

## Ask Jeff

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Well, good evening. It's 6:30 Central Standard Time and it's Wednesday night at First Baptist Church of Opelika and it means it's time to do some Bible study. Now, for those of you that may be here for the very first time either in person, online or listening by way of radio, allow me to remind you that this is our large group adult Bible study. There are men's Bible studies, women's Bible studies. There are studies for all ages, grades, stages of life and such. But you have gathered here tonight for a Bible study that's not just large in size, but is large in scope. And what that means is we have no set curriculum tonight. We have no set agenda tonight. In fact, everything we're going to talk about, every discussion, every passage, every topic, every concern, every question, is derived and originated by you. That's right. Tonight is all your fault, no matter what happens. No. In seriousness, this is a participant-driven Bible study, meaning that you will be the ones that originate the conversation.

Now, if you've never been a part of this on Wednesday night, let me kind of explain how this works. There are two means by which you can participate. You can remain anonymous by way of text message. Now, to use our text messaging system, it is area code 334-231-2313. When you send us a text message, you can be here in the room, you can be outside of the room, you can be anywhere in the world, but if you're in another country, please use the country code 01 first before you text in. Your question, your comment, your concern will be sent directly to our portal. It will end up on this screen. You remain completely anonymous. Obviously, your name would not be connected to it, nor will your phone number show up on the screen. If we're on a certain topic or concern and you want to drill down a little deeper or maybe go tangent to, you can stay on topic. You can send us a follow-up question by way of text messaging as well. When you do so, it will show up in a different font and I will know that we're staying on topic.

Now, for those of you that are in the room, you have the ability to raise your hand. When you raise your hand, you take the floor you begin to drive the conversation, however you lose your anonymity because we can see you, you're in the room with us, but let me remind you that if you raise your hand and you voice a question in the room, that your voice will not be heard nor will your image be used by way of radio internet or television. You are anonymous to the rest of the world but we're all family here so it's all good. So without further ado either text messaging put your hands in the air, why don't we do some Bible study? Does that sound good?

All right, here we go. Question number one says God gives us the Holy Spirit to discern right and wrong, however, all mankind has a general sense of right and wrong. What is the difference or does God live in every person to some extent? This is a very good, pretty deep question because I think we would recognize that per the question, for those of us who are believers in Jesus Christ, according to 1 Corinthians chapter 6, verse 19 and 20, we become the temple, we become the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit, the Lord himself guides us, directs us, leads us. According to John chapter 14 and 16, he leads us into truth. He shows us righteousness. He shows us judgment. He gives us the direction for our lives. The issue is, what about those that are non-believers? What about those that have no adherence to Christianity? We recognize that even pagan cultures establish rules, regulations, laws, and ordinances within themselves that establish that which is right versus that which is wrong, and there are moral codes that people as individuals and as cultures implement within themselves that at times cross-thread with biblical truth about that which should be done in accordance with the will of God versus contrary to.

So the big question is, is there some extent of God living within them? How does this all operate? I think the best way to begin answering this question is to go to the book of John chapter 8. John chapter 8, it is textually a passage of scripture that has come under great scrutiny throughout time. I don't believe there should be any scrutiny. John chapter 8 is the story of the woman caught in adultery. Now some of you have done enough Bible study to know that just that title alone is erroneous because a single individual cannot be caught in an act such as that. It does take two. But there is a woman that is brought to Jesus. They begin to question him about what should be done with this woman. Basically, they are baiting him to enact basically the Mosaic law that says that when one is caught in such an act, they should be stoned to death. Obviously, you remember Jesus stoops down, he writes something in the dirt. We don't know exactly what that was. And essentially, it says that beginning with the oldest, they begin to walk away. And Jesus said, "He that is without sin casts the first stone." At the conclusion of this famous story, he says, "Woman, where are your accusers?" She says, "I have none." He says, "Neither do I accuse you. Go and sin no more."

Now, if you will notice in this passage, I believe it is in verse, here we go, ah, verse 9. All right, I want to pick up the story. Now remember, those, let's back up the story for a moment, those that brought this woman to Jesus, they were not curious about Jesus. They were not inquisitive about Jesus. They despised Jesus, everything about him, right? These are those that were trying to disprove him. These were those that were trying to catch him in a trap every time he turned around. So, let's pick up the story in verse 7. It says, "when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst." Isn't that interesting? Did you know that that is the very first time in your Bible that the word conscience is used? And it says that their own conscience convicted them. Now these are not believers. These are what we would call

lost people. We might even classify them as being heathen-y because they were so contrary to the things of God even though they were religious and it says they knew because of their, quote, own conscience.

