

Ask Jeff

Musical Tongue?

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Alright, ladies and gentlemen, we're going to go ahead and get started this evening. Hopefully when you came in, you picked up the light blue sheet of paper called the circle of concerns, otherwise known as our prayer sheet here at First Baptist Church of Opelika. Just as a reminder that if you know of someone or a situation or anything that we need to be praying for whether they are directly related to our church or tangent to our church body, we would love the opportunity to do so. And again, let me remind you do not throw this away at the end of the evening. Hopefully you will take this home and this will be a part of your daily life as you pray for the issues and concerns of those near and dear to our church family's life. One thing I do want to mention, at the bottom of the front sheet there is the sympathy section for those who have lost loved ones in our church family, and on the backside two sections I always like to call attention to, those that are serving on the mission field, and those that are serving as a part of the military. Please make it a point to pray for these individuals on a regular basis. If there's anyone who needs an extra dose of prayer, it is those that are serving so sacrificially on our behalf in many and various capacities.

So let's pray tonight and we'll get started.

Lord, as we have gathered in this place, Lord, we recognize that it is because of those who are putting themselves or willing to put themselves in harm's way that we're here without fear of retribution. And so for those men and women who are serving in our military, Lord, we thank you for their act of selflessness. Lord, we pray that whether they're stateside or overseas, whatever their job description is that, Lord, somehow, someway tonight supernaturally you would not only protect them physically but, Lord, you would minister to them spiritually. If they are lonely, Lord, would you bring them peace? Lord, if they are hurting, would you bring them healing?

Lord, for those who are a part of our body or connected to our body who aren't with us tonight because they're serving on your behalf somewhere else, Lord, we pray that you would give fruit to their labor. Lord, I know oftentimes serving in difficult regions, it's frustrating and oftentimes feelings of disillusionment, disappointment creep in. Lord, I pray that you would show them the purpose of their labor and the long-term eternal effects thereof. And Lord, for those in our family who are hurting physically, emotionally, spiritually, mentally, Lord, we just pray that you would be the absolute God they need

tonight, the God of healing, Lord, a God of restoration, a God in some cases, a God of resurrection. Lord, there are those whose families and finances, Lord, they just need to be raised from the dead and, God, we pray that you would do so this evening.

Lord, as we open your word, Lord, we don't have an agenda. Our agenda is your agenda. Would you guide us, though it may be through our questions, would you guide us to that which we need to study so that when we go out from this place, we don't just become people who went to church but wherever we find ourselves, we will be the church. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

I do want to welcome you tonight to our Wednesday night Bible study here at First Baptist, Opelika that is collectively called Ask Jeff. If you're a first time with us, my name is Jeff and the whole purpose of tonight is guided by or directed by you. Our Bible study tonight is that which you have asked. These are your questions.

Now the majority of you, the way that you submit your questions is using the internet or online activity, fbcopelika.com/askjeff. As I remind you every week, when you submit your question, if you place your email address in there, you still remain anonymous. We do not know who you are so you can ask any question you want to ask without fear of being exposed, so to speak, but when you put your email address, when the question is answered, I push a little answer button and it will send you a video link to when it was answered. We know that people go on vacation, sometimes they're sick, life happens and maybe you were not able to be in attendance actually physically when the question was answered, and so we want you to have access to that answer.

Now in just a moment I'm going to begin going to the database to retrieve questions and my favorite part of the night isn't the question out of the database, it's when your hands go in the air. Now here's when it gets fun. You lose all anonymity when you raise your hand because we know who you are. However, you have the right, you have the privilege to take tonight any direction you want to go. You can go further into the question. You can go tangent to the question. Or you can raise your hand and say, "Hey, I just want to ask this because I want to. It has nothing to do with what you've been talking about." That's what's so great about Wednesday night. This is all what you want to know and what you want to study.

So that being said, we will go to the database. It says we are all given at least one gift when we accept Christ as our Savior for the edifying of the church. I have heard that speaking in tongues could mean to speak another language, i.e. English and Spanish, does someone who reads music considered as speaking in tongues? That's interesting. That's an interesting question. Is reading music speaking in tongues? Not everyone can read music and not everyone can take that music and make praises from it. That's a really good question.

Now we need to go to several passages in scripture. The Bible does speak about spiritual gifts and probably the best place to begin is 1 Corinthians 12. 1 Corinthians 12 gives us a good starting point not just for the list of the gifts but for the purpose and the distribution

thereof. Now specifically this question was in regards to the "speaking of tongues" and we're going to get to that specifically in just a moment because it is the most controversial of the spiritual fits. Now just so you won't think that you're alone and isolated in a vacuum of time, when the Lord inspired scripture 2,000 years ago, the entire 14th chapter of 1 Corinthians is dedicated to the gift of speaking in tongues. They couldn't figure it out either. They had trouble too, so don't panic when we ask the question what have I heard, or what have I experienced, or what other people say.

But in 1 Corinthians 12, beginning in verse 4, it says, "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." Now the rest of chapter 12 discusses these gifts in a variety of capacities. When you get to chapter 13 of the book of Corinthians, that famous passage that we oftentimes read or a part of wedding ceremonies, it basically says that no matter what the gift is that the Lord has given you, it is to be expressed with love or seeking out other people's concerns more than yourself. And then chapter 14 deals specifically with the most controversial of the gifts, the one known as "speaking and interpreting the gift of tongues."

