

Ask Jeff – Babies in Heaven

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For those of you who may be first-timers to our Wednesday night Bible study whether here in person or via television, internet and such, we somewhat titled this Ask Jeff but essentially what it is is this: everything that happens tonight is driven by you. There is a series of questions that have been submitted in the box by way of Facebook, by way of email. There have been several that here on Wednesday night, somebody will just scratch it on a piece of paper and drop it in there. That is absolutely fine and so however the questions get in here, that's where we go. Now, those of you who have some experience on Wednesday night know that it usually doesn't stop with the question that comes out of the box. Usually that propagates a series of other questions and the great thing about Wednesday night is we have no idea where this is going to end up, do we? So, well, in fact, we don't know where it's going to end up, we don't even know where it's going to start.

So that being said, let's go ahead and get started. Question from the box: really simple but very profound, do babies grow up in heaven? Now, that's a great question on both sides of the age spectrum for today, I was in what we would call a nursing home facility and I was in the presence of a believer, of a man, who is literally living his last hours on earth. His time has come. His body is ravaged. His body is frail. His body is beginning that process of shutting down. I don't believe there are any of us here, by the way, we are going to go to the word of God in just a moment. I don't believe there are any of us here who would look at that man and say, "Yup, that's what he's going to be like for all of eternity." Not at all. At the same spectrum, I don't think we would look at a child that dies much like King David's did in the first week of its life and say, "Well, that's his eternal state."

And one of the great questions is: so what does our eternal state look like from a child, baby's perspective, from a senior adult waning physically perspective? I think the answer is found in the book of 1 John 3. Now, there are other passages we can turn to. You know, the Bible speaks about the fact there will be no more death. There will be no more dying. There be no more illness. There will be no more sickness. One of the things that the Bible addresses that as a believer in Jesus Christ, when one enters what we know as heaven, that there is not an aging process. When we have been there 10,000 years, our hairs do not turn any grayer. When we've been there 10,000 years, bright shining as the sun as the old hymn, Amazing Grace, states. So I do not see any evidence of an aging process in heaven which begs the question: so what will our age be?

Now, let me go ahead and answer the simple way and then we'll go complex. Simply: I do not know. I am not God. But in the book of 1 John 3, let me turn there real quickly. It says beginning in verse 1, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." Now, let me just share that in a very simplistic sense: we know that physically and I don't think we can get necessarily overly literalistic about this but physically Jesus Christ was about 33 years of age when he died on Mount Calvary, about 33 years of age, okay? The ministry is about 3 ½ years. We could get into all those details. When Jesus Christ rose from the dead three days later, nobody said, "Wow, look at that young man." Nobody said, "Wow, look at that old man." They saw him in a resurrected body but there is no reference point at all of severe aging and/or regression. At the same time, when you get to the book of Revelation 19 and Jesus Christ descends out of the heavens, what we know as the second coming to the battle of Armageddon which, by the way, if that were to take place now, it's been 2,000 years, he is not pictured as aged 2,000 years nor has he been pictured the reverse. You get the idea that the same resurrected Jesus from 2,000 years ago, there is the same appearance when that time comes.

So based on 1 John 3, I am just of the very simple belief that somehow, some way and I don't understand all of it, that when we are in eternity for all of eternity, we will be as he is. Now, does that mean we're 33 years of age? I don't know that exactly but last time I checked, when he rose from the dead, things were pretty good physically. When he's coming back in Revelation 19, things are pretty good physically and we get the idea that when we've been there billions of years, there is not an aging process nor is there the idea that one's state of life exiting this earth immediately translates to the current state in all of eternity. In other words, if someone passes at age 20 here, they don't celebrate their 21st birthday up there. On the same hand, if one passes at age 102 here, they're not 102 there. So the picture that we get is a timeless, limitless, infiniteless, never dying, never aging, perfect, 6' 6" body. Oh, that's not in there either, is it? Well, that means then...the key factor of that verse is that we shall be as he is.

Now, I know some folks that have tried to get real strict with the exact dates and the time frame and exactly what age we will be there for all of eternity and some of that is defensible but I think the key factor is that there is a moving, conscious, complete, eternal state. So I don't know if that helps specifically on the baby question but I think it also helps on what we would call the other side of life's spectrum question. Hopefully that helps.

Any follow-up questions? Thoughts? Ideas? Concerns? Yes ma'am. Well, okay, that's a completely different question because the questions was: will there not be any children in heaven? Absolutely there will be because when you go into 2 Samuel 7 and deal with the death of David's son, remember David and Bathsheba had a son and he didn't make it past the first week? As he is mourning the death of this son, he said that, "He shall not return,"

this is King David speaking, "He shall not return where I am but I will one day be where he is." The Bible speaks in Deuteronomy 1:39, this is where, at least in a Baptist tradition, we get what we call the age of accountability. Remember, they're going into the Promised Land? They are 11 days into the journey. We spoke a little bit about this last Sunday night. That 11 day journey, they begin to rebel and get upset and get mad, would have been better off in Egypt? It said in Deuteronomy 1:39 that those who had not yet achieved an understanding of good and evil, they were allowed to grow up and go into the Promised Land. Interesting that the oldest person that would have gone into the Promised Land would have been about 38-39 years of age and Jesus Christ was about 33 years of age which means those of us who have already passed 40, it's going to be great when we get there, guys, because that which we've lost, it shall return and that which we have forgotten we've lost, it will return as well.

But to answer your question: yes, children will be but I think the mistake we make is equating the child as they were here to there as far as our physical understanding. Does that make sense at all? So, yes, children absolutely but just like 102 year old person who is on death's door won't always be 102. I don't know if that helps at all?

