

## Ask Jeff 1.17.19

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All right, I guess they call it a New York minute, right? A New York minute. Welcome to First Baptist, Opelika, our Wednesday evening Ask Jeff and Bible study. If you didn't receive one of the prayer bulletins, there are some on the back table there. Go ahead and grab a prayer bulletin.

Let me read a Scripture to you that's really been an encouragement to me over the past several days. It's out of 1 Timothy 2. The Apostle Paul is writing to Timothy and he's telling Timothy as a young pastor in the church of Ephesus, he is encouraging Timothy and admonishing Timothy about how to conduct himself as a pastor of a church and he says this, "I exhort therefore that first of all," the priority, what should be number one, "supplication, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men." Prayer is the priority of the church and ought to be the priority in my life and the priority in your life. One of the things I like about our church is when we gather together for worship on Sunday, the pastor opens up our services in prayer, he prays before he preaches the word of God, he prays after he preaches the word of God, and one of the things that we can do to help in the auditorium is pray as the pastor is preaching, pray that he will be filled with the Holy Spirit of God, pray that the Holy Spirit of God will give him just the right words to communicate a truth, pray for the Holy Spirit of God to bring conviction on people that they might get saved, get right with God. Amen? And then during the invitation when the pastor gives the invitation, asking people to come forward and making decisions for Christ, that would be a good time to pray also. Pray that the Holy Spirit of God would move on people's hearts and lives and that people will be obedient.

Now take your prayer list, if you would. We have some that are in the hospital at East Alabama Medical Center. You can pray for Charlotte this week and Betty, Amy, Robert, Maxine and Joseph. You'll notice a number of folks are in Arbor Springs, quite a long list of folks that are at home. You'll see where Misty is at St. Vincent's in Birmingham. Our sympathy is being extended to several families that are there, and you'll notice we have some missionary prayer partners as we usually do and, of course, we always want to make sure that we pray every day for members of the military, not only those that are listed on this sheet but those that are serving around the world in the United States armed forces.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer, shall we, and then we'll begin our Bible study this evening.

*Heavenly Father, you are good, you're gracious and kind to us. Lord, you've given us everything that we need to live lives that are pleasing to you, to live lives of godliness. Lord, you've given us the comfort of the Holy Spirit of God. You've given us your word to guide us and to guard our hearts. And Father, as believers in Christ, we come before you on behalf of those that are on this list, Lord, those that are on our hearts, Lord, people that need a healing, Lord, people that need comfort, people that are lonely and discouraged, people that are depressed, Lord, folks that are serving in the military, those on the mission field, those that are in hospitals, those that are homebound. Lord, you know all the needs of these people, all various needs and, Lord, you are the only one that can meet those needs. So Father, we do pray that you would meet those needs, meet them physically, emotionally, spiritually, socially. All these things we bring before you and ask for you to hear our cry and to work in lives in such a way that brings honor and glory to the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray, heavenly Father, that you'd make us sensitive to the needs of those that are around us. We pray, Lord, that we would have a consciousness of your presence at all times and, Lord, that we might be aware of the opportunities that you give us every day to tell other people about your love, your grace, and the salvation that we can enjoy through Christ. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

All right, good evening, First Baptist. How is everybody? All right, all right. Well, I do want to welcome you if this is your first time to Wednesday nights at First Baptist. I also want to welcome our radio audience, 97.7 will actually be listening to this on Sunday morning, but both of you, welcome to our Wednesday night Bible study. And I'll explain kind of how Bible study works in just a minute but I do want to give a public service announcement. You may or may not be aware of these events. I know probably one you are, one not so much. On February 7, that's on a Thursday evening, Christian comedian Tim Hawkins is going to be with us. We actually have less than 70 tickets left so if you're wanting to be a part of that event and come that night, we encourage you to go ahead and acquire those tickets so you can be a part of it. And just a few days after that on February 10, this should be the first time any of you hear about this because it is brand new information, there is going to be a pretty well-known gospel quartet group coming through town known as Greater Vision. They are going to be with us Sunday night at 6 PM. It is a free concert. There will be a love offering that is taken up that evening but we wanted you to be aware of that as well. And so on February 7, we have Tim Hawkins. February 10, we have Greater Vision. Both going to be wonderful nights. One is ticketed and running out of tickets, the other one it's just a come and free-for-all, everybody come and we'll just see how many people we can get in the building, if that sounds like a good time. So I wanted you to be aware of those two events upcoming.

Now for Wednesday nights here, the way that our Bible study goes it's divided into two sections. The first section is a Q and A time where you have the opportunity to ask any question you want from the word of God, Christianity, what we may say complementary or contradictory faiths, world systems, philosophies, whatever it may be with this one intent, not to give a denominational opinion, not to even give a local church opinion but to see what does the Bible, what does the word of God say about that issue or that question. Typically that's the first half. The reason I say typically is there are some nights

not just the number of questions that come into our website but the number of hands that go in the air, those questions get somewhat prolonged and that is wonderful, we love to facilitate them. We typically roll the second half into our prescribed Bible study which currently right now we find ourselves in the 16th chapter of the book of Revelation.

