

Ask Jeff

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By Dr. Jeff Meyers

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Crossroads Ministries

301 S. 8th Street

Opelika, Alabama 36801

Website: www.fbcopelika.com

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/jeffmeyers

Well, good evening. It's 6:30 Central Standard Time here in Opelika, Alabama. It is my privilege to welcome you to our Wednesday night large group adult Bible study here at First Baptist Church, which is a very unique Bible study if you've never been a part of it. As I'll explain in a minute, every aspect of our Bible study tonight, every question, every concern, every dispute, anything that happens tonight, is always originated by you.

So we'll get to that in just a moment, but I do want to welcome you and just remind you again, again, I love you being in the room. I'm grateful you're here with us. But on Wednesday night, we also have smaller group Bible studies. We have men's classes, women's classes, co-ed classes. We have all kinds of classes. I'm not trying to get rid of you, I just want you to know we have all kinds of options for whatever it is you may need in your respective life at this moment. But tonight you're here with me. Again, we're going to answer some Bible questions the way that you can participate here in the room and online, the best way is through our text messaging system, area code 334-231-2313. When you submit a question by way of text, you remain completely anonymous. Your phone number doesn't even show up on the screen. We have no idea who you are. You could be on the front row. You could be on the other side of the camera. It doesn't matter. It's all in real time. It goes to the computer, ends up on the screen. You not only get to originate a question, you have the privilege, if you so desire, you can do a follow-up question, meaning, we're on a certain subject matter, a certain topic, whatever it may be, and you can continue that stream of thought, kind of take it a different direction, take it a little bit deeper, whatever it is you so desire and whatever you need.

Now, text messaging works both in-house and out-of-house. However, for those of you that are here physically in person, you have a very distinct advantage that we saw you play to your strength last week, it's called raising your hand. When you raise your hand, you technically supersede the screen, okay? And you are here in house, and you have the opportunity to take the conversation any direction you would like. Now, if you raise your hand in the room, you lose your anonymity within the room. However, your image nor will your voice be used on the radio, television, or the internet. So you remain anonymous to the world out there, but not in here.

Real quick, before we get to the question, let me remind you, not only on Wednesday nights, but Monday through Friday every week, we have a daily question on our

YouTube channel. If you want to participate in that, that allows us to answer these questions in kind of 60 to maybe 90 second windows versus what we typically do on Wednesday night. You can submit questions both to the daily and to the Wednesday. Use both platforms. If you want to be a part of the daily YouTube channel, you use our website, either [fbcopelika.com/ask Jeff](http://fbcopelika.com/ask-Jeff) or askjeff.net. So anything web-based goes to our daily question bank, everything that is Wednesday night comes through either text message or you raising your hands.

So without further ado, before I get to the screen, if you were not here last week, y'all were feisty. I mean feisty feisty, alright? Y'all were raising hands all night long and there was a question that I promised that I would begin tonight on and I'm going to do this lovely lady the gesture of doing so again tonight. If you do not remember, most of last week's Bible study, most of it, not all of it, most of it dealt with concepts, constructs, and can we be honest, concerns from the book of Genesis, right? And one of the questions that was raised at the very end that I promised to answer was why was it that in spite of the fall of Satan, why was it in spite of all that, quote, mess that took place, why are we even here? Why did God allow us, Ma'am, if I can quote your question, why are we in the middle of the mess? That's exactly what you said, right? So, allow me to address the question of the proverbial why.

Two passages that you need to turn to tonight that I think are fascinating. The first one is found in Genesis chapter 6, the second one, which we're actually going to spend the majority of our time on this question on, is in John chapter 17. Now, if you were not with us last week, kind of a stream of thought that we didn't really just dialogue with, but kind of struggled with is this concept that we know that in Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," but we also know that by the time you get to chapter 3, in what we know as the Garden of Eden, whom we knew as Lucifer is now the serpent, he who was created perfect is now filled with iniquity, and so at some point between Genesis 1:1, because "In the beginning" is the beginning, at some point between there and chapter 3, you have what we collectively know as the fall of Satan. But also within that context, per this lovely lady's question is, you have the creation of mankind and so how do we reconcile these two concepts?

So, in the book of Genesis chapter 6, we have the very famous story of what we know as, quote, Noah's Ark, or the flood of Noah. I want you to notice what the Bible says about God's, quote, creation of mankind. Now, it's going to use the word repent. Don't panic. The word repent does not necessitate sin, error, or wrongdoing. Okay? All it simply says is, this is my terminology, I had the turkey sandwich, I wish I had chicken. There's nothing egregious or erroneous with either one, okay? So when it says he repented, don't think God made a mistake, because obviously he does not make mistakes. But in verse 6, it says, "And it repented the Lord that he had made man." You see the next three words? "On the earth." Now does that strike any of y'all as odd? He doesn't say he repents that he made man, he repented that he made man on the earth. Now, hopefully that's triggering some light bulbs to go off, right?

