

## Ask Jeff

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**Preached On:** Sunday, April 24, 2024

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Well, good evening. It is 6:30 Central Standard Time here in Opelika, Alabama. It is my privilege to welcome you to our midweek, large group, adult, Bible study meets every Wednesday night, unless you're listening on the radio in which it is on 10 a.m. Sunday morning, a little bit delayed, but still able to be a participant. Before we start tonight, just a little reminder. that tonight we're going to do a question and answer format of Bible study that lasts for about an hour. We're going to go in depth on some questions, I'm assuming. We will probably skip over and skim through some others. However, if you are not aware, we actually have Monday through Friday a daily question of the day on the Ask Jeff YouTube channel. Now, the way that you submit to our YouTube channel is through the website, [fbcopelika.com/askjeff](http://fbcopelika.com/askjeff) or [AskJeff.net](http://AskJeff.net). Either one of those web portals send you to a bank where the questions are collected for our daily question of the day that is answered Monday through Friday. However, this is Wednesday night. Wednesday night's a completely different system because we can dialogue, we can interact, we can drill down, and we can do what we call follow-up questions. The way that you interact tonight is by way of either text message or the raising of the proverbial hand. Text messaging, you can be in-house on the other side of the camera, you can actually be listening on the radio a few days delayed and submit a question for the following week. When you do it by way of text messaging, it is area code 334-231-2313. You're absolutely, completely anonymous. Obviously, we do not have your name. Your phone number does not show up. We have none of that. So you are anonymous whether you're on the front row or outside of the house. Now, with text messaging, you can submit an original question or whatever topic we are on in real time, you can submit a follow up question when you do so. It will come up on the screen in a different font and I know we are staying quote on topic. Now, for those of you that are in house physically, you have the availability to raise your hand. When you put your hand in the air, two things happen. Number one you have the floor, number two you lose your anonymity. Okay, we know who you are. Now those that are watching by way of the internet or television or listen on the radio will not see your image nor will they hear your voice which is why I quote repeat the question after you address it. So you're anonymous out there, not so much in here because we know who you are.

Now before we get started tonight, we are going to participate in a couple weeks in something that we do on pretty much a two to three time basis in the year. It's what we call the great clean out. Now let me explain what that means. You do an excellent job of

submitting questions. So much so that oftentimes we get backlogged with questions. So every now and then we take a Wednesday night and rather than having more of a dialogue or interactive feature, we take a host of questions and we answer as many as we can in one night in typically a 90 second to three or four minute fashion. Now, for those of you who've had a question in that question bank for a couple weeks, if it ends up coming in the clean out night, don't get upset. You can resubmit your question. It's no problem, okay? But I want you to know that on Wednesday night, May the 15th, Wednesday night, May 15th, we're gonna have the quote great spring clean out. We're gonna answer as many questions we can in one night. Obviously, again, you're available to resubmit the question if you wanna go more in detail at a later date, but it kinda helps us prevent questions from being submitted and not being addressed for weeks afterwards, okay?

So we're there in real time. Here we go, question number one. Here we go. Revelation chapter, it took y'all, how long did it take, Matt? Here we go, here we go. [fanfare] What did it take? It took y'all three minutes and 35 seconds. Thank you very much. It says "Revelation chapter 9 verse 1 says that a star will fall from heaven. What is this star?" Revelation chapter 9. As we discuss this respective subject matter, this has the opportunity, I don't want to prod you, it has the opportunity to be a little bit on the spicy side tonight. Here we go. Revelation chapter 9, we find ourselves in the midst of the trumpet judgments. Now remember in the book Revelation, there are three series of judgments that are described. We have what we know as the famous seven seals, we have the trumpets, and then we have the vials or the bowls. Now, you're in the midst of the trumpet judgments here and in chapter 9 verse 1 it says, "And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth, and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit, and there arose a smoke out of that pit as a smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of that pit." Now, I'm not going to read the entirety of the chapter, however, we discover that there is a star who descends, is given a key, and opens up a pit. A little personified, is it not?

Now, back it up into chapter 8 for just a moment. We're going to go back to the third trumpet, if you'll allow me, in verse 10. I want you to see how the Bible, quote, self-interprets itself. It says, "And the third angel sounded, there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp. It fell upon a third part of the rivers and upon the fountains of the water and the name of the star is called Wormwood. The third part of the waters became Wormwood and many men died of the waters because they were made bitter." I find it interesting that here in chapter 8 we have a star that is given a name. Here in chapter 9 there is a star that is overly personified. It opens up the bottomless pit. It even has a key to it. Fast forward to verses 11 and 12 of chapter 9 and it says, "And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in Greek the tongue, his name is Apollyon. One woe is past, and behold, there come two woes, more hereafter." I would argue that in chapter 8, during the third trumpet, you have a star with the name Wormwood, and in the fifth trumpet, chapter 9, you have a star with the name Apollyon.

Now, go back in the book of Revelation to chapter 1. Hold your place there in chapter 9, though. Revelation chapter 1, while on the island of Patmos, whom we know as the Apostle John, has a very unique vision. I think we'd all agree to that. The entirety of the book of Revelation is most unique. However, in chapter 1, in what we might call the introduction to the book of Revelation, he sees Jesus as he has never seen him before. In doing so, it describes him. In fact, if you go back up into verse 12 it says, "And I turned to see the voice of him who spoke with me, and being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks. In the midst of the seven candlesticks was one like unto the Son of Man clothed with a garment down to his foot, gird about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were as a flame of fire, and his feet were like fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace, and his voice as the sound of many waters. He had in his right hand," listen to this, "seven stars and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword. His countenance was as the sun that shines in his strength." This picture of Jesus that John sees, in his hand are seven stars.