Now regarding the Q and A time, typically we have a database where these questions are submitted on [fbcopelika.com/askjeff](http://fbcopelika.com/askjeff). They come in a random algorithm. However because of our Bible reading program where we we're walking through as a body of believers either a chapter or in case of today two chapters a day, one of the things I wanted to do is there are a lot of questions coming in regarding our Bible reading program, so rather than just pushing this random button, we pushed another filter that allows the question that was submitted most recently to rise to the top so that we can hopefully, can't guarantee it, but hopefully address some of the questions from our Bible reading that we've been going through during the week.

Now some of you may be thinking, well, that's great, I love like right now we're walking through the book of Exodus, about to go into Romans, you may be thinking that's great but I've had this question, I submitted it a long time ago and based on this new system it's never going to come up. Well, resubmit it. Go ahead and resubmit it and it will rise to the top as well.

So that being said, we are going to go to the database. First question: will we know each other in heaven? Now for some of you, you're thinking I hope so, others of you are thinking I hope not. So let me address that question not from what we hope but what the Bible says.

The first passage of Scripture that I want you to turn to is the book of 1 John. The book of 1 John, then we're going to go to Revelation, then we're going to go to the gospel of Matthew just to kind of give you a head start there. The book of 1 John 3. There is a statement about our future in a place the Bible calls heaven and this passage in 1 John 3, it alludes to, number one, who we are, our identity, our relationship to Jesus Christ, and how our relationship with Jesus Christ affects one day not only our presence in but our possible appearance and more importantly per the question, our relationships in heaven.

Now it begins in 1 John 3:2, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God." Now I'm going to push the pause button for just a moment. In the gospel of John 1:12 it says to those who believe on Jesus Christ, they are given the right or the privilege to be declared the sons of God. So when we read this verse when it says we are the sons of God, those are those individuals who believe on Jesus Christ alone for their salvation, all right? "We the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

So let me draw some parallels. What 1 John 3:2 is saying is we do not know exactly what we are going to appear and/or look like, however when Jesus Christ appears and there are several passages in your Bible such as 1 Corinthians 15, 1 Thessalonians 4 and others that talk about this time coming where the dead in Christ and the alive in Christ are raised

together to meet the Lord in the air, when he appears, at that trump sound that's declared there in one Thessalonians 4. When that happens it says that we shall be like him. Now there's a lot of things that we could infer from this passage. For example, in the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus Christ, he's on the road to Emmaus at one moment and literally in a nano second blink of an eye he's in another city multiple miles away. The disciples are gathered together in an upper room, he does not need to use the handle, he literally walks through the physical door. And so you see, here's what's important, we'll get to the relationship part, here's what's important about our post-resurrection eternal existence, appearance, or shall we say, bodies, that the physical limitations of this life are removed in the next. For example, Revelation 21 says our existence in the new heaven, new earth, new Jerusalem, there will be no more pain. Do we have any pain in the room tonight? We don't want to hear about it. All right, now next, there will be no more death. We've all experienced death at some level in our lives. And so when you look at that, those things that so constrain us and limit us and that we struggle with in the physical here are released are there. The fact that we will have bodies according to 1 Corinthians 15 that were mortal, now they are immortal. They were perishable now they are imperishable. So in a critical verse that when Jesus Christ appears, that we shall be like him.

Now I want you to back up or actually go forward a couple of pages to the book of Revelation 2, then we'll go to Matthew and we're going to get real specific because the main question was will we recognize, will we know each other. Well, we've just addressed the fact that we're going to look different. It's going to be different. You're going to have an existence that is immortal. You're going to have an existence that does not die. You're going to have an existence just like Jesus that was able to walk through certain barriers, appear in such and travel.

In Revelation 2, to the church at Pergamos in verse 17, I want you to hear the statement that is made about those who overcome, those who are in a relationship with Jesus Christ. Revelation 2:17 says, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." Now the reason I wanted you to turn to that passage is there is going to come a time way in the future where my eternal existence, my eternal life is in a place the Bible calls and describes as heaven. We've already found out from the Bible that my appearance will be different, my appearance, my limitations in today's flesh will be dramatically changed. We've also discovered from Revelation 2 that my name is not going to be Jeff. It says I have a new name. Now some of you may be wondering, well, what's your new name? I don't know. It says that nobody knows. So what you see is a pattern of newness. By the way, Revelation 21 says a new heaven, new earth, new Jerusalem, and so there is this construct happening of newness.

Now relationships in particular. Matthew 22. In Matthew 22, Jesus is having a discussion. The reason I say a discussion, those that came to him were having a debate but oftentimes when Jesus debated, it turned from a debate to a discussion real quick. These individuals are coming to Jesus and they're associated, they're known as the Sadducees. The

Sadducees had one primary theological position that they loved to debate and they loved to argue. They believed that there was no afterlife. They believed there was no eternity. They did not believe in what we would call a heaven or a hell. They believed that however many years of existence that you got on earth, that was it, it was over, there was no hope past that. A very contrary message to what Jesus was proclaiming, correct? Jesus was not only proclaiming that we could have abundant life now, we could have everlasting life then.