Now a couple of things I want to address about spiritual gifts and then we'll get specifically to the tongue issue. 1. As a believer in Jesus Christ whether you know it or not, you have one, you do have one. Now I don't know which one you have and I want to caution you about spiritual gifts tests and here's why: you can go online and you can Google spiritual gifts test and there are millions of them that are out there. Many of them list a number of gifts that are not mentioned in scripture so I want to caution you. There's nothing wrong with a spiritual gifts test, one of the best ones is a part of the Master Life discipleship curriculum, but I just prefer those tests that constrain themselves to the ones that are listed in scripture, okay? Don't need to go outside of scripture. The Bible gives us enough.

So number 1, you have one, alright. 2. You do not have them all but you may have more than one. And your gifts in life may either accentuate or diminish over time and experience. So there may be times and seasons in your life where the Lord uses one more, I guess, vividly than another, but I do not believe there is any believer in Jesus Christ who possesses none, and I do not believe any that possess all.

But tonight the question was brought up about tongues and it was interesting is this the issue of Spanish versus English, what about reading of music, what is this gift? Now what we have here in 1 Corinthians 12, I want to share with you one of the ways and please forgive my horrible, sarcastic, pastoral humor, but I have people come up to me all the time because I'm Baptist and Baptists aren't known for our tongue speaking, alright?

That's not what we're known for, in fact, we're known much the opposite thereof. And I'll have some of my friends come up to me and say, "You know, you're a Baptist preacher, do you believe in the gift of tongues?" I say, "Well, it's there in the Bible." They say, "So you believe?" I say, "Oh, I so believe in it that I know that God has given me the gift of interpreting tongues." They freak out. Have you ever heard somebody say, "My gift is interpreting tongues"? I hear a lot of people say, "My gift is speaking," but when you go two chapters over, it says it's never to be done without an interpretation. It's interesting how interested we are in speaking it, but how non-interested we are in interpreting it, and it says very clearly that if it is done without an interpretation, it is to be ignored, okay?

So but the ultimate question is, then what is it? And there's all kinds of opinions and all kinds of ideas, but before we take questions from the floor, I want to take you back to Acts 2 for just a moment. Acts 2 is that famous Pentecost event where the idea of "tongues" comes into its original context. Now that's important, its original context, how was it first used by God. Now for those of you that are Baptist, by the way, you know there's three kinds of Baptists, right? I don't know if you knew this. Some of you are Baptist, you're just Baptist. Some of you are Bahptist. Some of you are Baptist. So there's three kinds of Baptists, alright? So that being said, y'all never heard that before, there's three kinds? Alright. Alright. How many Baptists we got? We got any Baptists? We've got a few Baptists, yeah. And some of you are going, "I'm a Bahptist." It's okay, that's alright.

Acts 2, the famous Pentecost event. It says, "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Oftentimes when we read this passage, we stop at verse 4 and we talked about how the disciples were gathered together and when what we know as the public initiation of the church began, that they spoke in other tongues as the Spirit gave utterance. However, we need to keep reading to find out what exactly happened. It says, "And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language." Did you hear that? When Pentecost happened, they spoke and the miracle, I don't believe the miracle was in the speaking, the miracle was in the hearing. Now we keep going, it says, "And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians." Don't you think he's trying to get across they were from different countries speaking different languages?

Why did I go to such extremes? What took place in Acts 2 is not what's being described in 1 Corinthians 12. The utilization of tongues in Acts 2 to spread the gospel at Pentecost

was very much different than what's being addressed in 1 Corinthians 12 and here's why. In Acts 2, were those that were listening, were they believers in Jesus Christ? No. They couldn't even understand the language by which was being preached unto them, so miraculously God gave them the ability to speak. Now I've always wondered when they spoke, did they speak in the language that was heard or did they speak in their own language and God somehow translated it mid-air? We don't know but we do know they heard in their own language. When you get to 1 Corinthians 12 and you read through chapter 14, the gifts of the Spirit as we just read in chapter 12 of 1 Corinthians were not for the conversion of the lost but for the edifying of the church. So it is not so much a language translation as much as we hear a clarification of the message. When you get to 1 Corinthians 14, what you discover in this entire chapter involving the spiritual gift of tongues is that its purpose was for communicating clearly when there was confusion on the outset, because at the end of that chapter it says God is not the author of confusion.

