

Ask Jeff 5.24.17

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Alright, let's get started, folks. Welcome. Does it feel strange not having tables tonight? I know. I'm sorry. You had to feed yourself tonight. I apologize. That was a self-service night.

Hopefully you have a green sheet in front of you. This is our circle of concerns, otherwise known as our prayer list, those that are not only a part of the First Baptist family but connected to. Sometimes these are family members, coworkers, laborers, whatever it may be and so we just want to encourage you not to take this and throw it away at the end of the night, make this a part of your week where you pray for these individuals on a regular basis. They change every day as there are people that we find out that have medical issues, relational issues, and so we want you to know that every time we gather together on Wednesday night, we're going to give you kind of a fresh list. We can't know what to pray about if you don't let us know. So if you'll let us know in the church office, we will update it as soon as you inform us. At the bottom of the first page is always an area where we share thank you notes on behalf of those who have prayed for and helped those with sympathetic issues, oftentimes there's grieving type issues. On the back, there's always a section for those that are serving in the military and those that are serving on the mission field. I want to place special attention to those who are giving so sacrificially of their life and their time. So make it a point in your daily life to be praying for those not only who are a part of First Baptist but who are connected to us in some way.

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

Lord, tonight as we gather, we know that the names and the situations and the burdens on our heart are more numerous than those that are on this sheet and, Lord, we're grateful for the communication we've received and we're praying for those individuals but, God, we know there are those that are breaking our hearts and that we're struggling with that we haven't shared with anybody. God, we know tonight that you are able to address every situation in our lives whether we've verbalized it or not, whether others are aware of it or not so, God, we're just asking you to be God in our lives and in the lives of these folks. Lord, there are many who physically, they just need a touch of healing and we're asking you to be a healer. There are some who need restoration, we're asking you to restore. There are those, Lord, who just need their life and the things going on in life, they just need to have clarity and we're asking that you would remove the obstructions. Lord, tonight we're just asking you, Lord, if it would be possible that you would just be

an almighty, incredible, loving, active God in every situation that is mentioned, Lord, particularly those who are serving on the mission field, Lord, who oftentimes put their lives and their family's lives in physical danger for the sake of the gospel. Lord, we pray you'd give them encouragement at times often where they don't see fruit being born, that you would give them strength and stamina to keep pressing on when their bodies and their minds are exhausted, and God, we do pray that you would bring a harvest to their labors. Tonight as we open your word, as we study what you have given us chronologically thousands of years ago but as far as its impact as fresh as today is, God, we pray that it would do just that, it would speak to our lives, it would transform us and we would leave in just a few moments and we would be changed because of your word. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

I do want to welcome you tonight to Wednesday night Bible study here at First Baptist. Now there are two elements that typically take place on Wednesday night: there is the Ask Jeff or the Q & A session that is completely driven by you, and then there is the Bible study that we have not gotten to in quite some time because y'all been so interested in asking questions which is a wonderful problem. So tonight without announcement and without warning and without asking permission, we're going to reverse it is what we're going to do. We're going to go to our Bible study tonight because I think it will not only bring us some questions to ask and answer, but hopefully it will instruct us in some very current events in the life of our world.

So tonight I want you to turn to the book of Revelation 3. For those of you that are here for the first time or maybe you haven't been here since the last time we opened up the book of Revelation, we're going through the book of Revelation in a very systematic just kind of walk through approach. Some of you ask, "Well, when are we going to get through with the book of Revelation?" I'm hoping it happens before Jesus comes back but there are not promises.

Tonight we find ourselves at the end of chapter 3 and just as a summary, in the book of Revelation, chapter 1 is very much of an introduction. We have the Apostle John on the island of Patmos. He has been dismissed according to scripture for his faithfulness to the gospel of Jesus Christ, for his testimony of who Jesus Christ is. He is on the island of Patmos. He has a vision of Jesus like no one has ever seen before. He bows down before him. The Lord puts his right hand on him and says, "Fear not. I am the first and the last. I have the keys to death and hell." Then in verse 19 of chapter 1 of Revelation, he says, "I need you to write three specific things: that which was, that which is, and that which is to come." When we get to chapters 2 and 3, we have a collection of letters to seven distinct specific churches. Now as you see on your outline that I gave you, you're going to see it tonight that these churches are not just local churches in Asia Minor 2,000 years ago, I believe they have incredible significance to our lives not only through the years but in particular the time in which we live today.

