

Ask Jeff 11.08.17

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1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful, he is just to forgive us our sins." However, forgiveness does not necessitate restoration. Restoration is if it never happened and I think we all have a testimony in some level of the consequences of our sin. Yes, forgiveness but not always a restoration of the situation. However, specifically the question was asked, "I have a child born with a specific disease. Is that disease a consequence, a result of my past sin?" Interesting that whoever asked the question, you're not the first to ask it. John 9, we have a man who is born blind and in the situation, those who were following Jesus and those who were opposed to Jesus both drew the same theological conclusion and Jesus corrected them. John 9:1, it says, "And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." When you look in John 9, particularly the story of this blind man who was healed by Jesus, one of the three blind men of which Jesus healed, he says it was done for the glory of God, and I think kind of the hard yet fine line that we've got to walk, yes, there are consequences to our sin but Jesus made it very clear that this child that was born, his entire life with an ailment, that that wasn't the byproduct of his parents' sin.

Now let's be honest and I don't want to get into too many of a particular situation but there are some physical diseases that are a byproduct of our physical behavior that can be passed onto our children. We know that, okay? However when we're dealing with blindness in this situation, the Lord was very clear it wasn't because you broke the law, it wasn't because you sinned that caused this. And so I know somewhat it's a touchy situation, and I hear this all the time when people find out something about their children, whether they're diagnosed with some type of special need, they're diagnosed or they are born with some type of physical ailment, one of the first questions is, "What did I do wrong?" Jesus' response was, "Neither," and understand that in this story, this man who was born blind, Jesus utilized him to show the power and the glory of God and there was no focus on the past rebellion of the parents. Why is this significant? Because those parents that had that child, had sin, haven't we all? I mean, they had done something. They had sinned at some level, in fact, probably done something of a magnitude that the disciples are like, "Aha, is this because they did that?" And Jesus said, "No, this was done for the glory of God."

So oftentimes what we see as punishment, the Lord sees as an opportunity for him to show his glory and to be honored in the situation, and so hopefully that helps that question and I deal with people all the time struggling with the guilt of our past and the reality of our present, so let me twist the question before I ask for any follow-ups. How many of us look at our children, I'm just going to use an example, that are well and say, "Well, it's because I've been so good that they're well." Do we do that? No. None of us say, "I've lived such a righteous life, that's why my kid's healthy." So if we don't do it on that end, then why do we do it on the other?

Any follow-up, thoughts, concerns, issues? Yes, sir. Front row, then the back. Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Ah, you're going to ask that loaded question this early into the night. For those of you who couldn't hear, here it goes. The question was Jesus performs this miracle, incredible, one of three men of which he heals that were blind. By the way, we don't know if these were the only three because later in the gospel of John it says if everything that Jesus did were told, the volumes of all the books of all the libraries could not hold it. We're just told of these three. There might have been 33 that were healed of their blindness. We don't know. He says that, "While I'm here, I'm the light of the world but darkness cometh and I must do the work of him while it is daylight." And so the question he asked in that was do those things still occur? Do what we know as the miracles, the healing of blindness etc. Let me answer that in this fashion. 1. Jesus called himself the light of the world, correct? Yes. Also he said that we were the light of the world, alright? He promised us that another Comforter, as him, would come, what we know as the Holy Spirit, okay? As a believer in Jesus Christ, I possess the Holy Spirit, you possess the Holy Spirit, so you and I, we are the light of the world and we have the presence of God in our lives. So even though you and I live in a dark world, you and I are mobile pieces or parts of lights in this world. He called it day because he was physically present on the earth. You and I, we would not call this period day, it is darkness, but you and I are lights in the midst of the darkness. That being said, in 1 Corinthians 12, do you know what one of the spiritual gifts is? Healings. It is, healings. That is one of the spiritual gifts.