Now one of the best explanations that I heard of this spiritual gift came some years ago when a young man came to the church I was pastoring and he had been visiting for a while and I knew, and I don't mean this in any way good, bad or indifferent, I knew that he had a Pentecostal background. I knew that he was a part of a congregation that what we know as tongue speaking was a regular occurrence. One day he pulled me aside and he said, "Pastor, I think I'm ready to join the church but I think you and I need to have a talk first." I said, "I think we do." The best explanation I've ever heard of the gift of tongues in my life. He said, "Pastor, I want you to know that I believe that God has given me the gift of speaking in tongues." He said, "What do you think about that?" And I said, "Well, it's in the Bible." I said, "Do you want to expound on that?" He said, "Well, I believe God's given me that gift but I'm going to tell you something, as a part of this church," he's also told me, "I'll never use it here." I said, "Why?" He said, "Because there's no confusion here." He said, "All you do is get up and tell us what the Bible says." He says, "The gift of tongues is to stop somebody who's going outside the Bible and take them back to the Bible." That's good, isn't it? That's not typically the desire or explanation that we hear regarding the spiritual gift. Oftentimes we hear people who are wanting to go outside of the Bible and get a "new or fresh word," and here's a young man saying the purpose of it is to get back to what God said. I think this young man nailed it. I think he understood completely what the passages that we've just read were saying, that God doesn't use this to cause confusion or to add to or to do something "new." When there is an atmosphere of confusion, God uses this gift to take us back to his word and to give us clarity. So if we are in a context where the Bible is explained and expounded properly, there would be no need for that gift to be expressed because clarity is going forth.

Now in regards to the question that was given in specific, the question about Spanish into English. I do believe that in the context of Acts 2, there are times that the Lord utilizes that translation gift when there are language barriers. If you've ever done any study of or communicated with missionaries, there are many missionaries who have gone overseas and they've communicated in English or in one language and find out later that the person who received Christ as their Savior never even spoke that language. God somehow

miraculously made them to hear what they could not hear in the flesh. At the same time, I also believe God is in the business of making his word clear and not being confusing.

As regards to reading music. Well, I have a mom who for a period in her collegiate career was a voice major. Music is very important to my mom, has always been important to my mom, and I'm basically tone deaf. I cannot do anything in regards to music. My mom, much against my desires, made me – that sounds so bad – she strongly encouraged me to take piano for four years of my life. I was horrible at it because I didn't want to be there, and I'm one of the very few people that you'll ever meet that cannot sing, cannot play, but I can read music because my piano teacher made me learn how to read music. So I can look at a piece of music and go, "Oh, that's in the key of A," but I have no idea if you're singing A. I have no idea. So that being said, I don't think music is an expression of this gift but if you are musical, you are gifted by God because you have a gift that a lot of us wish we had.

Any follow-ups on gifts and tongues and speaking and hearing and interpreting and all kinds of good stuff there?

[unintelligible]

Ah, address tongues in a prayer language. That is actually addressed in 1 Corinthians 14. If you want to turn a few pages to the right and then I saw your hand in the back, sir, we will get to you. 1 Corinthians 14 when it speaks of this gift of tongues, let me find it here. I'm looking for the passage where it says about 10,000 words versus... Verse 18? Thank you. He says, "I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all," by the way, it says you all but that's kind of proof that, you know, Paul was a southerner, you all, y'all. There's one passage there where he talks about 10,000 words in public. Is it verse 19? Okay, here it goes. "I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all," or y'all, "Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue." The question was brought up about a "prayer language." There's lots of discussion and there's lots of debate about this and all that we have biblically in regards to that is what we just read. What I think is important about what we just read is that the Apostle Paul advocated the fact that this gift or this ability was somehow, someway a part of his life, but that it was not done in a public setting, it was done in a private setting, and he said he would rather only do five public and 10,000 private, that it was not something, and here's what I gather from that, it's more than just the public versus private, you also get the idea he's saying, "Though I may do this, I don't brag about it. I don't put it on a neon sign and say, well, I must be closer to God than you are because I have and you don't." Because you go two chapters earlier and he basically says not everybody has everything. So where one person may have the gift of faith or of understanding or of administration and here the Apostle Paul says something else, none of the gifts are to be demonstrated, "Aha, look at me."

So to that point, that prayer language concept is addressed there in 1 Corinthians 14. It is private. It is basically between an individual and God and it is not to be discussed or mentioned or even advocated in a public format because he says that's not what you're

supposed to do. Which makes it interesting, so why do we argue and fight about this because we're not supposed to be talking about it because he says you're not supposed to? Isn't it interesting how many of our arguments come when we go outside of what the Bible tells us to do in response to what God is doing in our lives?

Yes, ma'am.

[unintelligible]

Yeah, 13 through 15. Yes, he talks about his prayer in an unknown tongue. That's where he talks about interpreting and praying for the interpretation and he says, "I pray in the Spirit." He says, "I pray with understanding also. I will sing with the Spirit and I will sing with understanding also." So for this whole section in the midst of public tongues, he talks about private tongues but I want to be clear again: not for the sake of admonishing himself and I think in the context, it's not something that you discuss and talk about and say, "Oh, well, that's what I do and why don't you?" You almost get the idea he's saying, "I really don't want to talk to you about this because I know I'm not supposed to, but I need to talk to you about this so you'll know that the public thing has gotten way out of hand in the church at Corinth." And by the way, the church at Corinth was not known as a real spiritual group, but they were an incredibly carnal group. If you don't believe me, read chapter 5.