Now, if we were to go all the way back to the very beginning, all the way back to the book of Genesis, we know that humanity was established and formed by the hand of God and the breath of God in whom we know as Adam, eventually Eve. The word Eve basically means, that name, the mother of all the living. So if you go all the way back through the chronicles of human history, our origin is that we were created in the image and the likeness of God and though we are fallen and though we are sinful and though we are lost without Jesus Christ, there is still a consciousness within us that draws us at times to what is truth versus what is error. In fact, in Romans chapter 1, it says those that have never heard the gospel, those that have never heard the truth, that deep down inside of them, they recognize there is a God in they are without excuse. And so even though a lost person does not have the Holy Spirit living within them, according to what we just read they have had humanity since the beginning has a conscience within us that leads us and guides us and directs us to that which should be right versus wrong. You ever heard of somebody you say they just have no conscience? That's a phrase we use for somebody who basically has no capacity to make a proper decision. The Bible speaks about you can have your conscience seared. In other words, it's like a flame that's doing well and it's pinched, so to speak. It says that we can have it dulled. In other words, that which is our mechanism for decision making, thanks to life, environment, decisions, etc., can go somewhat wayward.

Hopefully that addresses the question somewhat. I just wanted you to see... yes ma'am?

[unintelligible]

Yes? Ah, great question. Was it, quote, within us before what we know as the fall of humanity? I would argue yes, because we were created humanity in the image and likeness of God, right? Everything's good. We have the mind of God, the direction of God, the purpose of God, the intent of God and then when we fell, things went sideways, right? However, we did not cease being the human creation that God made us, we're just in a fallen state. Now I know we joke around a lot, particularly about young people and kids that, you know, what we know as sin, our depraved nature, you know, I was talking to a young parent this week, the first two words out of any child's mouth is "no" and "mine." Those are the first two words, right? However, one of the things that I've discovered, not only going back to the book of Genesis, even lost people who hate the Bible and hate God will argue that there are things that should be right and things that should be wrong. And guess where that originates? Whether they want to admit it or not, it's because somewhere down the line we originated from God, our Creator, who is the originator of that rightness in our life that can be derived from no other place.

I don't know if that helps a little bit, but originally, yes. Sir?

[unintelligible]

Oh yeah, the Holy Spirit's working on us all the time. In fact, that passage in John chapter 16 where it says that the Spirit of truth or the Holy Spirit will convict us of sin, righteousness, and judgment, it's actually speaking pre-salvation. The only way we know we're lost is because the Holy Spirit prompts us to our lostness. The only way we know that Jesus is right is the Holy Spirit prompts us but, as you would agree, does not dwell within us. So, again, if I could peel some layers away, it's almost as if our internal compass, our conscience, is either agreeing with or arguing against the Holy Spirit's influence in our life. Now, as a believer, the Holy Spirit isn't, I hate to use this analogy, on the outside working in, he's on the inside working out.

So, yes, but you're right. The Holy Spirit is working and operating and within that, which goes all the way back to our Creator, I call it the internal compass, the conscience, we can either agree with and be saved or go against and remain lost, to keep it in general terms, but you're absolutely correct. You know the conscience? Yes, ma'am.

[unintelligible]

Correct. So this young lady's bringing up the fact that the question as presented says that all of humanity has a general sense of right and wrong. What is humanity's criteria? Now here's where it gets interesting because if you're gonna look at this from somewhat of a historical anthropological perspective, all of codification of law goes back to what we know as the Ten Commandments. All cultures, all societies, all people groups, whether they want to admit or not, have derived their means of living and how they negotiate and navigate each other by the original set of, if I can say, rules. There is not a culture that we know that actually advocates and promotes murder because they would no longer exist. In other words, if you look at just societies as a whole, you look at cultures as a whole, it's amazing, even in societies and cultures that are so contrary to scripture, how much of the rules line up with the Ten Commandments. Did you know that in, listen, in an Islamic country, if you steal something, they chop your hand off. If you lie, they chop your tongue off. In other words, they have said, and we would all agree, we're talking lostness here, stealing is wrong and lying is wrong, where'd they get that from? They got it from the Ten Commandments originally, which by the way, derived within the context of humanity's internal mechanism of our conscience of what God wants versus what he doesn't want. So if you begin to look at the codification of humanity's rules and regulations, the overwhelming laws of most lands surprisingly line up with what we know as the Ten Commandments. So guess what that means? It's within us. We know, but we don't want to admit who created us, who is our origin, and who we're ultimately accountable to, because humanity, unfortunately, is lost, fallen, and wants to do it our own way.

Yes, ma'am. Man, the chicken made y'all feisty. All right, go for it.

[unintelligible]

Absolutely. So, going back to the first sin, fall, it's not just that humanity, quote, ate of the forbidden fruit, it's that she went contrary to the word of God. Right? Remember what the serpent said in Genesis chapter 3, remember that famous question? "Yea, hath God said?" In other words, did God really mean what he said and said what he meant? And then she began to dialogue. and said, "Oh, this is good, it looks good, it will taste good, it will make us wise like the gods." She began to rationalize that somehow there was a better way of doing it than God set it up. Then she ate. So here's one of the great theological conversations that Jesus cleared up in what we know as the Sermon on the Mount. Is it a sin when we view the temptation? Is it a sin when we champion, embrace the temptation or is it a sin when we actually act out on the temptation? And that's a great theological question and Jesus summarized it pretty simply and he said, "If a man has looked on a woman as if to commit adultery, he has done so in his heart." In other words, it's not just because you did or did not perform the act, it's that your heart desired to embrace it, champion it. So therefore, when Eve says, "Hey, this will be good for us," I don't think it was just the quote-unquote act of, but the desire and the intent to champion it as the answer to one's life, if that makes sense. In other words, there's a lot of sin that happens in our life that never is acted out on, but our heart has fully embraced it and desired it and wanted it in our life.

