could not be more different. Go to Matthew chapter 18, Matthew chapter 18. We have one of the most debated, you say, "What do you mean one of the most debated?" Matthew chapter 18 there are actually 17 verses in your New Testament that could have been superimposed within this question because there are 17 verses within your New Testament that at times, such as right now, come under somewhat of a discussion, a debate, and shall we say scrutiny.

So Matthew chapter 18, I'm gonna begin in verse 10 because you know, we need to read for context sake, right? Verse 10, it says, "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." Verse 11, "For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost." Verse 12, "How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?" Did any of you have any difficulty reading that passage? Some of you did because in some of your Bibles verse 11 of chapter 18 is not there. Some of your Bibles it will have parentheses around it and say that the oldest and most ancient manuscripts do not contain this verse. There are 17 of those verses in your New Testament that have this quote specific designation. I love how this question was worded. They could not be more starkly different. You're right because in one it's there, in the others it's not.

Now before we address this somewhat cerebrally, I'm just going to ask a very ignorant rhetorical theological question: is there anything in verse 11 that you find theologically controversial? Is there anything in verse 11 that you say, "Well, it really just depends on how you see that content." Is there anything in verse 11 that makes you go, "Man, I don't know why God would put that there." For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost. If you ask me, that's pretty vital. Pretty key. However, per the question, there are some versions that either question its veracity or leave it out completely and so what happens is, and for those of you that like to do this,

congratulations, for those of you who do not, for the next few moments, we're going to nerd out. Here we go. What happens is when we get in the weeds, there is a discipline of what we call textual criticism. Textual criticism is the discipline where we take the manuscripts of days gone by, those scrolls of Isaiah in the Old Testament, the scrolls of what we know as the gospel of Matthew in the New Testament, and we take them, we collect them, we combine them, and then we study them to see what we have.

Now, there are what we call four major families of manuscripts and on Wednesday night, some of you are somewhat familiar with this, but for the sake of illustration and time, allow me to remind you, we have what we call the Texas Receptus. That's one of them. We have what we call the Alexandrian. That's the second one. We have what we call the Sinaiticus. Sorry for my handwriting. And last but not least, we have what we call the Vaticanus. These are the four codexes or families or groups by which we collect. Now, the reason that's important is those 17 verses that Matthew 18:11 is a part of are all contained in this one over here, but in none of these. Now, we have, can I say consensus on that in the sense of, it's not like this one has three and that one has four and this one has five. It's pretty cut and dry. One has 17 and the others have none.

Now, I think the importance of this is where these respective documents came from, okay? What we know as the TR, the Texas Receptive, the Received Text, whatever word you wanna give it, this comes from the great city of Antioch. Now you might not think that's a big deal but in the Bible it is. Acts chapter 11 verse 26, it says that we believers, we were first called Christians in Antioch, right? In fact, as you go on and read throughout the book of Acts in your New Testament, one of the things you discover is that when the early apostles and the early believers needed to kind of hammer out their theology, you know that they didn't go to Jerusalem, they went to Antioch. That was the place where, for lack of better terms, we chewed on and we formulated our theology. So this document comes from Antioch.

Now, the second one, Alexandrian, comes from Alexandria, Egypt. Now, I'm not here to throw stones, but when's the last time you heard of anything in your Bible good coming out of Egypt? In fact, I would argue that all the great heresies of the world have their origin in Alexandria, Egypt. I don't find it ironic at all that a manuscript that originates from there does not contain these verses.

Now Sinai, you say what about Sinaiticus or Mount Sinai? The traditional side of Mount Sinai which is that little piece of land northeast of what we know as Egypt, it was discovered in a deserted monastery and had not been used for the entirety of its existence. Okay, it was just left there, nobody ever used it. Again, you're on the northern shore of Egypt. Again, we're not in a place where the early believers or any believers really had any type of true ministry outlet, okay?

And last but not least we have the Vaticanus. Vaticanus comes and originates, you guessed it, in what we know as the Vatican. It's an interesting one of the families because it's the one that exists supposedly is superior but they don't let anybody look at it. Isn't

that ironic? So they just tell us what it says and they don't actually look or allow us to look.