Yes, sir. I saw a hand. I thought I did. Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

It does lead into baptism of the Holy Spirit. Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Okay, can I answer those questions in reverse? Okay, so the question was in regards to that young man's testimony about the clarity versus the confusion. He said how does that solve the confusion question? When you get to 1 Corinthians 14, it says that when this gift is to be utilized and, by the way, if the word of God is communicated clearly, it's not needed. It says very clearly, in fact, you go down beginning in verse 23 on, that it is not to be done by more than two or three. Now I don't know if you've ever had the privilege of being in a worship service of this context where there could be 200-300 people, automatically you're outside of scripture. Automatically because it says no more than two or three, and that an interpretation be given, alright?

Now also, speaking of that interpretation, go back to verse 4. It says, "He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church. I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues." The one point of clarification I want to make there is if and when this gift is to be utilized, the one who speaks in the unknown tongue knows what they said. It says he edifies himself. And when the witness or the

interpreter gets up and says, "I testify with my brother he said this," according to scripture not only not more than two or three but the initial speaker should be able to get up and say, "I didn't say that." Oftentimes when you hear testimonies of or if you've been in environments particularly in America regarding this subject matter, the person speaking has no idea what they said which immediately says it's not scripture. By the way, if you go through 1 Corinthians 14 and you begin to just write out what are the things that God has said must be in place or the order in which they must be done regarding this gift, there are at least 15 to 16 of those qualifications and my somewhat caustic joke to my Pentecostal friends is, if you can pass all 16 of those, we'll let you do it. But rarely do you ever see a public expression supposedly of this gift, particularly in a Western context, that can pass the 1 Corinthians 14 passage.

How did it bring clarity? This young man grew up in a context where there would be 200-300. There was chaos and there was confusion and his point was that someone who truly had this gift was to rise above the crowd and say, "Get back to the word versus what you're wanting to express." Does that help? So he wasn't advocating the gift as much as he was advocating the word of God.

Now the question naturally begs, what about the whole concept of the baptism of the Spirit? Those of you who are not familiar with this terminology, there are those in some faith context that say that the baptism of the "Spirit" is a secondary event in the Christian life. What they would advocate is that there is a moment or there is a time where I get saved, I am redeemed, I have been forgiven of my sins, I am seated in the heavenlies. I'm as saved as I'm ever going to be. I'm a child of God. Good to go. And they will advocate that at some point later in life there is a baptism of the Spirit. Now interesting, this is really a late 19th-20th century concept in the history of Christianity that derives from D. L. Moody. D. L. Moody, the great evangelist of the 1800s, died in 1899, was in the city of Chicago the night that it burned. Now if you're not familiar with how D. L. Moody preached, let me give you a little history lesson for just a moment. By the way, D. L. Moody was about my height and he was as wide as he was tall. Just a little reference of history there, so can you imagine that? So D. L. Moody would have these long evangelistic campaigns where they'd preach sometimes week 2, four weeks at a time. D. L. Moody was notorious up until the Chicago fire, he would preach for weeks without giving an invitation. He wanted people to be on edge. He wanted them to be anxious and then after weeks, he would give this giant invitation. The night of the Chicago fire, he did not give an invitation and as he sat on the shoreline there in Illinois and watched all that burn, he talked about how grieved he was at the thought that people were left hanging and had not made a decision, and he said that he called out to God and he repented to God and he says, and this is where we get the statement, he says, "That night I felt a rush or a pouring over me of the Holy Spirit and I was never the same again."

Now that's where this phrase comes from, alright? So we had to put it in its historical context, correct? I think in some ways the phrase has been hijacked because if you read what we read in Acts 2, it said, they, being the apostles, were filled with the Holy Ghost. They were already saved. Jesus already breathed on them. They had received the Holy Ghost. These same individuals in Acts 3 get filled with the Holy Ghost. In Acts 4, they

get filled with the Holy Ghost. In Acts 5, they get filled with the Holy Ghost. You say, "What is that?" Here's the statement I like to say: the day you got saved, you got all the Holy Spirit you're ever gonna get, the question is how much of you does the Holy Spirit have? And to D. L. Moody's historical context, that night on the shore of Chicago, the Holy Spirit had every bit of him after that point. He didn't have all of D. L. before that.

So baptism of the Spirit in its historical context and its biblical context of being filled is there are times and stages in our life where we yield and surrender more to the Lord. The context of which you're speaking of that somehow has been hijacked in our culture is there are those that say, "I got saved here but I didn't get the Spirit until later." In 1 Corinthians 6:19 it says, "Do you not know your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?" I got the Holy Spirit the moment I got saved, the question is how much of me does the Holy Spirit have? And so that is the context that we typically hear about being baptized in the Holy Spirit, people will say, "When did you get saved?" Such and such. "Have you ever been baptized in the Holy Spirit?" Again, they had the Holy Spirit, did the Holy Spirit have them, and typically, by the way, there's a word that we've thrown out of our invitation times. I wish we could recapture this. Help me do this. There used to be a word we used all the time. Have you ever heard the word rededication? That's what this is. When there's those moments in your life, sometimes for some of you 3, 4, 5 times in your life where you know you're saved but there's a part of your life that you've been holding back or there's an area that you haven't surrendered to the Lord and he gets your attention and the Holy Spirit grabs you and you yield and you surrender, and we rededicate ourselves. That's basically our word of saying we're now filled with the Holy Ghost, we're taking it to the next level.

