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Alright, ladies and gentlemen. I want to welcome you here to Wednesday night at First Baptist, Opelika. Hopefully whether you're a guest, member or a long time attender, you stopped by and picked up one of these blue sheets. The blue sheet is our circle of concerns, otherwise known as our prayer sheet. Allow me to remind you once again, please do not throw this away when you exit tonight. Please either tuck it in your Bible, take it with you, make it a point during the week to pray for these concerns that are both a part of and connected to our church family. As a reminder, if you know of a situation, a scenario or a person that we need to be praying for, please contact us in the church office and we'll make it a point to put it on our circle of concern as quickly as possible. As always, please look at the back of the sheet. There are two groups of people I'd love to call attention to is those serving in our military and those that are serving on the mission field. Please make it a point on a regular basis to pray for these young men and women and these families who serve so sacrificially both of them on our behalf.

Let's pray and we'll get started tonight.

Lord, as we gather in this place, we are grateful that all these that are named and even the ones on our hearts that are not on this sheet, that there is nothing that they're going through, there's no sickness or illness or struggle that you are not completely capable of taking care of. And so, Lord, tonight we just come yielding to you, your power, your authority, your provision, your care. Lord, we understand your desire to be a part of our lives and to heal is even greater than our desire. So Lord, we pray tonight with boldness that you would move in the lives of these people. Lord, we also pray for those who are serving both in the military and on the mission field, local and international. Lord, protect them with your holy hedge of protection. Lord, give them provision, give them favor. And Lord, we pray that you would open the doors for the gospel wherever their feet take them. Tonight in this place, Lord, we pray for those that aren't in this room, Lord, as we've got young people all around this campus and adults and Bible studies and our music department rehearsing and practicing. Lord, we pray that your Spirit would be filling every aspect of this campus but in this place, guide us as we walk through your word, direct us to the passages, Lord, guide us to the questions that we need to address and the answers that we need to have but more than anything, when we walk off this campus, Lord, I pray that we wouldn't be the same as when we walked on. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

I do want to welcome you tonight to our Wednesday night adult Bible study. We call it Ask Jeff because you have the opportunity to ask any question you want in regards to the Bible, Christianity or any subject matter related to it. Allow me to begin tonight by sharing with you why I like Wednesday nights so much. The reason I love Wednesday night is because most of the questions we deal with, most of the subject matters, most of the things that we discuss are not concepts or ideas that would regularly come up in a sermon, maybe even a Sunday school lesson, and so this is our opportunity to chase the rabbit, this is our opportunity to dig down, this is our opportunity to say, "But what about this?"

Now throughout time, you have submitted your questions. Most of them come in online at fbcopelika.com/askjeff. If you do take advantage of the internet, when you submit a question with your email address attached, when I answer the question, I click the answered button and it will send you an email to the link of the video just in case you were not here in person, or if you were so you can review it.

Now when you are online submitting a question, you are absolutely anonymous. I don't know who you are. None of us know who you are. All of the information personally is hidden from us. So you can ask anything you want and nobody knows you're asking it. However, I think the best part about Wednesday night is when you raise your hand. Now I know you lose your anonymity, I know we know who you are, but that's when, in my opinion, it becomes fun because we're able to chase the rabbit, we're able to go down whatever trail and just kind of see where the Scriptures take us.

Speaking of that, I'm going to pull out the database. When you submit a question, it goes into an electronic database. There is no rhyme or reason to how the questions are pulled chronologically speaking. So with that being said, I'm going to push the little button. This is the question. I know, that's good, that the Bible says that Adam and Eve were the first two humans on earth BUT, all capital letters, I just read it as it's written, is it possible that the earth was already here and Satan had already fallen and was roaming around thus the reason for the garden of Eden, a safe haven for Adam and Eve? Would this also explain why some people believe that the earth is millions and millions of years old?

Okay, this question, though not asked in this manner in a very elongated fashion, is in regards to what we call the gap theory. Now go to Genesis 1. You say, "Well, what chapter?" The first verse. Genesis, verse 1, I mean, the very first verse of your Bible. Now I know in sessions past we have discussed various views of the creation motif or the creation story, but this specific question is in regards to what we know as the gap theory and specific about Adam and Eve and the garden of Eden.

Now when you get to Genesis 1:1, it's a very definitive statement. It says, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Now when you get to verse 2 is when this question pops up. "And the earth was without form and void and darkness was upon the face of the waters and the Spirit of God moved upon the waters." What's interesting about verse 2 is it says and the earth was formless and void. Now that phrase "formless

and void" only takes place one other place in your Bible, it's in the book of Jeremiah 4. Jeremiah 4, beginning in verse 23.