Now, these two documents that are in the middle, these are kind of a little unique. You say, "Why are they unique?" Because a little over about 20 years ago, my wife Tracy and I had the opportunity to go to the British Museum and I actually saw them. I actually looked at them. Now, they didn't let me touch them because they're under glass, but I actually could see these famous documents. Now, they did not allow me to turn the pages so that I could look at the veracity of questions such as this, but those who have handled these documents verify that they do not contain these respective 17 verses. So, again, at the end of the day, when we are dealt with a question such as this, we have to ask ourselves A) what is the harm in having the verse, B) what is the message of the verse, and C) why would you put it in or not put it in? Why would you not want to say that Jesus Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost? By the way, we're not going to go through all 17 of them, but turn one page to the left. Matthew chapter 17 verse 21. Jesus has gone to the Mount of Transfiguration. He has come down. There's a little boy who is throwing himself in the fire. He's having some type of demonic attack. The disciples cannot heal him. Jesus does. Look at verse 21. What does verse 21 say? "These only come out by prayer and fasting." Guess what some of the Bibles say? Nope. It's not supposed to be there. Guess what? Again. So what you have here is you have a pattern of verses that most of church holds very dear to a heart. These are not just random odd statements in scripture. These are pretty core tenets here. These only come out by prayer and fasting. You go into Mark chapter 9 and there's a famous passage that talks about what we know as hell. Verse 44 and verse 46 says that the fire is not quenched, those two verses, again, are part of this 17 and a host of others. So again we're not going to go through all of them, what I want you to see is when you run across an issue such as this you have to ask a question A) why would we not want this, B) why is the message that controversial, and C) why did they not possess it?

Now, here's what's... before I turn it back over, here's the thing I want to find interesting. You know that what you just read either in the margin or at the bottom of a study Bible, it says these come from the most ancient manuscripts, right? Supposedly we're to trust them. Here's what they don't tell you, okay? If the most ancient, most reliable manuscripts don't have those 17 verses, you know what they don't tell you is that in Vaticanus it does not contain Hebrews chapter 10 to the end of the Bible. It's just not there. Not there at all. Oh! But it's one of the most accurate. Do you see how this works? So at the end of the day, do you want to get your theology from Egypt or Antioch? Do you want to get your biblical narrative from these places? I think...

A follow up says, "Doesn't God tell us we shouldn't be changing the word of God? Should we read those that are so different from?" Alright, so when you get to the end of the book of Revelation, now don't signal the alarm, we hadn't actually turned there, okay? It says that we should not add nor should we subtract. What's interesting about that passage, it says from this book of prophecy. Is it talking about the whole scripture? Possibly. Is it talking about Revelation? Most definitively. And we could have that discussion and we could have that debate. Yes, Jesus said in Matthew chapter 5 that

heaven and earth will pass away, that my word will not pass away. And so I would struggle saying I don't think it should be there. I would struggle with that. You may not struggle with that, but you've got to show up before God on your own. I'm going to show up on my own and I'm going to tell them it was there.

Yes sir?

[unintelligible]

Great question. So when you go and look up a verse, say I don't know, John 3.16, right? You do know that when the Holy Spirit of God inspired the Apostle John to write what we know as the gospel of John, he did not write chapter 3 verse 16, right? He didn't do that. That comes later in the 12th century. We began to put those numbers in for the sake of location and memorization. The numbers, the chapters were not a part of any of these original documents. But again, so this Sunday, let me give you a little hint on Sunday morning, we're gonna be in Luke chapter 4, it's the first sermon of Jesus, right? And it says in Luke 4, verse 16, he opened up the scroll of Isaiah. Have y'all seen how big Isaiah is? Okay, it's big, 66 books, right? Can you imagine if I had told you, "Hey, can you just go find that in Isaiah for me?" What he quoted or actually what he read was from chapter 61. If you tell me to go to chapter 61 then I know we're at the end. It's a means to locate and to memorize, it doesn't have anything to do with the inspiration or the preservation of. It's a tool to help us, if that makes sense.

[unintelligible]

Right, they go 10 to 12, correct. So the proverbial missing verses, can I ask the question, when did that happen? That happened in the mid 1840s is when that happened. There were a couple of, I love to do this, so forgive me, scholars who decided that they were going to look at things a little bit differently and it was in 1844 that the first publication came out that was accessible to the public that did not contain those respective verses. It was in 1844. Does that help out a little bit there? So, anybody else on that one? Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Oh, I failed to mention a whole lot of stuff. I just thought we'd stay kind of on topic here. Oh yeah. So all right great. So his observation is these three disagree. Well, I mean the fact that it doesn't have Hebrews chapter 10 on is a pretty big disagreement. What you'll realize is these three may not contain those 17 but among them, oh my, it's all kinds of he said, she said, upside down, inside out, all kinds of mess that goes on. Yes sir.