Now, in chapter 8 we saw a star named Wormwood, and in chapter 9 we saw a star named Apollyon or Abaddon. Here's where it gets fascinating. Go down to verse 20 of chapter 1. "The mystery of the seven stars, which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches." What is absolutely fascinating, not just within the book of Revelation, but in the host of scriptures, that oftentimes what you and I would collectively refer to as angelic beings, the Bible refers to as stars. Okay? Now, I've probably used this illustration before on a Wednesday night. Allow me to do it again. One of the most populated cities in our country is entitled Los Angeles which means the city of angels and people who live there are called stars. Isn't that where they live? The stars. Isn't that fascinating how that works out? And so even in our own secular culture, we draw somewhat of a parallel from this.

Now go back to chapter 9. That was the original question in the book of Revelation. Chapter 9. There is this star that comes and opens up the bottomless pit. All kinds of havoc takes place. I want to go back to verse 11 of chapter 9, "and they had a king over them which is the angel of the bottomless pit." I would argue that this star is this angelic being and he is described as a king over those that are in rebellion, those that are in the bottomless pit. This may seem like a very odd, shall we say, transition but I want you to go to the book of Job all the way in the Old Testament. Go to the book of Job right before the book of Psalms. In the book of Job, I want you to turn to chapter 41. Now, I know many of you are familiar with what we know as the book of Job, but just for a quick summary here, in the first 37 chapters of Job, there is a consistent, almost dramatic scene between the Lord and Satan, Job and the Lord and Satan, and the three friends that show up. When you get to chapter 38, it says that God shows up out of a whirlwind. He asked Job 35 respective questions in chapter 38 that even to this day there is nobody who can definitively give the answers. You say, "What do you mean we can't give the answers?" One of those questions is, "Where were you when God established the foundation of the earth?" It didn't ask what you believed the process was God used, it asked where were you, and none of you can say where you were when God did that.

Now, that being said, beginning of chapter 38, God asks a series of questions and God displays to Job his answer and his wisdom to the plight and the situation that befell him. Chapter 41. Chapter 41 begins in verse 1 asking what appears to be somewhat of a rhetorical question. It says, "Canst thou draw out Leviathan with a hook or his tongue with a cord which thou let down?" Now, when it uses the word Leviathan, if you have a study Bible, most of your study Bibles either below the line or beside the line is going to say some type of large sea-dwelling creature. Okay? In fact, many of them will even add a separate aspect and say that the term Leviathan advocates a creature which is multi-headed. Okay? That's just some of the commentary that you will see in your Bibles. Okay? A lot of times people, well-meaning, say, "Oh, look, the Bible's talking about dinosaurs or these great creatures." Go to the end of this chapter. Before we read the last verse of this chapter, what was Apollyon called? A king, correct? Notice what it says in verse 34, "He beholdeth all high things. He," that's Leviathan, "is a king over the children of pride."

Now, do you find it coincidental that all throughout scripture Satan is described as dwelling in the deep, i.e. sea, and in the book of Revelation he is pictured as having seven heads with horns upon them? In other words, what we see here in Job chapter 41 is basically God's not talking about dinosaurs. He's basically looking at Job and saying, "Do you have the capacity to wrangle Satan?" Well, of course not, right? He is the king over the children of pride. We go into Revelation, which was a part of the original question, what is or who is this star? It says that a star opens up the bottomless pit and that later it is referred to as Abaddon or Apollyon, one who is a king over those who are rebelling and have rebelled against God.

So, back to the original question. The star will fall. What is this star? I think we have biblical evidence that whatever it is, is not of a terrestrial sort, i.e. a star as we would know through a telescope, but is of a spiritual, a celestial, an angelic type being. A little follow-up question says, "The book of Revelation is hard to understand." I'm not going to argue that point. "Who are the creatures and who are the elders?" Now, this is in chapter 4, okay? So go back to Revelation chapter 4. Let me get back to Revelation here. And whomever submitted this question, you are absolutely correct. It is a very difficult book of the Bible to understand, but let me qualify why it is so. It is not because you, I, or anybody else is ignorant. That's not why. It's not because we don't have a lack of capacity. It's not that we're cerebrally challenged. It's not that it's written in a language that is hard to understand. In fact, you know, the book of Revelation is a lot shorter book of the Bible than most people give it credit for. It's not long or hard to read. Okay? Why is the book of Revelation so difficult? Because within 22 chapters, that takes literally less than about 30 minutes to read in totality, there are over 250 either direct quotations or inferences to the Old Testament. Now this is where we need to be honest with each other. If you were to survey yourself tonight or survey this room, and I'm not going to ask for a show of hands, what are you more familiar or comfortable with? Old Testament or New Testament? New Testament, right? Okay, let's go to the Old Testament. Which section of the Old Testament are you more familiar with? The first part or the prophets? First part. Guess where most of these come from? The prophets. In other words, our difficulty with what we know as the book of Revelation isn't our inability or lack of ability, it is typically

our lack of familiarity with the Old Testament passages which are being alluded to and extracted from in the book of Revelation. Okay? So, what's the key to getting Revelation? It's actually studying the Old Testament. In fact, I had a preacher tell me years ago, I don't want to take credit for this and I wish I could. It's just really good. He said, if you want to know what to believe right now, read and study the New Testament. If you want to know what's coming tomorrow, read the Old Testament because of all the prophetic elements that have yet to be fulfilled.