Now you remember last week when we talked about the character known as Satan in the Bible, we went to Ezekiel 28, and we went back into Isaiah 14 and talked about how sometimes the Lord used prophets to use illustrations of the past to give us truth about the present and in the future. In Jeremiah 4, beginning in verse 23, it talks about the earth being formless and void, it talks about the cities being destroyed, it talks about the animals being destroyed, it talks about all these destructive things and oftentimes we look at that passage in Jeremiah 4 and say, "Well, that's about Noah's flood." The only problem is not all of humanity was destroyed in Noah's flood, there were eight people that survived that event. Not all the birds were destroyed in Noah's flood because we know about the dove coming back and then going forth and letting them know that dry land had been found. So when you look at Jeremiah 4, it's discussing an event in the past of the destruction and the judgment of God that looks eerily similar to what we know as Noah's flood but it doesn't quite match up.

Now when you go back into Genesis 1:1-2, it says, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was formless and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep." Those who adhere to this concept that was alluded in the question believe that between verses 1 and 2 we have the fall of Satan, and that Satan fell and when Satan fell, the best description that I can give of this concept is that in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. Let's just take this room, for example. It was built. It was constructed. It was being utilized. But at this event in verse 2, the lights were turned out. You say, "Why do you say the lights were turned out?" Look at verse 3, "And God said, Let there be light." That what we know as the favor of God, what we know as the illuminated presence of God was in absence. A lot of those who adhere to this position say that's when Satan fell.

Now some of you are saying, "What does that have to do with the garden of Eden? What does that have to do with Adam and Eve and being the first humans and all this scenario?" Notice what happens as you walk through the creation story, "Let there be light. Let there be land. Let there be animals." The word "create" doesn't show up again until verse 26. When you get to verse 26 of chapter 1, it says, "Let Us create man." The first thing that is mentioned as being "created" after verse 2 is you and I, humanity. Everything else is just let it be, let it be, let it be. What's interesting is if you walk through the days of creation, day 1 as we call it, day 1, "Let there be light," it's called good. Day 2 is a firmament, a division between the heavens and the earth, it's not called good. Day 3 is good, 4 is good, 5 is good, 6 is very good.

What's interesting as you walk through Genesis 1 and this is what the question was alluding to, the question is alluding to is it possible that when Adam and Eve were created which, by the way, means something out of absolutely nothing, when they were created were they "not the first residents of earth"? Now don't panic. I haven't been watching the Discovery Channel, I promise. This isn't Ancient Aliens or all those kind of shows. The theory as was postulated in the question is that whom we know as Lucifer

who ultimately became Satan and the angels who fell and left their first estate had access to and had provision of the created order of which would have included earth, and when Adam and Eve were formed and created, sin had already entered the world, sin had already entered the universe, and so earth as a planet is already fallen but yet the garden of Eden was a special place of provision by God.

Now for those of you who question the line of thinking of the question, I want you to think about this. Why is it that God gave them a garden if the whole earth should be good? Have you ever thought of that? I mean, after all, if there is no sin and everything is great, why didn't he just give them the whole thing? Why did he have to create a certain place of provision that they knew that when they were removed from it, it would not be good? Second of all, when man is made in verse 26 through 28, why were they asked to replenish the earth? Last time I checked, if you're go to replenish something, that means there was something there prior to.

Now on the scientific side which was alluded to in this question, this is a great response to those who want to claim to the fidelity of Scripture of what we call a 6,000 year chronology of humanity but open up the door for a multi-billion year dating of the earth because in verse 1 of Genesis when it says, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," we have no idea when that happened. However if you do a strict genealogy study of the Old Testament, a guy by the name of Ussher did this years ago, not the R & B star, the theologian. Ussher discovered that when you go back to the garden of Eden it would have been roughly about 6,000 years ago, and this is one of the great tensions of Scripture, how do you take a 6,000 year chronology with the scientific data that supposedly there is verification thereof. This idea that's postulated in this question somewhat addresses this issue because it says way back when, we don't know how long ago that was, Satan fell, the lights were turned off, but 6,000 years ago the lights were turned on, Adam and Eve were placed in a special place of provision by God to replenish the earth and to go forth. We know that sin crept in, they were removed from the garden of Eden, and what did God say was on the outside? Thorns. Pain. Agony. The byproducts of sin.

So one of the things that I think is so important about the question that was asked is more than the dating of creation, more than the issue of them being the first humans, and this word about replenish, it addresses the issue that sin and the falling of Satan was an event prior to what we know as the garden of Eden and humanity's being involved therein. Now I know I hit that question fast and furious because we could go three hours on it, but the basic question is: is it possible that Adam and Eve were not the first of God's creation to step foot on what we know as planet earth? According to that theory, it postulates that it's possible that what we know as Lucifer and the angels before the fall had actually spent at least some or a little bit or maybe a lot of time in what we know on planet earth. That is the gap theory in five minutes or less. Usually we do it in about five hours.

So questions, comments, thoughts, rude remarks, concerns, what abouts?

[unintelligible]

Okay, the statement was made that's all theory, no verse. I quoted all verses.