Does that help at all with the question? Not really.

[unintelligible]

According to....?

[unintelligible]

Oh, okay, yes, okay, I'm sorry. I apologize for going. At that point you should have said, "That's not where I wanted to go." His question about being baptized by the Holy Spirit is in some faith traditions there are those who claim that it is the speaking of tongues that evidences that you are saved. Is that what you want to refer to? Okay. Here is a way of addressing this issue because I have friends of mine that believe that and they still are praying that I'll get saved because I don't speak in tongues, remember I interpret tongues. Remember? No, I'm kidding about that.

But the easiest way I can explain that is this: in Acts 2 we have to ask the question who was speaking in the tongues, okay? So who was speaking in the tongues and who was, I hate to use the word listening, Acts 2, who spoke in tongues? The apostles, okay? Did the nations that were all there gathered, did they speak in tongues? So were they lost? Only the apostles spoke in tongues. That made it very clear, did it not, that they were the ones

that were speaking. When you get to Acts 8 when you see Philip in the area of what we know as Samaria, do you know how many people speak in tongues there? Nobody. Nobody speaks in tongues there when the Holy Spirit gets poured out. And in Acts 10 when we see the Gentiles as a whole being reached out, the people who speak in tongues are not the apostles, they are the listeners who speak before they even acknowledge that they believe in Jesus.

Now the reason I bring that up is, how can you say tongues is evidence of salvation when here the people who convert don't speak, nobody speaks here, and they speak before they ever get saved? So that being said, the evidence of salvation is the presence of the Holy Spirit in our life, the changed life, not a new language or gift. If that's the case, if what you're saying is true, not your saying but those of you that are, then in 1 Corinthians 12 it would say the same Spirit that gives the gifts, you all have the gift of speaking tongues but there's some of you who have others as well. There is no place in scripture that says that we all have this gift or can speak in tongues or interpret tongues. The only passage we've got is in Acts 2 wherein the ones who speak are the apostles and the ones who "convert and walk the aisle" never do.

Does that help at all with that question? Anything else on tongues? We need to get to Revelation. Anybody else on tongues? We're good with tongues? Everybody's good? Going once. Going twice. Just remember, you're Baptists.

Alright so Revelation 2. We're going to talk about the church of death. This ought to be encouraging. Just to remind you, I know that we've had Spring Break and I know we've had some Ask Jeff's that have gone a little bit long because the subject matters bear witness, but we find ourselves in Revelation 2 and 3, we have the seven churches of Asia Minor beginning with Ephesus and ending with Laodicea. Just to begin with and I'm going to kind of close with this, remember these seven churches, there are seven specific churches that are being addressed in Asia Minor. Unlike the other churches that the Bible addresses such as the church at Thessalonica or the church at Ephesus earlier in the New Testament, the information communicated is not just to that one church but it's said to be communicated to all of the churches, in other words, the other six are to learn from the other one that is being communicated with. What we see in these seven churches are local church issues but what we also see beyond that and we've discussed this some at length, is there is the possibility that when you take the passage where it says that the Apostle John was caught up, and you take the passage where it says he was told to communicate that which was, which is, and which is to come, that more than just a message to a specific church, it's very possible that the Lord is utilizing John to give us a broad scope picture of history, of history from the ascension of Christ until the return of Christ, and if that is the case, then we have the church of Ephesus being that early church, that apostolic church that was fervent and on fire and doctrinally sound. Then we have the church of Smyrna that was intensely persecuted and claimed to be poor and without much strength but the Lord says, "You are strong and rich." Last time, we talked about the church at Pergamos, which means "married." We talked about the fact that in the early fourth century the church of Jesus Christ and what we know as the Roman Empire entered into a relationship where they became married and you couldn't tell one from the

other, and the doctrine of Balaam settled in, teaching the people of God to go around the things of God so to get the accolades and the rewards of the world.

Today we come to the church at Thyatira. This is the teenage boy church. The name means "odor of affliction." If you've ever had teenage boys in your house, we should just name it Thyatira while they're there because there is much odor. But beginning in verse 18 of Revelation 2, it says,

18 And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass; 19 I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first. 20 Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. 21 And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. 22 Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. 23 And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. 24 But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. 25 But that which ye have already hold fast till I come. 26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: 27 And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. 28 And I will give him the morning star. 29 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Now tonight when we address the church at Thyatira, we're going to deal with this on a level of the church individually and us personally as we see our own walk with the Lord, but we're also going to take a step back and look at, as I mentioned, prophetically or historically.

The name Thyatira means "odor of affliction." Really interesting that of all the seven letters to the churches, this was the smallest church but it received the longest letter, the idea that the Lord had so much to communicate even though congregationally they were probably the smallest. Now if you were to look at these seven churches as far as numerical size, Ephesus and Laodicea were the largest ones, and here we have Thyatira as the smallest. What's interesting is Smyrna was heavily persecuted, Sardis is going to be heavily persecuted, but Thyatira is actually smaller in size. You see, there is this erroneous thought that we must join hands with the world and look like the world in order to succeed in the world as the church. What we see with Thyatira is when they joined with the world and looked like the world, they actually diminished and lost their influence in the world.