And so today we come to the last of these churches, and by the way, the next time we pick up our Revelation Bible study, for those of you who wanted to get into all the wild things of the book of Revelation, all the crazy things in the book of Revelation, all the

things that you really wonder about, that's going to start up next time because as soon as you hit chapter 4, it gets crazy for about 15 chapters, okay? So just hold on, we're going to have some fun.

But tonight, the church of Laodicea, the lukewarm church, the one of which the Lord says I will spew out of my mouth. Beginning in verse 14, it says,

14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; 15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. 16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. 17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: 18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. 19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. 20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. 21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. 22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Now just as a means of introduction whether this is your first time here or you've been here through the entire study, there is a very much peculiarity about the churches in the book of Revelation. To begin with, the messages are for all the churches. In verse 11 of chapter 1, he says that all of the churches are to hear the messages of all the other churches, very different than the other letters to the churches in the New Testament. For example, 1 & 2 Corinthians is to the church at Corinth. The letter to what we know as Thessalonica is to those in Thessalonica. And so the letters to those were not to cross, so to speak. Here all seven churches were to read the message of all seven churches.

Also, the term church, interesting terminology, ekklesia, means to be called out or the assembled ones. This term is not found in chapters 6 through 19. Now that's significant for multiple reasons that we're going to deal with in the weeks ahead, but chapters 4 and 5 in the book of Revelation, they actually take us out of earth. You say, "What do you mean out of earth?" They actually take place in the heavens. Chapter 4 and 5 take place in the heavenlies. Chapters 2 and 3, we have these churches on earth. By the time we get to chapter 6, we again are going to be on earth and the judgment and the wrath of God is going to begin to be poured out through those famous seven seals. This is important as we study the church at Laodicea because the name or the term "church" is not used again until Jesus physically comes back in chapter 19 of the book of Revelation.

So one of the things that we've addressed as we've walked through these seven churches is a possibility, and I use that term loosely, the possibility of a prophetic or a chronological order. Now understand every one of these churches was a local church in Asia Minor. They existed. It was real. You could go to the church at Ephesus, you could go to the church at Thyatira, you could worship there on the Lord's day and you could be as part of a service. However, none of them exist today. They're all gone. Archaeologically we can go to the sites, we can see the remains, but the local church has passed.

Spiritually speaking, you can read all seven of these churches and hopefully the Lord will speak to you about your own spiritual condition because oftentimes you feel like some of these churches, much like the church at Pergamos, maybe you feel like you're married to the world, sometimes you feel like you're more interested in the things of the world than you are the things of God. Maybe sometimes you're the church at Ephesus, that you feel like you're doctrinally sound and you know and you believe the things of God but your zeal and your passion has kind of faded away.

So they have a personal communication as well as a historical, but the could it be is the prophetic, and one of the ideas that I've been sharing with you over the last couple of weeks and months is that these seven churches go beyond a local church in Asia Minor, they go beyond just what can they teach me about my relationship with God, but they actually give us a picture, a prophetic picture of how the church of Jesus Christ will, and I hate to use the term act but how it will shape itself from the time that Jesus ascended until the time of which he will one day return. And one of the things we addressed and I put this on your outline tonight, is that the church of Ephesus, if you look at these churches prophetically, if you look at them as giving us kind of a big picture of the history of the church of Jesus Christ over now some 2,000 years, the church at Ephesus would represent the early church, faithful to the doctrinal standards of scripture, hanging in there and fighting against heresy and erroneous teachings but yet there was a time where they lost their zeal for their faith.

The church at Smyrna, the church that, by the way, is one of only two churches in the book of Revelation that nothing bad is said about. Smyrna and Philadelphia, everything is good. The church at Smyrna was persecuted, it was bloodied, they were dying for their faith and they claimed that they were weak but God said you're truly strong. The second, third centuries of history, the Roman Empire either by allowance or by purpose, there were 10 major waves of persecution, in fact, the grand sum of a book entitled "Fox's Book of Martyrs" takes place in those two centuries, and so we kind of see a picture of the church throughout time.

Then we get to the church of Pergamos. In the fourth century, the church as an entity married the world. In 313, the Edict of Milan, basically the world government and the church became one entity and at that point even though we didn't really call them pastors in those days, pastors were appointing governors, and governors were appointing pastors, and pretty soon over the course of about 50 or 60 years, the church no longer looked

distinct from the world but it looked just like the world until about the sixth century, that's kind of how the church that's its mode of operation.