[unintelligible]

Okay, alright, she said, "I don't find between verse 1 and 2 where he falls, so where does he fall?" Where does he fall? Isaiah 14 is the first Scripture that records his fall so are we saying he didn't fall until the 8th century BC because that's when we first hear about it? I'm not trying to be ugly, I'm just trying to be honest because one of the things that we need to realize about the Bible, it's not written chronologically. Does anybody know most likely chronologically the first piece of Scripture that we received from God? Does anybody know what it was? Job. He's right in the middle of your Bible. Well, why isn't he at the beginning? I mean, most likely Job was like the great great great grandson of Noah. Chronologically speaking, it's all out of order from our perspective but it's all in order from God's perspective.

To your point, I don't see his fall there, I agree with that, however, let me retort a little bit here. Verse 1 it says darkness was upon the face of the deep. Does it not say darkness? 1 John 1:5 says God is light and in him is no darkness at all. So sin had to have entered the creation by then because darkness is present. In God is no darkness, so whether he fell between verse 1 and 2, or prior to verse 2, irrespective, I think by the time we get to verse 3, Satan has fallen. Can we go that route? We'll go that route. But you're right, it does not say he fell here. You're absolutely correct, but we have to agree to this, he fell at some point before chapter 3, the question is where did he fall, how did he fall, and what are the ramifications of his fall?

Romans 8:22 says that all creation, now y'all know what the word "all" means, right? All. All creation is groaning because of sin. Now let me tell you how preachers usually preach that word. By the way, I don't know if you know this but sometimes good theology doesn't make good preaching and sometimes great preaching is not real great theology, okay? We often teach and preach that the eating of the forbidden fruit, the garden, the fall of humanity was so traumatic that all of creation was affected. According to the strict biblical record, all of creation was already affected by sin before Adam and Eve fell into sin. Now that makes great preaching but it's not great theology because what we know as darkness was present before Adam and Eve which means, therefore, sin had to have been present, which means Satan had to have fallen prior to their existence. But you're absolutely right, young lady, did you like that? Absolutely right that it does not say he did fall. Those who adhere to this theory say that that is the evidence of or there is Scripture to justify that's when he fell.

So anybody else? Thoughts? Concerns? Issues? What abouts? Yes, ma'am.

[unintelligible]

Yes, ma'am.

[unintelligible]

No he never called the darkness good. You're correct.

[unintelligible]

No. Now she made the observation that what we call day 1, he called the light good. He never called the "darkness" good. You're absolutely correct there. Now here's what's interesting, just fun little assignment if you have time or, well, those of you who are real quick on your phones and Google and such, you can go ahead and go there, is look up the definition of evil. Do you know what the definition of evil or bad is? Absence of good. We don't know what evil is unless we know what good is. Good can stand alone as an independent property but we don't know what bad is unless we put it in reference to good. For example, tonight was a good meal. Y'all know exactly what I mean, right? However if I said last night I had a bad meal, it means in reference to what we know was good.

The reason I bring up that illustration is you're absolutely right that there's no reference to the darkness and its quality because naturally as it stands opposed to the light and its goodness, it must be bad which is why 1 John 1:5, God is light, in him is no darkness at all. By the way, Jesus is on the cross three hours between about noon and 3 of the crucifixion day. What was it that surrounded him? Darkness. What was the plague, the ninth plague of Pharaoh? Total darkness. When do most people get in trouble? In the dark. Is that not true? The darkness typically is not good but yet we know what good is as an independent property.

Any other observations? Genesis thoughts? Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Back to Jeremiah 4.

[unintelligible]

Right, okay, I'm going to go ahead and just so that everybody can hear because I have a microphone, I'm going to read verse 23 through 27 of Jeremiah 4. Now remember, our options here is this is an allusion that the prophet is using back to Noah's flood which I think we can say was a pretty good judgment of God, or as those who adhere to what we formerly called the gap theory, it is a reference back to this Genesis experience, okay? Now there are some who will say, "Well, it's not a reference to either of those past events, it's a reference to a future event." The only problem is I don't see any judgment that is pending in the future that would leave the earth in the condition of which it's about to be described where there's nothing that is left, okay?

Beginning in verse 23, "I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form, and void," By the way, I don't do this a lot but I love the language of Hebrew. I think Hebrew is the language of heaven because when you speak Hebrew, you can spit on each other and it's

legal. It's just kind of the way that you say it. But if you want to have fun, that phrase is *tohu va vohu*. Doesn't that just sound neat? So it says, "I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was *tohu va vohu*," I just think that's fun to say, "and the heavens, and they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and, lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled. I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities," now that brings up an interesting question, "thereof were broken down at the presence of the LORD, and by his fierce anger. For thus hath the LORD said, The whole land shall be desolate; yet will I not make a full end," in other words, I'm not done. Verse 28, "For this shall the earth mourn, and the heavens above be black: because I have spoken it, I have purposed it, and will not repent," or change from there, "neither will I turn back from it."