Yes sir. Right. Right. Yeah, okay, the question at hand now is: Jesus Christ raises from the dead, what did he look like? That's basically what we're asking. We know for a fact in John 20, remember doubting Thomas? You know, we call him doubting Thomas, his real name was just Thomas, we've dubbed him doubting Thomas. Eight days after the resurrection, he finally shows up to hang out with the apostles and to see that Jesus was actually there and Jesus makes the statement, "Behold my hands and feet. Feel free to touch." And then later on in the book of Revelation 1, remember the Apostle John sees, or chapter 5, sees the Lion of the tribe of Judah at or like a lamb that had been slain. I think you also get the idea of the marks.

Go to Luke 24, New Testament, we'll find a resurrection day here. You being in Luke 24 and they find the empty tomb. I want to go to verse 13. It says, "And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him. And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad? And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?" In other words he's saying, "Are you the only person around who doesn't know what's going on?" Here was this individual, obviously we know him as Jesus Christ, who in that last week of his life all of Jerusalem was centered around his ministry, his teaching, his life and then ultimately those hours that he was on the cross and yet it says here that they did not recognize him but almost had the attitude of, "Are you the only one who doesn't know this?"

Then you also have Mary Magdalene. Remember when she sees him in the garden, she believes that it's the gardener until she hears his voice and so just Jeff speaking here: the

last image that these individuals would have had of Jesus would have been a very gruesome, grime, devastating image, in fact, if you get to Isaiah 52:17, I believe it is, it says that his visage or his appearance on the cross would be worse than any other man and kind of the imagery that we have and I'm not trying to be crass but just honest, the imagery we have is almost meat, I mean, it's gruesome. When you look at the physical beating that Jesus Christ underwent on the cross, it would have been horrific.

Now, I'm going to walk out of the Bible picture for a moment and I'm going to go back into, I hate to say reality tv because it's really not real, but work with me for a moment. Have you ever seen "The Biggest Loser"? Have you ever seen what happens when they go back and see their family they haven't seen for 90 or 120 days? They are just aghast at who this person is because they don't look like the last time they saw them but after a moment it's like, "Wow!" Imagine how they would have seen Jesus those last hours, the image that would've been in their mind and now, other than the scars, think about this: a perfected, non-dying body. Now, let's think about that for a moment. That means no wrinkles. Some of y'all got excited about that, didn't you? I don't know, one of the things that we're not given knowledge of: hair color, wrinkles, whatever that may be. But remember, he is now in an absolute perfected fleshly state yet when he spoke and when he prayed with them, they knew who he was but at first glance there was kind of a disconnect there.

Does that help at all? So just remember, when we get there, brother, 6' 6" right here. Have you got it? Just checking. You're going to have to look up to me. Now, you know the old joke is that means everybody else is going to be 7' 4". I get that. And if I keep eating the way I am, I'm just going to be a bowling ball. You're absolutely right. That brings up another fun part about heaven: all you can eat without gaining weight. That's the perfected body, isn't it? It is called the marriage supper of the Lamb. I don't know. We won't get there.

Does that help your question at all? Okay. Anything else on this issue? Concept? Idea? It's a great idea. Yes ma'am. Ma'am, it doesn't have to be exactly on target. Right. Right. Now, the question that she has brought is absolutely fabulous question. She's kind of merging the ideas we've had of babies, perfected bodies and the rapture all in one big piece. So here we go and the question is: at the rapture event and we've spoken of that many times. It's in 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4. At that time where those who are dead in Christ and those who are alive in Christ meet the Lord together in the air, what is the event in regards to the children? Is that? To the children? Okay, of unbelieving. Okay, look, here we go.

Go back to Deuteronomy 1. I know I just quoted this but I want you to see it because the question that she has is: what about children of unbelieving families? Those who mom and dad and even, let's go multiple generations, have no belief in Jesus Christ whatsoever? Verse 39 of chapter 1 of Deuteronomy says, "Moreover your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, and your children, which in that day," meaning the day that they were punished for their unbelief, remember in that first 11 days, "had no knowledge between good and evil, they shall go in thither, and unto them will I give it,

and they shall possess it." Now, I mentioned earlier that's kind of a verse we use a lot of times with what we call the age of accountability and I know that this is devastating on any scale but when you've got someone like King David's child who is seven days of age and dies, folks, this is the biblical guarantee and security that even their seven days of life, they are secure in Jesus Christ because it says they have yet to know that good and that evil. They don't have an understanding yet. They have no consciousness of sin and rebellion and all that stuff.

But to answer your question: every one of these children that it was speaking specifically of had disbelieving parents. Think about that for a moment. Every one of them did because every one of their parents was kept from going into the Promised Land because of their unbelief so the unbelief of the parents did not dictate the future of their children. Let me speak that just in more personal. If you go back in my family tree, now, understand, since Jesus Christ rose from the dead it's been 2,000 years and I don't have all that access but at least in the near recent past, I can go back about 3-4 generations and I can see where Christianity entered my family tree which means that some point as hard as this is to swallow, at some point in my family tree, there was a parent who did not believe and a child who did. A parent who suffered those eternal consequences and a child who did not. So to your point, then to the rapture event: the belief of lack thereof of the parents of a child who we would call under the age of accountability, does not dictate those children. That is why I believe in Matthew 24 and other passages when Jesus is speaking of not just the rapture event but this tribulation, he says, "Woe unto them who give suck. Woe unto women who are with babies," because they're gone. They would be raptured.

Now, don't get upset because that's good for the baby because what did the Apostle Paul teach us? It is better to be in the presence of the Lord than to be stuck in this body, 2 Corinthians 5. "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord." And I think, just my personal opinion, I think I can defend it scripturally, I think one of the most dramatic aspects of that "rapture event" is the little ones who have no knowledge of good and evil. And Jesus said, "Woe unto them who give suck." In other words, it's going to be a dramatic experience.