Then you have the church at Thyatira. The church at Thyatira was that church, you remember, that had the issue with Jezebel and it was actually teaching those adherents to subscribe not just to things of the world but to do things even further than the Gentiles of the world would ever so do, a period that oftentimes as we look back in history, we say, oh, so representative of the Dark Ages. The gospel was so limited in its presentation. The church of Jesus Christ had really no spiritual influence whatsoever and the teachings that we see coming "from the realm of the church" were oftentimes erroneous and non-scriptural because the word of God was very rare in those days as far as you and I getting our hands upon it.

The church at Sardis, the red ones, those few faithful believers. Remember it said there was a few who stood strong in the midst of all of this erroneous teaching. I put on your sheet here kind of that time period before the time of Philadelphia because as we look back and you know that hindsight is 20/20, a lot of what I've just shared with you could be seen as speculative. Well, sure it's easy to look at the church at Ephesus over the first century, and the church of Smyrna the second and the third but, you know, you're kind of vaguely specific and it kind of looks like you're just kind of, you know, blindly shooting darts into the historical wind. However, when you get to the church at Philadelphia, the church of Philadelphia, like the church at Smyrna, is one of two churches where nothing bad is said about it, and the thing that the Lord recognizes about the church at Philadelphia is that they kept the word of God. Something incredible happened about 500 years ago in the history of the world, is what we know as the word of God, the Bible, the scriptures for the first time in ages could actually be possessed by regular humanity. They were no longer chained to a pulpit in a closed and dark ecclesiastical building. They were no longer reserved from some dark academic cave in the middle of nowhere. We began with the invention of the Gutenberg press and what we know as the Reformation, we began to actually publish and print the words of God so that you and I, the people of God, could actually see what God communicated with us. And beginning with that time period, we call it the missionary movement, all the great revivals, all the great awakenings, all the great missionary movements that took place, took place beginning about that time.

And here's where tonight comes in, up until about 100 years ago. If you and I are going to be absolutely brutally honest with ourselves, in the last 100 years, we have not had a true major world revival. We have not had a move of God that has swept entire countries and entire lands, so to speak. Now don't get me wrong, there's been pockets, there's been places, there's been peoples. I could talk about one of the great events that happened in Europe about 60-65 years ago was the Hebrides Islands, great revival movement, but it was very limited in its scope though it was powerful where it took place. Even here what we know in America as the Jesus movement of the 1960-70s time period among college students and on the west coast. But even in those movements, they were limited in scope, oftentimes they were generational, but they weren't widespread. You see, when I think widespread, I think of the first great awakening. I think of the second great awakening. I think the Layman's Prayer Revival of 1858. How about the Protestant Reformation? If

that wasn't revival, I don't know what was, where the world was turned upside down and peoples, not just a segment, were changed radically with the gospel.

You and I have not seen that in our life, in fact, you and I live in a world today where the youngest of our generation, my children, many of your grandchildren, those that are, say, 25-30 and younger, they are a very unique generation in the history of just our culture. Did you know that the young people today, those that are over in the Well right now, those that are our children and preschool ministry, they are the first generation in the history of this country that cannot go find somebody who's still alive to tell them what it was like the last time God moved. I want you to think about that for just a moment. Even at my somewhat young age, when I was a child, there were people who were still alive who remembered the late 1800s and the early 1900s when the D. L. Moody's and the Billy Sunday's and we saw God move in incredible ways. But right now, there is not a single person that you can go and say, "Hey, Grandma, Great Grandma, tell me what it was like when God moved across this land." You're not going to find it, in fact, I would say tonight when we talk about this prophetic perspective of the churches, to me I think the concluding proverbial nail in the coffin is the church of Laodicea because the church of Laodicea when you see its lukewarmness, when you see its fascination with stuff and not souls, if this isn't a picture of our contemporary world, I don't know what is. You and I are living, our world today looks so much like the church of Laodicea.

So let's look at the possibility of the "last church." 1. The term Laodicea means "rights of the people." Now don't think in terms here of the equality of rights and many of the movements that have taken place in our land over the last 50-60 years. This means that they were more concerned with what they wanted than what God wanted. Woo, if that is not a chastisement of our culture today. So many times we're not interested in what God wants, it's just what I want. We're more interested in my rights than our responsibility to God.

Stuff over souls. Verse 17 it says, "Because you say I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing," in other words, it's almost the attitude of, "I don't need to know or learn anymore. I got all I need. I'm good. I've got this." Their fascination with stuff.