[unintelligible]

Okay, I trust you. Oh yes, okay. What he's saying is they've done some laser studies of some of these documents and discovered where things have been changed. Oh yeah, oh absolutely. That's correct, because that's what they thought about it. All right, so let's get real practical for a moment, okay? If you are composing a document, now by the way, we

just read 2 Peter 1:20, right? Comes from God. Let's just talk about you, personally, alright? Let's say that you have a communication, this is, what I'm about to say has nothing to do with scripture, but it does. You are writing a document to somebody that is of such great value, you need to make sure that everything said is said exactly the way you want it said, right? You do realize that when you edit it, you take away, you don't ever add. So I would argue the fact that they've taken away means it's been edited because every paper I ever wrote growing up, the original manuscript was always longer than the final one because I realized, "Well, I can shorten that, I can say that differently." So whether it's the end of the gospel of Mark which is one of the things that's in question, I would say the longer or the present reading would have been the original one. So anybody else on that one? Yes sir.

[unintelligible]

Yes, all scripture is inspired by God. It is. Great question. What would the early church call scripture? Go to Luke chapter 4. You're getting to get a heads up for Sunday morning. You get a three-minute nap this Sunday morning. Here we go Luke chapter 4, and there's a host of passages that I could go to. Verse 17, "And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written." Alright now fast forward to the right to the book of Romans chapter 15. Romans chapter 15. Romans chapter 15 here we go. Romans chapter 15 verse 4. Now the book of Romans kind of right in the middle chronologically of the letters that were given to us through whom we know as the Apostle Paul. It says, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime," now last time I checked that means in the past right? There you go, "were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." In other words, the book, the term scriptures in the New Testament is a reference to the Old Testament. 1 Corinthians 15, Jesus lived, died, rose according to the scriptures," which would be the Old Testament. So what we know as the Old Testament was considered the scriptures by the New Testament individuals until the New Testament came around and then the totality would have been. Is that going where you were going, maybe, sort of kind of not really? Can I help you out better?

[unintelligible]

Oh, great question. So when you have a portion of scripture, for lack of a better term, that tends to quote another portion of scripture, was there the, quote, circulation thereof? Is that what you're asking? Oh, absolutely. In fact, just read how the letters begin. Think about, for example, the book of Galatians, "To the churches in Galatia." Churches plural. In other words, this was to be given and passed around. If we're going to go get in the weeds a little bit, you know we call the gospel of Matthew, correct, you do know that there were people in the first century impersonating Matthew and writing false gospels. The advantage we had is we had Matthew who said, "No, that's not mine." And then when it would get passed to another congregation, someone said, "Well, how does that compare to the Matthew we have?" They said, "Well, the real Matthew told us that was his." See, we have this testimony, and that is why, by the way, when we talk about these 17 verses, we can get all hot and bothered, we can argue, scream, and yell, but one of the

things that I want to make note of, well, there's a group of people we call the early church fathers, okay? These are guys that lived from about 100 AD to about 300 AD, all right? They were the first individuals that communicated with each other and on behalf of the church. When they wrote back and forth, I think this is going to help you a little bit, they quoted what you and I know as the New Testament. They quoted every single verse in the New Testament but those 17 verses to each other back and forth, if that makes any sense. And the reason is, if you want to really get in the weeds for a moment, is while these church fathers were writing to one another, there was this heresy that they were fighting against called Arianism. Arius was the propagator of it that claimed that Jesus wasn't truly God. And what we know as the manuscript that came after that fact contained the verses that were being debated about during that fact. Notice the verses we've read, most of them deal with who Jesus is and what he came to accomplish and what his purpose was because that's what we were fighting.