Now, go to John chapter 17. John chapter 17, let me give you a little context here. Jesus is in the Garden of Gethsemane. We typically think of the Garden Gethsemane as Matthew 26 where three times Jesus says, "Not my will, but yours be done." Very famous passage of scripture, rightfully so. John 17, we typically call the high priestly prayer. This is the point where obviously Peter, James, and John are on the side falling asleep when they should have been awake, but we get really just the inside of what's happening the night before the crucifixion of Jesus. This is the longest prayer of Jesus Christ that we have recorded, and it is the most transparent prayer. If you'll read through John 17, you don't have to do so at this very moment, you'll discover that it is divided into three very distinct sections, okay? In the first five to six verses, Jesus declares that he has done that which the Lord has asked him to do. He's completed it, okay? The second section basically addresses his prayer for what we know as those disciples that are falling asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane and what he desires for them. The third section is an area where he is praying for the future believers, future followers, which technically could be considered you and I, alright? Of the entirety of John chapter 17, Jesus only prays for everybody and everything else with one exception. Verse 5 is the only place in the entire prayer where Jesus asked the Father for something regarding himself. Okay? And I want you to hear what John 17:5 says. It says, "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self," listen to this request, "with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." Now, I want you to think about that for a moment. Not the glory he had before the incarnation. Not the glory he had before he began his earthly ministry. He says, "I had a glory, I had an environment that has changed since the world was."

And so ma'am, I would argue to your point, or your question, that when Satan fell, and we know it was between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 3, we could distinguish and we could discuss when that was, we know from Ezekiel 28 that Lucifer, the lighted one, that was his original name, he was, for lack of better terms, the worship leader of the universe. He was the one that pointed everybody's attention to whom we know as Jesus Christ. However, when he removed himself, iniquity found in him, and he, quote, fell, as we like to use that terminology, what do we discover? We discover that you and I now have the privilege, listen to this, we have the privilege of filling the most important void in the whole universe. What's the most important position in the universe? Acknowledge, worship, and direct people's attention to the Lord himself. And so therefore, when Jesus says there is something that is missing that can now be restored, what he was saying is, by him going to the cross, by him allowing us to be in a redemptive relationship with him, we are now in a position to honor him, worship him, and point people to him that places us positionally in a place that hadn't existed for a long time, okay? Now here's what's fascinating, the phrase "before the world was," and so again it goes back to in Genesis 6 he says it repented that he made men on the earth, here in John 17:5 it says before the world was, what we discover kind of on the backside of last week's discussion is at some point between Genesis 1:1 and the creation of mankind something went sideways and we may not get definitive answers on the how and the when, but we know something occurred. And so to your question, why are we a part of all this mess? We were created to redeem it. We were created to restore it. I'll go ahead and tell you, you were created, I was created for the most important position and role in the whole universe.

Now is that not the complete opposite of what Satan tries to tell you? Satan tries to tell you you're worthless, you're no good, and you should never be here in the first place. Why? Because you were created for a position that he vacated and so what does he try to do? Just like he did in the Garden of Eden, he tries to misdirect our attention, misdirect our lives from what they should be. And so I think, I don't know if that helps your question out just a little bit there, but to your point, to your verbiage, I think that clears up why we a part of the mess and that's the word you used. So I'm just quoting. Everybody good?

Yes sir. To piggyback on that, we might get to the screen tonight. Yes, sir?

[unintelligible]

Are you speaking of Noah's flood? He did. Say that one more time. He paired what up? Well, sinful humanity was on the boat. Sin was on the boat. Right. Oh, that's a great question. If you could not hear him, when God destroyed the earth by water in Genesis, which he did, according to the Bible, there are eight souls that were saved, Noah, his wife, his three sons, their three wives. To your point, he said sin was paired on the boat. That's a formal way of saying nobody was perfect on that boat. If you want proof, read the chapter of when they got off the boat, okay? It went sideways quick, okay? The question is, great question, why did God not just start over? Why did he not say enough is enough, it's time for humanity 2.0, right? Hopefully you still have Genesis chapter 6 open because I want to look at a verse there and then I want to go back into chapter 3. Genesis chapter 6 verse 8. We see a word used, if I'm not mistaken, for the very first time in your Bible. I could be mistaken, but I don't think I am. Genesis chapter 6 verse 8, the first word isn't the first time it's used, but it's my favorite word in the Bible, "but," in spite of the wickedness, in spite of the sinfulness, in spite of the fact that God said judgment is coming, "But Noah found grace in the eyes of God." Now what is grace? Grace is getting or receiving that which you cannot earn nor do you deserve. So you're exactly right, the very fact that he spared Noah is an act of grace because in our perspective God should have started over, correct?

So the question is why did he not? Go back to Genesis chapter 3. Genesis chapter 3, humanity has fallen into sin and we're going to be in Genesis all night again. I mean yes, Genesis chapter 3:15. What we know as verse 15 is actually God's pronouncement of judgment or consequence on the serpent, okay? We addressed this a little bit last week, but I'm going to take it from your question's perspective. It says, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed. It shall bruise thy head, thou shalt bruise his heel." Now we talked about last week, this certainly is not the first gospel, but it actually is prophetic toward what we know as the virgin birth because the seed naturally comes from a man, here it is coming from a woman. But what I think is important to your question is God promised essentially that from the lineage of this woman, which by the way you know she doesn't have a name yet in verse 15, she gets a name later. Remember what her name Eve means? Mother of all the living. That's what her name means. When he says from her seed, basically the Lord has prophesied, if I can

use that terminology, that the Messiah will come from this lineage. If you start over, then you don't have a fulfilled prophecy. In other words, Noah wasn't perfect, his kids weren't perfect, but by the grace of God, they were the vessel that God would use to get on that boat for 15 very long, and you know it had to be stinky months. Have y'all ever thought about that? If you've never read Genesis 6 through 9, which gives you the dimensions of Noah's Ark, it was a big boat, but it had small windows. Small windows with a lot of animals. And if you've ever had any animals in your presence, mm-hmm, they stink. it would have been a stinky boat. But Noah found grace in the eyes of God. So again, why did God not start over is because by the grace he extended to Noah, that prophecy of this lineage could continue. I don't know if that helps out, but I think that's the best I can do. Does that help a little bit?