The problem that kills a church, this is any church as a whole, as an individual, or a member thereof, when you major on the minors and you minor on the majors. Woo, if this was Sunday morning could I get to preaching. When we think that that which is temporal is eternal and that which is eternal is temporal, you're going to have problems, and what you see at the church at Thyatira are the things that should have been important, the things that they should have focused on, the things that should have gathered their attention, they just glossed on by, but the things they should have no business in, the things that did not matter, the things that were of no significant significance, they spent their time on them. You know, there's an old adage and I'm going to pick on us Baptists for just a moment. There's roughly about, I'm just speaking of what we know as the denomination of Southern Baptist churches, there's about 46,000 Southern Baptist churches and the old joke is the way that we plant churches is that we've had 23,000 church splits. Some of y'all will get that in just a few moments. Because how many times do we fight and argue and fuss and get upset over the color of something, the placement of something, the name of something and it doesn't matter eternally but it matters temporally.

So they majored on the minors, they minored on the majors. Alright, I won't get to preaching. The persons and not the things that kill a church. I want you to hear very clearly the problem in Thyatira, and we're going to see this in just a moment when we look at it historically, were not objects or things, it was people. What does he call out? Jezebel and what she was teaching and how they were responding. It was their life and their belief that was a problem. It wasn't where they were located. It wasn't the way that the building was constructed or the color of the carpet per se, it was who they were and how they were behaving and what they believed.

Now I'm going to go through some of the things about Jezebel for a moment just to kind of get a picture of this. Now interesting, Jezebel, the name means "not married." Now remember the church before this was the church at Pergamos, correct, which means "much marriage." Jezebel means "not married." Was Jezebel married? Yes. I've given you the passage of scripture. From 1 Kings 16 through 1 Kings 18, it tells us the story of Jezebel and her relationship with Ahab. She was an idolater. Not only was it Baal worship but it was really Ashteroth which is the female side or the female deity of Baal worship of which that she was so privy to.

You know the famous story when Elijah goes up on the mountain and he fights what we know as the Baal worshipers where they called down fire from heaven, and he mocks them because their god, Baal, is not listening or heeding them. And we also know that Elijah wins that battle, he rushes down the mountain because he wants to outrun Jezebel and outrun the chariot before Jezebel and Ahab find out that 900 of their prophets have been killed on the mount that day. Everything that Jezebel touches is an absolute wreck. In fact, there is Ahab, there's a place in the story of their life where Ahab desires a vineyard. Now I hate to read into scripture, that's a thing called eisegesis. We're never supposed to read into it, but sometimes I can read tone. There's this passage where Ahab is covetous of another man's vineyard and he comes to Jezebel and he says, "Jezebel, he

won't sell me his vineyard. I want his vineyard." And Jezebel goes out and makes sure that the man is killed and steals his vineyard and gives it to her husband Ahab. The reason I tell you that story is the picture you get of Ahab is he comes home and he goes, "But honey, I want the vineyard." And she says, "Fine, I'll get you the vineyard." He pouts and he whines and so we kind of see the story that's taking place.

Why is this so important? Because she was married to Ahab but she was not acting like she was married to Ahab. What we see at the church of Thyatira, though the church is to be the bride of Christ, what the picture is, is that they're cheating on Christ and going outside of Christ for everything that Christ should give them. There's an old statement: if they'll cheat with you, they'll cheat on you. Is that not who Jezebel was as a person? When she met Ahab, a horrific person, she continued that in their marriage, so much so that her name means "not married" because her actions toward Ahab were as if she was not even married to him even though she technically was.

And that's the picture that's coming out in the church here, and when I say that she is purpose driven, I'm not against having a purpose, I'm not against having direction, but I want you to notice in verse 20 what it says. It says real quickly, she called herself, she called herself a prophet. Now this is in complete contrast to Acts 11. Acts 11, we find ourselves in the early day of the church and we're in Antioch. Antioch was kind of the central place for doctrinal orthodoxy. It was the place where the fervor and the fire of Christianity first began. In Acts 11:26 it says, "And they," the believers, "were first called Christians in Antioch." Does anybody know what we were first called before then? In Acts 9, Saul before he became Paul called us something, people of the way, you're absolutely right. Now why would they call us people of the way? Because Jesus said, "I am the way." So we were called people of the way until Acts 11, where then we were renamed Christian, which means "little Christ or imitator of Christ or ones who look like and talk and walk just like Jesus." When you go back to Acts 11:26 it says, "And they were called." Not they called themselves. What is so important there is when I say that she was purpose driven, here we see Jezebel, here we see the church at Thyatira, they determined who they were, not God or the world declaring who they were. She said, "This is who I am," and she was no more a prophet of God than anybody in scripture.

We see the horrible things that she was doing. She preyed on ignorance. She called herself a prophetess. Now this is actually a title that's used in scripture and there are individuals in scripture that are called prophetesses, those that speak truth into lives of other people. But what's interesting is she hijacks a biblical title and places it on top of an unbiblical life. I'm going to be honest with you, you can put a steeple on the building and put a cross on the top, that doesn't mean Jesus is preached. You can wear a clerical robe and you can have music that sounds like the angels but it doesn't mean you're speaking of Jesus. She no more spoke the gospel than anybody. Everything she did was against the things of God. She taught them how to do ungodly things. She led them to commit fornication when the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 6, flee fornication. How can she be a prophetess?