One of the things that I think we take for granted, for the first 300 years after Jesus rose from the grave the church was discussing who Jesus was. And by the way, they didn't have Google and they didn't have YouTube, and a lot of times they would ask a question and it might be years before they'd find someone who would have the answer to it, you know? And we have these things way back in the day, they had these formal gatherings, they called them councils, and you say why do those councils last for seven years? Because it takes a lot to get everybody together, you know? And so there was a passing around, there was a... and I would claim when you have something in 1 Timothy that appears to borrow from a gospel, whatever it is, to me that verifies versus contradicts. It brings unity to it. Any other textual issues. Yes sir.

[unintelligible]

Oh yeah. Oh yeah, the questions you can't answer. Oh, I can have fun with every Bible version out there. If we wanted to waste all of our time tonight, I could have so much fun with y'all. I could spin y'all's heads upside down inside out.

[unintelligible]

Hush. Yeah. So, but I agree with you sir, but just for our sake tonight, ask the first question. What's the harm of those verses? I agree with you. Second question, why would you not want them? And the third question, why do all these suspect places have that in common?

[unintelligible]

I know that. Again, any other textual questions? Moving on, we're moving on. Oh, yes sir, never mind, yes sir.

[unintelligible]

Ah, the Dead Sea Scrolls. The Dead Sea. You knew that was coming, friend. The Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in an area called Qumran, basically south side of the Jordan River, 1947-ish is when they were discovered. What do they have to do with any of this? So the Dead Sea Scrolls do not contain any of what we know as the New Testament. This is all New Testament stuff, right? Real quickly, what they do for us is they validate what we know as the Old Testament because within the Dead Sea Scrolls was a copy of the Old Testament at least 100 years before the time of Jesus that contained all of the Old Testament except for the book of Esther. And so, therefore, Jesus was not a self-fulfilled prophet. It was spoken of in advance, and he literally fulfilled it. Now, here's what's interesting. In the last 12 months, because they're still finding documents there, they found Esther. So, Esther was found. So, therefore, we can say, thanks to the Dead Sea Scrolls, that the entirety of the Old Testament existed at least 100 years before the life, death, resurrection of Jesus, which meant that it wasn't written after the fact. That's what's important to them. Yes sir, second question.

[unintelligible]

Ah, is there a modern translation? The only true, now when you use the word modern, you understand we're talking about thousands of years here. The only, in English, the only English translation that is purely that TR is what we call the old King James. Then there's what we call the New King James, which is about 98% that and about 2% the other. Then we had, you know, the Holman Standard Bible. There tends to be just a striata, if that makes any sense. But today, the only one that is purely just that one is what we call the Old King James. But 1611 is modern compared to the Old Testament. So you ask for a modern translation. There you go. It's in English. So, anybody else on that one?

We're moving on. It says, "Referencing Job chapter 14 verse 5," oh, I love that verse, "is man's idea of transhumanism possible or probable?" The simple answer is no. Okay, let's go to Job chapter 14. Book of Job, chapter 14. By the way, while we're speaking of the text of scripture, if we were going to go back and study, even though Genesis describes the beginning, and we know that Moses was given the words directly from the Lord, what we know as the book of Job was actually the first book of the Bible, for lack of better terms, that was put into print, if that makes sense, okay? It is technically the oldest book of the Bible and if you go back and look at all the individuals that are mentioned with the friends of Job and such, most likely, now don't hold me to it but most likely Job was a contemporary of the grandkids and great-grandkids of Abraham, okay? So that just kind of gives you a historical thing.

Job chapter 14 verse 5. Actually, I'm going to back up to verse 1 because it's just a great passage, but verse 5 has this incredible truth. It says, "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not. And dost thou open thine eyes upon such an one, and bringest me into judgment with thee? Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one. Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass." Now transhumanism, if memory serves me correctly, is this concept or this idea that we through technology and research and

innovation whether it be through synthetic organs and such, that we can prolong, elongate and supersede life is you and I know it. Okay, we can go on and create kind of our own immortality. Now what I just read in Job chapter 14 says that your days are numbered. Okay, and so I would argue that you can create whatever you want in the lab. You can implement whatever you want. At the end of the day, no matter how smart you think or we think we are, God knows what he's doing and God has, quote, determined our days.