By the way, if God started over, every time humanity disqualified itself, we would now be at humanity 4,318 because this is just a cursory reading of the book of Genesis. Y'all ready? Chapter 3, Adam and Eve go sideways. Chapter 4, Cain goes sideways. Chapter 6, the whole world goes sideways. Chapter 11, Shem, Ham, and Japheth go sideways. Chapter 16, Abram goes sideways. Do y'all get the idea here? It doesn't matter what chapter you turn to or who you're dealing with, everybody messes up and technically disqualifies ourselves, but what do we find? Grace. Did not Adam and Eve find grace by God? Absolutely. What did he do? He allowed them to continue to live. He made skins for them. They had to be removed from the garden. But I don't know about you, but when he said, "In the day you eat thereof you will surely die," he extended grace physically to them, even though spiritually that relationship was breached. Did that help a little bit? Okay.

Can we get to the screen? Are y'all ready? It's gonna be a profound moment. Here we go, here we go. It says, "Why did Michael the archangel fight Satan over the body of Moses?" That's a good question. You know where the answer is? The book of Jude. You said, who's Jude? Go to Revelation, hang a hard left. All right, here we go. Now, for some of you may be thinking, I don't even know what this is, who this is, and why this is. Let me give you a little historical background. In the book of Deuteronomy, 34th chapter, last chapter of what we know as the Torah, the Pentateuch, the books of Moses, those first five books, the very last chapter of that section, Moses dies but he doesn't just die, he dies in a very unique fashion. Remember that this was a man of great faith, he was a man of great obedience, he went under Pharaoh, he put the staff in the water, he multiplied, I mean the manna, all that great stuff, right? But remember what happened toward the end of his life? The people began to gripe and whine again about the water. God told him not to strike the rock, God told him to speak to the rock. Y'all remember what Moses did? He struck the rock, right? And because of that, God's, quote, punishment to him was that he would not see the Promised Land. It was Joshua. In fact, in Joshua 1:1, it says the same spirit that was on Moses was on Joshua. Okay? So Moses dies and when he dies he actually is buried east of what we know as the Promised Land on the east side of the Jordan River. And here's what's significant, according to Deuteronomy 34 it says that no man knew where his grave was. Okay?

Now that's a very important historical set up for the book of Jude because within the book of Jude we have this obscure passage in verse 9. It says, "Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil, he disputed about the body of Moses, did not bring against him a railing accusation but said the Lord rebuke thee." Now, the question is why would Satan fight Michael the Archangel over the, quote, body of Moses? Because here's this body that's been buried. It's the east side of the Jordan River. Nobody knows where he is. Why would, quote, he show up and desire to have, quote, possession of, right? Now, the answer is actually threefold, right? Now, for the sake of time, I'm not going to specifically go to every one of these passages, but you feel free to do so if you so desire. The first answer is in the book of Malachi, chapter 4. It's the last chapter of your Old Testament, okay? In that last chapter, it prophesies, other than the Messiah, two individuals that are going to be critical to his ministry. One of them is Elijah. I'll let you guess who the second one is. Moses, right? Then you get to Matthew chapter 17, okay? Matthew chapter 17, Jesus is on the Mount of Transfiguration. Remember Peter, James, and John go up there. His raiment, his appearance is as bright as the sun. Do you remember who joined Jesus at that experience? Elijah and? Moses. Exactly. Now I think we would all agree that last chapter in Malachi is important that Moses is going to be a part of things, I think we'd all agree in Matthew 17 Moses' appearance is critical, however and I know you're shocked that this is going to happen on Wednesday night, the third and the final answer is in Revelation chapter 11. Here we go Revelation chapter 11 and there it is. I set it up, there it is. How long did it take? You don't know? It took 20 minutes and 41 seconds. There it is. Alright, for those of you that are new to us on Wednesday nights, we always end up in Revelation. Alright, Revelation chapter 11. There is a very famous passage about two men during these quote, end times last days, who are considered, the title we give them are the two witnesses, okay? They're the ones in the midst of this great tribulation who give verification, they give witness to all that the Lord is doing in the midst of all that is happening, alright? Now, verse 3 of Revelation 11. "I will give power unto my two witnesses. They shall prophesy for a thousand, two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth. If any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth and devoureth their enemies. If any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed." Verse 6, "These have the power to shut up the heaven that it rain not in the days of their prophecy." Push pause. Who did that in the Old Testament? Elijah. Remember, he spoke and for three and a half years it didn't rain. He spoke and it did rain, okay? Let's continue the story, all right? Verse 6, "and have power over the waters to turn them to blood." Who did that? Moses. And so a lot of times we have all this discussion, "Oh, I don't know who these two witnesses are. I think it could be this guy. I think it could be that guy." Well, it describes them as the guy that shut up the heavens so it didn't rain, the guy that turned water into blood.

Now the reason I bring all that up is Moses died in Deuteronomy 34 and he died unfortunately in rebellion against God but that did not discount what God had planned for him in the days ahead, and if he is physically going to come back and bear witness on behalf of God, then Satan is going to want the body because you can't have him physically back if you don't have a body. Correct? Now, I know. I know what some of you are thinking. The Bible says in Hebrews 9:27, it is appointed unto men once to die.