Now what I think we have to delineate here is, when you see the ministry of Jesus, you see healings, you see walking on water, you see him feeding thousands of people with a sack lunch, okay? When you get into the book of Acts and as you begin to read the book of Acts and even the ministry of the Apostle Paul, you see that somewhat tailor off just a little bit. If we'd just be honest with ourselves, when you read the book of Acts, at the very beginning of Acts, I mean, you've got Peter walking by and his shadow and somebody is healed, alright? You've got a situation in Acts 19 where a napkin is used and healing takes place. But you start reading the book of Romans and 1 and 2 Corinthians,

Galatians, Ephesians, and you don't see it as much, and so the question becomes do we not have the authority? Do we not have the capacity? Are we not called to do the same thing? I don't think it's in what we have the capacity or the calling to do but something different.

I want you to turn to 1 Corinthians 1 and I'm going to show you what I mean here. Trust me, I'm going to pull this full circle. It's a great question because oftentimes we struggle with, "Well, Jesus touched somebody's eyes and he healed them, why can't we as believers touch somebody's eyes and they're healed as well?" 1 Corinthians 1. I'm going to begin in verse 22. "For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men." What do the Jews require? A sign. What do the Greeks or the non-Jews, what do the Gentiles require? What does it say? Wisdom. Think about the book of Acts for just a moment. Who are the apostles ministering to primarily at the beginning? Jewish people. Who are they ministering to primarily later? The Gentiles. Who does Jesus primarily minister to throughout his ministry? The Jews. And so there are signs and there are wonders and it says there were those that rejected him but there were many who believed on him.

You get into 1 and 2 Corinthians, the Apostle Paul according to Philippians 3, he said that he was circumcised the eighth day, of the tribe of Judah, of the stock of Israel, born of the tribe of Benjamin. He says, "I was a Hebrew of Hebrews. I was a Pharisee." And yet as he is the apostle called to the Gentiles, you don't see the signs, you don't see the wonders, but what does he do? He goes into the synagogues, he goes into the street and he reasons with them from the scriptures. And so I think the issue is not the communicator, it's the audience. The Jewish audience requires a sign, the Gentile audience requires wisdom and reason, and my point in my saying that is that we, most of us are Gentiles, I mean, last time I checked all the barbecue around here is pork so we're Gentiles, right? Okay, most of us are, that we see biblical evidence that the Lord utilizes wisdom and reason in reaching Gentiles and he utilizes signs and wonders primarily in reaching Jews. Now can he use reason with Jews? Yes. Can he use signs with Gentiles? Absolutely, but biblically you see in the ministry of Jesus, you see him working signs and miracles and wonders among the Jewish people as well as the apostles in that environment, but when you get to the Gentiles which, by the way, can we remember that it was the Jews who said, "Let his blood be upon us and our children," when he begins to work through the Gentiles, guess what happens? It's reason and wisdom.

I know we're studying the book of Revelation and hopefully we'll get there tonight, sometimes we don't, but when you get to the book of Revelation, guess who shows up again? We studied him last week, who was it? The 12 tribes, the Jews. So what do you think's going to be once again a very active mechanism of gospel presentations? Signs and wonders because what do they require? They require a sign.

Does that help at all in that situation? Not really.

[unintelligible]

But I didn't answer your question, did I?

[unintelligible]

Okay, there's one more, that's okay.

[unintelligible]

Okay, the question he's asking, I think you're, if I know the question you're asking properly, you're asking the 3 ½ year ministry of Jesus, then the 3 ½ year "ministry" of the Holy Spirit leading in the book of Acts? Alright, what he's speaking of, if we begin the ministry of Jesus Christ right here, his ministry was about 3 ½ years. For those of us studying the book of Revelation, isn't that interesting how that time period always seems to come up all the time? Three and a half years, after 3 ½ years, we have his death and burial, we have his resurrection and ascension, alright? The question he was asking is there are those that propose that when you then begin to look at the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the beginning first 3 ½ years of the book of Acts, that it is the first 3 ½ years here that you have a very supernatural miracle-based ministry at the hands of the apostles, and so the question is, is what we're seeing a time-limited spectrum, that it's seven years. Though specifically kind of an issue there, there is a term called cessationism, that which ceases. A cessationist is someone who believes that the miracles, the supernatural, the wonders that we're talking about, that they ceased at some point. Some of them believe it ceased after seven years, some of them believe it ceased when the gospel went forth to the Gentiles in Acts 10. Some people believe it ceased with the bringing of the scriptures. We read 1 Corinthians 1, I don't see signs ceasing because of calendar, I see signs ceasing because of an audience. Does that communicate?