By the way, the last of the Ten Commandments says, do not covet. Okay, coveting is desiring what somebody has for yourself. There's a lot of us, we don't even have the means to acquire what somebody else has but in our heart we've desired it and wanted it more than what we've got so we've coveted even though we've never acquired it. So but here's the key to that, if you go back to James chapter 1, just because a temptation is present in your life doesn't mean you've fallen into sin. Temptation unfortunately is a part of life, the question is have we responded, embraced, championed it, and desired it as a part of our life. Hopefully that clears that one up.

Now by the way, when we start talking about the conscience, you understand there are books with hundreds of pages in them exploring these concepts. We're not going to solve it in an hour. At the end of the day, humanity originated by God himself. Internally they know what is right versus what is wrong. We have a natural deprivation toward what is wrong because we don't want to admit that we are wrong and believe in that which is right. Did I make that right? I think I did.

Anybody else on that issue? Man, if every question's like this, we're gonna serve chicken every night. I just want y'all to know. All right, question numero dos says, simply stated, "Why do we exist?" Oh, let's do an easy one tonight. "I heard it one time that we are taking the place that Satan vacated." All right, so the question, okay, let me back it up just a little bit. There are four questions that every human being has to answer over the course of their lifetime, whether they realize it or not. There's a perfect segue from the last question. You have to answer this question, where did I come from? What's the problem? How do I fix it? And where am I going? Now let me answer those four questions from the three main quote worldviews that are present among humanity. If somebody has what we might call a materialistic worldview, typically we would express that as atheism as far as belief system is concerned. You believe as a materialism, you believe that you came

by way of a series of accidents, of non-direction design and purpose. The problem is that we don't have enough knowledge or education to fix the issues we have. The answer is we need to acquire through research and exploration the answers to the problems and where we're headed, we're headed to the same dirt that we came from. That is the scope of what we call the materialistic worldview. Now, there is also a worldview that is pantheistic, where everything is of the divine. See, the materialistic view says everything is material, nothing is spiritual. What we know is the pantheistic is everything is divine. It says that we came from another layer, or a previous existence. The problem is we haven't reached enlightenment. The answer is we need either to meditate or focus our thoughts and our energies on becoming one with the universe and eventually we'll go to another layer until it eventually answers the question. All right? Now, what does a biblical worldview say? You came from God, the problem is sin, the answer is Jesus, you're either going to heaven or hell. That's it, okay?

Those are the four questions that everybody has to answer. Whomever submitted this question said, "I want a fifth question, all right? And the fifth question is why?" Now here's where it gets a little bit fuzzy. We can answer where we were created, right? God created us, put us in the garden of Eden. We know when. We can go back to Genesis chapter 1. We know who, God. We know how. Remember he took the red dirt, the clay, and he formed humanity. We can answer the who, the what, the when, the where, and the how. Here's what we can't answer, the why. So why is it that you and I were, quote, created? Why was humanity even put into existence? Now, there are some erroneous belief systems to this question. There are many people who say, "Well, I believe that God created us because he desired relationship, he wanted company, and for lack of better terms, he was lonely." Now, that's a pretty sad representation of an almighty, all-powerful God, okay? By the way, the Bible says in Hebrews chapter 12 verse 29 that the number of angelic beings is without number. I don't think he was lonely, okay? The question is then why? Why would he even form us? Why would he even fashion us? Why would he go to all of the trouble that we see laid out in scripture?

So, with that being said, turn to John chapter 17 and I want to propose the verse that is actually alluded to in the question because we know whom we came from, God. We know the problem is sin. We know the answer is Jesus. We know we're either headed to heaven or hell based on how we address the problem of sin with Jesus. So the question is why? Why did God even do it? So per the question, let me propose John chapter 17. I'm going to begin reading in verse 1 for the sake of context, but verse 5 is where we're going to camp out. Now let me remind you. We are in the Garden of Gethsemane. We are literally minutes away from Judas and 500 soldiers coming to Jesus with swords and staves to take him to a trial which is illegal by every means possible. We are hours away from Jesus being put on the cross, and we are about 17 hours away from him breathing his last breath and saying, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." We are on the last day, the last night. Remember Jesus has taken them from what we call the Last Supper. They've walked across the way. The bible says they sung a hymn on the way which means it could not have been much of a long walk. They get there, Peter, James and John are by the wayside You know the famous story, "Guys, stay up late, pray with

me." The flesh is weak, the spirit is strong, and what happened? They fell asleep time after time time again.