Now, Revelation chapter 4. Who are these creatures? Who are these quote-unquote elders? Well, in chapter 4, verses 1 through 3, there is a scene where who you and I know is the Apostle John is caught up. He's up into the throne room of God. He sees the Lord on a throne. There's rainbows. There's sounds. There's all kinds of quote-unquote crazy things that are taking place. Let's pick it up in verse 6. And by the way, the question said creatures, what I'm going to read it in a moment, my version is going to say beast. That's the same entity. The creatures and the beast are the same thing, right? It says, "And before the throne, there was a sea of glass like unto crystal. In the midst of the throne and around about the throne were four beasts full of eyes before and behind. The first beast was like a lion, the second beast like a calf, the third beast like the face of a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle, and the four beasts had each of them six wings about them, they were full of eyes within and they rest not day and night saying, Holy holy holy Lord God almighty, which was, which is and which is to come. And when those beasts give glory and honor and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth forever and ever, the four and twenty, or the twenty-four elders, fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth forever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and they were created." Per the question, we have two respective groups of entities, we have these beasts slash creatures, and we have these elders.

Now, let's begin with the beasts or the creatures. They are described there in a very unique fashion, the face of a man, an eagle, an ox, all these different things. If you go back into the book of Ezekiel, did I mention earlier one of our problems with Revelation is our lack of familiarity with the Old Testament? Can we all agree that Ezekiel probably ranks only second to Leviticus of our lack of knowledge and understanding, right? Ezekiel chapter 1, chapter 10, describes the same creatures that are described here or quote unquote beasts and what we find in Ezekiel is these entities are pictured as those that are on the four corners of the throne of God. That's the way Ezekiel presents them.

Now, let me push pause for just a moment. In Ezekiel later, chapter 28, it mentions another creature that is over the throne of God. We know him as Lucifer, the one who advocated his position and rebelled against God. Most people subscribe, including myself, that these beasts, these creatures, are what we call cherubim. It's a specific angelic classification in your Bible. Normal angels, cherubim, are pictured in very limited numbers. In fact, five. One of them, Lucifer, who has fallen so, four. How many did we have here? Four. The throne of God, the presence of God, a very unique description. So I

would think that these, quote, entities, creatures slash beasts, are these cherubim that are described in Ezekiel chapter 1 and chapter 10.

Now, let's get to the elders. Who are these 24 elders? I'm gonna give you a good, old-fashioned, solid answer. I don't know. I really don't. Most people claim that these 12 elders are what we know as the leaders of the original 12 tribes and the 12 apostles. Let me tell you the issue and/or possible fault with that concept. I'm not contrary to it, just I want to share with you kind of the difficulty. Number one, you go back in the Old Testament, you know the famous 12 tribes? You know when you get to Revelation chapter 7, their names change. In other words, you don't have the same 12 in the Old Testament as you do in the book of Revelation. So is it the new 12 or the old 12? I don't know. Now when it comes to the original 12 apostles, we had 12, right? Remember Judas? He went by the wayside. He was replaced by Matthias. But then in the book of Romans, you have the Apostle Paul who calls himself an apostle out of due season, which technically makes 13. Now, guess what? If I get to heaven one day, and I show up, and these 24 guys are there, and it's the quote leaders of the tribes and the apostles, I'm not going to be upset about it. I'm really not. Okay? I don't know, you don't know, nobody really knows who these 24 are but I can tell you this, they're pretty important. I mean, after all, if you think about it, the cherubim are kind of leading out the worship. The elders are coming in and they're the amen corner of the worship. Then when you get later into chapter 5, the rest of us join in the worship. Okay, so they're critical. I have no problem. If you leave tonight saying, "You know what? I think it's the 12 tribal leaders and I think it's the 12 apostles." That's great. No problem, okay? You might be right, okay? There's just really no definitive answer. I do believe there is a more definitive answer on the creatures or the beasts with what we know as the famous four cherubim.

Now, we revisit that question and I'm going to open it up. Why did that question preface with quote unquote hard to understand? Because half of that question came from Ezekiel and the other half came from a host of passages tucked in the book of Numbers. Again, those passages we're just not as familiar. The most dangerous thing you can do in the book of Revelation is take a limited understanding and knowledge of the Old Testament, read the book of Revelation, and without referring to the Old Testament, just say what you want it to be. That's the most dangerous thing you can do because you're claiming at something without referring back to what it is a fulfillment of in what we know as the Old Testament.