Now again, the struggle that we have in both of these passages being alluded to but particularly Jeremiah is, yes, the heavens were black, without light, again, we have an issue there because we go back to Genesis 1 and there was a time it says "and there was light." 2. There was no man and there were no birds. Any judgment that this could be referring to that might be future, we're about to study the book of Revelation, no matter how bad it gets even in the tribulation and Armageddon, you never see an absence of humanity or an absence of the birds of the air. Here you do. You go back to Noah's flood and there wasn't an absence of humanity, there were eight that survived on that ark. And there wasn't an absence of the birds of the air. So therefore those who would subscribe to what we know as this gap theory say, "Aha, this must be describing Genesis 1:2."

Now can we all just be friends tonight and say that no matter what your particular view of Genesis 1:1-3 is, Jeremiah 4 is speaking about a judgment of God on sin and that judgment was so traumatic that earth was incredibly affected but that God was not done with it. We can all agree to that statement, the question is where do we place it, how do we place it, and everybody has their particular views and/or positions but I think ultimately we have to realize that sin is judged by God, there are consequences thereof but we see that he's not done, in fact, even at the final judgment when it says the heavens and the earth are fled away, he begins a new creation one day, the only difference is at that future judgment there's not an absence of humanity and there's not an absence of the birds of the air.

I know we've made this as clear as mud, have we not? So to whoever you are who asked the question, yes, you fit in on Wednesday night. Thank you very much. Anybody else? Yes, ma'am. Now this is number 2 for you and then I'm going to the back row. Go for it. We keep a tally bar on you. Go for it.

[unintelligible]

You're going back to Genesis, aren't you?

[unintelligible]

Okay, the question is, you're just going to go ahead and open the can tonight. Here we go. Is why would it say in the aspects that we're dealing with, why would his Spirit move upon the waters? Or hovering above the waters? This is the interesting thought here. Okay, because the question was asked, y'all remember what the original question was, right, okay? Because the question was asked in reference to what we know as this gap theory, allow me to answer it as those who adhere to this theory would do so, that when the Lord judged, for lack of better terms, this event, this as they would call this the judgment of verse 2, that they see much like in Jeremiah 4 that we read, they see the judgment of God as a water-filled drowning experience. They go into Psalm 104 to justify that. Psalm 104 talks about the earth being covered with water, but when you read Psalm 104 it's not talking about Noah's flood.

So what's interesting is those who propose this "gap theory" have actually whether they meant to or not, have walked in some incredible theological territory because last time I checked, God works in threes, does he not? If verse 2 of Genesis 1 is a judgment of God on sin, primarily Satan and the angels, that would be judgment 1 big time, right? Noah was judgment 2, correct? What did he say after Noah's flood? He said, "I will no longer destroy the earth with water." What does he do at the very end? With fire, which would mean that would be three major judgments of God of the earth. But to your point, Psalm 104 is a passage that those that would adhere to this theory would claim describes water as being the means of which it was, for lack of better terms, "flooded."

Now I know there are many of you here not just in person but out there in the internet world that are a lot smarter than I am, but think about this, let's just assume these folks are right, that they're putting Psalm 104 in the right place, Jeremiah 4 in the right place, Genesis 1:2 in the right place, and that there was a great flooding judgment. In verse 3, God says, "Let there be light." Last time I checked with the absence of light, it's real cold, right? Well, what happens with a lot of water with no heat? Freezes. Every single scientific mind in the world says at some point this earth was covered with ice. They just argue over when it happened. Isn't that interesting? Because we get this question as Bible believers all the time, "Where's the ice age? I don't see it in the Bible." Those who adhere to this theory kind of walk through that door and show that there's the possibility that putting these verses together would say, "Well, maybe is when that occurred."

Now those who subscribe to what we know as the ice age and every scientific mind I've ever met says it happened at some point, they just all disagree on when that point was. And so, again, to your point, this is the judgment feature.

Back row back there. Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Here we go back to Jeremiah.

[unintelligible]

The cities? Oh boy. Yeah, what do you want to know?

[unintelligible]

Excuse me.

[unintelligible]

Cities require not, yeah, they require inhabitants.

[unintelligible]

He's asking... whoa, whoa, I'm just defending the theory tonight. You said, "Are you saying?" Let me take a step back there. So according to this theory, according to this idea, the fallen angels that he's asking were they carpenters? I don't know.

[unintelligible]

Here's the problem. Go for it.

[unintelligible]

First man, first woman.

[unintelligible]

We know where they are, yes.

[unintelligible]

Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

No, whoa, whoa. Let me rephrase what you said and see if I heard it right. If Jeremiah 4, Jeremiah 4 according to this theory is actually to be placed at the beginning of verse 2, not between 3 and 4. So in other words, this judgment took place prior to, "Let there be light."

[unintelligible]

That's fair enough, yes, sir. And so therefore they would advocate the discrepancy that we see in this world of a strict biblical chronology of humanity versus who knows how long of a chronology for creation, there is this, that's why it's called the gap theory is there is this gap of time that we know not of that could be defended with these Scriptures in that section. Does that make sense?