John 17 is the record of the prayer, the conversation between Jesus and the Father minutes before Judas comes and gets him. You ready? Verse 1 says, "These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." Now here's what's important about verse 5. If you read the totality of John chapter 17, it is the only part of this prayer that Jesus prays for himself. Everything else, the first four verses, Jesus is praying that whatever happens, that the Father would be honored and glorified. When you pick it up in verse 6, he is praying for those disciples that are sleeping around the corner, that as the night goes forth and as the process ensues, that they will be strengthened and that they will have resolve. Then you get to the latter part of John 17, Jesus is praying for you and I. He's praying for the believers and the disciples that would come after those first disciples. The only verse that Jesus prays for himself is verse 5 and what does he pray? This is the eve of the crucifixion. He says, "Father, give me the glory which I had with you before the world was." And that's the phrase that we need to hang onto. Let me tell you what the Bible does not say. The Bible does not say, "Give me the glory I had before the incarnation. The glory I had before Bethlehem. The glory I had before the Christmas story." Jesus says there is something missing that he has not had since the world was.

Now, if I understand the scope of the scriptural story, the only item that could have been either made absentee or voided from in context of that last statement is what we know as the fall of Satan. That's it. It's the only thing that's available to us and so if we take that and we look at verse 5 in light of it, then what that says is this that, "When that event occurred, something happened that will not and cannot be restored until I go through what I'm about to go through." So that glory that he has not had, quote, since the world was. So the proposition per the question is that that which Satan vacated was then given the opportunity to be filled by humanity.

Now, we've read Ezekiel chapter 28, Lucifer before he fell and became Satan. Do you remember what his job was? His job was to honor, glorify, and worship the Lord. That was his purpose. He was designed with that in mind which means that per this question, the reason for humanity wasn't just to fill a void, the reason for humanity was the highest purpose and calling in all of the universe. You do realize that Lucifer, according to Ezekiel 28, was the cherubim over the throne of God. He had the position that was above every other entity other than God himself and he said, "No. If I can't be number one, I don't even want to be number two." That's the Myers version of that.

And so the question is, so were we created because God was bored? I'm not even going to go down that path, okay? There's no way that an all-knowing, all-powerful God is going

to get bored, right? And by the way to think that a couple billion of us is gonna fill that void, nah, it's gonna take a whole lot more than that if that's what makes you bored, okay? But the idea that we were created with the single greatest purpose in all the universe, now do you understand why Satan hates you? He hates you because when you honor God, and when you glorify him, and when you believe on him, then essentially what you've done is you have fulfilled that which is the greatest position that he, per this question, vacated.

Said we had a follow-up question here. It says... Oh, it's follow-up from question number one. Okay. You want to go back to number one? We're going to stay on number two? Do we have anything from number two? I've addressed it a little bit. The why question. Okay, let's go back to number one. Here we go. It says, what is the Holy Spirit's purpose in conviction of sin in a believer since there's no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus and all of our sins have already been forgiven when we were saved? Oh, this is a really good question. All right. Now remember, back in John chapter 16, three roles, three purposes of the Holy Spirit, all right, to convict us of sin, righteousness, and judgment. The question is, what is the, quote, purpose within a believer's life if condemnation is not a part of the equation? Remember Romans chapter 8 verse 1, "Therefore there is no condemnation to those of us that are in Christ Jesus who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." So there is no condemnation. I want to give you two words tonight. I know we've discussed this on Wednesday nights before, but it never hurts to have a repeat session. Here are the two words, relationship and fellowship. Relationship is your standing with God. Your fellowship is your state with God. In other words, the best illustration is found in Romans chapter 8, it's found in John chapter 1, and you understand this as well as I do. John 1:12 says that those who believe in Jesus Christ have the right to become the children of God. Romans chapter 8 talks about that we become the adopted children of God, we are joint heirs with him. The picture that we have per John 3 when he challenges Nicodemus to be born again, is that when we believe on Jesus Christ and per the question, when we are saved, we become his child. We are in relationship with him and our standing is that we bear his name. We're a part of his family and we are his.

Now, once that occurs, there's this thing called fellowship. There's this thing called growth. In fact, in 1 Corinthians chapter 6 verse 11, it talks about coming out of sin and into that relationship with the Lord. It says, "And you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified." Now let's walk through those words real quick. What does that mean that you were washed? Well, according to Titus chapter 3 verse 5, it says you were washed by regeneration. In other words, you were saved, okay? Justified. To be justified is to stand or to be established as in a right position or place. Guess what? According to the book of Jude, one day we will stand faultless before the Lord, not because of our works of righteousness, but because of his. I stand before you right now, I have been regenerated by the blood of Jesus, okay? One day, when I pass from this life to the next, I will stand justified through Jesus Christ.