Now, you go into the book of Proverbs, and it says that a fool can shorten his days. This question is regarding lengthening our days, okay? And so therefore, even though I'm an advocate, not that you can tell, but I'm an advocate of taking care of one's body, okay? Even though I'm an advocate of health, I would argue that you can prevent foolishness of shorting your days, but you cannot elongate or prolong your days, no matter how technological that we seem to think we can get. And now, with all types of intelligent items that we have out there, there's thoughts of taking our bodies and freezing them, taking our brains and transplanting them, and all these kind of things, and at the end of the day, I got news for you, you get what God gives you and it's over. End of story. You know, there's people spending a whole lot of money trying to get an extra couple of days. I'm being honest, they really are. So I think this idea, in theory, is possible, but biblically, no. The Lord has said I don't think so.

Now, you can shorten your days. A fool can shorten his days. You say, "Really, I can shorten my days?" Sure. I can go to the top of the Empire State Building and say, God has determined me to live 70 years, watch this. Whew! Guess what happens? Y'all be doing my funeral next week. Is it not foolish to do that? A fool can shorten his days. Absolutely. But I don't think we can elongate them. The Bible says we can't add a hair to ourselves and we can't add a cubit to our height. What makes us think we can add years? So, that being said, anybody, we're good? Everybody's good? Yes, sir?

[unintelligible]

Oh yeah, God knows everything. Yep. Right. Oh, absolutely. Oh yeah, absolutely, you're right. So if God has determined you 70 years and you decide to go jump off the Empire State Building at 50, so God knows, yes. But what's interesting about this verse is God is determined in the sense of, in context here, Job is basically questioning why he's still alive. "I'm suffering, I've lost everything. Why am I here?" And in Job 14 it says because God has determined you to be here, if that makes sense. So again, I'll go to Isaiah 55. It's kind of a good default here, "His ways are not our ways. His thoughts are not our thoughts." He's God, you're not. So, all I'm saying tonight is if you think you can say, "Hey God, watch this," you're in trouble. Okay, that's the reason.

"Do you think," oh boy, "do you think King Solomon is in heaven?" I don't know. That's a tough question. If memory serves me, hold on, time out, hold on, hold on. Hold on, give me just a moment, time out, push pause, talk among yourselves. Talk among yourselves. I was just double checking before I said it. Okay, he's not listed in Hebrews 11. Hebrews chapter 11 is the hall of fame of faith. Now, those are not the only 32 people that are in heaven. I realize that. I just, I would hate to say he's not, and then he's listed there, but

oops, yeah, he's there. In other words, we know that we know that we know that those folks are, okay? Here's the issue that we've got here, guys, and I'm just gonna quote, call it what it is. In the Old Testament, whether you're Solomon or whether you're Saul, that's a good one we're debating as well, okay, those are characters that did not have the blessing that you and I have, okay? You say, "What do you mean the blessing you and I have?" Jesus has come, he has lived, he has died, and he has risen from the grave. Okay, and because that that atonement, his blood has been offered and it has been given and our sins have been paid for, when we call on him, according to what the Bible says, we can know that we know that we know we are his children, we are part of his family, and we have a seat in the heavenlies, okay? Not even David had that privilege. You say, "What do you mean David didn't have that privilege?" I mean, by the way, David is in Hebrews 11, right? No question. But go to Psalm 51 for a moment. Psalm 51. There is a prayer that David offers. This is post-Bathsheba, so to speak. In Psalm 51, David makes a very interesting statement that you don't have to worry about making. Verse 11, David, faithful to God, trusting God, writing scripture on behalf of God, leading for God, messed up. Verse 11, "Cast me not from thy presence and take not thy Holy Spirit from me." Now you say, "Where's the contrary there?" Jesus said in the gospel of John that we are in his hand and nobody or nothing can pluck us out. David couldn't say that, all right? At the same time, we have passages like Jesus, "I'll never leave you, I'll never forsake you." Our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. We could go into all those passages, right? And the reason that David didn't have that privilege is that because the perfect blood of God had not been shed. Hadn't been shed yet. And so therefore, there are characters like Solomon who at first did, he did pretty good, right? But what about the end? Didn't turn out well. In fact, you go back in the Old Testament, one of the things you'll discover is that 75 of the men and the women who started off for the Lord did not end well.