[unintelligible]

What does that have to do with this? The question was where did Cain get his wife? He picked the best looking sister he had. Alright, moving on. It's true. Or maybe he didn't pick the best looking one. I don't know, but to her question, here we go. By the way, I am firmly convinced that we could spend months on Genesis and months on Revelation and not answer all the questions, but in quick synopsis of that before we go to Revelation, the Bible has 10 genealogies in the Old Testament, okay? What we know as the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 11 is the 11th. None of those genealogies have a single woman listed. Not one of them. What we do know is according to Genesis 5, that Adam and Eve had had three young men in their family: Cain and Abel and then Seth. We know that Abel was killed by Cain so by the time you get to chapter 5, you have two lineages, you have the lineage of Cain and you have the lineage of Seth, and it said that Cain had these children and Seth had these children. The question is where did Cain get his wife, where did Seth get his because there's no mention of young ladies being born to Adam and Eve nor their descendants. You don't find a woman in a genealogy until you get to Matthew 1, in the genealogy of Jesus there's three of them and two of those three are Gentiles. That's a whole other study for another day.

Alright, let's go to the other end of the Bible, the book of Revelation. Phew, my. I'm already tired.

[unintelligible]

Oh yes. Can I make a point of clarification and if I did not make this clear, I apologize. I did take biology, I promise. Someone said that they needed me to make it clear that there had to be women there because there was no man that birthed those babies. You're absolutely right. Ah yes.

Okay, phew. Tonight, Revelation 1:19. Tonight may be one of the most critical studies of the book of Revelation and here is why. I am convinced that there are several things in the book of Revelation are what I call hooks, like a hook like you would put a coat on in your closet. These are just some critical things that you need to look at that will help the rest of the book of Revelation come into place or be pieced together.

Tonight, we look at the timing. We've seen John the island of Patmos. We're about to get into the seven churches, then the heavenly scene of chapter 4 and 5, and then ultimately this tribulational experience. But in Revelation 1:19, the Lord asked the Apostle John who is on the island of Patmos, he gives him one very specific assignment, he says, "I want you to write that which was, that which is, and that which is to come." Now this is critical for us to understand because the Lord's making it very clear there are things of the past I want you to record, there are things of the present that I want you to record, and there are things of the future that I want you to record, and how we divide the book of Revelation determines on how we see the events of the book of Revelation. So tonight, and I know I've given you a lot of information on that outline and I'll explain all that in

just a moment, I want to just lay out for you a 30,000 foot view of the book of Revelation kind of looking at it in big picture, and then look at what are our options and our opportunities to divide the book of Revelation so as to see what is the past, what is the present, and what is the future.

The book of Revelation as hopefully you well know, is laid out into 22 chapters. However, if you will go to chapter 20 of the book of Revelation, this is possibly the most critical of chapters and the reason is because every one of the historical adopted views of the book of Revelation is based on this chapter. Now there is a view or there are varying views other than three that I've put on your outline, but one of the views is known as preterism. We dealt with that our very first night. Preterism is the idea that all of the events of the book of Revelation have already been fulfilled in the first century and none of it relates to the days that are ahead. We've dismissed that based on various ideas and concepts.

But when you get to chapter 20, we have an experience, we have an event that we often call the millennium. Now the millennium is a Latin word for a thousand years and the reason is that in the first six verses of Revelation 20, seven times the Lord says the phrase "one thousand years." He says that Satan will be bound for one thousand years; that Jesus will reign for one thousand years; after the one thousand years is up, Satan shall be loosed. And so this time period known as the millennium or this thousand years is critical to our understanding of our view of the book of Revelation because there are three main perspectives by which people see the book of Revelation and the events therein.

Now I have listed for you on your outline these three main views and the order or the chronology of the events of the book of Revelation as seen from their perspective. Now the first one I want to address is a view known as post-millennialism. Now when you say the word "post," that means "after." This is the idea that Jesus Christ will descend to the earth, a physical coming to earth post or after the millennium. Now the idea behind post-millennialism is that humanity is getting better, that the church of Jesus Christ is gaining ground, that darkness is being pushed to the side, and that light is winning. This theory was the most prominent theory of the book of Revelation during the 17-19th centuries. Why? The missionary movement, the great revivals and awakenings that were happening not only here in America but over in Europe and even into Asia. The gospel was going forth like it had not gone forth since the time of the book of Acts and the early apostles. However there was an event that put kind of a kink in post-millennialism, it's known as World War I. Supposedly it was the war to end all wars, right? Yeah, that didn't last long, did it? World War I really damaged the idea of post-millennialism because we saw that humanity was not getting better and we saw that the church was not pushing back darkness, and World War II put the death knell in what we know as post-millennialism.