So guess what? Between now and then, it's sanctification and sanctification means to be distinct. It means to be holy. It is the process by which we begin to look more like him. That's why in the book of Ephesians chapter 2 it says we're his workmanship, which

basically is a picture. If you allow me to use this analogy, I want you to imagine that when you get saved that you become this big block of marble, okay? And that what happens is between then and you go to glory is the Lord is chipping off all the stuff that doesn't need to be there to present an image that you were designed to be. That's kind of the picture of what sanctification is. The reason that is important, okay, is because in the sanctification process, in the fellowship process, in our state of our relationship, the Holy Spirit within us convicts us, "Don't go there." I got one for you Baptists, "Keep your mouth shut." Think about that for a moment. If you've spent any time in the book of Proverbs, it'll make you nervous about talking because it talks about that a wise man keeps his mouth shut. More of us get in trouble with our mouth than we do our feet. Read the book of James. It says we can control huge ships with a small little rudder, but who can tame the tongue? In fact, one of my favorite illustrations is your words are a whole lot like toothpaste. Have you ever noticed about that? Once you put the toothpaste out of the tube, you ever try to get it back in? Can't do it. It's out there. It is what it is.

And so therefore, the role of the Holy Spirit to convict us as a believer isn't our need to be saved, isn't our need of, oh my, what about my relationship with, it's about my fellowship with. It is convicting me that I am A) needing to repent of, to conform to in my relationship with the Lord so that more of that marble can be chipped off of me. Now when we talk about relationship, it's an easy illustration. We all get it, okay? All of us at some point have been children, correct? Some of you ladies would say, "Well, I'm still next to a child." And I understand that, okay? People tease Tracy, she's got four boys in the house. I get it, right? There are times where we as children do not necessarily walk the path that our parents are proud of or would like us to. It does not cease or alter our relationship with, but it can hinder our fellowship or our state of. In other words, we know. Have you ever had this said to you? Now, I understand people come from broken homes, messed up homes, and oh my, you have no idea kind of homes. I get it. But at least in my world, do you know what some of the most, one of the most frightening phrases that were ever spoken to my ears? "Just wait till your daddy gets home." You know what I knew? I knew right then the conviction of the Holy Spirit was, "You done gone the wrong way and you're about to pay the price for it," right? And it didn't matter how much I cried, how much I yelled, how much I hollered. She just said, "Wait till he gets home. Wait till he gets home." And what took place was that a change of, a repentance of did not reestablish my relationship, it did not reestablish my standing, but it sure did change my state. It sure did change my fellowship.

And so hopefully that makes sense there, that once we are saved, the Holy Spirit within us guides us unto a sanctified, holy, unto the way the Lord would have us to live. It's no longer about heaven and hell. It's about our sanctification. It's about our holiness. It's about our living with him. Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Oh, it is our ability to do that which we've been called to. So let me say this, a very simplistic yet very heavyweight theological statement. Only by the Holy Spirit, only by the Holy Spirit, are you able to do anything that could be considered holy or honoring to

God. That's it because last time I checked, it said all of our deeds are like filthy rags. I know what you do for a living, sir, you're a mechanic. I know you've got some filthy rags at your place. Absolutely. Can't get it off, can you? It's all there. And even if it looks good from a distance, it's probably not, right? They're filthy. That there is nothing that we can muster up within us to declare that somehow we are righteous. It is only by the Holy Spirit that that can even occur in our lives. Absolutely.

So here's what I want here here. Can I clear up some error? Sometimes you'll hear people say this that we are saved by faith but sanctified by works. That's not true You're saved by faith and you're sanctified by faith, faith that the Holy Spirit is directing you into that which you should be a part of versus what you should not be a part of. So in simplistic terms, you know, in the book of Isaiah chapter 30, I believe it is, it says oftentimes we're looking for bright lights or listening for loud sounds while God whispers in our ear, "Go to the right, go to the right, go to the left, go to the left." As a believer who's already saved, seated in the heavenlies, you do understand that there will be temptations come your way, there will be opportunities to fall into the traps of sin, and as the Holy Spirit convicting you, "Don't go there. Don't say that. Don't be a part of that." That is the conviction of the Holy Spirit with our fellowship and our state in spite of our already secure relationship and standing.

Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Oh, absolutely it does. Oh, absolutely. The conviction of the Holy Spirit to turn away from sin makes us more effective witnesses because unfortunately the greatest travesty to our witness are believers who are falling in and participating and advocating and sometimes even celebrating sin, which is the hypocrisy which is known to many as Achilles heel of Christianity. Absolutely. So all that being said, it's all about the Holy Spirit. It's not about us.

By the way, in John chapter 14, here's what Jesus said, "The Holy Spirit will testify to me." In other words, the Holy Spirit is never going to point us away from God. Always point us to. So in other words, and again, let me just make it practical and tangible. Obviously, the word of God, right here, correct? The Holy Spirit is never going to urge or convict you or lead you to do anything contrary to the word of God, ever, ever, ever, ever. Which is why, when people say, "Well, I just, I felt the Spirit say." Well, you may have felt it say, but does it match up with what God already said? Because I've got a whole lot of feelings that are not of God, usually in the area of gluttony. Hey, I'm at least an honest Baptist. Okay, I just want y'all know I'm honest about it.