I don't know, does that help you, ma'am? Okay. It's going to be interesting but you kind of weaved all those questions together. I like that. Anything else on that? Yes ma'am. They were told to wipe out entire cities, yes ma'am. Yes ma'am. Okay, that's a great question. Because now she's going, in the Old Testament there were times, particularly when they went into the Promised Land, where the Lord said, "Anybody whose last name ends in ite, Hittites, all the ites, get rid of them." What about the eternity of the parents? What about the children? Based on Deuteronomy 1, I would justify the children as being okay. Ultimately though, those individuals and their response to the Lord, I mean, think about Rahab in Jericho. Now, the Lord came into Jericho and spared her through the scarlet thread but you had a believer amidst the non-believers and had it been wiped out, I would think that Rahab would have been okay in that scenario. So we don't know about every individual but based on the children, I think there is strong, in fact, somebody a long time ago gave me a great statement that just gives me comfort. It says: God takes

care of children and fools and that none of us are getting any younger. Think about that for a moment. You know, even Jesus brings the little child up on his lap and says, "If you want to enter into the kingdom of God, you've got to have the faith of a little child." Over and over and over. I don't believe there's any Scripture anywhere whatsoever that can advocate that children's eternity is determined prior to their having an understanding of good and evil so if they happen to be in a cataclysmic event, they're okay. Even a judgment of God event.

Does that help at all? Well, that's a good point. The question she has asked is: why take the children out because they are innocent at that point? You see, there was a little small place in Canaan or what we know as the Promised Land, a little place called Gath. And up in that north little village of Gath, when Joshua and the Israelites went in, this is found in the book of Judges 11, they go in and they say, "Do you know what? Those guys up there, they're not that big a deal. It doesn't matter." One of the kids that was playing on the hill that day was named Goliath. They probably should have taken that one out because once he came to fruition, it became a big old mess. You see, we may not understand why the Lord said to take them out but now thousands of years later, reading and realizing, "Wow, they should have taken them out." So, once again, we're not God.

Yes ma'am. Well, yeah, there is ample evidence in Scripture that God knows our hearts. I mean, think about King David in 1 Samuel, you know, here is David and he's the eighth of eight boys. He is the runt of the family. Who laughed? I'll have you know, I'm an only child. I'm the tallest of the children in my family. No runt here. Just thought I'd mention that. Okay.

What does the Lord say? He tells Samuel, "Don't look on his countenance but look on his heart." And obviously that is why he was anointed the king. Yes, the Lord knows our heart but I would also caveat that by saying you also see ample evidence in Scripture that the Lord gives us an opportunity to turn our heart toward him, you know. I had this question come up this week, I know it wasn't put in the box but it relates to your question, ma'am. Someone came up and they said, "Why do you see in the Bible like in Acts 5 with Ananias and Sapphira and other places, why do you see that there are times where an individual or group of people are given one opportunity by the Lord to respond, they respond erroneously and they are wiped out? Why aren't they given a second chance? Why aren't they given a third chance? Why aren't they given a fourth chance?" My simple answer to that is that all of us have sinned, all of us are sinners and the very fact that he gave us one chance is grace, two chances is mercy. So to those individuals that were wiped out, were they given an opportunity? We don't know exactly but we do have the testimony of Jonah who went into Nineveh, who was just a despicable culture in his day and the Lord said, "Give them an opportunity," and what did they do? It said, "The King began it and they repented. They poured sackcloth and they repented of their sins." It said, "Even the cattle repented." I don't quite get that but they did.

I'll be honest. I'm a dog lover, y'all know that. Animals get stuff sometimes before we do. Have you ever had a big thunderstorm come through and the dog gets under the bed before you should have? I mean, you're saying, "Why?" Okay, this is completely off

track, but hey, it's Ask Jeff so here we go. You know, I think that way, way back in the animal family tree, every animal on this earth had a great, great, great, great grandfather who was a part of the Noah experience and I don't know how it works but I think somehow they just pass it on to all the offspring of, "When it starts to rain, start running." Just my opinion because they tend to be smarter about it than we are. Animals start taking off before the earthquake hits. Animals take off before the tornado arrives. Somehow, some way, they just sense these things and I know I've gotten completely off track from your question there so I apologize for that but I thought we'd have a little fun.

Anything else that relates to the initial question? I apologize. Anything? Somebody? Somewhere? Yes ma'am. Right. Sure. Right. Right and the question she has brought up if you couldn't hear it was: those kids that are covered, for lack of better terms, not held accountable to, what about those of a completely Christ-rejecting faith? An activist family in a very non-Christian faith. Is that what you're saying? Once again, there is and I'm going to be honest with you, there are debates...are we going back to the rapture question? Or just in general? Just in general. Whenever, sometime. Okay, wherever I want to go? Can we go back and talk about the animals? No, I'm kidding. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. Because the cattle did repent. It says they did.

Alright, so on the famous rapture question in regards to children: there are two stream of thoughts. Now, this is in light of Deuteronomy 1:39. One stream of thought is: any child under what we would call the age of accountability at that moment is raptured. The other thought is that any child who is not under the age of accountability, this goes back into 2 Thessalonians 2, is not judged for their rejection at that event but in what we know as the period of the tribulation given the opportunity to make that decision. Does that communicate? Because, here we go, let's go to 2 Thessalonians 2 because I got that look of, "Hmm, I don't know about that, Willis." Those of y'all remember "Different Strokes"? "Whatchyou talkin' about, Willis?" Who just said, "Short dude?" There was a tall dude in that show too, you know. Naw, it's fine. I'm glad y'all can laugh at me.