And so they struggled and so they come to Jesus in Matthew 22, beginning in verse 23, and I want you to hear this strawman argument that they pose to Jesus and I want you to hear his answer. It says, "The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him, Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother: Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. And last of all the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her." I love verse 29, "Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God." Verse 30, "For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven." So in that passage of Scripture it says not only that we will have a new name, we will not only have a new existence and a new body, but there will be a new way of relationships being established in this place that we know the Bible calls and describes as heaven.

Now I know that it is at this point there are some of you that get real upset because you've had a long-lasting, wonderful, God-centered marriage, and you read this passage and you say but that which has been so wonderful here won't exist as it does here there, and it makes you somewhat discontented, sad, whatever it may be. You do realize there are people right now who are celebrating and speaking in tongues, they are so excited about this verse. For those listening on the radio and the internet, there is a lot of headshaking going on in here. But I think what is critical for us to understand, and this is important, that that which we presume to be the greatest of things here might possibly be considered the least of things there. For example, last time I checked, there has not been a company I've ever seen here on planet earth in any state that I've lived in, any country that I've visited, that paves the road out of solid gold but yet in chapters 21 and 22 of the book of Revelation, the streets of the new heaven, they are described as being made of pure gold. That which we cherish here is the dirt there. So what this passage leads us to know, that whether it be our relationship as husband and wife, whether it be our relationship as siblings, as friends, whatever it may be, that our relationships to one another on the other side will far exceed even what we could imagine being great on the side.

Now let me address this personally, then we'll open up the floor. I've answered the question just as I have from Scripture, and I've had people over time ask me, they say does that not upset you, that one day your wife, Tracy, whom you love dearly, that you're not going to be sharing "a mansion with her" as John 14 says? I said, well, on this side, you know, the Apostle Paul said we look through a glass darkly now, we'll look through

one clearly then. I said, well, here's what I've done. I know from Scripture that we're not going to be sharing the same mansion, we're not going to be in the same relationship as we are today, but I have made a request to be her neighbor. So I've made that request. I don't know if she's made that request but, you know. But the reason I bring that up is, I know there's a lot of emotions that come with this and here's what I want you to hear about heaven in general, relationships in specific. According to what we've just read, there is recognition, there are new names, there are new relationships, and yet we are all called the children of the sons of God. So therefore you get this idea that there will be recognition, there will be knowledge of, there will be an understanding but it will be on such a greater level that whatever we consider the most intimate of relationships here will pale in comparison to our heavenly relationships there.

So with that being said, questions, concerns, rude comments? Real quick, in the back. Yes, ma'am.

[unintelligible]

Okay, what I'm saying is I think we're all going to have an unbelievably divine, heaven based recognition. You're going to recognize everybody but I don't think you're going to walk around going, "That's my child," because you're also going to have to walk around going, "Well, that's my ex-boyfriend." Yeah, that might be the other place. But do you understand how that works, because also in Revelation 21, it says that there will be no more pain, no more death, there is this phrase that says no more remembrance of former things, and here's what I would say to you, the relationship that you have even with your own son, that the relationship that you have with him will be of a greater value than it is today but you'll have that same relationship of that value with everybody that is there. Don't limit it to our human constructs.

So I heard this best explained, one of my dear dear mentors in life who has now recently passed away, Dr. Gene Williams, here's how he explained this to me once. We were having this conversation and he said, "Jeff, this is what you need to understand. One day when we're all in heaven, you need to understand that Tracy, your wife, is going to love me no less or no more than she loves you. Can you understand that?" I said, "Well, yes." He said, "What I cannot understand is that my wife is going to love you no less than me." And let me explain this, it kind of is like, have you ever heard the difference between a recession and a depression? A recession is when your neighbor loses their job, a depression is when you lose your job. When we're talking about somebody else, it's easy it's like, "Oh, well, of course, we're all going to recognize and know each other. It's going to be kind of equal." When we're talking about ourselves, all of a sudden it's like, "I don't like this."

So what I want you to understand is my body, your body, my name, your name, my physical lack of limitations are going to be so incredibly better there than here, that we've got to trust that the Lord also understands that about relationships. And I believe and one of the things that I defend is that I don't think that you're going to have to walk around heaven one day with a name tag on. I mean, I don't think you're going to have to go

around and say, "My name is," well, I don't know what my new name will be but let's just use today's context, "My name is Jeff. Who are you?" I don't know how it's going to work, the Lord knows what he's doing, but I will tell you this, Jesus Christ had a new body, correct, post-resurrection, lack of limitations post-resurrection, and when he walked in the upper room, none of the disciples said, "Now, who are you?" They knew who it was. So imagine them being in a post-resurrection state, him being in a post-resurrection state, and all of us, I just think that we have evidence that everything is so new that even the relationship however felt Lord works it out is going to be so far greater than we could ever imagine.