You see, the same thing happens in our world today, is we have people that give themselves titles and in charge of institutions and organizations, but often what they promote is not verified in scripture and so the same thing, she preyed on people's ignorance. Let me tell you what we need more in the 21st century as the body of Christ than maybe anything else: we need discernment. We need discernment. If it walks like a duck and it talks like a duck, it may not be a duck spiritually speaking. How do you get discernment? You match everything that anybody says about God by the word of God, including me. Don't trust Jeff Meyers. Trust the word. Hopefully I communicate it accurately. If I don't, call me on it. Anybody who is scared to be aligned with and/or held accountable by the word of God shouldn't be teaching the word of God. It isn't what I think. I tell people all the time, "Don't get upset with me. I didn't write it. God did. I'm just communicating. Don't shoot the messenger," so to speak.

But what she did, she preyed on their ignorance because they did not know the word of God enough or they desired the things of the world too much that she was able to get in and they believed her as a spokesman on behalf of God when she was much the opposite. She was very persuasive. She took what they were doing in Pergamos and took it to the next step. Now remember Pergamos. Pergamos is the church that married the world. Thyatira is the church that cheated on the world. In other words, they cheated on themselves. They took it to the next step. She convinced them that being like the world wasn't enough, they needed to even be more like the world than the world was promoting.

Do you remember in 1 Corinthians 5, the Apostle Paul makes this statement, "You are doing things that not even the Gentiles are willing to do." In other words, you're so far out of line. That's what we see here with Jezebel and the spirit of Jezebel. She worked through teaching errors to believers. The book of Jude verses 3 and 4, it says that what happens, when this occurs within a church context or a group of believer type context, it says that there were teachers who crept in, in other words, they presented themselves as something they were not, got you to believe that they were legitimate, they gave you false credentials, for lack of better terms, and then they snuck in and according to the book of Jude, they spoke the lasciviousness of Jesus, in other words, they taught that Jesus wasn't who Jesus said he was. But they snuck in. The same thing happens here with Jezebel, encouraged ungodliness among the godly. She actually told them that fornication was a godly behavior. Now there's nowhere you can justify that in scripture anywhere from Genesis to Revelation but that's what she told.

Now I like this next statement I used because we're in the South, we can use this statement. She was pig-headed. You ever use that phrase before? You're just being pig-headed. Usually you don't mean that as a word of affirmation. I wanted to use the word obstinate but the other three all started with P so I just thought we needed a P tonight, she was pig-headed. She refused to repent. Now I want you to look at verse 21 of Revelation 2, "I gave her space to repent of her fornication and she repented not." Phew. I gave her space. Now the natural question is: how much space did he give her? We don't know.

Now I'm about to look at this church from a historical prophetic perspective and we can kind of look in more detail there, but I think is what's critical is even Jezebel was not

beyond redemption, even Jezebel was not beyond the arm of God's grace. With all that she was teaching and all that she was doing and the horrible acts and the horrible teaching, God comes and says, "I want you to repent. I don't desire you to live this way." And it says that she repented not.

Now what was the product? What did she produce? Now this is important to see. What happens when Thyatira occurs? What happens when Jezebel sneaks in? The first thing is there is intense pain, misery and anguish. That's what the Bible says. Though it may look good on the outside, it's painful on the inside. Agony now. Verse 18, they're in great tribulation, give according to your works. In other words, their experience though she promoted it and told them what they're doing was actually the right thing, they were experiencing detrimental repercussions. As I mentioned to you, it was actually the smallest of the churches.

Now numerical size does not dictate the blessing of or the success or the favor of God. However allow me to share with you that I knew an individual when I was in graduate school that wrote his entire Ph.D. dissertation studying a very specific denomination in North America that was not Baptist, and in his study of that denomination, his conclusion to his dissertation which can be attributed to any local church, group of churches, or denominational churches, that the more that a "people of God" go away from the word of God, the less influential and impactful the church becomes. We believe, somehow we've bought this lie that if we look like the world, talk like the world, and join with the world, we'll have the success of the world and the opposite occurs. We join with the world and say, "Well, we must be just like them." Fornication, eating things unclean, doing all the things the world does plus a little bit more, and what happens? It says that they had agony. They actually were suffering and they were not being impactful and they were not doing or being as they wished.

Agony in the future. Boy, this is nice in verse 19, "I will kill her children." Now I want you to think back to Matthew 23. Jesus is in front of a group of Pharisees, religious individuals who actually think they're more spiritual than Jesus because of the places they go and the times they go and the prayers they say publicly, and one of the things he says to them is that their converts, their proselytes, are twice the children of hell than them. In other words, what we see at the church of Thyatira is what was killing them in the present would have exponential ramifications down the line because their children and the descendants and those who believed, don't think just biological, think convert, those that came after them would take it to the next step. I'm going to give you a phrase that you can take to the bank. What parents do in moderation, their children will do to excess, and that works spiritually too. What we allow to creep in that is unbiblical in moderation, the next generation will take it to excess and what was happening in Thyatira was the exact same story.