So anybody else on that one. We're good? Moving back. It says does the blessing that God made to Abram in Genesis... Whoever wrote this question. Thank you You say what do you mean? Thank you. His name wasn't Abraham yet. Thank you very much All right in Genesis chapter 12 verse 2 and 3 still apply today to Israel and the nation? Oh, it's a good question All right, go back to Genesis chapter 12. This is the original call of, per the

question, Abram. He would not be Abraham until after the birth of Isaac, the child of promise. Genesis chapter 12 verse 1 and 2. It says, "Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." That is the original declaration, okay? Now, go a few pages to the right to verse 15. Oh, chapter 15, I apologize. Chapter 15. When you get into chapter 15, it goes into a little more detail of what that will look like. Now go into chapter 17. There's a reason for this, I promise. Chapter 17. I'm going to begin in verse 1. We're going to read 8 verses. It says, "And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying, As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God."

Now the question is, does it still apply today? Let me ask you, what does the word everlasting mean? There's a lot of folks today, it's almost become scarily popular, a lot of people saying, "Well, I just, I don't think it's still relevant. It's been voided out." You do realize that in the verse of the Bible that this building is named after says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that who sort of believeth in him should not perish but have life for a time that can get voided at some time with God." What does it say? "Everlasting without end." And so what are the two covenants that we just read in chapter 17? There's actually two of them. The first covenant is that he will be their God and they will be his people. That's covenant number one. Covenant number two is a piece of dirt. Okay? And so when you walk through the Old Testament and even into the gospels, the thing that you need to understand is this, that the opportunity presented before them with the Messiah whom we know as Jesus Christ, was a fulfillment of both of these. He was the answer to the relationship issue in sin, but there was never a voiding of the dirt and/or the land. And what we need to understand today is there's only one piece of dirt on this planet that has been deeded by God. Only one. And it's in what we know as the Middle East, in a land that we call holy, that the world calls Israel. That is the most valuable piece of dirt on the planet. Why? Because God deeded it, okay?

Now, it also talks about this covenant with them to be their God. What's fascinating is in Romans chapter 11, verse 25 and 26, it says that right now that blindness is in part to the Jewish people but there is coming a day when the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled that all Israel shall be saved. The beautiful picture that we have in the book of Revelation is that everything that was promised in Genesis comes to fulfillment and is never voided out.

There are times of lapse, there's times of rebellion, there's times of unbelief, but man's rejection did not void out God's declaration and aren't you grateful for that? Man cannot void that which God has declared. So simply put, that covenant is still good today. In a physical sense, it relates to the dirt. In a spiritual sense, you do know that even though those Jewish men said, "Let his blood be on us and our children forever," that Jesus is still the Messiah and the Messianic answer for every human being on earth, including those who said no to. Okay? He is the answer. He was the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies, whether they agreed with it or not and so therefore, he was the fulfillment of the covenant, even though it's been rejected, it has not been voided.

Hopefully that helps a little bit. Yes, sir?

[unintelligible]

Ah, the boundaries of Canaan. There we go, here we go. All right, so forgive my map making cartography skills, okay? Is that okay? All right, so forgive me for that one. All right, so for the sake of very simple illustrations, we're gonna have here, this is the Mediterranean Sea. I'm gonna get to it all. We're gonna have what we know as Israel with a little... we're gonna make this the little Jordan River. This by the way for the sake of current events, this little area right here is what we know as Gaza. That's the Gaza that all the mess is over right now. This is the West Bank over here, but this is what we know is Israel. Now down here we have Egypt which, by the way, the king of the highways over here. We have Syria. Okay over here we have Jordan. Down in here we have Saudi Arabia. But what is fascinating is if you go all the way over here, here's another body of water over here, here's another sea, we have a little land over here that you and I got to know real well about 30 years ago. A little land known as Iraq. Kuwait, that little area, which happens to have a couple of rivers that are mentioned in the book of Genesis as the boundaries of what we know as the Garden of Eden. So that is over in this location right here. Here's what's interesting. The original boundaries, original boundaries, now what we know as the Holy Land today is this little area right here. In fact, I didn't draw it exactly. Most people call it the black-eyed pea, because that's what it kind of looks like. I gave it a little bit too liberty down here by the Dead Sea. But nonetheless, that's what we typically refer to as the Holy Land, right? The original boundary, the original boundary has it from the top up here, all the way down to Ethiopia, what we know as Ethiopia, so that would be Africa, down in here, all the way across to Babylon, which is Iraq, and all the way back. It's a big triangle, is what it is.