Ritual over relationship. Now look in verse 20. Now this is a verse that oftentimes we use in personal evangelism, nothing wrong with doing that, but understand this is a message to a church, to an entity, to a plural body of believers. It says in verse 20, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." You get the idea when you look at the churches prophetically that they had buildings, they had budgets, they had crowds, but they didn't have Jesus. Phew, folks, that's oftentimes a very clear accusation of the contemporary church in our world today. The church of Jesus Christ has never had more stuff, more finances, more buildings, and more things than we do today yet the gospel is seeing very little movement globally completely compared to days when we didn't have all this "stuff."

Then you talk about the falling away or the apostasy. What are the issues with the church of Laodicea that is so difficult for us to stomach, and we'll deal a little bit with this in just a moment, is this whole lukewarm spewing out of the mouth and oftentimes it has caused people to struggle with their own security of their relationship with Jesus Christ because he says, "I'd rather you be hot or cold," and you struggle saying, "Does that mean he'd rather me be lost than to be struggling with my faith?" This is a message to a church. This is a message to an entity and so even though we can apply it to our personal lives and our own lukewarmness and lackadaisical attitude toward the Lord, understand he's talking about this entity being spewed out. Now remember, church at Ephesus, what did he say? "If you don't repent, I'll remove your candlestick." Remember in chapter 1, verse 20, the candlestick was the church, the entity, not the soul of the individual. Every one of these churches, he says to them, "If you don't change or fix, you're not going to be around long." What does he say to the Laodiceans? "I will spew you out of my mouth."

Now what's interesting in 2 Thessalonians 2, and for those of you that were here Sunday night, we read this passage, it speaks about the soon one day rise of the Antichrist, by the way, we're going to get to him when we get to chapter 6 of the book of Revelation. But it says that before he rises to prominence, there is a falling away first. It's the only place in the Bible we have this term "apostasy." Do you know what the word "apostasy" means? It means "imitator." It means someone who looks the part but is not genuine. Is that not the church at Laodicea? They have all the trappings of "Christianity" but Jesus is not even in the building. So the idea that we get from a prophetic standpoint is as if these seven churches, notice if they give us a picture of the time from the ascension of Jesus to the return of Jesus, a history of the church, then that means that before Jesus comes back, there is not global great revival, there is a falling away.

Now I never want to take today's headlines and read them into the scriptures but can we all testify as you look back at the last 10-20-30-40-50 years of the "church of Jesus Christ," can we honestly say we're becoming more fervent for the things of God? Can we honestly say that we are seeing massive movement? Yes, in some segments and some areas but globally as far as an increase? That's difficult at best, particularly compared to several hundred years ago when entire continents were affected with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

So how do you personally respond in the midst of this? Now this is where it gets a little personal. If the prophetic interpretation can be applied and we see the church of Jesus Christ waning and falling as we get closer to the return of Jesus Christ, first thing he says, buy gold that is tried. 1 Peter 1:5-6 says that there are trials and tribulations that come in our life so that we might be refined into a beautiful item for the sake of God.

It says white raiment. In Revelation 6 and 19, these are the robes that were given to the faithful ones who stayed fervent for the things of Christ, in fact, we'll study this a little bit more in Revelation, you almost get the picture or the idea that it is our faithfulness to the things of God, for lack of better terms, that sow the threads of these white robes that one day will be placed on the saints of God.

Anoint thine eyes. 2 Corinthians 4:5 says that the devil has blinded those who do not believe. Real simply, folks, open your eyes to what's really happening in the world and not what we want to happen in the world.

It says pull others out. Jude 1:23, I know we don't go to the book of Jude often but if you're in Revelation then hang a hard left and you'll find Jude. In Jude 1:23, it talks about despising sin so much that you pull people out of the sinful situation in their life.

And finally, finish strong. All throughout scripture there's always been a remnant. Always. By the way, the definition for remnant as found in Isaiah 6 is one-tenth, that there's always a segment of believers, there's always a group who stays faithful to the end no more so than the church of Laodicea that we see this as a reality, that as the Laodicean concepts and ideas begin to permeate a culture, a society, and the world at large, and I would say from a prophetic standpoint preparing the world for the one day reign of the Antichrist, the remnant can still say strong.