[unintelligible]

Well, that's what I'm getting at. I just didn't say it as good as you did. She said, "I don't see signs ceasing." By the way, you don't have to just be on the front table to participate tonight. It's okay, everybody can. Her response was, "I don't see signs ceasing." Correct, because as you get, it depends on the audience by which the message is being proclaimed to. In scripture those who have a Jewish background, lots of signs and wonders. Those that have a Gentile background, not so much. Well, according to scripture we're now in the time of the Gentiles. According to Romans 11:25 and 26, the Jews by in part or not in whole but by in part have rejected the Messiah and until the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled, then all of Israel shall be saved. So we're in the midst of Gentile ministry chronologically which would mean that, generally speaking, wisdom and reason versus the supernatural because what did the Lord say? The Jews require a sign.

So I don't like going with the strict chronology with the Holy Spirit because it's audience-based, not time-based. Does that help? I got a, "Eh, that'll help." Yes, sir, back there.

[unintelligible]

Oh yes. The question is going back to John 9, a child or a person that's been afflicted with some type of ailment issue from a physical perspective, how will they feel when they get to heaven? I think the best answer I've got, some of you may remember the great hymnwriter Fanny Crosby? Fanny Crosby spent her entire life blind. She never was able to see with her eyes and one day there was somebody that thought they were wise, came up to her and said, "Fanny, don't you wish that the Lord would give you the ability to see?" And she said, "No." He said, "You don't?" She said, "No. He's blessed me with my blindness because the first thing I'll ever see with my eyes is Jesus." And now you wonder why she wrote all the good hymns, because she had the right perspective. So you're right there, that what we think is a blessing to us, may be a hindrance. What we may think is a hindrance to somebody else, may be a blessing.

Anybody else on this one? Anybody? Somebody? Nobody? We're good? Alright we're going back to the database as we call it. Oh, I thought somebody was trying to put...

[unintelligible]

You just saw, is that what you said?

[unintelligible]

Okay. Hey, we're Baptists, man, sometimes we eat just a little too much.

This is an interesting question or a series of questions. It says did God eat food? Well, he was Baptist, wasn't he? No, I'm kidding. Kidding. Kidding. Kidding. Why are the offerings cooked and created an aroma pleasing to God?

This is really a reference back to and I know that y'all spend most of your quiet times reading the book of Leviticus, so you don't even have to turn there. I know you do. You go back to Leviticus, particularly chapters 4 and 5 and 6 and there are the burnt offerings, and the peace offerings, and for the sake of time we're not going to go back into all of those offerings, but you see animal life, you see what you and I would call food being offered unto the Lord. Now the way this process worked and I'll explain specifically the answer to the question, is that you and I would bring our offerings unto the Lord and when we did so, we brought them particularly unto the Levite tribe. If you'll remember, the Levite tribe was the only one of the tribes that did not have a land grant. They had, for lack of better terms, a free lease on land and they did the work of the sacrificial system day-in and day-out, and so their food, their sustenance was brought forth by a portion of the rest of the tribes. They would bring in whichever they required for that specific sacrifice. They would bring it in, they would present it to the priest, the priest would do likewise with it, and oftentimes that not included the removal of the life of the item but oftentimes the cooking of that item, the burning of that item, and then the priest would eat

a portion of that item and then they would give the rest unto the Lord. That's just how it worked.