And finally, agony for all. It says all the churches will know. You see, one of the problems with our sin is when we're in sin and we're struggling in sin and we're trapped in sin, we typically have this very simple defense mechanism. If I've heard it once, I've heard it a thousand times, "The only person I'm hurting is myself." No. You're killing

everybody around you and you don't even realize it. The church at Thyatira wasn't just destroying its own testimony, it was destroying the testimony of the other churches around because people assumed that they believed the same things and were doing the same things that Jezebel was teaching them in Thyatira. So what we see with this spirit of Jezebel is it didn't just affect this one local congregation, it had ramifications that extended beyond.

Now that being said, I want to go to somewhat of a historical prophetic element. One of the things about the churches here in Revelation 2 and 3 that I find fascinating is that when you have the opportunity to look back in history, and by the way, hindsight is 20/20 every single time, you're able to see that these various churches in somewhat of a vaguely specific way give us a little insight to how the people of God, the body of Christ, the church as an entity has operated from the ascension of Jesus up until his soon return. As I mentioned, the church of Ephesus, all was good as far as their doctrine was concerned. They were strong. They denied those that claimed they were apostles. They pruned those out that were false teachers. But the Bible says they lost their first love. A great picture of the first probably 50-100 years of the church of Jesus Christ, strong in doctrine, fervent but a loss of the first love.

Next church was the church of Smyrna. It was a heavily persecuted church. We talked about that from the early second century until the early fourth century, there were 10 major waves led by the secular government against the Christians. Some of them allowed it to happen, others actually promoted it to happen. It reached its climax in the early fourth century when it was actually legislated that it was okay to dismember and disembody Christians just because they believed in Jesus. That's how bad it got in the world in the early fourth century. Remember the church of Smyrna was small in number but they were strong in faith. They said, "We are poor," and he said, "Oh, but you are rich."

Then the last time we studied the church at Pergamos, the church that means "much marriage." Something happened in the early fourth century to the church of Jesus Christ that changed everything. All of a sudden this government, all of a sudden this institution that was secular that despised and hated and made laws against Christianity decided to marry the faith. And what we saw is that what we know as the Roman Empire declared Christianity the official religion of Rome and it's never been the same. When we, the church, married the world, horrible things occurred. Why? Because we became just like the world. Unfortunately the world didn't become like us, we became like the world. That happened in the early fourth century, and as you study how Christianity began to propagate and go forth, for about the next 200 years or so, we became instead of an organism – listen – we became an organization. We began to create layers and multiple things of hierarchy and establishment and rules and regulations and all of a sudden we decided to put everybody under the burden of all of these this and that, and check off a box, and cross a t and dot an i, and we became just like the world overnight, so much so that in about the fifth to sixth century, the world was saying, "Church, here's your new pastor," and the church was saying, "The secular leader is your authority." Not to submission thereof, but in other words, they were of equal worth and value.

When you look at the church from hindsight, when you get to the church at Thyatira, if you look at it prophetically it is an incredible picture of what happened in a period that we know as the Dark Ages. If you've studied a history of the Dark Ages, it was a time without education, it was a time without medicinal qualities like we would hope to have in sanitation, it was a time of death, it was a time of plagues, it was a time of war, but more importantly it was a time where the word of God was almost impossible to find and the message of Jesus Christ was rarely spoken. The reason it's the Dark Ages – listen – is the light of the gospel had a bowl over it. We allowed the world to so put their influence over us that the light of Jesus Christ was completely hidden, and when you take Jesus out of the world, it turns into darkness.

It's funny that our world today wants rid of Jesus, their problem is they have no idea what they're getting rid of. Last time I checked, now I could be wrong and if I am, please correct me, I've never driven by an atheist hospital. Have you? Most hospitals unless they're operated by a specific community or maybe a private institution, most of them have some type of "Christian affiliation," do they not? Most of the relief work that is done in the world is done by Christian-based institutions. But when you take Jesus out of the picture, the light is removed and what ensues? Darkness. What we know as this time period as the Dark Ages, many people have looked back to the church at Thyatira and said that's what happened. We took this marriage and we became unmarried. We cheated on ourselves and we decided to commit fornication, we decided to eat food put unto idols, and we did not repent and we suffered the consequences thereof. By the way, if you look at this time period that many people look back and said, "Man, that looks just like the church at Thyatira on an historical scale," I cannot tell you how many times I've had this conversation, when people will not believe in Jesus or they will not believe what the word of God says because of atrocities that have been done in the name of Christianity, most of those atrocities happened in that time period in history when the light was lessened and the darkness prevailed.

Now just when you thought it couldn't get any better, next week is Sardis. It's going to be more persecution. Can't wait to come back, can you?

Let's pray and we'll go.

Lord, as we depart from this place, may we not be people of darkness, may we be people of light. Lord, whether it's our place of business, our home, Lord, even this church campus, may we be the light that you've called us to be. May we be the church wherever we find ourselves. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

God bless. See you next week. We're going to study persecution again.

Yes, ma'am.

[unintelligible]

Oh yeah. Okay, so, alright, I'm going to give you an interesting story about this.

[unintelligible]