So personally you can look at the church at Laodicea, you could look at history and say, "Oh my, this doesn't look good." Big picture, no, it doesn't. Micro picture, it can in your own personal life. So as we look at these seven churches as we prepare for chapter 4 where all the crazy fun stuff of Revelation begins, I wanted you to see that these seven churches I think are more than just local churches. I think they're more than just spiritual lessons. I think there's the possibility they give us a picture of time from the ascension of Christ to the return of Christ, and if that is true, if it's true, then you and I are in the last time, we're in the period of Laodicea because Philadelphia, if this perspective is true, is clearly come and gone and Laodicea is upon us.

So as a transition to our typical Q & A whether it be about Laodicea or anything else, any Laodicean Revelation 3 questions and then we'll go to the database tonight? Anybody? Anywhere? Should have fed you food because it would wake you up. Alright, y'all are good? No Revelation questions? Alright, that's fine. I'm good. Oh, yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Right. Okay, so the question is and I think a good observation. My statement about no sweeping huge revivals, what about the ministry of Billy Graham? Alright, so, by the way, I would testify incredible ministry utilized by God, impacted millions, including my own mom who was saved at a Billy Graham crusade in Ardmore, Oklahoma years ago; before he was, you know, filling in huge massive arenas, he was going to local municipal parks. I just aged my mom for you all and she's going to love watching this tonight.

But that being said, I think there's two things we have to look at. 1. When I use the term revival or awakening globally or continentally, look at the first great awakening. The first

great awakening affected Europe and North America to such an extreme we actually started colleges or seminaries because there were so many young men being called to preach we had to educate them. Not so much in the '50s and '60s with Billy Graham. Even if we go back to what I call the tent revival of the late 1800s, early 1900s, you know, one of the things was they hated Billy Sunday coming to town because when he left all the brothels and bars were closed. Not so much something we saw. In fact, I would say and when I was doing my doctoral work on the history of spiritual awakenings, I had a young man in my class because we were young when we were studying back then, who wrote a paper on the sociological ramifications of the second great awakening as a picture of true revival, okay? I know some of you are thinking, "How can you still remember that paper?" Because we basically had to memorize them for our oral exams. But what he went through is he studied when God sweeps across an entire land, what do we see happen sociologically with morality, imprisonment, even out of wedlock births, you know all these statistics and it's amazing to see the transformation not just of an area. By the way, Billy Graham would go into cities and that city would experience a transformation but the rest of the country was not.

Does that make sense? And so I think you're exactly right. We see ministries.... Now today in the contemporary world, Billy Graham not quite because of his age, but there are ministries in places around the world particularly on the other side of the world and we're seeing incredible impact happening right now, particularly in East Asia and some other parts where we're seeing tremendous numbers of people coming to Jesus. Here's the difference: it's not turning the culture upside down. In other words, in countries that we would label fascist or communist, there are a lot of movements of God in those places where literally thousands of people are coming to know Jesus but it's not changing the heart of the land, it's changing the heart of the people. So I would say these major movements, they changed the heart of the land. Yes, Billy Graham and others, incredible ministries.

Here's the hard pill to swallow and maybe it's not as hard for you but it is for me. It is a hard pill to swallow to realize this is where we are because we always want to hold out hope, we always want to say there's still a chance, but eventually according to 2 Thessalonians 2, eventually the apostasy will occur and eventually Laodicea will be a reality. And so I think sometimes the difficulty is saying, "Are we really there?" That's a hard pill to swallow but there can still be a movement of God, in fact, here's my illustration. Remember in the Old Testament Goshen? Y'all remember Goshen? When the plagues were happening in Egypt, Goshen was that place set aside that when the plague took place in Egypt such as darkness, it wasn't dark in Goshen. I'm a believer that if what I've shared with you prophetically about the churches is true, we can still live in Goshen. We can still be fervent for the things of God where we are so that our lives are protected by the provision of God in the midst of what is happening.

So now can God move in a mighty way? Is it possible that he could sweep this land and the whole world again? Oh, sure he could. He's God. He can do it. However the Bible does say there is coming in the last days an apostasy. Is it tomorrow, is it 100 years from now? I don't know, it will somewhere come. But that's a good question.

Anybody else on this one? Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Oh, the Dark Ages. Well, I'm not a professor of history. The question was what caused the Dark Ages? Can I answer this theologically or do I have to answer it historically because an historian and I might disagree. Theologically, 1 John 1:5, "God is light. In him is no darkness at all." It was the absence of the word of God and the presence of God in people's lives.

[unintelligible]

What caused the absence of the word of God? Well, in my opinion, when the entity...