So, yes, ma'am.

[unintelligible]

No more remembrance. Go to Revelation 21. Well, the former things are passed, yes. So all right, verse 4 of Revelation 21, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." It's a new existence. It's a new everything. That's what I'm calling remembrance, yes, ma'am, because last time I checked, this old world is not fun and there's a lot of things that I don't want to remember, you now? And we tend and I've heard this statement from somebody before, it's a great statement, I've heard somebody make the statement that if a person who they loved who is currently in heaven could see what somebody who they dearly loved is doing on earth, if they knew it, could remember it, they would be in hell not heaven. Does that make sense?

So again, this is where the Bible says we live not by sight but by faith, and here's what I believe. I love my wife, I don't love my height but I love my wife, and I just believe that God is so good, so big, so powerful that what I consider the greatest here is going to pale in comparison to there. And I know it's not going to work this way but I kind of have to think this way, I think when you step into eternity, I think when you step into what we call the golden streets, I don't think there is one of you that is going to be like the Israelites in the wilderness and go, "We had it better in Egypt. Yeah, if I could just go back to that old place known as earth." I think you're going to go, I don't think there will be words. That's why Psalm 46:10 says stand in awe of God, without speech. So I just think it's going to be so good, so new. Again, I know sometimes we struggle but the thing I've noticed about this question is we always struggle with the relationships and the things we like and think all the things that we don't like will just be gone. You can't have it both ways.

Yes, ma'am, I saw your hand earlier.

[unintelligible]

Yes. Great point. Yeah, Matthew 17. I'm glad you brought that up. Jesus comes and Peter, James and John are up on the mountain and Jesus appears, well, actually Jesus goes

up with them and there appears with him Moses and Elijah. Peter opens his mouth like he always does except this time he's not inserting his foot. He says, "There's Moses and there's Elijah." No name tags. Jesus didn't tell them on the way who was going to be up there. These guys who have passed from this life, he immediately knew who they were. I don't know how they knew but they did. And so again, I'm glad you brought up that point. I just kind of get the idea of when we're in that resurrected state, we're just going to know, and it was an incredible experience that they had with them. It wasn't detrimental. It was so good, listen to this, that Peter, James and John said, "Let's build three tabernacles and not go back down." It was that good and they were not even in their post-resurrection bodies. It was good stuff.

Anybody else on this one? We're good to go? Yes, ma'am.

[unintelligible]

That's okay, they're in second grade, they'll forget by third grade. Yes, ma'am.

[unintelligible]

Yes, Audio Adrenaline.

[unintelligible]

I love that song.

[unintelligible]

You know, this question only could come from a Baptist. The question for those of you who couldn't hear, and there was an allusion drawn to a very popular song in the 90s talking about God lives in a big big house, with a big big table, with lots and lots of food, and we've got big big yards, so we can play football. I mean, that's an SEC song if I've ever heard one. But that being said and the way that that song is written is to give a lot of illustration to the greatness of heaven, is what it is. She was asking having taught that to second graders, did she mislead them by talking about, you know, the joys of what would you want to eat at the table? And the question was, okay, we talk about all the bad things being gone but what about the good things?

Well, interestingly the Bible talks about the marriage supper of the Lamb. It also talks about in Revelation 22 that they ate the fruit of the tree. So if there's one thing we Baptists got right, we're practicing for heaven right now with all this eating that we do. No, but one thing I will say whether it's second graders, whether it's 20 year old, you do understand that when we start talking about heaven whether it's the physical appearance, the relationships therein, our minds and our constructs now are limited. We cannot fathom, we cannot imagine and so we use illustrations, we use examples to help us where we are. And again, I think it's fine what you do with second graders, I'm just saying we cannot let our illustrations define it but just help us picture it. And one of the phrases that



I like to use anything describing heaven, is better than. Imagine the best dinner ever, it's better than that. On the opposite hand, would you allow me to say that hell is worse than? Worse than anything we could imagine. As bad as we think it could be, it will be worse than. Heaven will be better than. And we use illustrations whether we're in second grade or we're full grown adults. We have to kind of imagine things as described in Scripture, if that makes sense.

Now in that song that you alluded to, it's a fun song primarily written to teenagers and the theme of the song basically is that God has a plan that is bigger and better than anything you can imagine. Get on that plan. And so I don't get theologically upset with some of those constructs they use because the purpose was to lead them to understand the goodness and the grace of God, not the actual physical dimensions of heaven, if that makes sense.

[unintelligible]

Ah, the question about senses.

[unintelligible]

I can go down the food route. Jesus ate fish in his post-resurrection body. Do you notice a theme here? There's a lot of eating. No. Now you know the big question is do you get to eat all you want and not gain weight? That's what I call heaven.