Alright, 2 Thessalonians 2. This is a passage about the antichrist. This is a passage where it talks about that he is restrained by the restrainer which I believe is the Holy Spirit, until that time period in which he is allowed to ravage the world and I'm just going to begin in verse 8 of 2 Thessalonians 2. Let's go back in verse 7. "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed." Now, I'm going to stop there for a moment. I personally believe it's saying that the only thing keeping the antichrist from being the antichrist is the Holy Spirit period because only God himself is able to restrain him. So beginning in the middle of verse 8, "whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders." By the way, you go to Revelation 13 and you see kind of the details there. "With all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

Now, hang on with me for just a moment because we're going to unpack this in two different ways. That last verse that I read, there are two ways of looking at that. Either A: those people who come under the wooing of the antichrist are so wooed by him they never do believe. Or because they rejected the Gospel since they had heard it prior to his coming to power, that there is no chance for them. Does that make sense? Those are your two options there. You say, "Well, how does that relate to the original question?" If you see that in those two ways in this rapture event, what you could have here is you either have either A. all those who have yet to reach the accountability taken or you have those who are still children no matter where they grow up, that because they were not of the age and could not have believed the lie, they still have an opportunity, though those who are spoken of are damned already.

Does that help at all? The accountability age is: I do not know because it says those who have yet to know the difference between good and evil. I have met five year olds who completely get it and I've met 11 and 12 year olds who are spiritually clueless for a multitude of reasons and I think just like your salvation, my salvation, it is an individual thing, not an age thing. There are lots of denominations, there are lots of groups that have certain ceremonies and such at certain ages because they say, "At this point you now get it." Well, at that point some of them have already gotten it for a while and some of them still don't have it, if that communicates.

So I've had the privilege and one of the, I guess, advantages I've had in life, not only being a pastor, but facilitating over 100 youth camps in my life back when I didn't have gray and they let me come and do youth camps, having spoken with so many young people about Jesus, it's amazing how many times a very young person, 5, 6, 7 years of age could explain and understand and grasp sin and then I have a 5th or 6th or 7th grader who didn't get it. It was just like the spiritual lightbulb hadn't come on yet. So going back to the Deuteronomy 1 passage that age that did not yet know, remember I said the oldest one was about 38, technically could've been about 48. Maybe it was a 10 year old child when the wilderness event began.

Does that make sense? Does that help? So it's different for everybody. Now, when I say this is humorous, it's always humorous when you're on the safe side of Deuteronomy 1:39. One of my favorite stories happened years ago when we were serving in another state. There was a couple who had come with one of their sons, this was before church on Sunday morning. They said, "Our son is beginning to ask spiritual questions. We think he really understands some things. We want him to talk with you about being saved." I said, "Man, I'd love to. No problem." So we kind of sit down where we were and I had already pre-arranged this, I said, "Mom and Dad, do you mind if we just have a man to man talk? Do y'all mind not being a part of this?" "Oh, we think that would be a great idea." We had already planned this out. They walked out of the room but they stepped right around the corner so they could hear everything because they needed to hear everything but I wanted him to have the freedom to communicate.

So I asked this young man, I said, "Do you know what sin is?" He said, "Oh, absolutely." I said, "Can you define it?" He said, "Sin is doing anything God doesn't like." I said, "Can you explore that a little more?" He goes, "Well," he said, "anytime you do something that the Bible says you shouldn't or you don't do something the Bible say you should." I said, "I'll work with that. That's a good definition." I said, "Have you ever sinned?" "No." And I know the parents are about ten feet away and I'm thinking to myself, "This is going to be really fun." I said, "Have your parents ever asked you to do something and you didn't do it?" "No." I said, "Have your parents ever told you to stop doing something and you kept doing it?" "No." I said, "Have you ever been ugly to your little sister?" "No." And so we kind of wrapped up the conversation. I told him I enjoyed it. He walked out of the room and his parents looked at me and said, "What was that?" That was a child who even though he had a lot of head knowledge and definitions, really didn't get the difference between good and evil because he had not translated the facts to real life. He had it all up here but he didn't have it down here.

I don't know if that helps. Now, I've seen that in 6 year olds and I've seen that in older children as well. I'm going to tell you something that I've learned through my experience. I cannot defend what I'm about to share with you biblically. The age of accountability tends to be lower the more fervent the family is regarding their faith. As they are taught as young children, as Bible study happens in the home, as church is a part of life, they have more exposure to the truth of God's word. They have more exposure to the reality of sin.

I had an individual that I knew in Georgia, in fact, he was on staff with me, that never even went to a church until he was 30 years of age. No exposure at all. Now, was he past the age of accountability? Absolutely but the point is he had not grown up and so what I have seen in my own personal life is that those who have no exposure to the truth of God, no exposure to the things of God typically, don't hold me accountable to this one, that age of accountability tends to naturally be a little higher just because there is lack of exposure. But at some point, there is a true understanding and at that point, then we are accountable to our relationship with the Lord.

Does that help at all? I hope so. Yes ma'am. There is a whole box down here but we're good, go ahead. Now, that's not fair blaming somebody else for raising your hand. Okay, that's a great question: what about those who have "never heard"? Go to Romans 1, book of Romans 1. Yes, I hear some moans, we have been through this before but that's okay. We have guests. We have visitors. New tv audience, you never know. Romans 1 and I'm just a big believer that if it comes up again, we must need to learn it again. Romans 1, beginning in verse 18, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." Woo, that last phrase is tough, isn't it?

They are without excuse so the natural question becomes: what about those who are in the far remote parts of the world that have never seen a Bible, never heard the name of Jesus, etc. etc.? What I glean from Romans 1 is this: that we as humanity, we are responsible to the Lord for that which has been revealed to us by the Lord. Now, it talks about creation. It talks about the invisible things. Are there people who are on planet earth who have never heard the name Jesus Christ? Absolutely, but according to this passage, they have seen, they have witnessed around them that there is a God that they must be subject to.

Now, my very literal answer to this comes from the book of Acts 10. There is a man by the name of Cornelius. Cornelius is a man who it says in the very beginning of Acts 10, he fears God. I equate Cornelius to the illustration you gave and back to Romans 1 because Cornelius is in a completely heathen, pagan Rome. He is surrounded by all the religions of the world, all the heathenism of the world. He is saturated with misteachings. He does not hear much truth, okay? But yet he fears God which means he has had, "All this stuff around me, I'm not buying it at all. There's got to be something else." And it says that he prays to God that he would know him and what does God do in that chapter? He sends somebody to him.