That's a whole lot of stuff. Any clarifications, helps, thoughts, concerns, follow-ups? Everybody's good? We're done with the book of Revelation? And we are done. It says, "In John chapter 20, Jesus would not allow Mary to touch him because he had not yet ascended. Why was it okay for Thomas to touch him?" Oh, this is a great question. Go to Revelation...that's just my default on Wednesday night. Go to Revelation. Go to John chapter 20. John chapter 20 is what you and I know as the resurrection account of Jesus in this respective gospel. The story picks up in verse 11. Now remember, stone's been rolled away, everybody's confounded. Verse 11, there's my word, but. It says, "But Mary stood without at the sepulcher weeping and as she wept, she stooped down, she looked into the sepulcher, and seeth two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at

the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they said unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She said to them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, saw Jesus standing, and knew not it was Jesus. Jesus said unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou? She supposing him to be the gardener said unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where you have weighed him, and I will take him away. Jesus said unto her, Mary. She turned herself said unto him, Rabboni, which is the same Master. Jesus said to her, Touch me not for I'm not yet ascended unto my Father but go to my brethren and say to them I ascend to my Father and to your Lord and to my God and to your God." The key to this verse is the last sentence that I read, go tell the brethren that I'm ascending to the Father Now, when we mention the ascension of Jesus, our natural default is Acts chapter 1. Acts chapter 1, remember they're walking down the road, the disciples are there, Jesus says, "Be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, the uttermost parts of the earth," and then boom, he's gone, right? Here's the problem. That takes place 40 days after his resurrection. 40 days and we have numerous accounts of Jesus quote being touched after his resurrection and before his main ascension, shall we say. How about on the road to Emmaus, the two men? He goes inside, he breaks bread with them, correct? Now the Bible doesn't explicitly say touch but he never told them not to touch him. Per the question, you go a little bit further in the gospel of John, Thomas is going to show up. Now we call him doubting Thomas and rightfully so. Why? Because eight days after Jesus rose from the grave, he finally showed up. Okay? He finally shows up and what does Jesus tell him to do? "Touch me." But what did he say in verse 17? "Go tell the brethren. Go tell them that I'm ascending to the Father." So what we have here, if you want to map it out chronologically, is that you have Jesus dying on the cross. You have Jesus being buried in the tomb. Three days later we have Jesus raising from the grave and I would argue based on this verse 17 of John chapter 20 that after his interaction with Mary, he quote unquote ascended to the Father and immediately descended in a matter of milliseconds. This is the same Jesus who walked through walls and appeared and reappeared instantaneously in the post-resurrection accounts of his life. So it's not a time factor, it is a function factor.

Now, here's the question that you may not have asked, but you may be thinking: why would he need to ascend to the Father? What would be the purpose therein? Because that which had been slain, that which had been sacrificed, and that which was the provision for humanity had to be put on the mercy seat. You say, "The mercy seat? What do you mean the mercy seat?" Go to Revelation chapter 11. Come on, hang with me tonight. I know it's meatloaf night, but y'all got this. Here we go. Revelation chapter 11. Revelation chapter 11. There is this little nugget in here that is fascinating. It's actually found in verse 19. Now, let me give you a little context here. We're in the midst of chapter 11, we're in the midst of the two witnesses, all these things happening in the Revelation. Read verse 19 of chapter 11, "And the temple of God was opened in heaven." Push pause, not the temple in Jerusalem, not that building that had a veil that was torn, right? It says the temple of God opened in heaven "and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament." You know what we know is that famous ark of the covenant, what was in the midst or on the top of it? It was the mercy seat and that is where the sacrifice had to be presented for the sins to be atoned. And so what I think we have here in this quandary, so

to speak, when Jesus says, "Don't touch me yet," he has just raised from the grave. He was going to go up, ascend, take this, do this action, and immediately descend to show himself unto the Father and to complete the sacrificial system which he ultimately did for humanity. This is why the book of Hebrews says he is a better sacrifice. Now, here in verse 19, unlike what they'll tell you on late night cable television, the ark is in heaven. That's what it says. It's not in Ethiopia. A whole other series of questions there.

So, any follow-up? Any thoughts? Any concerns? Anybody? Boy, y'all, the food did sit heavy tonight. Okay, that's good. Here's the great news. We got a lot of questions, so we're good to go, right? Okay, we're good. Here we go. It says, "If a person dies in a different way that isn't by, quote, natural causes, would it still be considered as God's divine timing?" It's a great question because most of us, per this question, think that there is an expected time period by which we will live. We know that we have bodies even though our soul and spirit is saved by Jesus our bodies are wearing out, and by natural causes things just don't work the way they used to and they cease to operate the way they used to and eventually we wear out and we die. Now, I believe to answer this question, one of my favorite verses in the Bible, go back to the book of Job. I had no idea he was going to be so popular tonight. Job chapter 14 is a passage that I have to hang my theological hat on on a very regular basis and I could give you, I could exhaust the rest of this hour with stories as I've walked alongside families as a pastor of what we would call untimely deaths. Deaths that we didn't see coming. Deaths that did not work according to the insurance statistics and the actuaries, right? Things that we say that was way too early or maybe even way too late.

Job chapter 14, verse 5. Actually, I'm going to back it up to verse 4 for just a little bit of context. It says, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one. Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass." I believe that Job chapter 14 verse 5 says this, that God and God alone knows the number of days that you're going to possess. You and I think that it is untimely. You and I think it's out of the course of natural causes but according to what we just read, God has determined and God knows no matter how it lines up with expected statistical length, God has determined our days no matter how limited or how lengthy they may be.