So the question makes perfect sense: did the Lord just get hungry? I mean, why did he have all of these sacrifices? Why was it an aroma that was pleasing unto him? The Lord does not need physical food. He does not need it. The aroma that is pleasing to the Lord is not the fact that he said, "Hm, it's barbecue tonight." That's not what he was saying. The aroma was that the people had been obedient, had been sacrificial, and had said it is more important that the Lord is pleased with me than my belly is filled. And when they gave and it was given, that is the aroma that was pleasing to him, not the fact that it was a turtledove that had been properly sacrificed but a person's heart that had been properly sacrificed. That's why you get into Isaiah and it says, and also in Psalm 51, it says the Lord does not delight in the offering of bullocks and of rams but in obedience. It wasn't the bullock, it wasn't the ram, it wasn't the turtledove, it wasn't the wheat offering, whatever it may be, that was so pleasing to him, the item, it was the heart that was behind it.

The Lord is no need of physical food, he's in no need of financial resources. It's all his and he is self-sustaining. What he is pleased with is the aroma of our obedience and our sacrifice unto him. That's why the aroma was pleasing.

Any questions on sacrifices? That went pretty quick. You're like, "Man, I don't want to go back into Leviticus." Y'all good not going into Leviticus? Okay. Hey, I know y'all study it every morning so we don't need to. So we're good there.

Alright, here we go, moving onward. Alright, Roman law-wise, not prophecy-wise. That's a great question. How did the Sanhedrin manage to have Jesus crucified by the Romans and stone Stephen by Levitical law? Jesus and....were both accused of blasphemy.

That is a really good question. Let me tell you kind of what that question means. The law that Jesus broke was not Roman law, it was Jewish law. Why? They said he blasphemed because he claimed to be God, alright? They gave him up to the Romans but notice what they did in the story of what we know as the Passion story. What did they do? They told the Romans that he had broken Roman law. So not only did they make up something he did, they lied about it. So when you say, "Well, how did they get to pull the Romans in this?" They told the Romans that he had violated Roman law, and understand that in those days the what we know as Judea or the Jewish land, it was the place for the Jewish people but it was under governance of the Roman people and there's always this tension, alright? Because you had these Roman governors, the Pontius Pilates of the world, the Herods of the world, that had oversight there but you had this Jewish law that superseded in the context of the temple and the Sanhedrin and all of the religious laws of the day.

So there's always this tension and so when you see the Jewish people, or shall I say the leaders of the Sanhedrin, standing before Pilate saying, "Give us Barabbas," you understand here is Pilate, the Roman, saying, "Hey, it is your custom, your custom to do

one. Which one of these guys you want?" And they said, "Give us Barabbas." And so what's interesting is the Romans, particularly Pontius Pilate, all he was doing was fulfilling the wishes and desires of the Jewish leaders and then, thus, Jesus was the criminal who was crucified and replaced Barabbas. That which was, listen, that which was guilty, Barabbas, was replaced by he who was innocent. Isn't that a picture of us? We, who are guilty, have been replaced by he, who was innocent, on the cross. So what you see is the Jewish people coming to the Roman people, accusing Jesus, saying, "He claimed to be a king." Remember what Pontius Pilate said about Jesus? King of the Jews. And remember they said, "Don't write that." And he said, "I have written what I have written."

So what you see in the context there and you see this with... and they asked about Stephen, Stephen was actually stoned by the Jews, not by the Romans. I mean, they went at it and, I mean, they threw rocks at him. And so it was the Jews that stoned Stephen. It was the Romans who technically put Jesus on the cross but it was the Jewish people through their custom and law who handed him over to the Romans, and so that's kind of your geopolitical context there.

Any crucifixion, Passion questions, that issue there? Food set heavy tonight, didn't it? No, y'all are good? Y'all just ready for Revelation? Oh, I got a, "Yes, sir."