Now, one of the blessings and I know y'all are kind of learning this about me over time is I have a real heart, I have a real love for missionaries and have you ever wondered so why does a certain missionary go to a certain place? I mean, do they just get a map of the world, blindfold and throw a dart and see where it lands? I'm going to tell you what happens. Talk to missionaries and they'll say that God puts a burden on their life for that place, those people or that specific whatever it may be. Now, you say, "How and why does that happen?" I'm going to tell you what I believe: just like Cornelius, those people who are in that area are crying out for the God they know that is there to reveal himself to them. So ultimately their accountability is to that which has been revealed to them.

Does that help at all? A little? A little is better than none. Right. The question and the secondary question is: so is it manifested in nature that which is around them. Here's my simple response to that: if you want to know that there is a God and you are not him and you should be subject to him, there are only three things you've got to do: first thing is this, you've just got to look up. Now, don't look up in the middle of the big city, look up in the middle of nowhere and see what is above your head. When you realize how much is there and how little you are, it ought to get your attention. When you see all the countless stars and all that kind of stuff, you look up and you see creation and you just say, "Wow, there is a God." When you look out at what is around you at the creation that we even live among, you ought to say, "Wow, there is a God and I am not him." Now, personally speaking, do you ever get out into the middle of the ocean and you can't see land? That will make you believe in God quick. I'm serious because you realize, "I am but a speck on this planet. But then the last one is: you look in. There is a great theologian from years ago who said, "Within every single one of us is a God-shaped void that only God can fill."

So if we're willing to look up, look out and look in we realize, "Do you know what? There really is a God and I am responsible to respond to him," and then for simplicity terms, "to request him to reveal himself to me." Cornelius did. There was a very immediate answer. Today there are missionaries all over the world going to remote places of the world, I believe because people are crying out to be told the truth.

Does that help at all? Going incrementally up a little bit scale? Okay. Good. Anything else on that? Yes sir. The book of life, yes. Okay, the book of life, when is your name in it? This is found back in Exodus, I believe it's chapter 31. This is the famous book of life which is spoken the most of in the book of Revelation 20. Let's see if I've got the chapter right here, Exodus 31 is about the Sabbath, forgive me. Chapter 32 of Exodus. I was close. My baseball coach used to say, "Close is good enough in horseshoes and hand grenades." Okay, here we go.

Verse 33 of Exodus 32, "And the LORD said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book." The idea that I get there is that one was already in that book and then was removed therefrom. Fast forward to the book of Revelation 20, the famous what we call oftentimes the white throne judgment of God, the great white throne. Revelation 20:11, it says, "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." The way that I see it, this goes back to the baby question, by the way, that when one is conceived, for lack of better terms, their name is in the book of life and then upon rejection of the grace of God, it is blotted out at the judgment. So really, one's name is written before one takes a breath and then the blotting comes after one's last breath is taken. I don't know if that helps.

Yes sir. But understand, okay, his question is: everybody's name is written in the book until one rejects. Go back to Exodus 32, what caused their name to be blotted out? Sin. What can wash away my sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Isaiah 1:18, he can take our sins though they be scarlet, wash them white as snow. The idea that, this is my little simplistic illustration here, okay? The way that I read Exodus 32 and then in light of Revelation 20, the way that I read it is that when I began, that my name, Jeff Meyers, written in the book of life. At the point in which I reached an age where I understood between good and evil, folks, you cannot be found unless you're first lost. When I got saved, I knew I was headed to hell first, okay? You cannot get to heaven before you first realize you're going to hell. I realized I was lost and I was a sinner. At the point in which sin was conceived in me and I realized that, according to Exodus 32, there went the name. But the great news is that how is it that one day I'll walk into heaven? Jeff Meyers. Jesus Christ. My name is written in the book of life through him, not through me. That's how the babies are addressed in this situation and that's how we as adult sinners are

addressed, that my name is there because of his name, not because of my name. Now, go back to Revelation 20. Their name has been erased because of sin and they're not in the name of Jesus Christ so they're not there. Does that help at all?

Yes ma'am. Anytime you say "so" and make it five syllables, I'm in trouble. Yes ma'am. According to Exodus 32 and I believe so, yes ma'am. And the Lord said, "I can't do that." What she's referring to is Moses in realizing Israel's sins said, "Whoa, whoa, God, I know you've taken their name out, take my name out instead. Take mine," and he said, "I don't want that one," because Moses could not intercede for them, only the Lord could. So yes, and back to the question you brought up whether you meant it or not is, so the minute that an individual sins consciously after a good understanding between good and evil, that's the moment of damnation? Absolutely.

Yes ma'am. And that is why, this is why and I'm going to address this a little bit on Sunday morning, that is why parenting and grandparenting is so critical because we don't want a long period of time to go. Now, does it have to be their decision? Absolutely. Parents can't make it for them. Grandparents can't make it for them. But you cannot be found unless you're first lost. You can't be saved unless you're lost. You have to realize you're lost first. Well, you're not lost unless you realize you have sinned. Every single saved person has spent at least some period of time in their life as lost. You want that to be as short a period of time as possible. If I were to go back and look at my life, you say, "Jeff, how long were you lost before you were saved?" I don't know exactly. I'm going to ballpark it about a year. That's dangerous territory for anybody whether one is 7 or 70, it doesn't matter. And one of the things that I've shared with people because if I go back even though I was only in the second and third grade when that occurred in my life, I had trouble sleeping at night. I had trouble after church on Sunday. I couldn't go to bed on Sunday night because the message of Sunday school used to get stuck in my head because I knew I was lost. I'll be honest, I don't know how people who don't know Jesus sleep at night. I don't know how people go to bed at night not knowing where they'll be if they never wake up. I don't understand that because in my life, now this is just my experience, I couldn't quit thinking about it because I knew I was lost and the day I got found, I'm going to tell you what, I ran down that aisle. Have you ever noticed here when it comes to invitation time, I don't pull the heart strings real hard. Why? Because I know that the day I got saved, man, he could have said, "We're not having an invitation," and I would have run down anyway because I said, "This boy is about to have one."