Now there are still some that advocate this belief system. They are very few and far between mainly because I think we all recognize that darkness is propagating and light is shrinking and post-millennialism says that sin is eradicated and then Jesus Christ comes and sits on the throne. Now the main problem I have with post-millennialism is that Jesus

Christ comes back in chapter 19 so why would he come back after the thousand years? I think it's got the chronology flipped.

Now the opposite of post-millennialism is pre-millennialism, the idea that Jesus Christ comes back physically before the millennium. Now this is the position of the overwhelming majority of the books that you can go out and buy on the subject matter known as the book of Revelation and eschatology. The basic theory or concept of pre-millennialism is that darkness is increasing, the world is diminishing, and that as we get closer and closer to the coming of Jesus Christ, that the world will not get better, that the world will actually get worse, and instead of us preparing the earth for Jesus, the earth is in such desperate state it's only Jesus that can rescue us from our own demise.

So post-millennialism says everything is getting better, pre-millennialism says everything is getting worse. The third major view is known as amillennial. A or the letter a in Greek means none or no. The idea of no millennium means that the thousand year reign of Christ as mentioned in chapter 20 is not to be taken literally, that the book of Revelation is an allegory, it's figurative, it's a story of the struggle of good versus evil. And there's ups and there's downs, there's good times, there's bad times, ultimately they would say, "Yes, Jesus Christ wins and Jesus Christ reigns forever and forever," but that a chronology and an understanding of the book of Revelation is really not worthy of our time because the events are not to be taken literally. They say that this event in chapter 20 is not a literal one thousand years, it is a figurative expression of Jesus Christ who reigns in our hearts and because he reigns in our hearts, he thus reigns in the earth.

The problem I have with amillennialism is that the Bible says in the mouth of two or three witnesses, we've got seven in six verses. If Jesus Christ is not going to reign for a thousand years, then why did he tell us he would seven times in six verses? If Satan is not bound for a thousand years, then why did God, why did he use this phrase seven times? It's almost as if he is screaming it so loud we would have to over-think it to miss it. Interestingly, most of the adherence to amillennialism or those who subscribe to it are academicians. Now I'm not against school and I'm not against education, I went for 13 years, okay, and I did get more than one degree. I want to make that clear, but I did go for 13 years so I'm all for education and I'm all for learning, but sometimes we can think so hard we miss the main point. Amillennialism almost over-thinks the book of Revelation so as just to make it a story versus to make it prophecy.

That being said, I think that the evidence will be made clear all throughout the study that the earth and humanity is not getting better, that the book of Revelation is not just an allegory or a figurative story, but that humanity is creating its own demise, propagating its own sinful darkness, and it is Jesus Christ alone who pulls us out of this mess one day. So that being said, that's the main view of the book of Revelation, it's either a story to be told, it's getting worse or it's getting better. Those are your three options as a whole. However, in Revelation 1:19 Jesus tells John, "Write which was, which is, and which is to come." So now what we're going to do is dig down even a little bit deeper and say, "Okay, how do we divide the book of Revelation?"

Now most people when we begin to do what we're about to do, don't have any problem on the right side of this line graph because when you get to chapter 20, we've got the reign of Christ, we've got Satan being bound. Immediately thereafter we have what we call the battle of Gog and Magog when Satan comes back up and he rebels and is loosed for a little season and God destroys him and them with the fire and the brimstone. As soon as Gog and Magog takes place, you then have what is called the Great White Throne Judgment. This is that passage at the end of chapter 20 where it says, "I saw the dead small and great stand before the Lord, and the book of life was opened, the book of works were opened." This is what we typically call the great final judgment. After this event, we basically have the beginning of eternity. We have Satan and we have those who adhere to his system of belief and rejected Jesus Christ. At the end of chapter 20, they are sent to what the Bible calls the lake of fire, and those of us who believe in Jesus Christ beginning in chapters 21 and 22 become the residents of the new heaven, the new earth, and the new Jerusalem.

Now you may be wondering tonight, "So why did you start at the end?" Well, you'll notice I put this on your outline: however you divide the book of Revelation, every single view says "and this is what shall happen hereafter." We don't struggle with this part of it. Once we get past chapter 20, there may be variations, there may be differences of opinion, but basically sin is judged and righteousness is rewarded. Jesus reigns in heaven for eternity and hell and the lake of fire is there for all of eternity. There is not a lot of struggle with chapter 20 onward. Our biggest issue is what do we do up to chapter 20? Not so much what shall be hereafter but what is the past and what is the present?

Now when you begin to look at the book of Revelation, I'm just going to work it backwards. From chapter 19 all the way back to chapter 6, we have a series of events or we have a time period that is commonly referred to as the Great Tribulation. Now you say, "Why do we call it the Great Tribulation?" Because that's what Jesus called it. In Matthew 24, he talked about this great time of tribulation, oftentimes we call it Daniel's 70th week, it's a reference to Daniel 9. The book of Jeremiah calls it Jacob's Trouble. This period of time which if you take a literal chronology of the book of Revelation is seven years in length of which the first 3 ½ years are bad but not so bad as compared to the last 3 ½ which the book of Daniel talks about this covenant that is made between the Antichrist and humanity that he breaks at what we know as the abomination of desolation. So you have this seven year time period that is divided in half and the abomination of desolation, again as referenced by Jesus in Matthew 24, is this critical event that divides the events of this seven year time period. All of what we know as this great tribulation time period takes place between chapter 6 and chapter 19 of the book of Revelation.