That's correct. However, you would have to admit there are some outliers. Okay? Elijah never died. Enoch never died. Did you know that Moses actually dies twice? You say, what do you mean twice? He died in Deuteronomy 34, right? Read the rest of Revelation chapter 11. He gets his head cut off. So again, there are outliers, but the exception of the rule does not make the rule. And so again, to the question of why would Satan want the body is because God had such great, incredible plans, not only for him, but you ready for this? When you go to Revelation chapter 11, who are the two witnesses speaking primarily against? The antichrist, who is basically the physical embodiment of Satan. Here's what he's trying to do, he's trying to eliminate his opposition in advance. But guess what? Michael the Archangel shows up and what does he say? "The Lord rebuke thee." And because Moses shows up in Matthew 17, we've got biblical evidence that Satan didn't win that battle. He didn't get that body. But that is a great question that is actually answered from this obscure verse in this very short book of the Bible, tucked all the way in the back of the New Testament, that goes all the way back to Deuteronomy 34.

Any other Moses, Michael? Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Say that one more time. Why did Jesus choose fishermen to be his disciples? That's a really good question. Now, we know that Jesus said, "I will make you, quote, fishers of men." Right? We know that. That's a picture. There's a multi-layered question to this. Let me address the men as professional fishermen and then let me address those whom they would catch, you and I. Alright? Now, let's address them. When you look at the passages where Jesus called the disciples, one of the things that you'll notice is it says when he called them, they were cleaning their nets. Now, again, I know you love to fish. I know that, right? And many of you do as well. But you know as well as I do, the reason that a fisherman cleans his nets is because if he doesn't, the next trip's not gonna be good, right? Those men had a long-range vision of what they were doing and not just about today. You've heard the old adage, right? Give a man a meal, feed him a day, teach him how to fish, and he'll eat his whole life. Those men were cleaning their nets, preparing their nets. They had a concept of it's not just about today, it's about the days ahead. So when you look at them as fishermen, I think that has to come into play of how they were operating in life that was what Jesus was desiring to have.

Now here's the fun part. Okay? Jesus tells us in Matthew chapter 4 to the disciples, "You will be fishers of men." You might be surprised how much like fish we are. You say what do you mean we're like fish? It takes a different kind of hook to get you all. Anybody who's spent any time in a boat fishing knows you don't just take one lure to every lake, right? In other words, when it comes to sharing the gospel, the gospel never changes but sometimes the way you present it, sometimes the way you package it, sometimes the manner in which you share it, sometimes somebody gets saved the very first time you share it. Just kind of like, excuse me for saying that dumb fish, whoop, I'll snag it, right? Alright, you love those fish, I get it. But then, just someone like you guys that love to hunt, there's some of you fishermen, there's been a spot on a certain lake where the big

one is and you know he's down there. You've seen him, you've tried to get him, and you've gone hundreds. And people are like that too, are we not? Okay?

But here's the neat answer. Go to Psalm 104. Here we go, go to Psalm 104. I love this. All right, thank you, sir. By the way, I love the question. I promise I didn't plan it. Here we go, Psalm 104. I want to show you something fascinating. We talked about in Genesis earlier and last week, remember we talked about the waters below and the waters above? We kind of talked about all that. In Psalm 104, I'm going to begin reading in verse 1, it is a telling of the creation narrative, but I want to focus on a very fascinating aspect. It says, "Bless the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty. Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment: who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain: Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters: who maketh the clouds his chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the wind: Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire: Who laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed for ever. Thou coveredst it with the deep as with a garment: the waters stood above the mountains." You know what the Bible is saying? That you and I right now are in the midst of a spiritual water. We're all fish. There are waters below, there's lakes, there's streams, there's oceans, right? There's waters above. There's a crystal sea right at the entrance of heaven, right? But it calls this space between the deep and it says he covered it with the waters that even stood above the mountains.

The biblical description of all that space is a very aquatic description which means that if Jesus sees us metaphorically as fish, he needs fishermen to show us how to catch each other. In other words, he did not pick engineers, no offense to engineers, he picked people who knew that sometimes you gotta go out all night, fish and catch nothing, you still gotta fix your nets for the next night. Guess what, folks? How many times have you shared the gospel, shared the gospel, shared the gospel, no fruit, no fruit, no fruit? You got to mend your net, you got to keep on going back out. Right? Okay? So I think the answer is a both/and. They had a perspective and a vision that he admired and respected. Secondly, I think there's biblical evidence that we're all a bunch of fish. Okay?

Y'all remember last week when we went to Job 41 and Leviathan? Remember, this was the sea monster that swims in the waters, but yet he was called the king of the children of pride? You see that aquatic? Now, I know I do this all the time, okay? So forgive me. Is it possible that Satan is playing his hand through the movies we watch? Y'all ever heard of a character movie, Aquaman? You know what it pictures? It pictures, in that movie, Earth's original civilization was all underwater. Is it possible we really are underwater? It's called the deep. It's just not a liquid physical water and we're all fish. And here's the question, are we going to allow ourselves to be caught by the Lord or are we going to be eaten by Leviathan? Y'all pick.