Let's go to Revelation. Chapter 7. The last book of the Bible. Those of you who are brand new with us, don't worry, we're going to be here a while in Revelation. Just pick up where we are. Revelation 7. This, remember, is a parenthetical section of the book of Revelation. Parenthetical is a big fancy word that just means out of the chronology of. We've been walking through chapter 6, the first six seals have been opened, the seventh seal is going to open up in chapter 8, verses 1 and 2, but before the seventh seal is opened, the Lord gives us this commentary. This commentary in chapter 7 is regarding those who, to use our vernacular, are saved, those who are redeemed, those who are forgiven during what we know as the great tribulational period. It's divided into two sections. It's divided into the famous 144,000, 12,000 of the 12 tribes of Israel that we talked about last week, specifically that the tribes of Ephraim and Dan, who fell into idolatry, were replaced by the tribes of Levi and Joseph. Now beginning tonight in this passage, beginning in verse 9, we have the message about those who come out of the tribulation that are not specifically a part of the 144,000.

Now as an aside, there are those even today who want to propagate that the only number of people who "make it" one day are 144,000. It's because they only read the first eight verses of this chapter. When you get to verse 9, we find out that there are more than 144,000. It says,

9 After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; 10 And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. 11 And all the

angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, 12 Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. 13 And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? 14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 15 Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. 16 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. 17 For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

Now you'll notice kind of the title of the Bible study tonight that I put on your outline is "Why the book of Revelation must be futuristic." Now I'm going to take you back a long time when we began our study of the book of Revelation. We addressed the fact that, generally speaking, there are three, I mean, I know there's more but three basic views of the book of Revelation. There are those who believe that the book of Revelation has already been fulfilled, that all of the events that are listed whether it be the sun turning dark and the moon turning red are pictures metaphorically of things that happened in the first century, particularly with the temple in Jerusalem that was taken down in about 70 AD and what we know as the dispersion of the Jewish people, and you've got guys like Nero and Titus and these men, very antichrist type individuals, and they claim that the book of Revelation took place in the past in the first century, it's that which is history of the past. There are those who believe that the book of Revelation is an allegory of the present, that there are good times and there are bad times, there's times of great revival and there's times of not so much, but there's coming a day where the Lord is going to come and clean it all up. Ah, but then there is the position that the book of Revelation is futuristic, that the events such as the seal being opened and the rider on the white horse, the events of the vials and the trumpets, the events of the Antichrist weren't fulfilled in the first century and they're not just a metaphor of today, they're a picture of sometime tomorrow.

Now the reason I put on here "Why the book of Revelation has to be futuristic," is because oftentimes when we discuss Revelation past, present or future, we talk about the sun turning black and the moon turning red, we talk about the horse and the famine and diseases, we talk about all of the prophetic elements. Tonight, we're going to talk about those that are coming under the protective umbrella of the Lord and here's what I want you to see: what is written about these individuals is not the same that is written about you. In other words, if these individuals were present in the first century and what we're about to read about them was real in the first century, then somehow in God's salvific economy the rules changed all of a sudden. Work with me and I'm going to show you what I mean.

Let's begin with the transition. It says in verse 9, "After this." Now remember, we're in a parenthetical chapter here, so not after the sixth seal, this is parenthetical, so what that means is that these individuals that are being spoken of, these are individuals that are coming out of the tribulation during the first seal, during the second seal, third seal, etc., even beyond the seals unto the vials and the trumpets. Do not limit these individuals to just between the sixth and the seventh seal, alright? Don't limit them chronologically to that very strict timeframe. We're talking about anybody during this even that Jesus called the great tribulation, alright? Remember, we've stepped out of chronology. So when it says, "After this I saw," don't think chronologically, think quantity or quality. He saw the 144,000, now he sees the multitude, alright?

Moving forward. The people. Who are these individuals? It says that there is a number that no man could number. It did not say a number that was limitless. It said no man could number. In Hebrews 12:29 it says the number of angels is more than any man can number. The picture that we get here in chapter 7, verse 9, is that when he sees those that have been redeemed, when he sees those, to use our terminology, that have been "saved," he sees a mass of people that he can't put a number on.