We back it up a little bit further, chapters 4 through 5, we have a picture of heaven. Now when I use the word "heaven," allow me to put it in quotations. The Apostle John is in what we call heaven, he's around the throne room, there's the crystal sea, there's the cherubim, this is the time period in the book of Revelation where we see the book that's sealed with seven seals that is opened. This is where you see the, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, who is, who is to come," with the angelic beings singing.

Chapters 4 and 5 are the only chapters in the book of Revelation that do not take place on earth. Everything else is happening on the earth. Chapters 4 and 5, a little asterisk here, this is all taking place in the heavenly realm. Now as we go forward, there are times where you'll see events in heaven and in the earth but as a whole everything in chapter 4 and 5 is in the heavens.

Now we back it up a little bit further, chapters 2 and 3. Chapter 2 and 3 contain the message to the seven churches beginning with Ephesus, ending with Laodicea. We will discuss this in much greater detail in the couple of weeks leading up or coming to. But you have the seven churches, all of which are geographically located in what we know as Asia Minor. We'll talk about the different ideas and theories therein, but all of these activities and events are taking place on the earth.

Now I want you to notice something. Chapters 2 and 3 are taking place on the earth, 4 and 5 in the heavens, 6 through 19 in the earth. So you have a difference here right here. Now chapter 1 which we've already discussed, chapter 1 is the island of Patmos. This is where when John is there, he's been exiled by which we believe historically a man by the name of Domitian. He is there for two reasons, for the word of God or his faithfulness to the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. It's there when he is in the Spirit on the Lord's day that we discussed last week, that he has this vision of Jesus Christ. He has this vision therein, he is commissioned in verse 19 which is our study tonight, to chronicle, to write down, to record that which was, that which is, and that which is to come.

Now as I put on your outline tonight, there are three main ways of which people divide the book of Revelation. I'm going to walk through those different views but as you can imagine, I'm going to spend a little more time on the one that I believe will be the best way to guide us in the days ahead.

Now the first idea or the first view is that when it says "write that which was," the past tense, alright? So we've got to divide the "was," the "is," I'm just going to put it in the middle of the board, and the "to come." I'm going to just make it simple there. View 1 states that the island of Patmos and the vision of Jesus is the past. That's "which was." When you were on Patmos, that's what you saw, those were the experiences of the past. That "which is," the present tense, is chapter 2 and 3 known as the seven churches of Asia Minor which, by the way, none of them physically exist today at all. Those actual local churches no longer exist. As a side note, I find it interesting that where the gospel first saturated planet earth is where it is the most rare in the 21st century. Most of the places where Christianity is so difficult to find today is where the first churches were established 2,000 years ago. That's an important note when we study the churches because he says, "If you do not do what you're supposed to do, I will remove your candlestick," which means remove your presence or your authority in the place in which you are.

So view 1 says the past is Patmos, the present are those churches in that first century, and that the future is everything from chapter 4 forward or back. In other words, this picture up in heaven, the tribulation, chapter 20, etc. Alright, that's view 1. View 2 is that chapter

1, Patmos is the past, alright, but chapters 2 through 19 are the present, chapter 20 forward is that which is to come. Now let me share with you kind of the pros and the cons here. View 1, the struggle with view 1 is it makes everything that is present day actually the past, and everything that is to be future is absolutely everything from the first century on. View 2 says that the churches and the tribulation are all a part of the same segment. We're going to discuss this as we get further in the book of Revelation. The reason that this is a struggle is because we're going to have to draw a line at some point at what capacity, what involvement if any the church of Jesus Christ has in this Great Tribulation. View 2 says that at some point the church will morph into the tribulation and experience the tribulation, alright?

Then there's view 3. Shockingly, this is where I'm going to hammer down just for a few moments. I'm a firm believer that the Bible interprets itself so much simpler than we allow it to. For example, on the island of Patmos it says that he sees Jesus in his vision and there are seven stars in his right hand. What are those seven stars? When you look at verse 20 it tells us what the seven stars are. It says that he's in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. Verse 20 tells us he's in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. Allow me to show you view 3 that I believe is the simplest and most what I consider just easily laid out way of dividing the book of Revelation.