Now I know that was a whole lot of stuff from a very simple question, so thanks for helping me there, but I think it helps us understand the imagery and the metaphors that Jesus used all throughout his ministry. Why do you think most of the great teachings were on the side of the water? Because that's where we are and who we are. And he's picturing for us how this applies to us. You think about it, almost all the great stories of

Jesus are within sight of water. Every time. He's on the Sea of Galilee, right? He's on the River Jordan. And guess what's in all those places? You guessed it, fish! Which we're a whole lot like, if you'd be honest with yourself because most of us, myself included. Now, no offense to you, can we all admit fish as a whole are not the smartest creatures? No, they're not smart, right? Because they can see something that is shiny, twisting, and looks good to the eye, and they'll just snag on it, right? Isn't that what we do every day? Sin is shiny, twisty, and we jump on it before we ever think about the consequences and next thing we find out, we're in the boat, we're getting gutted.

By the way, there's one last thing before we transition to the next question. Let me remind each and every one of us, you catch a fish before you clean a fish. You cannot expect lost people to act saved until they're saved. You've got to catch them first. And by the way, last time I checked, the time frame between catching them and actually cleaning them is a nasty, slimy, and at-time painful process. I've been gilled. It's not fun.

Yes, sir?

[unintelligible]

No, they weren't all fishermen. The majority of them were. Yeah, they weren't all fishermen. You're right. But Peter and Andrew were fishermen. James and John were fishermen. And most likely Bartholomew as well because he was from Bethsaida, which was a fishing community. So at least half of them were and you'll notice that when he called them he was on a boat and they were mending their nets, and after he raises from the dead and meets them in Galilee, they're fishing and he meets them on the side of the shore. So it's a prominent, it's not the total theme you're right. Matthew he was an accountant, he was a CPA in our terminology. So you know, somebody had to keep the books, right? Judas was a thief. He's a whole other story.

Okay, here we go. Move on. Yes, you can ask anything you want, ma'am. The texting is purely optional now. Go for it.

[unintelligible]

Yes, ma'am. I don't know. I don't know. I'm not a professional fisherman. I don't know. So you're asking how people get fat? Okay, now I understand her question. Like a fish that can get large and at time a little bit feisty, are there people that are more difficult to catch? Oh, absolutely. Let me give you some biblical examples. How about the rich young ruler? The rich young ruler was tough to catch. In fact, Jesus' analogy on the backside was, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for somebody like you." Why was he hard to catch, though? He was hard to catch because of the distractions and the things that he was consumed with. And, by the way, he believed that his own self-piousness was good enough. The hardest person to catch, if you can use this analogy, is a religious person because a religious person believes that whatever they're doing is satisfying the struggle or the issue, and they are right in their own eyes. The Pharisees. Think about the Pharisees. Jesus, I mean, forgive me. I'm going to use the

fish analogy, Jesus filleted them. I mean, he really did. You think about the language he used to these guys. When you tell somebody that you're a whitewashed tomb, when you tell somebody your converts are twice the children of hell that you are, I mean, but they were in their own minds, they thought... here's the issue, at the end of the day, you cannot be found until you believe you're lost. Ladies, can I, I'm gonna get on your side for a moment. Us men, we struggle with admitting that we're lost in a car, correct? Come on guys, you know, I'm with you because we don't want to admit that we don't know what we're doing. We don't want to admit that we don't know where we're going. And you cannot get to where you need to go until you admit you don't know where you're going. Right? The Pharisees thought they knew where they were going and they thought they had the answers. But then you take the woman at the well, okay? John chapter 4. She knew her life was messed up. She had been discouraged for years and she had been demoralized by the whole culture. Jesus shows up and says, "You know what? You know, I've got water that if you drink of it, you'll never thirst again." Within the hour, she had gone to another city, grabbed a bunch of guys and said, "Man, you gotta hear this." The Pharisees, these guys said, "You know what? We're not going to eat or drink until he's dead." Do you see the difference? So yes, there are fish that are hard to catch and there are fish that are easy to catch. The key is Jesus is the fisherman.

So all right, here we go. We fished enough. No, we haven't fished enough. Yes?

[unintelligible]

She confessed to the size of her fish, and he's excited about it.

All right, here we go. Here we go. It says, "Why are there so many different races of people in the world if we all came from two people?" All right, that's a really good question that thankfully our contemporary culture helps us a whole lot more than we may realize, but ultimately, yes, you guessed it, we've got to go back to old Genesis again. But one of the things that we've discover today, thanks to all of these incredible, just I would say advances in technology, is that we have the ability, we have the capacity to analyze our DNA structures, genetic backgrounds, and one of the things that we've discovered is that in spite of your obvious outward appearance differences, that the difference genetically between any two random people on planet Earth is rarely more than 2%. We are 98% alike and about 2% different. So one of the problems that we have is when we see obvious outward differences, we assume that the whole thing is different when all it is the cover to the book. The Bible says all have sinned, not just these people. Right? So if you start peeling away the layers, we all got a sin problem, we all need Jesus, right? The problem is most of us focus on the 2% and not the 98%, right?

So when you go back to Genesis, again we've kind of addressed this tonight, you go back to the story as written in the Bible. You've got Adam and Eve, they have children, they have children, they keep going, they keep going, they keep going. Eventually in Genesis chapter 6, Noah gets on the boat with his wife, his three sons, his three daughter-in-laws, those eight people, according to the biblical record, that is all that there is, right? By the way, when it says the same two people, you do realize everybody on that boat has their

great-great-great-great-great-grandmother and grandfather, Adam and Eve, right? But essentially, if we can kind of pull the story back a little bit, the two people on the boat are Noah and Mrs. Noah, because they were the originators of the others, right? Here's what you'll discover, that when they got off the boat, and there's a lot of issues in there, God made it very clear, you read this in Genesis chapter 9 and 10, he said to Shem, "You go east. Ham, you go south. Japheth, you go west." Guess what we did? The opposite. You realize that basically, and by the way, as the dad to three sons, this is brilliant. He basically says, "Hey boys, go create your own thing. Do your own thing." What did the boys do? "Oh no, we want to hang together." So what did they do? They created what we know as the Tower of Babel. So what does God do? He comes down, confounds our language, and guess where they end up going? Shem goes east, Ham goes south, and Japheth goes west.