So don't think it's limitless in the sense of that it's so vast that it's all, but it is without number from a human perspective which brings us to the next statement: all nations, all kindreds, all people, and all tongues. It's not saying that all people were forgiven because we pick up later there's a lot of people rebelling, but what he's saying is those who come under the protective salvation umbrella of the Lord during this time period, it's not just the 144,000. From all nations. Help me out, folks, what does the word "all" mean? All. All people, okay? All people irrespective of background, irrespective of the way that we might view it physically. So it's all people, all nations, all kindreds, all tongues. That means that the reaching out of that protective umbrella of the Lord during this time period is as vast as any other time period. All people. All nations. All tongues. Genesis 12, remember what he said to Abraham? He said, "You will be a blessing to all nations." So what we see happening in Revelation 7 is somewhat a picture of the fulfillment of the promise of God in Genesis 12. When he called Abraham out and said, "Your descendants will be more numerous than the stars, from all peoples, all kindreds," we see the same thing happening here in Revelation 7.

Now this next part I find where we need to delineate here. This is where it's going to get interesting. I want you to notice the song that they sing. You think, "Why is that important to hear what they're singing?" I want you to read the lyrics. Beginning in verse 10, they cried with a loud voice saying, or they sang with a loud voice, "Salvation to our God which sits upon the throne and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God," and they said or they sang, "Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen." Now what's interesting about that is if you'll flip a page or two to the left, chapter 5, verse 9, the song of those that are redeemed of all the nations, all the kindreds, all the tongues, is different than the song that was sung in chapter 5, verse 9,

when it says, "And they sung a new song." Here's what I want you to hear: those that are sitting in the choir are two different groups. In chapter 5, the tribulation has not begun yet. In chapter 5, the first seal has not been opened. In chapter 5, we have a picture of those throughout time who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ who are gathered at the throne singing and honoring and glorifying together. When we get to chapter 7, these are those that were called out specifically during this time period that Jesus called the great tribulation.

They sing a different song. Look at the lyrics. It's a different song. You say, "Well, I don't think that the lyrics are that significant." Okay, let's go to the next step. The time period which this happens. Look in verse 13 and 14. "And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, you know. And he said to me, These are they," don't you love it when the Bible is specific? "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Here's what I want you to hear: notice he didn't say, "Oh, these are the same folks that were singing in chapter 5." He didn't say that, did he? He said, "Who is the one asking who they are?" The elders. You go back to chapter 5, verse 9, it's the elders and the redeemed that are sitting around the throne singing together and all of a sudden this elder shows up and goes, "Who are these guys and where did they come from, and why are they singing a different song?" And he says, "These are they which came out of the great tribulation."

Now turn back to Matthew 24 because I want you to see the words of Jesus here because sometimes there is the thought of, well, maybe we're drawing too distinct of a line, maybe we're drawing too hard of a line here, maybe we should just be a little more fuzzy here. Well, I want you to hear the words of Jesus in Matthew 24:21. I'm going to back up to verse 15, I won't read it all. It talks about the abomination of desolation. He talks about this horrible event where we know the Antichrist from 2 Thessalonians 2 goes in, claims that he is God. He says, "Run for the hills!" Everything is bad and he says, "Woe unto them that have children." Verse 20, he says, "pray that your flight is not in the winter, pray it's not on the sabbath." Look at verse 21. If you have a red letter Bible, these are the words of Jesus, "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." Jesus says that this time period is different than any other time period. Jesus drew the line. I didn't draw it, he did.

Now go a few more verses to verses 29 and 30 of the same chapter. Now in chapter 24 of the book of Matthew, there are two questions that are asked. I believe Jesus answers them. We won't get into all that, but he gives a story, he gives a parable of a fig tree. But before the fig tree, there is the olive tree and notice in verse 29, these are the words of Jesus, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." Why is that significant? Because two times in one message Jesus says this time period is different than anything else. And

people say, "Well, why do y'all call it the great tribulation?" Because that's what Jesus called it. He called it, it was the worst tribulation, greater than any other time period.