Now, why is this important? Well, you do remember that there was this big boat that Noah was at the helm of for a while, right? That boat landed in Mount Ararat. Mount Ararat is right in this area, right in here, roughly, okay? I'm not perfect with my dimensions, not perfectly good. You remember what he told his three sons? He told Shem to go east. He told Japheth to go west. He told Ham to go south. Why is that important? Because those three directions from that location are perfectly outside this area that God had set aside. So the land that he went to that he knew not of, the original covenant was all of this. What we know as the Holy Land today is the byproduct after the Egyptian enslavement. Remember where they went back into the land of Cana, the Canaanites?

The modern day small piece is post-Egypt, not original land grant. So here's the good news. One day when the Lord comes back and all this gets settled, they getting the whole thing. I got news for you. They're all arguing over a little piece of dirt. The deed's even bigger than even what we're fighting over today. So just kind of an interesting, I know I've got a whole lot of lines going out there, but the original grant's actually bigger than what we know of today. And when you start digging in Genesis and such, in chapter 17, it gives all these dimensions that you can look at and see. It's much, much, much, much bigger. Which by the way, I know you didn't ask this, but I'm gonna go there. When we get to Revelation and the famous New Jerusalem, okay? It talks about being 1,400 miles in length, width, and height. Okay? Most people have interpreted that as a cube but there is another item, or another object that has equal dimensions, and it's called a pyramid. And that would interestingly work well in that original land grant. Just fun.

Yes, sir?

[unintelligible]

Yes. Okay, so the question is, or let me preface it because many people couldn't hear. There are those today that subscribe to what we often refer to as replacement theology. Replacement theology is an unfortunate belief system that believes that the church has replaced Israel, that the promises to Israel are to the church. There's multiple problems with that. The biggest problem that is, you know one of the things that God promised Israel? The great tribulation. I'm not real interested in it. I just want you to know, okay? But, that being said, those who subscribe to that theology, they claim that the fulfillment of this, the promise, was fulfilled in Joshua, the taking of the original land, all right? That original land, oops, hold on real quick. And I pulled it off. The original land, there's my black eyed pea. It's a little better now. Remember, this is the Mediterranean Sea over here. This is what we know as the River Jordan, Dead Sea down there. Remember, they come out of Egypt. They come this way. There we go. Remember God had them go this direction? You remember that? I don't know if y'all realize that, but what we know as the famous Exodus, he had them go from the east to the west. They cross over the Jordan River, and they start, you know, there's the battle of Jericho, Ai, all the ites. The original land conquest was essentially what you and I know as the black eyed pea, except in Joshua chapter 11, it says on the edges there were groups of people that they did not conquer who unfortunately came back later to wreak some havoc. But the land as we know it in the Joshua experience was the black eyed pea, for lack of better terms.

[unintelligible]

Oh, nowhere close to the original one. But understand that between the original grant and that there was a whole lot of mess, if that makes sense. But guess what? One day in the future it shall be fulfilled. It's going to happen. Anybody else? Yes, ma'am.

[unintelligible]

Yes, okay. Let's go to Romans 11:25, and 26. Here we go. Now, some of you may or may not be aware of this, but one of the most prolific and most well-known Baptist pastors of all time, ma'am, said that these are the two hardest verses in the New Testament, so I appreciate you. Thank you very much. Romans chapter 11, verse 25 and 26 says, "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." Verse 26, as you alluded to, ma'am is the verse that can cause some issues and it says, "And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." Now the question or the issue there is all Israel, what does that mean? Does that mean that anybody and everybody that came from Abraham is good to go? Go back to chapter 2 real quick of Romans. Go back to Romans chapter 2 verse 28 and 29. It says, "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." And so, again, in Romans chapter 2, it's already qualified that really what makes somebody a part of Israel isn't physical circumcision, it's their trust and belief in the Lord's provision. So when you get to Romans 11, it says, all Israel shall be saved. I think we need to understand that in light of chapter 2. It doesn't mean that every descendant of Abraham goes to heaven. It's all of Israel. In other words, those that are the believers, those that are genuine. And when you get to Revelation chapter 7, you know what we discover? We have the 12 tribes again. And we have the 12,000 of this tribe, the 12,000. We have this raising up again of this identifying of Israel. The difference is, they're Israel in flesh, but more importantly, they're Israel in belief. All Israel will be saved. I interpret verse 26 to say that once the time of the Gentiles is filled, and by the way, the book of Revelation primarily has a Jewish feel, and you see those 12 tribes, that all of those that are Israel are saved, not all those that came from Abraham are saved.

Does that help distinguish a little bit? In other words, nowhere in your Bible do you get evidence that somebody, quote, gets to go to heaven just because they have the right parents. So the reason that that one very well-known pastor said this is the most difficult passage is exactly what you brought up, ma'am, because we tend to naturally see it as a physical descendancy, but in light of chapter 2, I think it's more of a spiritual descendancy. They just happen to be believers that are Jewish by birth. Does that help a little bit? Okay. Yes, sir?