Now, you go into the book of Proverbs and there's this great little Proverb. It repeats itself over and over and over again, and by the way, when the Bible speaks of two or three witnesses, when you get 13 or 14 witnesses, maybe we ought to pay attention. You know what the Bible says all throughout the book of Proverbs? A fool can shorten his days. A fool can shorten his days. You say, "What do you mean by that?" Let me give you an illustration. Let's just say hypothetically for the sake of illustration that God has determined that Jeff Meyers, right here, I'm going to get, oh, I don't know, 78 years and three days. How's that? That sound good? Why not? 78 years and three days. I'm not 78 years of age yet, okay? Though I may look, I'm far short of it, okay? So let's just say, ha, God has determined my days, it's 78 years and three days, and let's say that I decide to go to Atlanta, Georgia, climb the highest skyscraper they have, and do a free fall. What do y'all think's gonna happen to me? I'm gonna die. You know why? Because I'm a fool. Oh



no, but God has determined my days. No, no, no. God has determined my days as long as I'm not a fool about my days.

The Bible says there's nothing you can do to lengthen your days. I'm sorry, I know there's a lot of you in the medical field, there's a lot of you in the exercise field, you can make our days better, but according to the Bible, you can't lengthen them. You do realize that the guy that invented aerobics died in his 50s and the guy that invented what we know as fried chicken from Kentucky lived to be in his 80s. Think about that for a moment. You know why? Because God determines our days. And from our perspective, can we just come to this agreement, it doesn't matter how many or how few, they're never enough, are they? It is always untimely to us. And so, again, is it divine timing? It's always divine timing, even with this corollary or asterisk of foolishness that can, quote, shorten our days. Now, hopefully bring a little bit of humor. You say, how does that work out on a regular basis? Four words that every Southerner at one point has said in his life, "Hey guys, watch this." Yeah. Pretty much you're going to challenge Job 14:5 every time somebody says that.

So any questions on length of life? Everybody's good? It says, "In Romans chapter 8 verse 11, if the same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead lives in us, why doesn't the Baptist church speak more about the power of the Holy Spirit?" Well, that's not a pointed question, is it? All right, here we go. Romans chapter 8. By the way, I know that 2 Timothy says that all scripture is inspired by God and essentially what that means is that we don't have the ability nor should we ever elevate one passage above another passage or demote a passage below another, but I think we would all agree there are sections of our Bible, there are passages in our Bible that just tend, we tend to gravitate more and probably just attach ourselves to more. If you were to ask me, now you're not asking me but if you were to ask me, "Jeff, if you could only have three chapters in the Bible, that's it. You only get three." Romans 8 is one of them. This is one of those chapters that if somebody came to me and said, you get one page in the Bible. One page. I mean, I would have to struggle between Romans 8 and John 3. I'm just going to be honest with you. That's just me. I know what some of you think. You mean not Revelation? No. Okay, moving on.

So, Romans chapter 8 verse 11, "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." It's a great question. Why do we, and I know it says Baptist, and I have no problem owning it, why do we, in a quote-unquote, Baptist or Baptist congregation, which we're in right now, why do we, for every time we mention the Holy Spirit, do we talk about Jesus at least ten times? Is that a good ratio? I mean, think about the songs that we sing. It doesn't matter which service you go to, there's a whole lot more about Jesus than there is the Holy Spirit, right? And you're right, it is the Spirit of God that raised him, the same Spirit that lives in us, so why do we not talk a whole lot more about the Holy Spirit? What if there is actually a Biblical answer to this that absolutely has nothing to do with being Baptist?

Go to John chapter 15. John chapter 15. When you're in John chapter 15, let me set the stage. In John chapter 15, you are 24 hours away from the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The scene, what we call the last discourse, it begins in chapter 13 with Jesus washing their feet. There's a series of teachings and such. Chapter 15, 16, 17, we end up in the Garden of Gethsemane. I want you to hear what Jesus, actually back it up into chapter 14, hopefully this won't be too cumbersome for you, chapter 14 verse 16, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." Pretty clear passage about the Holy Spirit, right?

Now, go over to chapter 16 for a moment. Chapter 16, verse 7. Again, we're at the same, I guess, gathering here, okay, Jesus and the apostles. Verse 7 of chapter 16, "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter," the Holy Spirit, "will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." You would have to admit, Jesus is making a pretty big emphasis on the Holy Spirit, is he not? And so why, when Jesus puts so much emphasis on the Holy Spirit, per the question, do we talk about Jesus at least ten times more than we do the Holy Spirit? Are we wrong?

Go to chapter 15, verse 26. "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father," listen to this last statement, "he shall testify of me." Now the reason that at least in this context you hear more about Jesus than you do the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit dwelling in you and working in you points you to Jesus. The Holy Spirit never points you to himself. Do you see how that works? In other words, I would argue the question, if you're spending more time talking about the Holy Spirit than Jesus, you may not understand the role of the Holy Spirit. The role of the Holy Spirit is not to focus on himself. The role of the Holy Spirit is to point us to Jesus. And so the more we talk about Jesus, the more we sing about Jesus, the more we speak about Jesus, the more that we are being led by the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit testifies of Jesus.

Now don't get me wrong, Acts chapter 1, what did Jesus say? He says when the power of the Spirit comes upon you. In Acts chapter 2, whom we know as Simon Peter, gives the famous Pentecost sermon. Go home and read it tonight and find where he preaches about the Holy Spirit. What does he preach about? Jesus. The Holy Spirit came upon him and he testified. of Jesus.

Now, I'm going to come on the back side of this question here. I do believe that in Baptist traditions we tend to unfortunately have a de-emphasis upon the Holy Spirit because most of us are scared of the Holy Spirit. I'm going to be honest with you. You know why? Because the Holy Spirit will lead you places you don't want to go. Jesus talked about this in John chapter 3. When he said he must be born of the Spirit, what did

he equate the Spirit to? Wind. He said you can't see where it's coming and you can't see where it's going, but you can see the after effects therein. And so oftentimes I think we diminish the role of the Holy Spirit when its proper role is to point us to Jesus. And so hopefully that's a proper biblical balance not to negate, not to relegate, but to realize function and purpose is to testify of Jesus. Hopefully that helped out a little bit with that one.