Yes ma'am. Yeah, okay, yes. Good point. The question she asked is: are we not born in sin? Have you ever worked in the preschool department? There's your proof. We are born in sin. You don't have to teach a kid to lie, cheat or steal. They're just pretty good at it right from...they're good, right? So, hey, how many times does a kid at two years of age have the can in his hand, "You've got the can?" "No." The reason I'm bringing it up, we are born in sin, the question is, what covers our sin? Right now, I'm going to speak to me personally, my life, what covers my sin is the blood of Jesus Christ. That's what covers me. Go back to when I was two years of age, what covered me? The Apostle Paul talked about that that which he did in ignorance he was not accountable for and so the grace of God, I'm of the belief, covers us. This passage in Deuteronomy 1, the grace of God

covers us until there is a willful knowledge of and then we've got to be covered by the blood of Jesus.

Does that help out? It goes back to the age of accountability, but yes, we are born in sin. We're not born good and living proof are two and three year olds. It used to be called the terrible twos, somehow it's become the twos and the threes. I don't know how that works out and the fours. Some of y'all said, "And the 23s too." Sorry, it's true.

Does that help out at all? But yes, we are born in sin. Okay, that's a great point, ma'am. Okay, we're going to have, sorry this didn't erase too well, forgive me. We're going to have somebody be our straw person today, just an example. We're going to have a person This is going to be me in the future, are you ready, real tall. Look at that. Boy. You see that? Do you like that long body there? This is Jeff, new body, 6 foot 6 inches. Okay, here we go. I'm sorry, I just had to have some fun. This doesn't work with my analogy at all.

Okay, here is an individual, this individual is born, okay? They are going to live their life right here. Let's just use simple years here. Let's just use year 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. I'm just going up to 8 for the sake of an illustration, okay? You're 1: are they doing things that are spoken of against the word of God? Absolutely. They are lying, cheating, stealing, doing everything. That's what babies do. I mean, in some respects their cute but boy, it frustrates you, doesn't it? Absolutely. "Do you have that?" "No, I don't," and they're holding it in their hands. So at this point, there is a rebellion, there is sin but the question is what is covering that sin? That goes back to Deuteronomy 1, the grace of God. It is the grace of God that a two year old who lies, cheats and steals and then is in a horrific auto accident, does not darken the doors of hell because he didn't know any better. That's the grace of God. So what is covering them? The grace of God.

But then, and this is just a numerical illustration here, don't take it too literally, we keep going, we keep going but then somehow, second or third grade just for illustration sake, this individual realizes the good and evil, realizes what sin is, begins to understand. "There is a God. I'm not him. He has laws and I have broken them and I'm in trouble." At least that's how it worked in my life. I realized I was lost. At that point, the covering is gone and our sin is exposed. What is the wages of sin? Death and we are in trouble. From that point on until they are covered by the blood of Jesus, there is death. That's why sometimes you see these little pamphlets, Gospel presentations, that Jesus Christ forms a bridge. He bridges over. You know that, we can go through all those illustrations. That's the best way I can describe it. Now, that time period may be a couple days, some of y'all lives, it was 25, 30 years, you know, but lost is a lost. I don't think the time element is relevant because lost is lost and the key is being covered.

So I cannot tell you how many families in my life, when I say the unfortunate privilege, it was unfortunate the situation, it was a privilege what I got to minister in their lives, who were what I would call marginal at best believers. These were moms and dads who, their testimony was a little shaky at best and when they lost a child, wanted to know what happened to their child and you begin to explain to them what the Bible says. The

comfort. The release. But then it also opens the door to say, "But what about you? Are you saved because you know at age 3, you know they didn't know but you do." Which goes back to the question you brought up that knowing and understanding being responsible to.

Does that help you at all? Okay, I don't know how we got here from there but it's good. Anything else? Wow, go ahead. It keeps popping into your mind. Okay. Okay, wow. Predestination in three minutes or less. Now, I'm going to kind of deal with that on Sunday night, by the way, message but I'm going to give you a hint: the concept of being predestined, the concept, maybe we hear the word "predestined" and we hear "election," okay? That terminology is utilized all throughout the Bible. It really is and so if the word is there and the term is they we've got to deal with it, right? Now, let me go ahead and share with you your pastor's belief. You have every right in the world to disagree with me and that's okay but I'm going to go a little more through this on Sunday night, the Sunday night message if you'll come back but the passages that we have that are utilized for election and predestination, I am of the opinion that they speak of a corporate entity. For example, Israel was called elect.

Now, what does that mean when somebody is elect? What does it mean when they are predestined? That means there is nothing you can do to stop it, there is nothing you can do to change it and God's going to do it, too bad. There is nothing, there is no decision, there is no option. Folks, the Old Testament makes it very clear that what we know as Israel is elect, the elect chosen of God, so it doesn't matter what they do over in the Middle East, nothing is going to change that. Nothing is going to stop it. You can't stop it. I can't stop it. Nobody can. If you look at the Old Testament, do you see how many times they tried to destroy Israel? It wasn't going to work, right? Do you see how many times Israel willingly defied God? I mean, at some point don't you think God surely would've said, "Okay, enough with you all, I'm done." But he didn't because they were elect. They were predestined. They were the ones who would always be, okay?