Now back to Revelation 7. You have a group of people from all nations, all peoples, all tribes, all tongues, who, for a lack of better terms, have been redeemed, have been reconciled, they're under the protective salvation umbrella of the Lord. They're singing a different song than before the tribulation began. They are in a time period of which Jesus even said was very distinct and different from others. And we're going to see that their clothes or even their appearance is different.

Notice what we find in verse 9 of chapter 7, it says, "After this I beheld a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes." Okay, clothed with white robes. Verses 13 and 14, "And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

Now backup to chapter 1 of Revelation for just a moment. I promise I'm hopefully going to help make sense in a moment. In Revelation 1, the introduction to what we know as the book of Revelation, the Apostle John is on the island of Patmos. Verse 5 it says, "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." Now do you notice a difference in personal pronouns there? In Revelation 1:5, Jesus washed us, in Revelation 7, it says these guys washed their robes. The difference is the perspective and what you see in Revelation 1, what you see before the great tribulation begins is you see the Lord loving, the Lord washing, the Lord extending grace. When you get to Revelation 7, it says these are they who washed their robes. The wording is different. The song is different. The time is different. This is very important for our understanding today because when you get into the parables of Jesus, particularly Matthew 25, you have the parable of the virgins. Remember the famous story of the 10 individuals of which some of them were "not prepared with their oil"? They had not prepared their oil? These individuals had washed their robes? What you see here in Revelation 7 is that during this horrific time period known as the great tribulation, is you see these individuals who are believing, you see these individuals who are being forgiven, and we see them differently than even you and I today. The song is different, the way in which the clothes are described is different, even the time period is described different. Jesus said this is a different time period than even you and I live in today.

So the perspective today for you and I, the tribulation has not begun, it hasn't started. Jesus says, "I have loved you and washed you. I've washed you in the blood and made your robes white as snow." When you get into Revelation 7, it says, "and they washed their robes." By the way, when we get to chapter 12, it says they overcame who we know as the Antichrist by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony. That's a phrase that's never used chronologically before the time of the great tribulation.

Now before you go, "Hm, I don't know about this." I want you to notice the next section of your outline. In verse 15, it says, "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple." Y'all find that interesting? They're serving God in the temple. It says they serve him in the temple, "and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them." One of the most politically incorrect and heated conversations that we could ever have today is about this famous "Jewish temple" that which was originally constructed about 1000 BC, that which is no longer physically standing but prophetically according to the book of Revelation will one day be. I want you to notice what I put on the outline here. When you look at this perspective from above, it calls it "his temple," correct? Isn't that what it says, "his temple"? His temple. Go over to Revelation 11 and when the seventh trumpet is opened, in verse 19, now this is in the middle of the tribulation, seventh trumpet, "And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail." Interesting that here it says these individuals who were redeemed, these individuals who were saved, it says in verse 15, it says they sat before him and served him in his temple.

One of the most interesting Bible studies you will ever do is take the book of Hebrews and take the book of Leviticus, I know, there's Leviticus again, and when you begin to read those books in conjunction, you will see that when the Lord told them to build a temple, when the Lord told them to weave a fabric, when the Lord told the priests to dress a certain way, it wasn't because that was the fashion statement, they were to picture on earth what was a reality in heaven. The temple on earth was to picture the temple in heaven. Notice what it says: they served him in his temple. When you get to Revelation 11:19, it says that his temple is above. Now do you understand in what we know as the Lord's Prayer when he told us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread," and then he said, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." The temple was on earth as the temple was in heaven. The ark was on earth as the ark was in heaven. And we are to live on earth as we one day will live in heaven.