Yes, ma'am?

[unintelligible]

How did I find out what? Question for those of you who could not hear: how did I find this out, and in light of that, I believe there's a need for this to be taught? When I say what I'm about to say, I promise you I'm not being condescending. Okay, I read John 15 No, I'm serious. In other words, one of the great travesties that we all fall into, we're all guilty, myself included, okay, we tend to gravitate or we tend to camp out in specific passages, in specific sections, and we don't take those sections and, I hate to use the word, but balance them with the other respective passages. For example, if you are reading a book, listening to a podcast, listening to a Bible study or sermon on those that tend to overemphasize the Holy Spirit, you're never going to hear John 15:26. You're never going to hear it because John 15:26 testifies of Jesus. On the other side of the equation, if you're scared of the Holy Spirit, you're not going to spend much time in John 16 because it says he's here, he's in us. In other words, that is why all scripture is inspired by God, not just the parts we like. And so that is what hopefully we're doing here on Wednesday and hopefully you're doing individually on your own that, I mean, we've been all over the Bible tonight, right? Because Revelation must be understood in the context of Ezekiel. And the Holy Spirit of Acts 1 and Acts 2 must be understood in the light of John 15. That there are these witnesses that work together to give us the complete story and not just part of the story.

I will say, and I know many of you have heard me say this before, one of the most dangerous tactics in the world is an individual who knows enough Bible to guide you in parts and sections of it without the totality of it and to convince you of something that just isn't biblical. I can make the Bible dance. Oh, I can. I can take a section here and a section there, I can put them together where they're never meant to be, and I can go places we should never go. And I can prove it. Did you know the Bible says that David was a man after God's own heart, right? Sure was. It also said David went into Bathsheba and made her his wife. I guess a man after God's own heart cheats on his wife. Now y'all looking at me like I've lost my mind. But how many times do we do the same thing with this question? The Bible says Jesus will send a Comforter and he will lead you into truth. You don't need to talk about Jesus anymore, just talk about the Holy Spirit. You're doing the exact same thing. It's just not offensive to you because it doesn't hit home.

We can take the Bible and we can make it... If you want to get real fancy, I call it doing hermeneutical gymnastics. You say, "Hermeneutical gymnastics, what is that?" That's a big fancy word for making it say what you want to say and it doesn't say what you don't

want it to say. And that's a dangerous, dangerous thing, which is why I'm going to give you permission to do something. Anytime you're listening to a sermon, a Bible study, anything, I don't care who it is, myself included, one of the best things you can do when somebody quotes or looks at a verse is go back and look at the verses around it. How many times have you heard me on Wednesday night say back it up a few verses, let's get in the context here, because let's see what we're really talking about not just what one phrase says. But that is a very very valid question. That's why all scripture is inspired, not just the parts that we really like.

Any more on that one? And we're gonna move on. We may just clean out tonight. Here we go. It says, "When we get to heaven, will we remember things that happened on earth?" Now, what if the answer to this was yes and no? You say, "Whoa, whoa, time out. How can it be both yes and no?" Let's talk about heaven from a chronological perspective. You and I today, as believers in Jesus Christ, if this was our night, and again, I'm getting 78 years in three days. Y'all remember that? I'm naming it and I'm claiming it, right? You do know there's no way that's what I'm getting now. But that being said, let's just claim my illustration, 78 years, three days. If that day were today, according to the Bible, in 2 Corinthians chapter 5, to be absent from this body is to be present with the Lord, correct? We just read Revelation chapter 4. What did it picture? The beasts, the creatures, the elders, if you keep reading into chapter 5, a host of people around the throne room of God. They're worshiping, they're celebrating, they're saying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty." Do you notice anything absent from those pictures? Your mansion. It's not there. In fact, you don't find anywhere, 2 Corinthians 12, when the Apostle Paul is caught up, Revelation 4 and 5, Revelation 6, there's no place where a person upon their death immediately gets the key to their mansion. You know why? Guess what? Revelation. Again. Okay?

Go to Revelation chapter 21. Revelation chapter 21. I had no idea we were going to be here all night. It's your questions, not mine. Revelation chapter 21. We are on the backside of what you and I know as time. Human history has come to a grand conclusion. Judgment has taken place. Eternity, if you'll allow me to say it very crudely, has been initiated. I know eternity means without beginning or end, however, the realization of it from our perspective begins. Chapter 21 of Revelation, verse 1. "I saw a new heaven." Push pause. A new heaven? That means that the heaven that my dad currently resides in doesn't exist anymore because why do you need a new one if you've got the old one? Correct? In other words, those of us that we love, those of us one day when we'll go, the heaven that, if tonight is my night, if tonight's the night where I go to glory, I'm not going to wake up in my mansion tomorrow. I'm going to wake up around the throne room of God celebrating the Lord and doing what we read in Revelation 4 and 5. But you realize there's a whole lot of stuff that happens between tonight and Revelation 21. A whole lot of stuff. You've got all that book of Revelation. You've got all the reign of Christ. You've got the judgments and all those things. And what happens in Revelation 21? It says, "and there was a new heaven and a new earth." This is the passage that Jesus talked about in John chapter 14 that said that that, quote, mansion would happen.