So you say, "What do you say about them?" I don't know. That's why John chapter 5 verse 22 is so important. It says all judgment is left to Jesus. It's all left to him. I don't know about Solomon in his walk with him. I don't know. All I know is we don't have a confirmation and we don't have an affirmation. We don't have it. Now, you say, "Well, why would God allow someone to be used like that?" Hold on. He's God. We're not. It's not our ways, not our means. And so we don't know. I hate to say we don't know what we don't know. So one day, I hope he's there. I mean, I do. I hope everybody's there. The problem is not everybody's there. So it's a great question that we just can't answer. Now, if he was in Hebrews chapter 11, we can answer it. We know those 32 are there, right? They're listed. They're verified.

It says, "We know that Peter was married." Absolutely. "Is there any evidence that the other apostles were married?" This is an interesting question because Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law. Last time I checked, if you have a mother-in-law, you're married, right? Just thought, yeah, absolutely. James, John, the other guys, there's no reference to, there's no mention of. Many of them, shall I say most of them, here's what the Bible describes. They left their nets and followed Jesus. You say, "Well, what does that mean?" They weren't married. They weren't married. You say, "What do you mean they weren't married?" Are you serious? You really think I'm going to be out fishing one day and decide I'm not going home anymore and I'm going on a three year journey with this guy. I

don't need to tell Tracy, it's all good. They weren't married. There's no way. They weren't married. It just says they left their nets and took off. Nah, they weren't married. And there is no reference in scripture to them quote, being married. Okay? There's just no reference at all. So, it's not there. Now, again, I say this occasionally on Wednesday nights. If I show up to heaven one day, and James of Zebedee shows up and goes, "Looky here, preacher." It's okay. I'm sorry, didn't mean to defame you. The Bible didn't tell me, okay, because it doesn't tell us.

All right, it says, "If you subscribe to original sin, you believe you are born sinful, would sinners be in the book of life?" Okay, there's like 14 layers here. Let's let's work this out, okay? In the book, what we know as the quote-unquote book of life, the first time that's used in your Bible is in the book of Exodus chapter 31 and 32. The last time it is used in your Bible is in the book of Revelation chapter 21, okay? In the first occurrence of this passage or of this statement, it says that they were written in the book and that the desire was not to have your name blotted out. Okay, later in chapter 21 of Revelation, it talks about that their names were not blotted out of the quote book of life. The issue of original sin, we've got to kind of parse this out tonight, okay, because we all believe in this at some level but we probably don't believe it the way that Augustine believed it, okay? Augustine, theologian of years gone by, was the one who, notice this, originated original sin. Do y'all like how I said that? Okay, he originated this concept. What you need to understand that I'm just going to go ahead and call it out for what it is, Augustine, now by the way, he was a Roman Catholic monk, he believed that the very act that procreated a child was sinful. Now those of you that are married ought to be getting real upset with Augustine right now, okay? And you say, "Why did he believe that?" Psalm 51. That passage, if you still got it out, let's see what it says here. Psalm 51, it says, verse 5, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me."

So Augustine believed that the act of sin, now by the way can we just push pause there? You do realize that even though Noah sinned, God told him to replenish the earth. Right? So God's not gonna go tell us something that's sinful, correct? So that's strike one, right? So that's what we believe. And then, because a child was conceived in sin and born in sin, according to his sacramental works-based theology, that child, on its very first day of life, is subject to hell if it dies and so that is why in that system of theology they baptize babies because they believe that they've washed their sin away. I'm just telling you what they believe, okay? And so that is the original sin doctrine.

Now, I would claim biblically it's not viable. The act of procreation is not sinful if done God's way. Okay, we come into the world, are we depraved? Yes, 1 Corinthians chapter 15 says in Adam all die. We have a quote-unquote sin nature, right? We possess it. Don't believe it? Volunteer in the preschool. You'll see it. I promise it's there. But just because you believe that we are all sinful creation who bring forth sinful creatures, that is not a subscription to original sin the doctrine. Original sin the doctrine means that something sacramental must be done on behalf of that baby immediately so that if they were to perish unfortunately they would not descend into hell. But we know that in the book of Deuteronomy chapter 1, verse 39, they're going to the Promised Land, it says, until they

were able to understand between good and evil, they were not held accountable. And so I got news for Augustine, unbeknownst to him, God is a God of grace not of legalism.