Now, again, I am not a geneticist, I'm not a microbiologist, I get that, however, it does not take an individual of that magnitude to realize that people who live above the Arctic Circle tend to be a little more pale than those of us that live in Alabama because it's cold, they're always covered up, and they never see the sun. And then there's us, right? In other words, I think there's a clear biblical explanation that the 2% that's different is more of an environmental repercussion than it is an internal difference because at the end of the day, it doesn't matter if you're a descendant of Ham, a descendant of Shem, or a descendant of Japheth, we've all messed up, we've all sinned, and we all come to Jesus the same way. Doesn't matter. And so again, when we talk about the quote unquote races, we as a culture are describing the cover of the book when really we need to be discussing more the pages of the book because last time I checked, it doesn't matter the exterior, the interior, all of humanity is messed up. You can't find, you can't find, I know there are some people that would argue this, but if you get down to the core of humanity, you really cannot find a single human being that in the eyes of God is better than another human being because we're all messed up. And it doesn't matter how you package it, if that makes sense.

So again, it's kind of a simplistic Genesis answer, but I think it's a very observant answer and here's the beautiful thing, today, the advancements of technology that are coming out, you know what we're discovering? It doesn't matter who you married, you're related to them. You really are. Now you may be 17th cousins, twice removed on the father's side, but we're discovering, and by the way, you can go back and look, there are actually publications coming out, articles coming out, that are showing that thanks to our research into DNA, RNA, and all those things, they're discovering a common mother and father that we all came from. Man, aren't you shocked the Bible's right again. Here we are. But again, our observations are based on the 2% and not the 98%.

So, just thought I'd bring that up. Everybody good? We're all good? Moving on. It says, "Can you please help me understand Judges chapter 10 verse 16?" I'll do my best. It says, "And his soul could no longer endure the misery of Israel." Yes, good old Israel. Here we go. Judges in your Old Testament. By the way, speaking to the book of Judges, it is in a section of the Bible that we call the writings, and this is kind of my shameless plug. For those who have not yet signed up to be a part of and desire to be a part of our Bible

memorization plan, most of the passages that are available are in this section of the Bible and most of them are in areas that we consider to be very obscure. However, you might be shocked how many of these passages actually have biblical stories that you're actually familiar with, you just didn't know they were there. Alright? So again, let me encourage you. I know I'm in the book of Ezra. Feel free to join me. But that's kind of what's left there but it is some of the most fascinating stories in all of the Bible and you get to be a part of it.

Alright, here we go. Joshua chapter 10. Judges, no, I started to say that's not going to work. Judges chapter 10 verse 16 which reads, "And they put away the strange gods from among them. They served the Lord and his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel." Alright, so let's unpack all this. Within the book of Judges, and by the way you do see it in the book of Joshua as well even though I shouldn't have been in that passage, we see a theological position that we commonly refer to as the sin cycle. You say, what is the sin cycle? The sin cycle, you can see it in the Garden of Eden, you can see it in the book of Judges, you can see it in your own life. It goes a little something like this. Humanity is going about their life. Everything is good. They get distracted by the things of this world. They fall into sin. They think it's going to go well. The problem is they realize that they've fallen into sin and eventually you hit rock bottom, right? They hit rock bottom. They cry out to God, "God, help us, help us, help us, this isn't what we wanted!" God comes in. He establishes grace. He pulls them out of the proverbial ditch. They worship the Lord. They celebrate the Lord. But then they get apathetic. They get overly confident. And guess what happens? They fall into the same trap over and over. Let me put it in more of a contextual scenario. You ever heard the phrase, the one thing people don't learn from history is to learn from history? Because what do we end up doing? We end up repeating the same mistakes generation after generation after generation, right?

That's that proverbial sin cycle. What we find here in Judges chapter 10, again, we find ourselves in this cycle. The Israelites have rebelled against God. They have confessed their sin. "Oh, help us, help us, help us!" Now, it says in verse 16, and if you read up just a little bit beyond that, they basically confess it all to God. "We messed up. We followed the wrong people. We were mistaken. We should have never done it." And then according to verse 16, they actually took the false idol, they burned them. But you know what? This wasn't the first time this has happened and it wasn't going to be the last. And so when it says there that his soul can only endure the misery of Israel, what he's basically saying or what it's basically saying is this is a perpetual cycle that is not going to end on its own endeavor. It's going to continue and continue. And by the way, there's going to be a few more judges and then in 1 Samuel chapter 8 remember what the Israelites say? "We don't want the judges, we want a king." And God says, "You really don't want a king." They say, "Oh yeah, we want to look like just like everybody else."

So here's the thing I want you to hear when you mean the misery of, they burned the false idols and they got rid of the high places. That sounds like a great thing, right? But did you know, profound, did you know you can do the right thing for the wrong reason? And I think that's what we see in this famous sin cycle, is they burn down the high places, they burn their idols, but their hearts never change. Their motives never change. Their desires

never change. And so basically God's saying, "This is good today, but we're going to end up in the same place in a few weeks. It's just going to keep on."