[unintelligible]

The 144,000, yes, sir. And the two witnesses. Ah, the question is this, are the famous two witnesses, and are the quote 144,000 that we find in the book of Revelation, are they the ones that are in charge of witnessing to the Jewish people on behalf of the truth of Jesus Christ? I knew we couldn't make it a night without going there. We gotta go to Revelation. Here we go. Alright [fanfare] so there it is. Go to Revelation chapter 14. Now this is important. Again, I know there's a lot in your questions, sir, so I want to head to chapter 14. The two witnesses, they're actually found in Revelation chapter 11. They are exactly what the word says. A witness is one who testifies to. By the way, for those of

you who have not heard, though I know it is not listed in 1 Corinthians chapter 12 as one of the spiritual gifts, if I could, and please don't think ill of me, I wish that I could have the spiritual gift that the two witnesses have. I don't know if you've read about them, but when somebody opposes them, it says they breathe fire and whoever's in front of them is engulfed. I'm just saying, it would be nice, but that's not a spiritual gift that honors the Lord, of course, but that's the two witnesses. We know that they testify. That's easy.

The famous 144,000. When you go to chapter 7 of the book of Revelation, it's 12,000 of this tribe and 12,000 of that tribe, and it just kind of lists out. Chapter 14 gives us a little more insight. I'm going to begin in verse 1. It says, "And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God. And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters."

Now, to your point, sir, the 144,000 is not the total number of people, quote, saved, if we can use that term. They are what I would claim the evangelists of that great tribulation, because back in chapter 7, it does mention the 12,000 of this tribe and 12,000 of that tribe but then in verse 9, it says a number without number of all nations and peoples shall be redeemed. So therefore 144,000 isn't the total number of redeemed, it is those that have been called by God of the redeemed to preach that everlasting gospel to the world at large in that time period. I like to call them the 144,000 evangelists. Does that help clarify? Obviously the witnesses, obviously the 144 are proclaiming. Yes, sir?

[unintelligible]

According to the book of Revelation it does. Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

It says, defiled with women, yes. Do you want to expound on that, sir? Okay. But here's, it is what it says. But here's what's important about that verse. Unfortunately, we live in a society and a culture and a world today where there are people who believe that they're already a part of this group. And by the way, they have the name Witnesses in their name. Witnesses to Jehovah, right? What's fascinating is most of those that subscribe to that belief system that come to my house to try to persuade me that I'm wrong, are women.

What does it just say they are? Men. The men who come to my house are all married. If you want to have a very uncomfortable conversation on your doorstep, just read that verse when they come by your house because biblically speaking, you cannot be a part of the 144,000 if you are a woman or a married man. Can't happen, according to what we just read. So again, it goes back to the evangelists of the previous question. But yes, sir, it does say they were defiled with women, and I'm gonna let you work that out in your own house.

Any other questions? Everybody's good on that one? We got a couple of minutes left. It says, is Matthew chapter 7 verse 21 through 23 for people still trying to obtain salvation through the law? Okay, Matthew chapter 7 verse 21, very famous passage. We can do this in two minutes. I know we can. It is in the context of what we know is the Sermon on the Mount. Let me remind each and every one of us at the Sermon on the Mount, which is the most famous message that Jesus ever preached, there was not one single born-again Christian, not one of us, right? Why? Because you can't have a born-again Christian if you don't have an empty tomb and the blood of Jesus spilled. Every single person that was listening to Jesus, watching Jesus, was under the Old Testament law doing everything they could to quote be right and justified before God. When you read Matthew chapter 5, Jesus lists all of the ways that we sin against each other horizontally as humans. When you read chapter 6, it's all the ways that we sin vertically against the Lord himself. When you read chapter 7, you find out all the consequences to that and when you get to verse 21 he says, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." In other words, what Jesus is saying is there's a lot of people one day who are not going to heaven who are upset because they thought they earned the right to be there. They were religious enough. They did enough good stuff and they quit doing the bad stuff. Notice it's everything they did, they did, they did, and what does Jesus say? "I never knew you." You go into the book of Galatians chapter 4 it says now that you know God or rather that you are known by God, it's about relationship, it's not about deeds, efforts, religion, etc. Yes, they're all Jewish people, yes, they're all trying to obtain their salvation by works, and Jesus makes it very clear it's not by what you do, it's who you know, and he ends the Sermon on the Mount by saying there's two ways that you can live your life, you can build your house on shifting sand or on the rock. And who did Jesus always refer to himself as? The rock. It's real simple. The answer is relationship, not religion.

We're out of time. Let's pray. We'll roll.

*Lord Jesus, thank you that particularly as we close tonight that our everlasting, our eternal standing is not based on what we do, what we don't do, how religious we become, or how religious we've been, but on the fact that you satisfied the price and the penalty for our sin on the cross and you rose from the grave to seal the verdict that we can be washed, regenerated, sanctified, and justified through you and you alone. May tonight,*

*may we leave this place more assured in our faith in you than in the deeds of the flesh. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray, amen.*