But the question she's asking is what about our senses? I want you to go back to Revelation 6 and I think I can help a little bit but I may not be able to help a whole lot. Again, please hear me clearly. When we start talking about heaven, when we start talking about hell, a lot of even the Scriptures we're putting together, we're having to postulate here. The Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 12 is caught up into the third heaven, he is caught up into the throne room and he comes back and he says, "I can't even really explain what I saw. It is so incredible it's even beyond description," all right? In Revelation 6 beginning in verse 9, there are a group of people who have been martyred. Now this is during that great tribulation time and we'll talk about that in just a moment when we hit our Revelation study. In verse 9 of chapter 6, "when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled." Now again, we are getting just a little sliver or a glimpse here of those who were believers in this life on earth who are now, they have been killed for their faith so therefore they're under the altar in a place we would call heaven, I want you to notice that they are able to speak. They are able to wear robes. It says they are under so you get the idea their posture. All I would say to that is there is the idea that the senses much like appearance and names will be maybe not different but new as well because they are experiencing some type of sensation. There's a

lot of those. When you have these occurrences in Scripture where you have whether it be in Revelation 6 or other passages, those who are dwelling in the presence of the Lord, there's a lot of speech, there's movement, there's, shall I say, structure to their shape. If you're wearing a robe, then you have an appearance that is very similar to what we know as a human appearance. In fact, 1 John 3 said we will appear as he does. When Jesus appeared, he was in a post-resurrection body but he didn't appear inhuman.

Does that make sense? Does that help at all?

[unintelligible]

Oh, sure.

[unintelligible]

Oh, yeah, you go...

[unintelligible]

Better than. Better than. In fact, it says in Revelation 21 that there is no need of the sun there because Jesus is the light thereof. Again, it's better than, you know, in all of those and so that's to me, maybe I'm being overly simple, I just like saying it's better than whether we're dealing with appearance, whether we're dealing with relationship, whether we're dealing with senses. It is better than which is so much better than worse than on the opposite side.

Now I don't want to embarrass anybody tonight but there is someone in the room who happens to be my mom that years ago I was debating this issue, and unlike the song you alluded to, I was wondering if baseball was going to be in heaven and I was having this theological debate in my mind because I was wondering there's no sin in heaven, how can you have baseball in heaven, somebody has got to win, somebody has got to lose, somebody can't throw a strike, somebody has got to have an error. So I'm debating this to which the great theologian that she is, notice I'm not making eye contact with her right now, she looked at me and she said, "Jeff, you can go to heaven or you can go to hell. Pick." Don't allow the description or the lack thereof taint your desire to be there. You know, I've heard people say, "Well, of such and such ain't there, I ain't going to heaven." Well, I guarantee the alternative is not pleasing in any respect. Don't make the decision based on our limited description thereof. It is better than.

Anything else on this one?

[unintelligible]

Yeah, 1 Corinthians 2:9 says if you try to put your mind around it, it's not going to happen. You're going to hurt yourself, if that makes sense.

So yes, ma'am.

[unintelligible]

Ah, the question of the white stone. Yes. Back in Revelation 2, now one of the neat things about Revelation 2 and 3 is there are these messages to the seven churches. Now those of you that have been part of our Revelation study, you know that all these churches are somewhat similar and yet a lot different, if that makes sense, all with the exception of two. So five of them have some kind of a condemnation, two of them are said you're doing great, okay? And so there are some similarities, there are some differences but at the end of every single one of them, every single one of them, it says "to him who overcometh," okay?

Now 1 John 4:4, 1 John 5:4 says that those who believe in Jesus Christ have overcome, okay? So let's just take that and kind of overlay it, that the very last promise of these two chapters of these seven churches, you have these incredible promises of not only who we are but what we have access to in Christ. Allow me to illustrate. In chapter 2, verse 7, this is to the first church at Ephesus, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." In other words, there is this promise in Christ we will not experience death and we will be in the paradise of God for all of eternity, all right?

Fast-forward to verse 10 of chapter 2, actually verse 11, I'm sorry. This is to the church at Smyrna, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." In other words, in Revelation 20 when that great and final judgment happens and those who have rejected Jesus Christ are sent to the place called the lake of fire, it says this is the second death. To those who are in Christ, you don't have to worry about that. So there are these incredible promises, okay?

To your point, ma'am, verse 17, "I will give him a white stone." This is in the language of the day, it's a conjecture really of the legal system where I'll just put it in our context, if you have a jury and you have someone on trial, that in biblical days what they would do is in that context if a black stone was given, you were guilty, a white stone you were innocent. So when it says there you're a white stone, you are declared innocent, okay? Not because of your own doing. Not because of your own abilities but because you've overcome, your relationship with Jesus Christ. You're given a stone, a white stone and you're given a new name, so it's declaring judiciously that you are declared innocent, all right? That's important because there is this big theological word called justification which means to be presented as innocent. The book of Jude says to stand faultless before him. So the great promise there is that we are declared innocent not because of ourselves but because of him. That white stone was the picture of one's innocence versus one's guilt.

Does that help at all with the white stone? Okay. Anybody else? I thought I saw a hand. Maybe not.