I know what you're thinking, "What does this have to do with remembering anything?" Stay in Revelation 21, verse 2. "And I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men. He shall dwell with them and shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them and be their God, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any pain, for the former things are passed away." When you get to the new heaven, you get to the new earth, it makes it very clear that whatever experiences or whatever memories or whatever you want to call it took place, according to this, they're gone. It's over. It's out of there, right? You say, "Well, what about tonight? What about if tonight is my night? Am I going to remember? Am I going to be a part of?" If you look at these passages, we have 2 Corinthians 12, Revelation 4, people that have gone into the presence of God, you know what you'll notice about the direction of their focus? The throne of God. They're focused on the person of God. They're focused on the presence of God. They're not focused on anything else. You say, "Why is that important?" Because I want you to know something, if in heaven you can remember the things of earth, it would be hell. Do you hear what I said? I want you to think about that for just a moment. You know one of the things that we as humans are great at doing is we're great at highlighting the highlights and forgetting the low-lights. You want an example? Go to your high school reunion. Everybody at a high school reunion is a hero and you couldn't stand them when you were in school with them. Oh, I'm just saying what you're thinking. You know I am. Okay, why? Because we forget about the conflict. We forget about the rubbing of personality. We forget about all those things and we talk about all the highlights.

If you were tonight, and I'm not asking you to do this because I don't want you to leave depressed, if you were to take a journal of your life and quantify and categorize experiences as either being negative or positive, I promise you'll have more negative than positive. Life is tough. Life is hard and I've got news for you, I don't want to remember any of it. And when you're focused on Jesus, you're not waiting. I'm just going to go and tell you, we hear it at funerals, you will not hear it from me. When you're at a funeral and somebody stands up and says that whoever just died is watching the service, they're lying to you. They're not watching the service. You know why? Because if they're in heaven, they're watching Jesus. That's what they're doing. You say, "Well, what if they are watching the service?" You know the only biblical evidence we have for somebody that is dead that sees what's happening on earth, they're in hell. Luke 16. The rich man could see what was going on. Lazarus is having the time of his life. So, if you want to watch earth from the next life, go to hell. If you don't, go to heaven because if you can see what's going on on earth, you're going to be in hell. You're going to be.

Boy, I got real serious real quick, didn't I? I'm just being biblical, folks. I'm just being biblical. I got news for you. My dad passed away three and a half years ago. He hadn't seen anything since. Nothing. Not a thing. You people say, "Wouldn't your dad be proud of you?" My dad ain't paying attention to me. My dad's got his eyes on Jesus. He good to go. All right? And guess what? One day when I get there, you know what I'm going to be looking at? Jesus.

Now, there's coming a day where I'm going to get my mansion. I'm going to get it. I'm going to get a mansion one day, and I don't know all that that's going to go. That will happen one day but when that occurs, there is definitely a wiping of the slate. It has all been, quote, cleaned out. All right. Commentary thoughts, rude remarks, we're good? Yes, sir. Hopefully this isn't rude remarks, but go ahead.

[unintelligible]

Okay? Sure, absolutely. Right. Right. Right. Okay, real quick, I'm gonna put all those questions together, because you spoke softly. The question is, what about you lead somebody to the Lord, or you had a part in it, and then you never see it come to fruition, do you celebrate it in heaven? And then you quoted a passage where Jesus talked about a group of people when he said, "Hey, you pictured me," and they said, "We didn't know that we were doing that," right? Now, let me differentiate those two, okay? The Bible does say in John chapter 4, Jesus speaking, he says, those that reap and those that sow will rejoice together meaning that people who actually are that one who leads somebody to the Lord don't, for lack of a better term, get more accolades than those that were a part of the process. That's a great thing, okay? On the backside, Matthew chapter 25 that you alluded to when they said, "When did we give you a cup of water? When did we clothe you?" That's not a picture in heaven, that's a picture on earth when Jesus comes back to reign at the end of what you and I know is that tribulational time period. And so that's not a heavenly experience. And I know, I know, I know I'm probably gonna get in trouble. There is a very well-known song in Christian circles for the last decades or so that says these words, "Thank you for being a friend. If you had not led me to the Lord, I would not be here." It's about a guy going to heaven and thanking somebody. It's a great song. But it's not found in the Bible. I'm sorry. It's a great song and it pictures for us the gratitude of somebody who is in heaven on behalf of somebody who was already previously there that led them to the Lord. It's a great song. It communicates a pretty relevant concept, but you just don't see it portrayed in scripture. Okay? Again, I'm not against the song. I like the song. I love the song. But it's not portrayed objectively in scripture.

Yes, sir?

[unintelligible]

You're a little bit confused. That's okay. You're advocating that when I get to heaven there's a remembrance of loved ones? Matthew 22 verse 30 says we will be as the angels and not married. 1 John 3:2 says we will be as Jesus. I think everybody's gonna know who everybody is, but I don't think I'm gonna say, "Hey, that's my friend Paul." You're gonna have a new name. Did you know that? According to Revelation 3, you're getting a new name, I'm getting a new name, I'm going to be six foot four. Y'all are going to all be looking up at me. You've got to pray. I mean, come on. Right?