And so what has happened is that has propagated a system of theology that says that from the day one is literally conceived, things must be done and boxes must be checked to make sure that that person doesn't end up in the wrong place even if they didn't have a clue what was going on around them. That's the doctrine of original sin. So when we say the doctrine, that's not the same as saying that we're shaped in sin. Does that make sense? There's a difference there. Are we inclined to sin? Yes. Are we depraved in sin? Of course. But at the same time, you are not held accountable for that which you're not aware of, if that makes sense. So would they be in the book of life? According to Exodus we're in the book of life until we don't believe in or marked out of the book of life. So you start off but then they can go sideways. Questions, book life, we're good? Oh I'm sorry, back row, yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Proverbs 22:26. Sure, well, I say sure, I don't know if I can help you at all. Ah, yes. Now, one of the beautiful things about Proverbs is you can't necessarily read it in context, because a lot of the statements are independently of their own. It says, "Be thou not one of them that strikes hands, or of them that are sureties for debts." In modern day language, be careful cosigning anything.

Now, let me describe what a proverb is. A proverb is not a guarantee, it's a more likely than not this is how it works out. There are exceptions to every rule, but the exceptions don't make the rules. In the book of Proverbs, it basically says, if this is how you behave and this is how you believe, this is generally how it works out. So, when it makes the statement, "Be thou not one that strikes hands, makes an agreement with, or them that are surety for debts," it's basically warning... by the way, if you do not know this, the book of Proverbs will help you with three major issues: strong drink, bad women, and bad money. I'm serious. And so it's warning us. Now, again, you do whatever God's telling you to do, so I'm not here to tell you what to do, but it's interesting, years ago, I had an individual that was in my life, he's no longer, he has since passed, that, you know, sometimes you know those folks that are just great business folks, they just know how to do money? They're just good, right? So one day I found myself in an environment where I was kind of hanging out with him. I said, "Hey, you know, I'm a young guy. What's some of the best financial advice you'd give me?" Without, I mean, without missing out, he said, "Never co-sign for anybody." He said, "Man, I have lost more money and almost gone to prison because of other people's stupidity." That's what that verse is talking about, because when you co-sign, basically it says somebody else can default and you're on the hook for it. You're on the hook for it.

Now lest I be called a hypocrite, you know we have housing institutions in our neighborhood or in our area that if you are an 18-year-old college student, they will not allow you to be on the hook for your rent. So I have signed those documents, but I have made it very clear to the original signee that I'm allowing them to live, but they're gonna

pay the rent. Does that make sense? So that's what it's warning us about. Be careful, be cautious, and have warning on those issues. Does that help out a little bit? Yep. Because it'll get you in trouble. Quick. But I'm serious. If you're struggling with money, read Proverbs. If you're struggling with the opposite sex, read Proverbs. If you're struggling with strong drink, read Proverbs. I'm serious because it warns you about all that stuff and where it can take you. I mean, every time I read Proverbs 7, it scares me. You say, "What do you mean it scares you?" Because it talks about women taking to bed and sending you to hell. You say, "What are you scared about?" I mean, I'm not scared of doing it, I'm just the visualization of what that does. It says, stay away. It talks about the fragrance. Never mind. OK, here we go. Anything else on Proverbs? Hey, I read verses like you just brought up like, oh, I signed my son's loan. I mean, I panic. I'm like, ah, not good.

All right, Luke chapter 8. "Why did Jesus tell the family to tell no one what he did?" Great, great, great question. So many, many, many times in the gospels, Jesus performs a miracle, does a great work, miraculous work, and he tells people, "Don't say anything." Now, the academic world, put air quotes around that, the academic world, you go research this, go Google it, they'll say, "Oh, that's the Messianic secret." You say, "The Messianic secret?" That's their way of saying that Jesus was trying to keep his identity a secret. You know what that is? That's called rubbish. You say, "What do you mean rubbish?" Well, in John chapter 10, Jesus said he was so much God in flesh that Abraham was excited when he saw him and he got everybody upset. Jesus never hid his identity from anybody. What he did do is he told those who were the recipients of his virtue, as the Bible says, or the miracles taking place, he told them to not tell anybody because here's the reality, they didn't understand. They didn't get it. My favorite example is Matthew chapter 16. Matthew chapter 16, Peter declares, "You're the Son of God. You're the one that we've been waiting on. You're the guy." And Jesus says, "Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my Father which is in heaven." Whoa, that's good stuff. Within the same chapter, Jesus tells Peter, "Get behind me, Satan." You say, "What do you mean?" Because Jesus said, "I'm going to go to a cross, I'm going to die, and I'm going to raise from the dead," and Peter said, "Not on my watch you're not." Peter didn't get it and many of the recipients of these miracles, they saw him as a miracle, or they saw him as a Messiah, but they didn't get the whole story. And you go into John chapter 2, and Jesus turns the water into wine. He flips over the tables of Passover. He starts talking about the temple being torn down and rebuilding in three days. And it says in John chapter 2 that after he rose from the dead, they understood what he meant. They didn't get it in real time. They got it once he came back from the dead. And they're like, "Ah, this is it." So Jesus wasn't telling people to be secretive. Jesus wasn't telling people to hush. Jesus was saying, "If you don't know what you're talking about, don't open your mouth." That should be a Proverb which means we'd have a lot of silence in our world. So, but that's a really good question. Anything on that one? It's pretty simple.