So here in the midst of chapter 7, these individuals that no man could number, they serve the Lord in his temple. That's the temple above. Now let's talk about the temple below. Right now, today in the 21st century, physically as far as a bricks and mortar structure, you can go over to the Middle East, you can go to Jerusalem, I've been there, there is no standing temple. It's not there. But here's the good news, according to 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, there is a temple right now, did you know that? You're it and I'm it. It says that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost. People say, "You know, there hasn't been a temple for 2,000 years." There's been a temple. You realize there was a physical structure in Jerusalem, it had a veil, it had a place where they made the sacrifices, but when Jesus was crucified, what happened to that veil? It was torn, right? Say, "Oh, we lost the temple." No, we didn't. We transferred the temple. The temple went from a physical structure to you. There's always been a temple.

So right now what I call this church age, there is a temple. It is the believers in Jesus Christ. During the tribulation, the seven year time period that Jesus called worse than any other, when you get to Revelation 11, guess what happens? There is a temple in

Jerusalem. It says that an angel comes and he measures it with a rod, so many dimensions by so many dimensions, here's this court, here's that court. In fact, 2 Thessalonians 2 says the Antichrist will go into that temple, the abomination of desolation, he will claim he is God.

Have you ever thought of this: did the Lord ever have two temples? Were there ever two? There never were, right? Only one. So there was a physical temple, this is all going to make sense, I promise, there was a physical temple in Jesus' ministry, right? When that temple, when the veil was torn, it was replaced by another temple, right? Our bodies. When we, the temple of the Holy Ghost, are taken up, there's another temple that comes. Now does it make sense? That's why there will be another physical temple one day because this temple is going to be removed. We are the temple of the Holy Ghost right now. There's a time coming in the tribulation there will be a physical temple but notice in Revelation 21, the new heaven, the new earth, this is after all the judgments, everybody who is going to heaven is in heaven, everybody who is going to hell is in hell, notice in Revelation 21 at the very end of the Bible, verse 22. This is eternity. It says, "And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it."

Folks, we could go about four hours just on that one verse because as you begin to see in God's economy how he is working in his presence, just work with me as we wrap up tonight, that temple originally built by Solomon at the desires ultimately of David, it was built to house the presence of God, was it not? That's why it was built. And I know there was ebbs and flows because of the Assyrians and the Babylonians, but that temple comes, it's torn down, it's rebuilt, backup, Herod's temple. It is there in the days of Jesus. There are sacrifices being made. There are prayers being offered. He even called it "my Father's house." Upon his death, the veil is torn. A new temple is now erected, those who the Holy Spirit dwells within, you and I as believers in Jesus Christ. So that temple goes. One day this temple is going to be caught up and there's a new temple that shows up in Jerusalem. You read in the book of Ezekiel 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, there's all this talk about a temple and it's somewhat confusing, I'll be honest with you, but eventually according to the prophecies of 2 Peter fulfilled in Revelation 20, everything that we know that is physical is going to be burned up, right? It's going to be gone, that means even that temple that Ezekiel talks about, gone. Guess what? My body, your body that is the temple of the Holy Ghost, one day gone, right? Replaced with a new body.

So the physical temple is gone, our physical body that is now a temple is gone, but what does the Lord say at the last two chapters? There's no need for a temple anymore because the Lord himself is the temple thereof. The reason I wanted to wrap it up that way tonight is this, you see the Lord moving and working throughout time and history in various capacities and means and ways, when you look at these folks that are "saved" in Revelation 7, they sing a different song because they're in a different time period. They have a different type of robe because they're in a different time period. But even though they're in a different time period, just like our body being a temple versus a physical temple years ago, it may be a different time and it may be a different structure and it may be a different song but it is still the same God all the way through. Let us not get caught

up in the structures below but in the reality above because they served him in his temple with his ark and his covenant.

I probably should have gone first tonight to ask questions later, shouldn't I? I apologize for that.

Let's pray and go pick up our kids. Do your heads hurt tonight? Did y'all eat too much? Are you okay? Alright, let's pray.

Lord, tonight we are grateful that no matter what the length of our days or the century by which we live in, that you are the same God yesterday as you are today as you will be tomorrow.