Now do you know why we need a Savior? This is why we need Jesus. I was having a conversation with somebody the other day. In the conversation, somebody made a statement very similar. You probably said this to somebody. They just said, "You know, I just keep messing up. I just keep messing up." And I said, "Friend," I said, "now you get why you need Jesus because if you could quit messing up, you wouldn't need a Savior." We keep messing up. The Israelites keep messing up. And I know I've shared this with the men's group on Tuesday morning, so guys, here's your two-minute nap. You ready? One of my favorite stories years and years and years ago, I was teaching a men's Bible study similar to what we do every Tuesday morning at 6:30 here on our campus. In the process of doing so, I don't know how it came up, but one of our, I would call, aged men, mature physically, mature spiritually, confessed to the group. He confessed. He said, "I've been reading in another Bible study the book of Judges and I keep thinking to myself, these are the biggest idiots that have ever been on the planet." And he goes, "But then I woke up one day and said, I'm just like them." And he's right. You read the story of the Israelites, you see the misery, it's just this perpetual saga and cycle all over the time and guess what? The only way we get out of it is Jesus. That's it. There's no other way out. The Israelites tried every way, every means, every possible, and it didn't work. But God told us that all the way back in Genesis chapter 3.

By the way, just because I'm a curious cat, anybody in the room have Judges 10 they're memorizing? Anybody got Judges 10? I just thought I'd ask. Somebody does. I think. Oh, here we go.

Oh, follow up question. "Does this mean that God has a soul?" Alright, this is a fascinating question. Are y'all ready to get into the theological weeds for just a moment? Here we go, let's have some fun. I don't know who submitted the question, but you opened it up, alright? The Bible makes it very clear, Deuteronomy chapter 6, "Hear O Israel, the Lord your God is one God." Right? There is only one God. There's not multiple gods. However, we see from the very beginning of the Bible through the end of the Bible that he reveals himself in the person of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Again, unity, one God, not different, right? You go to 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 verse 23, it says, "I pray your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved unto the coming of our Lord," okay? You and I recognize there's only one of you, but you have a spirit, a soul, and a body. You, humanity, we go back to Genesis 1, it says that we were made in the, quote, image of God, right? He is one God, but we see him as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. You are one person, but you have a body and you have a soul and you have a spirit.

Now you say, what does that mean? So let's break that down and again, every single illustration breaks down at some point. But if we were to take the Godhead and we were to ask ourselves which part of the Godhead would be the spirit, that's a pretty easy answer, right? It's called the Holy Spirit. Pretty simple. Well then which one would be the body? Well, which is the one that we actually could touch and feel? 1 John chapter 1 says

unto Jesus whom we touched, which means the soul is the Father. Now again, every analogy breaks down. Please understand, we're just kind of talking with terminology. So when it says his soul was grieved, we started in John 17, did we not? John 17 begins by Jesus saying, "Father, I've done everything you told me to do." That's not a division of the Godhead, that's an understanding of responsibility and role. So when it says his soul was grieved, who is the architect? I hate to say this, I don't want to sound bad. The architect of all this is the Father. Okay, now, the Son is God, the Spirit is God, the Father is God, and there's only one God. That's something we can't really wrap our minds around, but if we were going to really get in the, don't think of God having a soul, think of the person of the Godhead that reveals and acts as our soul does, if that makes sense. And by the way, that term, and his soul was grieved, that's metaphorical, but it's also picturesque.

So that's a good question. Anybody else on that one? It says, could you, how much time we got? All right, here we go. "Could you help me to reconcile the five points of Calvinism, TULIP, with the biblical understanding of free will and eternal security?" Yeah, this is a question we've been dealing with for 400 years. We're down to about 10 minutes, all right? So, I'm gonna answer this question probably differently than you may expect. Okay, that TULIP there, okay? You see it on the board, that TULIP. That is an acronym that has been utilized throughout the years to describe a theological position that is most commonly referred to as Calvinism. Now, that's named after John Calvin, the theologian of the Reformation, however, John Calvin did not construct this acronym. It was those who followed him that did so in the early 1600s. He had been dead for years when this came up. Allow me to share with you what this acronym stands for. The T is total depravity. The U is unconditional election. The L is limited atonement. The I is irresistible grace. And the P is the preservation of the saints. Allow me to share with you in very simplistic explanation what those five points mean as written. Humanity is totally depraved. There is nothing that we can do to save ourselves. Unconditionally, God has elected whom will be saved and who will be damned. Jesus went to the cross and rose from the dead limitedly only for those that were unconditionally elected to be saved. When he reveals to them that they are part of the saved they cannot resist him and because their life will emulate that, they will persevere to the end so you know they're the real ones.