When you move over into the New Testament, particularly if you want to go to 1 Thessalonians 1, which by the way, is chronologically the first letter the Apostle Paul gives us, 1 Thessalonians 1. Actually, I'm not going to deal with it probably this Sunday, it's going to be next Sunday. Sorry to, I guess tease you there. Verse 3 of 1 Thessalonians 1, "Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father; Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." You go forward, forward, forward, verses 9 and 10 talks about turning away from idols and serving the living and the true God. The way I mention it in that sense is: just as Israel in the Old Testament was elect, the individuals within "Israel" had two different destinations. There were those who were born in the tribe of Benjamin who died and went to hell. There with those a part of the tribe of Benjamin who died and went to what we know as heaven based on their response to God, even though the corporate entity was elect. Romans 2:28 says, "that which is Israel is not that which has been circumcised in the flesh but circumcised in the heart." Israel was elect, the individuals had a responsibility to God. Folks, the church of

Jesus Christ is elect. No thwart of hell was going to stop it from happening. The devil himself was not going to stop Jesus Christ from going to the cross. You could not stop the church. You can't prevent the church. In fact, it says in Matthew 16, "though the gates of hell will never prevail." Never. But how many times do you look at the letters of Paul and he distinguishes between those that are in Thessalonica that believe and those that don't? Those that are in this place that do and those that don't.

So the simple answer and, by the way, do you know this issue we've been discussing it for 400 years? We are not going to solve it in 4 minutes. So my simple answer to that is: not an either/or but a both/and. There are some people who would say, "Oh, that predestination, that election stuff, that's not real." Yeah it is, it's in the Bible. It's not if it is, it's whom, how, what, where and why. So you can't throw it out but then you have to deal with it and I believe based on the Old Testament passages and the New, that there is what I call corporate election but I do believe there is individual responsibility.

Does that help at all? I hope so. I just solved 400 years in 4 minutes. No, I really didn't. I do talk fast, yes I do. I hope that helps. Anything else on that? It's actually 7:31 and we did one question. I don't know how we got here from there but we got here. What was the question? The question: do you believe we got there from do babies grow up in heaven? That's how we got there and can I just say the majority of us getting there was from these front few rows. Just thought I'd let you know.

Anything else on this to sum up, clarify, think about, should, shouldn't, maybe? No they don't. No. Okay, I do want to address this question because it's a good one: what about children whose parents never darken the door of a church? Even here in this city it happens, right? Let's not talk about way over there, let's talk about right here. We live in a world where and I'm going to tell you, you're all getting ahead of the game, we'll talk about this a little bit on Sunday morning, this coming Sunday. We live in a world where people do not darken the doors of churches. Bibles are paperweights instead of reading material. I could get into all that. The question he said was: it seems like they don't stand a chance. Their parents may be neglectful spiritually but there are a lot of other people in their life that have an opportunity: friends, teachers, coworkers, neighbors. You know, I cannot tell you how many people I have known in life that their salvation did not come under the influence of their parents but under a friend, under a neighbor.

One of my dear friends growing up, I know I joke about my height, I know I do, okay? But you can't make what I'm about to tell you up, alright? I am 5 foot 6 inches, 5' 7" with shoes on just to make it clear. One of my dear friends in high school who did not get saved until he was 16 years of age was 6 foot 8 1/2. We coached little league basketball together. The kids called us to Stick and Stump. I'll let you pick who was who. The best part about it was we weighed the same. I'll never forget, he had to special order his jeans. His inseam was 42 inches. Now, here's the best part: he became, obviously I grew up in Texas, he became for a period, now he owns his own business, he was in law enforcement. He was a Texas state trooper. Do you know the big hats they wear? And the big boots they wear? He served in the Dallas, Fort Worth area. I with my own eyes saw him one day, he had a young lady pulled over in a car and was, I don't know if he was

giving a ticket or what. I don't know what he was doing but he was dealing with her. No kidding, he was on his knees on the highway, eye level with her at the car window. That's how tall this guy was.

You say, "What does that have to do with anything?" Absolutely nothing but it was fun to talk about, so that being said, Chris, that was his name, it's still his name, came from a family that didn't just not believe, they had no use for people who did believe. He was not allowed to go to church. He was not allowed. His parents forbid it. If you unpack the story, they had been hurt by some things, okay fine. They did not allow him to go, period. You'd invite him to go. But do you know what they did let him do? Play softball. One of my dear friends growing up got saved after a softball game that he played with our church team. He was allowed to play softball with us but he wasn't allowed to go to church and so his parents, to your illustration, completely negligible. It wasn't about the fact of not wanting to raise him up that way, utterly rejected him being raised that way but they didn't reject softball. Well, we had a church softball team and one day after the game, our student pastor, our Brother Wilton, so to speak, he coached, he was big into softball, took him out for a Coke afterwards and the next thing you know he is a believer. So the reason I wanted to address that is: there are negligent parents, there is a lot of negligence out there but the Lord also gives us a lot of interaction that we can have impact in their lives in various areas and he's just one great example.

Yes ma'am. You look very excited so yes. Oh, I'm sorry. Well, I think, okay, she's referring to the verse that talks about that there is eternity that is set in our heart, back to the book of life, back to Romans 1, back to there is a God-shaped void in every one of us and we're trying to fill it with something. I believe that every human being on this planet whether they cause this or not, they realize that there is sin because they realize there is a problem. Something is not right so what do I do to solve it? Well, if you're in Colorado, you legalize pot and you just stay high. You think I'm teasing. Life is not satisfying to them. They know there is something more so let's find a way to just ignore it. Every human being has something inside of us that says, "This ain't all there is." That's the eternity set in our hearts. We know there is something more. We know this isn't it. I mean, even as a child. I knew I grew up in a Christian home but even my friend Chris would admit this, there were times as a young child he lay in bed and he knew there was something more, even though he had never been exposed to it. He knew it. You know, we've had those experiences, eternity is set in our hearts. The problem is not realizing eternity is in our heart, the problem is realizing what the solution is because we want it to be what we want it to be. We want to ignore the problem, fabricate the problem. You see, the group in our world who would just say that we came from dust and we're going back to dust, those individuals know there is a problem, they just simply say the problem is one that is going to go away and there's never a problem again but the problem is always there. Everybody on earth admits there's a problem.