All right, moving on real quickly. I know we've got a Revelation study but next question says Exodus 29:20. All right, let's go. Exodus 29:20. Yes, ma'am. Somebody knows that verse by heart. Exodus 29:20. The question is what was the significance of putting the blood on the right thumb, right earlobe and the right big toe? I know some of you are thinking, "Huh?" Well, let's read it. Now let me go ahead and preface this. This is in the context of the sacrifices that the priests are giving on behalf of the people. This verse, there were burnt offerings that were given every day but there were sin offerings that were given at alternate periods. Verse 20 is dealing with a sin offering. So we're dealing with an offering for one's sin, all right, not just an acknowledgment of the goodness, the grace and the provision of God.

Verse 20, it says, "Then shalt thou kill the ram," notice the allusion to when Abram took Isaac up on the mount, "You shall take the ram, and take of his blood, and put it upon the tip of the right ear of Aaron, and upon the tip of the right ear of his sons, and upon the thumb of their right hand, and upon the great toe of their right foot, and sprinkle the blood upon the altar round about." So the question is what is the significance that God had them put the blood of the sacrifice for sin on the right earlobe, right thumb and the right big toe? Now this means of placing blood on the body of the priest, if you read the book of Leviticus there are several occurrences in Scripture. I think there's about half a dozen. I could be wrong about that but there's more than just this reference, and so the question is what is the significance? I know, I don't know who wrote the question but I know you're going to like the answer. Are you ready? I do not know. No, then the reference was I got you. Well, you ain't gonna get me a lot because there's a lot I don't know. The Bible does not explain why. The Bible explains what. Now why is that important? Because sometimes God tells you what to do without telling you why you're supposed to do it, and so if we have to know the why to every question, we'll never do the what. Notice what Aaron and his sons, they never argued. They never said, "But God, I like the left earlobe. But I like the left big toe."

Now there are some thoughts, there are many who have said, "Well, when you take the earlobe, you take the thumb and you take the big toe, it kind of represents the entirety of one's self and the sin was on behalf of the entirety of their sin." Again, we are making illusions, allegories and such and I don't think there's anything wrong with saying that, there is just no definitive answer. However, I will say that in Scripture, and do not get upset with me if you happen to be left-handed, my oldest son is, the right hand and the right foot and anything on the right side represented authority and power and the left hand not so much. If you've ever been to the Eastern world, do not offer your left hand to somebody, and if they offer their left-hand to you, do not touch it. Some of you go and research what that means, particularly when they don't have some of the updated facilities that we have in our culture. But when the Israelites would capture the kings of their enemies, you know one of the things they would do is cut off the right thumb and the right big toe so they could not grasp and they could not run away.

Now I'm not trying to read that into the passage, I'm just saying that here was a sacrifice given for sin, the totality of one's rebellion against God, and I think the fact that it is on the right side of the body is an allusion to the authority and the power – listen – that the

blood has because it was blood on the earlobe, it was blood on the thumb, blood on the big toe, and according to Hebrews 12 it says the only way to have remission from sins is the shedding of blood. So I think you have the power of blood displayed, the completeness with the way that it is put upon the bodies of the priests but, again, it's one of those things, we know the what, we are not specifically given the why in Scripture. Never let the absence of the why keep you from doing the what because I've got news for you, he doesn't tell everybody the why. For example, Abraham, David, Solomon, Paul, you, we're oftentimes just not told the why.

So anything about the priest putting blood on their thumbs, toes and earlobes? Everybody is good there? Aren't you grateful that we don't do that at church now? I mean, can you imagine how that church would have stunk, smelled. It would have been nasty. That's all I know.

So all right, let's move on to the book of Revelation. Chapter 16. Revelation 16, we find ourselves in what chapter 15 called the last plagues. Now if you are brand-new to us and you're thinking to yourself, "I am 15 chapters behind, how am I ever going to catch up?" At the pace we're going, you're just fine, don't worry about it. You're going to be good. But chapter 15 calls it the last plagues because in the book of Revelation beginning in chapter 6, ending in chapter 19, we have a time period that Jesus Christ himself called the great tribulation, a time period that the prophet Daniel called the 70th week, a time period that is called Jacob's trouble. This is a period of time that literally taken as seven years where the wrath of God is poured out on those who have rebelled against and rejected him.

Now there are three series of specific judgments that take place. There are what many of you are familiar with, the famous seven seals. Those seven seals take place at the beginning. Then there are what we know as the trumpets, and then there are what we call the vials. When we get to Revelation 16, we find ourselves with the description of the vials. Now tonight, time willing, we're going to go through the first five because when you get to the sixth one, you have a parallel and somewhat of a parenthetical to what we know as the battle of Armageddon.

So beginning in verse one it says,

1 And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels,  
Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth. 2  
And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a  
noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast,  
and upon them which worshipped his image. 3 And the second angel  
poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead  
man: and every living soul died in the sea. 4 And the third angel poured  
out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became  
blood. 5 And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O  
Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. 6  
For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given

them blood to drink; for they are worthy. 7 And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments. 8 And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. 9 And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory. 10 And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, 11 And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.