So I think here's one of our big faults, one of our biggest faults, and I'm not condemning you, I get trapped in it too, most of us make heaven a heavenly earth. Does that make sense? We take the constructs of earth, the relationships of earth, the structures of earth, and we just make it better. I think we're gonna be surprised when we get to heaven one day, we're gonna discover how limited our perspectives were. One of my great heroes of the faith, Dr. Gene Williams, love him, miss him every day of my life, one of the statements that he used to make was this, and he would say this publicly, he would look at myself and he'd say, "Jeff," he said, "one day," he said, "one day when we get to heaven," he said, "you understand that I'm going to love your wife as much as you love Miss Tracy, and she's going to love me as much as she loves you because in heaven, there are no gradations of love, qualities of love. We are all the sons and daughters of Christ, and we are..." Does that make sense? We tend to take relationships and say, "Well, marriage is much more intimate than siblings." Well, of course it is. But guess what? In heaven, we're all brothers and sisters. We're all sons and daughters. It's the great equalization. It's Walmart. Now, I know what y'all are thinking. "Walmart? What?" Y'all know that Walmart's the great equalizer, right? Millionaires and homeless people in line together. Tell me I'm lying. It's absolutely true. People in tuxedos and people in their pajamas. Correct? Absolutely. It's the great equalizer.

Now, that's somewhat humorous. My point to you, sir, is we have relationships here on earth that are more valued than others, more intimate than others. We don't see that in the biblical. Now again, we're given very limited knowledge of heaven. We're just given limited. The problem is most of us make it what we want it to be. Hey, Matthew 22:30, it says that we'll be as the angels and we will not marry. I've told this joke before, I'm gonna tell it again. I'm not gonna be married in heaven to Tracy. She's probably grateful, but I'm not going to be, okay? But I have requested that my mansion be next to hers. I've requested it. But my relationship with her won't be like it is today. What?

[unintelligible]

Oh hush, forget that. So, yes sir. I saw a hand over here. Yes sir?

[unintelligible]

I'm not going to question that one. Yes, sir. Yes, sir. I'll advocate that. No offense, I don't think she's giving you a second thought. And you're okay. That's correct. Oh, I'm not going to argue that. Again, to those who could not hear, his wife recently passed away. In his words, not mine, she hadn't thought twice about him because she's focused on Jesus. You said that, not me. But I agree with it. In Revelation 4 and 5, there's a focus on Jesus, nothing else. There's never a place in your Bible where anybody in the heavenly realm is either paying attention to or focusing on anything on earth. It's just not there. And by the way, let me tell you where we're horrible about this. Anytime anybody wins a championship game, anytime, "Man, my daddy was watching me tonight. My mama was watching me tonight." I got news for you, they weren't. I'm sorry. Biblically speaking, they're just not.

Now, 2 Corinthians, I know we're running out of time, 2 Corinthians chapter 12 is a story, when I say story, it's an account of the Apostle Paul not at death, but being caught up to the presence of the Lord. Okay? He hasn't died, but he's in the place where those that have died in the Lord are hanging out, forgive my casual language there. And I want you to hear how he describes this experience. "It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise," I want you to focus on this next phrase, "and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." Basically what the Apostle Paul was saying is the way that heaven works is so different than the way that it works down here that you can't even begin to compare much less contrast, so to speak. Again, what do you have in the biblical record? You have those that go from this life to the next who are believers in Jesus Christ. They are focused on the Lord. That's what we get in Revelation 4 and 5. You have a man who is in the same place, a place called Paradise, the heavenly realm, who says, "I can't even utter what I heard. I don't even know if I was in the flesh or not. It was so magnificent, I can't even explain it."

And so again, I don't want to make light of any of this, okay? But that which we value so much, treasure so much, and care for so much on this earth, whether they be relationships, constructs, listen to me, one day when we all get to heaven, as that song says, okay, it is all going to go by the wayside when we realize what it means to be brothers and sisters of the Lord Jesus Christ. You're going to have a love for one another that you've never experienced with anybody on earth. You're going to have an expression of existence. For some of you, the older you get, the more... you're not going to hurt anymore. You know the old phrase, if it doesn't hurt, it doesn't work? You're going to have stuff working that doesn't hurt? I've got good news for you, you know it says that you don't need to sleep in heaven? You know, the older we get, the more we've gotta sleep, right? We're tired. We're wore out. We've got too many miles on the odometer. Guess what?

And even down to the relationships and the structures and such, I don't think we can grasp how good it is going to be, beyond anything we can imagine, which is why I'm going to close with this. In John 14, I know Jesus was talking about the mansions. I know he was talking about Revelation 21, okay? But he says, "Believe in God, believe also in me for I go to prepare a place for you. If it were not so, I would tell you." Can I Southernese what Jesus was saying? "Boys, it is so good you're going to have to see it to believe it." That's essentially what he was saying.

We gotta go. Let's pray.

*Lord Jesus, thank you that we have the hope that is stored up for us in Christ alone. God, that this old world that we are, as my brother said, we are just passing through. And we do thank you, God, thank you that you allow us, as Ephesians 5 says, that we have marital relations that picture Christ in the church. God, thank you like Romans 8 says,*



*that we have children that show us a picture of what it means to be your child. God, thank you for these pictures. Thank you for these relationships. Thank you for these experiences. But God, I pray and I thank you that when we focus, as Colossians 3 says, on the things which are above and not on the things that are below, that we will see that whatever you have planned and prepared for us makes whatever we love here just pale in comparison. Put our eyes on you and nothing else. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*