Okay, we're down to like a couple minutes. Oh, yes. This is a good one to end on. "My former church does a pet blessing. Does the Bible say anything about a pet blessing?" Y'all know about churches that bless pets? Y'all know about that? You bring your pets and they bless them. You say, "What does the Bible say about that?" I'm going to give you a guess between zero and ten. You pick. Zero. There ain't nothing in your Bible

about blessing your pets. Not at all. Now lest I'll be condemned, you know what the Bible says in Proverbs? You're my Proverbs guy. Proverbs chapter 10 verse 12, "A righteous man takes care of his beast. A righteous man takes care of his animals." In other words, a man who fears the Lord and loves the Lord understands the animal kingdom was given on our behalf. We take care of them. It doesn't say we bless them. Okay, doesn't mean we sanctified them. By the way, there are churches that do the blessing of motorcycles too. Oh yeah, oh absolutely. I think we ought to bless some teenagers, but that's okay.

At the end of the day, listen at the end of the day the thing that we need to understand is this, according to Ecclesiastes chapter 3, verses 19 through 21, what we know as the animal kingdom is definitively different than what we know as the human kingdom. We are different entities. We are different creations. We're different creatures for different purposes, okay, and at the end of the day, I got news for you, you do realize that we don't even bless people. You say, "What do you mean bless people?" When's the last time we had a service where somebody walked up we started slinging stuff all over them? We don't, right? You know why? You know why you don't need that? Because if you're a believer in Jesus Christ, you have the Holy Spirit within you. You don't need me or somebody else to bless you. All right? You're good, if that makes sense. So again, do we take care of our animals? Yes. Do we bless them? No. There is no biblical evidence for it at all. It is a tradition. It is a rite. It is a ritual. It is something that people do because they want to, not because the Bible says so, if that makes sense.

Now, that's a great challenge because that started out with "my former church," okay? I'm going to twist this with the last minute we got, whether it's your former church or whether it's your current church, okay, our goal should strive to be as biblical as possible, whatever that means. And so it doesn't matter if it's a Baptist or something else. It doesn't matter if it's a former church or current church. Our goal should be as biblical. And when we find things in our life that we may like, approve of, and enjoy that are not biblical, then we need to adjust ourselves and not try to adjust the Bible to fit what we want it to be. How is that for going 360 all the way around?

Alright, that being said, before I pray and we close, next week there are no Wednesday night activities, none at all. You can come and do a private prayer meeting in the parking lot if that's what you want to do. All right? But next Wednesday night, nothing on our campus, everything at your house, hopefully getting ready for some type of expression of thanks and gratitude. And by the way, as we roll into this season, please be thankful to God for all the blessings that he has bestowed to you, all of the benefits he's bestowed to you, and the very fact that unlike some folks we talked about in the Old Testament, you can call on the name of the Lord and he will forgive you and he will save you. He will change you and he will put you a seat in heaven. That is worth being very grateful and thankful for tonight. So with that being said, let me pray and we'll roll out.

Lord Jesus, we are grateful, we are thankful that as your word says as while we were yet sinners, while we were yet in rebellion, that Christ died for us. God, we can't fathom that kind of love, we can't fathom that kind of grace, but we thank you for it. And God, as we roll out of here, may we be grateful not just for salvation, may we be grateful for your

word, may we be thankful that even with the great questions of life, that your word is designed to be studied, it's been designed to be read, it's been designed to be lived out. God, guide us in your word to seek out the answers in your word and may we be found faithful to your word and to nothing else. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.