Now for those of y'all that are seasoned veterans to our Wednesday night Bible study, just if you would, give me a little bit of a leeway here because one of the things that I believe needs to be explained is there are two very diametrically opposed views to these three sets of judgments. There is one view that says there's only seven series of judgments and they're just described three different ways. The first one is described as a seal and then as a trumpet and then as a vial, etc. etc. That looks palatable when you compare the seals and the trumpets. You can kind of say, "Yeah, I kind of see it here but not there." When you get to the vials, the vials are completely contrary to the seals. For example, the first seal is opened up, it's the antichrist being revealed and death ensues. Well, the first vial is the mark of the beast that the antichrist is going to implement actually being spoiled, and so they're different. So as you walk through the vials, I think there is strong evidence that these are what chapter 15 said, these are the last plagues. In other words, we've already been through a bunch of them, here come a whole lot more.

Now what I have done on your outline is walk through these five vials and ask four very important questions: who, what, where and why. So the first vial in verse 2 is the exposure of the mark of the beast. Remember back in chapter 13 it said both great and small, free and bond, if anybody wanted to be able to do business, if anybody wanted to be able to do commerce, to live an existence of physical life on planet earth, they had to take this famous mark of the beast. All right, so in verse 2 it says that the vial's poured out, there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast. So who is it that is experiencing this horrific judgment? It's those who worship the image whom we know as the beast. So everybody who took the mark of the beast is experiencing this noisome, this grievous sore that takes place.

The next question and this is where this vial is intriguing: what takes place? It says a noisome and grievous sore. Some of your Bibles will say sores, plural. However I want us tonight just for the sake of argument just work with sore, singular, rather than plural and just work with me, I promise we'll get there in a moment for my explanation thereof. But I think we can agree that whatever this is, whether it is singular or plural, it is not pleasant. Noisome. And people say what does that mean to be noisome? The image I get is when it takes place they're screaming in pain, they're screaming in agony. This is a miserable experience. It says it's grievous, and so it's not like you get up in the morning, look in the mirror and go, "Hm, what is that?"

No, there is extreme pain, extreme agony, and whatever this is, it is obvious to everybody who is around because notice where the where. Back in Revelation 13 it said that the famous mark of the beast was either in the right hand or it was in the forehead, and so it makes sense to me that if the mark of the beast is exposed, then wherever it is it will be identified as such. So in other words, if it was in the right hand, you'd see an exposure on the right-hand. If it was in the forehead, you would see an exposure in the forehead. Now that's the where part of it.

Why does this happen? Why does the Lord do this? And really what I've given you in chapter 16, verse 11, is the theme of all the vials, they refuse to repent. One of the lessons that humanity desperately needs to learn is this, according to great preachers of old there is a payday someday. We think we're getting away with it, we think everything's fine, we think, "Oh man, I'm making the best decisions. Everything is great." But there comes a day. Notice that there is no warning by God. You don't hear this great voice out of heaven saying, "I just want everybody to know in three days unless you get rid of the mark of the beast, it's going to be really bad." No, it just says all of a sudden the Lord opens up his wrath and, boom, this sore noisome and grievous.

Now here's the parallel I want to bring forward to you, an interesting study at least in my opinion, is in the book of Leviticus primarily but in the Old Testament, there is a disease known as leprosy. And I know there's a lot of contemporary ideology and even medical perspectives therein, but I just want to look at what the Bible describes leprosy as, all right? This is why I would advocate more for the sore, singular, than the sores, plural, but either one is awful, I think we can all agree on.

Now for the sake of time, you can go back and look up these verses. I promise they say what I've told you they've said, all right? Leprosy. Leviticus 13:2, 4, 19, 24 and 28, leprosy is called a bright white spot. Hm, that sounds eerily parallel to what we just read, this grievous sore, this gruesome sore, and when you study the people who suffered leprosy in the Old Testament, they were in agony, they were in pain not only personally but it also affected their relationship with others.

In Leviticus 14, this is interesting. Leviticus 14 it talks about how do the priests of God treat leprosy. And by the way, if you study your Old Testament, there were ways of doing so and they took people and they put them in confines for a while and there were certain rituals, and by the way, just so you know, remember when Jesus healed the lepers and only one came back to thank him? Do you remember what Jesus first told them to do? Go show the priests. In other words, go and get cleansed by him and be declared again clean to your community.

But in chapter 14 of Leviticus it says that when there has been leprosy in somebody in a home, that once that is cured, that the priest is to go back into the house and make sure that the house is clean. Now this is interesting to me because I've given you the quotation. In verse 37 it mentions leprosy in the walls of the house. Hm, that's interesting, that in the Old Testament the disease that a human could have of leprosy is described as so awful it can actually get in the walls of your house, okay?