Remember back in verse 10 of chapter 1, it says, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day. I heard a voice call out to me and I turned to see who it was, the voice as a trumpet." Now those of you who have taken me seriously and actually read through the book of Revelation the last couple of weeks, do you remember any other time in the book of Revelation where he hears a voice that sounds like a trumpet? Okay, so you didn't do the assignment. Let me tell you what it is. It's in chapter 4. Turn to chapter 4 of the book of Revelation. I want you to see something. In chapter 4 of the book of Revelation, it says that he hears a voice as a trumpet. What does that voice tell him to do? It says, "Come up hither." In other words, he is transported up into the heavens at the beginning of chapter 4. What does chapter 4 and chapter 5 encompass? This heavenly picture.

What does it say? It says, "I saw heaven opened." Now I want you to notice in chapter 4, heaven is opened. Heaven is opened, he is called up by a voice as a trumpet. Does that sound eerily familiar to other passages in the Bible? Where I heard the voice of a trumpet and the dead in Christ rose first? We'll get to that in a couple of weeks. So in chapter 4, heaven is opened, he hears a voice, he is called up. What's interesting is the next time you see heaven open is in chapter 19. In chapter 19, beginning in verse 11, it says, "And I saw heaven opened, and I saw Jesus Christ on a white horse with the armies of heaven behind him, and they descended to the earth." This is that famous battle of Armageddon passage.

Now the reason that I shared that with you is that he was told, "Write that which was, which is, and which is to come." That's three parts, right? There are two doors that open up in the book of Revelation from earth to heaven and if those two doors stand as pillars of division, how many sections are left? Three. Is it possible that on the island of Patmos – work with me here – is it possible on the Lord's day which, by the way, we talked about last week does not mean Sunday, it means the day of the Lord, it means when the end

time events take place, is it possible that when he's on the isle of Patmos and he has this experience with the Lord, that supernaturally, by the way, this happened to Paul in 2 Corinthians 12 so it's not a first time event, is it possible that the perspective that he has is in chapter 4 looking back at the churches, living out presently this great tribulational period, and then looking forward to the millennium and beyond? If that view, view 3, is correct, then what that does for us is say that the events of the churches and the events of the tribulation are two separate time periods. They do not overlap. There is a division between them, and the time period known as the tribulation and then what we know as chapter 24, there is a division here very clearly as well. In chapter 4 somebody goes up. In chapter 19 somebody comes down.

Now the reason I think this is so critical for you and I to understand, these seven churches right here in Asia Minor historically speaking as I share with you, they do not exist anymore. However, if as I postulated what we see happen in chapter 1 when he's in the Spirit on the Lord's day, that what we're actually seeing is chapter 4 as far as chronology is concerned, voice, trumpet, heard one call up to me, then at this point what we know as you and I today are the past. We're the past. The events known as the tribulation, he sees them laid out before him as the present and then from chapter 20 forward he sees as the future. The reason this is so critical is because if you do not put a division here, then you're going to struggle with where the church falls in relationship to the tribulational time period.

Now I've got dear friends of mine who believe that the church of Jesus Christ will go through the tribulation. You're going to see as we walk forward, I do not find biblical evidence for that. Let me tell with you what my friends say to me. They say, "Jeff, we don't agree with you but we hope you're right." Did you hear what I said? "We don't agree with you but we hope that you're right." Why is that statement so important? Titus 2 says that we are to look to the heavens for our blessed hope. If you and I have got to go through this, where's the hope? If you and I, like the Apostle John, are removed from that, that's what I call hope. Even those who I know and love as friends who subscribe to a view other than myself claim that my view has hope and we're told in Titus 2, look to our blessed hope.

Now the reason this is significant and I'll wrap up with this, in the weeks ahead we're going to walk through chapter 2 and 3, and I want you to imagine that we're not just looking at seven churches, we're not just looking at a town known as Ephesus or Thyatira, but if this view is correct, then what the Lord is giving John or giving us through John is a look back on all the history of the world up until this traumatic Great Tribulation event. So the book of Revelation doesn't just become teaching on the future, it will give us insight on the past as well. The book of Revelation is so critical for us because it's not just about tomorrow, it gives us insight on yesterday as well.

Phew, I don't know about you but I'm sweating up here. That was a lot of information. By the way, one last thing before we dismiss. Some of you that are on social media, if you're on social media and particular on Facebook, if you are not friends with me, please friend me. I have a policy, I friend everybody, I like nothing. Does that make sense for those of

you that are on social media? The reason I'm telling you that is we are now uploading the outlines on the church website and I'm also going to post a link on social media every Wednesday so that we'll still have them in paper copies here but you can have them either for future reference or you can get them in advance. As soon as we have them available, we'll go ahead and load them up. You can go ahead and look at them in advance. Or if you're not able to be with us here in person and you're at home sick or whatever, you'll have those with you wherever you find yourself.

So let me pray for us and we'll get out of here.

Lord, as we dismiss, thank you that no matter whether it's the past, the present, or the future, that all of time is in your hands. Help us to remember that there is nothing that has occurred, is occurring or will occur that it's not outside your realm of knowledge and your hand of control. May we yield to you in all aspects. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Go, please, pick up your children. We love them but we don't want to keep them.