That's what it says. Essentially what we know as this doctrine says is that those who one day will be in heaven were chosen arbitrarily by God at no decision of their own. There's nothing they can do to earn it or deserve it. It is what it is. You go to heaven or hell based on his arbitrary will and there's nothing you can or can't do. That's the very crass explanation. The question is, how do you reconcile this with a biblical understanding of free will? You may or may be surprised that the term free will is in your Bible more than you may think. Exodus chapter 25 told the Israelites to bring an offering to the tabernacle of their free will. Ezra you know I'm in Ezra but I'm in chapter 2, chapter 7 of Ezra says that when they came back and rebuilt Jerusalem they came and they made a free will offering, okay? So how do we reconcile these things? I think again one of the problems with any theological position of such nature is, anybody can find a passage to defend their position when they so desire it or like. What I would say is this. I'm going to give a historical answer and then I'm going to give a biblical theological answer. Here's my

historical answer and I want you to hear me clearly. What we know as Calvinism, what we know as the TULIP acronym cannot be seen as an independent theological position, and I can prove it. Calvinism was not developed as an independent theology. It was a response to heresy. In other words, in the 1500s, there was a group of people known as the Arminians. Okay? If you've never heard of the Arminians, allow me to explain who these guys are. They believe that everybody's inherently good, eventually everybody will choose Jesus, and everybody's in heaven. Can we all agree that's not true? Right? So a group of people in the early 1600s came and said, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, that's not true." What we know as this TULIP doctrine, it's not an independent doctrine, it's a response to a false doctrine.

So in other words, when they say total depravity, what that means is not that humanity cannot, quote, there's nothing they can do to be saved, what it means is we're not all good, we are totally depraved. Unconditional election. You know what the Arminians said? The Arminians said, eventually you'll figure it out and you'll find your way. They said, no, no, no. It's unconditional. God told us the only way. And by the way, his name is Jesus. The Arminians said, everybody's going to end up in heaven. They said, no, no, no, no. It's limited. Do you see a pattern here? It's not an independent thought. It is a response to a heretical thought that we have turned into an independent thought. So in other words, one of the things I've said throughout the years is one of the great problems in life is when the second generation perverts the intent of the first. This doctrine was created as a response to heresy. Now it has taken a life of its own that it was never historically meant to have.

Now, let's answer this biblically. You all ready? Go to the book of Isaiah chapter 42. We've got enough time to do this real quick. Isaiah chapter 42. Isaiah chapter 42. Remember, you can get into all that total depravity, but that second one is a problem. Unconditional election. Unconditionally election as taught, generally speaking, means that God elects whom he elects with no regard to anyone's personal faith or decision. That's what is claimed. I want you to look in Isaiah chapter 42. This is the very first time in your Bible that the word "elect" is used. Here's what it says, "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break." Guess who we're talking about here? Jesus. So in other words, when we use the term elect or election, you cannot use that term apart from Jesus because he is the original elect, okay?

Now flip a few pages to the right to chapter 45. This is one of those verses, if we can get this verse, I think you and I can fix the theological problem that the question originated from. Verse 4 of Isaiah 45, "For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me." Why is that important? Israel is called elect, right? Israel is not an individual. It's an entity. In other words, unconditional election biblically has nothing to do with you or nothing to do with me, it has to do with the plan of God. Israel was the vessel that salvation came through, right? Does that mean that every Israelite in the Old Testament is in heaven right now? No! Because it's not about individuals, it's about an entity.

And so allow me to somewhat repurpose this TULIP to what I believe is a biblical explanation, okay? Total depravity, that's right. Humanity is completely sinful and there's nothing they can do inherently to save themselves. Unconditional election, that's right. Unconditionally God has a plan that nobody can change. That plan is Jesus Christ. You're either saved or you're lost. Limited atonement. You guessed it, there's going to be some in heaven, there's going to be some in hell and it's all based on what you decided about Jesus. Irresistible grace. Wow, I know a lot of people have told God no, including me. You ever told God no? So he's irresistible. Oh, you mean you're bigger than God? No, no, no. In other words, that's where we struggle. And the P, the preservation of the saints, the question is, eternal security, preservation of saints isn't eternal security, preservation of saints in the TULIP doctrine means you will continue to do good as evidence you really are. Which proves my point. You know there's these five points we call Calvinism? You know what most people are, and I think if you're biblical, you're actually two and a half points. You believe in total depravity, you believe in corporate unconditional election, and you believe in limited atonement and the fact that there's a heaven and there's a hell, but not that Jesus only went to the cross for the elect. "For God so loved the world," not for God so loved the elect. Okay? "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord," not the elect who call on the name. Do you see how that works? And one of the biggest problems, it goes back, I hate to go full circle, we've taken a theological construct that was originally created as a response to heretical thinking and we've made it an independent thought, it's bred its own constructs and turned into something that I think it's never designed to be, if that makes sense. The problem is we propagate this a whole lot in our culture.

And so again, this election is the big issue, is it individual or is it corporate? I subscribe based on Isaiah 45 that it is corporate because Israel is called elect, not Jacob. Jacob's called his servant. Israel is called elect. Jacob was who he was as an individual. Israel was the name that was given to him as a collective body of people. And the last verse I'll quote is Romans chapter 2, verses 28 and 29. It says, "Not all that are Israel are Israel, but those that have been circumcised of the heart." In other words, this whole construct is based on the plan of God and not respective to each and every individual in the construct. Okay? So that's my quote-unquote very quick biblical response to a question we've been dealing with for 400 years and we didn't solve it in fourteen minutes, but here's the deal, when you look at your Bible, I think the Bible makes it very clear that we've all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, it makes it very clear that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us, and whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved, which last time I checked means everybody, anytime, always.

Let's pray.

Lord Jesus thank you tonight that according to your word there are none of us that are outside the scope of redemption and salvation, yet at the same time, Lord, there are none of us that are righteous in our own deeds and actions. God, I pray tonight that in the midst of all the questions, the concerns, and all the great discussion that we would never lose sight of what you called in 2 Corinthians 11, the simplicity of salvation. Lord, I pray that we would never be so heavenly-minded that we're no earthly good. It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.