Now moving on, 2 Kings 5, there's a man by the name of Naaman who has leprosy. You know that he comes to the prophet of God, he wants to know how can I be healed, how can I do this. He tells him to go wash seven times, okay? Miriam has leprosy in Numbers 12. She is put out of the home for seven days. The passage of Scripture we just read is in the midst of time that lasts seven years. And I don't want to read too much into it but I think that whatever happens when this mark of the beast is exposed, that it has a parallel to this Old Testament disease of leprosy as far as the anguish and the agony that it caused, as well as the issues that it caused not only in their home but in their community at large. So that which – listen to this – that which gave them life and that which gave them comraderie with others when exposed does just the opposite. It brings sickness and pain and isolation.

And last but not least, the book of Jude, that's not chapter 23, that's verse 23, there's only one chapter. In Jude 1:23 it warns us, I quoted for you, "hate even the garment spotted by the flesh."

So that being said, just an interesting parallel that this mark of the beast, that one day when the Lord pours out the first vial it will be exposed, those who have had the mark, they'll experience great pain, agony, and there is a parallel with leprosy in the Old Testament, I think if not literally at least figuratively to give us a construct of how awful this experience will be. That being said, there is nothing that describes anything like that in the seals or in the trumpets but it is in the vials

Vial 2, verse 3, it says "the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man," that's important because the next vial it says it becomes blood. This time it says "becomes as the blood of a dead man, every living soul died in the sea." So who is affected? Everything in the sea. Everything. The word "every" means what? Every, without exception. Now what's interesting and I put this on your outline is this, the sea is and I know there are all types of different forms around the world but predominantly the sea is made of what we would call salt, saltwater type generally speaking. The fountains are going to be the freshwater in just a moment. So notice that the second and the third vial get everything that is of a water substance.

It says every living soul died in the sea. Why? It became as the blood of dead men. That is not a pretty picture, folks. Now the word "as" means a simile, a comparison, an allusion to. It did not say it became blood, it said it became as blood but whatever it is is so bad that everything is dead. Everything. So not only, by the way, the first vial, it doesn't say that the sore went away, does it? It doesn't say that the pain went away. So not only do you have this noisome, grievous experience with the mark of the beast, now the sea has experienced this mass death which would have produced mass stench, complete unsanitary conditions, and the removal of a very significant food source for humanity. We've got a proverbial mess on our hands.

Vial 3, verses 4 through 6, "the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood." Focus on that, not as blood, they became



blood. Do you remember another river that became blood in the Bible? In the Exodus, correct? Remember when Moses, it became blood? Okay, it says in verse 5, "And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy. And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments." Who is it that is affected by this judgment? Those who, notice there is a description, those who have shed blood of the saints and of the prophets. So those in the second vial, the inhabitants of the sea experience death, in the third one it's the inhabitants of the land that are experiencing death. What happens? It says that the rivers became blood. That's very significant when we get to chapter 17, so just kind of hold onto that for a moment. Where does this happen? The rivers, the fountains of waters, the freshwater. Why? For they are worthy.

I want you to notice something interesting here. The Lord has as a pouring out of his wrath and his judgment, he has them drink blood. Why? Because they took blood. Is it just me or do you notice that in our contemporary world there is a lot of imagery, there's a lot of cinema, movies, videos etc. that have the consumption of blood as a part of it? You do realize we're just being conditioned, right, to accept and to receive. And one of the things that I put on here, blood to drink, in Genesis 9, Leviticus 17 and in Acts 15, the digestion, the ingestion of blood is forbidden. Now the reason I put those three passages, Genesis 9 was before the law. Leviticus 17 was the law. And Acts 15 was after the law. So there is no way that you can look at it and say, "Well, that was a different day. That was a different time." The Lord never endorses or promoted the activity that they took part in, and isn't it interesting just like Haman in the book of Esther, remember he built this gallows for the destruction of the Jews and he was killed upon the same instrument that he built. The means by which they killed the prophets and the saints is the means by which it took place in their lives. Very reminiscent of the book of Galatians 6. I put this on here, that you reap what you sow. You reap unto the flesh, you will sow unto the flesh. You reap of the spirit, you'll sow unto the spirit.

So as you see these first four vials here, for the sake of time we'll push vial 5 to next week's gathering, you see a horrific experience. Now let me remind you as if we need reminding, if you go back and read the seven trumpets, it wasn't pleasant. You go back and you read the seven seals, it wasn't pleasant. It is just misery piled onto agony. But notice verse 11, they would not repent of their sins. What a statement and I know one of the questions is why did it keep going? Why did the Lord....? Because they would not repent of their sins. God takes sin a whole lot more seriously than we do.

All right, let's pray.

*Heavily Father, as we depart from this place, thank you for your word. Lord, we know at times it is challenging, we know as seen today and tonight that it doesn't have all the answers that we would hope for but, Lord, we admit you give us enough, you give us all that we need. So Lord, I pray that 1 Peter 3:15 would take place in our lives, that we would leave this place, that we would be prepared with the answers for the hope that we*

*have in you. Lord, encourage us through your word, challenge us through your word, more importantly may we be found guilty not just of believing but living your word. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.*

Go get your kids, unless you didn't bring kids, don't go get any kids.