You see, there are 4 main questions everybody has to answer. These are the 4, only 4. I'm fixing to sum up all of life in 4 questions. 1. Where did we come from? You have to answer that question, right? I came from God. I came from an accident. I mean, that's what some people would say. Two big rocks collided in midair, I just came from an

accident. You have to answer where I came from. Then you have to answer: what's the problem? Then you have to answer: how do I fix it? Then you have to answer: where am I going? So you take a believer in Jesus Christ: I came from God, the problem is sin, the answer is Jesus, I'm going to heaven. Take the secularist: I came from an evolutionary accident, the problem is a lack of knowledge, I've got to get more knowledge but I'm still going back to the dirt. That's what they believe. But the fact that they admit there's a problem says eternity is set. They know that something is not right. I mean, we could pick and pull, I know there's a myriad of opinions about those that we would call elected officials, okay? But do you realize that whether you agree or disagree with those people who are in elected office, every one of them understand there's a problem or they wouldn't put legislation in to do something. Now, whether you agree with their analysis or not, at least they say something is not right. What does the Bible define that which is not right? Sin. You see, the struggle that we've got in the White House and in our house is that nobody wants to call it sin. If we would start calling it sin, we would realize that a lot of that stuff is not going to make hill bit of difference. You can climb that hill all day long, it's not going to help. Jesus will because he climbed the hill.

Does that help at all with that understanding? Right. In all the different workings and I know we've got to pray but today statistically in the United States of America where we live, a person who comes to know Jesus as their Savior does so in the 15th interaction so what that means is along the road they've had 15 possible, what I would just call spiritual interactions. So that could be as simple as an invitation to church, the hearing of a sermon, the conversation after a softball game, whatever it may be. And one of the things I try to encourage people is this, even like the Super Bowl parties that we're having to try to outreach the neighbors and our friends. I don't know if anybody will actually get saved that night but what if that's number 12 in somebody's life? What if that's number 8 in somebody's life? You know, everybody wants to be number 15. Who wants to be number 14? You're just close but not there. In my friend Chris's life, some of us, we were probably like number 10, 11, 12 and 13 and 14, just to use that analogy. Somebody else got to be number 15. So as I said, somebody's got to be number 1. Somebody's got to be number 2. That's why and I'm going to conclude with this before we pray, go to John 4 because this is when I get excited. Go to John 4. This is the story of the Samaritan woman, by the way.

Yes ma'am. Well, understand, okay, she's asking if my friend Chris saw the difference in my life and his life? I was not his primary friend. I did not invite him to play softball. An individual by the name of Greg did. I became one of his best friends through that experience. In other words, we weren't bosom buddies and I went up to, you know, I didn't do this to him and say, "Hey, do you want to play softball?" He was 6' 8 1/2", okay? A mutual friend of ours who I went to church with by the name of Greg was very dear friends with him. They played basketball together. Surprise, he played basketball, okay? Invited him to play softball. I know I make fun of myself all the time but when you're practicing softball and you're standing next to a guy who is literary 14 inches taller than you, you become friends because he's tired and he takes his arm and he puts it on your head and he rests right there. I mean, you just become buddies and you look so goofy next to each other, everybody talks about it. Our friendship really started on the

softball field, matriculated after he was saved. I was not a true critical key of that so if you were to call him up right now, he lives in Tyler, Texas, if you were to call him up and say, "How integral was Jeff in your salvation?" I probably wasn't a huge part, I was a bigger part in his discipleship after he was saved, if that makes sense. But if you were to say, "Who was the person in his life?" It was an individual by the name of Greg who he played basketball with who also went to our church and played softball.

No ma'am. I hope so. I don't know. Well, I appreciate it. But in John 4, remember the Samaritan woman. You all know the story, right? Had 5 husbands, living with somebody else who was not her husband. Jesus confronts her and she says he is surely a prophet. She goes back, finds the whole town, all the town, actually the whole town didn't come, the men come with her. Isn't that interesting? Just thought I would say that. The disciples say, "Hey, why aren't you going to eat? Don't you want to eat?" Verse 32, there's that word again "but." "But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him ought to eat? Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work. Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together." The reason I bring that up is to use my illustration in America today of 15, I think that number 1 and 2 in eternity get to celebrate as much as number 15 because you cannot have 15 without 1 and 2. And I think that's where the frustration in our lives comes in, whether it's a parent that you see that is not being impactful, well, we can be number 1 or 2 in their lives. There are a lot of our Awana leaders right now that are being ones, twos and threes in some kids lives. They are planting those first stages and it may not manifest itself until much, much later. We don't know but somebody's got to be number 1, somebody's got to be number 2.

And there are great stories out there. One of my favorite stories, I'll say it quick because we've got to pray, is there is a chronicled story, it's in the state of Arkansas where there was a little small country church, a little bitty church. When I say just a couple of, we're talking about 2 dozen people. That's it. 2 dozen people. And they would go out every week and they would go visiting and they would share the Gospel and there was this individual that was in the church that was friends with a man that every week they went and tried to share with this man that was a friend and every week he slammed the door on them. Every week. Eventually the man got saved, okay? When he walked the aisle, when he professed his faith, they let him speak and here's what he said. He said that he wanted to thank the church that they had come to his house 236 times and didn't stop. It's a true documented story. 236. That's a lot of asking which just goes to say, in that story, somebody had to be number 1, somebody had to be 236 and I think the biggest struggle we have is when we say what good would it be to be number 8? Well, 8 connects 7 and 9 and eventually you're going to get to 15.