[unintelligible]

I can tell it's loaded because you keep rolling with this. I would say when the "entity," the structure, not the individual, what we call the church, when it married the world and decided to do it the world's way and they went the world's route rather than the word of God's route and they surrendered, or shall I say they gave up their allegiance to the word of God for the power of the world. When the word of God went away, the darkness came in.

You see, I had a pastor friend of mine years ago who lives on another continent, he gave me a great analogy. He said that and because he lives in what we call a very spiritually dark place, okay? He says where the word of God increases, the activity of the enemy must decrease because he's exposed. Where the word of God decreases, the activity of the enemy increases. So let's apply that to your question. Where the word of God increases, there is light. Where the word of God decreases, there is darkness.

So during what we know as the Dark Ages, not only was there an absence of the scriptures, there was an absence of being able to read, being able to write, being able to understand. There were very few people who had all the power and all the authority and everybody else was kept out or away from truth which is exactly what happens when the Antichrist comes. Very few people in power, everybody else is the ignorant masses and told just to be quiet, trust us, we've got this.

Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Well, I don't care if I'm politically correct.

[unintelligible]

I know we're supposed to refer to it as the Middle Ages but maybe I'm strange but my middle is right here. That's my middle.

Yes, ma'am.

[unintelligible]

Alright, that's a great question. If you couldn't hear her, in Matthew 25 Jesus tells the parable of the 10 virgins. You know the story, that there were 10 virgins that were preparing their oil, and oftentimes in scripture the oil is representative of the Holy Spirit, and it says that they went out but five of them did not prepare and so when the Lord returned, they were, for lack of better terms, left out. Is that a good summary of the parable? Jesus told this parable in Matthew 25. What I think is important is when you begin to look at Matthew 24 and 25, this is called the Olivet Discourse, the teaching on the end times, very relevant to the book of Revelation. The question I would have and I think, by the way, every passage of scripture has three interpretations, historical, it happened the way the Bible said it happened. Jesus was on the Mount of Olives and he actually taught this. We got that one. The spiritual application, how does this apply to my life? Well, to my life when Jesus comes calling, I'd better be ready, you know?

The illustration I use in my life, this is just Jeff, this is a Jeffism right here. I talk about the bus, that my life, I'm sitting at the bus stop and God brings the bus by and he opens the door and I either get on the bus or I don't, and I can't control where the bus is going. I mean, about 12 months ago it brought me to Opelika. I mean, I didn't know I was going and here I go, I'm just getting on the bus. Here we go. But that's every day of our lives that we get on the bus and say, "Okay, God, I'm just doing what you told me to do."

Doctrinally, which means it's to a specific people, at a specific time, for a specific reason, when you look at Matthew 25, I would venture to say and we're going to study more of this later in Revelation, you are smack dab, Jesus is teaching doctrinal truth about what we call a time period known as the great tribulation, because when you go back to Matthew 24, the disciples begin by saying, "Tell us when these things are going to happen," which is the destruction of the temple, "and what will be the sign of your coming," when he physically returns. And that picture of the 10 virgins is him physically coming in, they're not ready and then he judges the nations which is exactly what will happen in Revelation 19.

So to answer your question hopefully more specifically, I think that parable is doctrinally for a timer period we know as the great tribulation. Spiritually speaking because half were not ready and half were, is it a picture to us of the contemporary church? Billy Graham made a statement years ago that half of the American church was lost and that was based on his analysis. And I did my entire dissertation was a study of intra-evangelism. You say, "What is intra-evangelism?" Well, intra means inside. It was a study using the person of Nicodemus, a study of lost church members. Doesn't that sound positive? That was my dissertation and because Nicodemus is the perfect example. He went to church, he knew the Bible, he was faithful in giving, but he didn't have a clue

how to go to heaven, did he? And so I used his story as a picture and I went and did the research and the data and what we discovered is that Billy Graham was pretty right. As you begin to survey people who claim to be Christians, say they love the Lord, believe one day they're going to heaven yet don't think Jesus is the only way. I struggle scripturally, if you don't think Jesus is the only way, are you really a believer? I struggle with that. I don't think so even if you claim to be so.

So to your point, is that representative that half? It could be. I might take it a step further with the teaching of the remnant, it may only be, when you get to the very very very end, it may only be 10% instead of 50%. Anybody else on that one? That's a good one, though.

Anybody? Anybody? Anybody? We're good? We're good? We're good? Whoa.

[unintelligible]

Oh, about Calvinism. Oh, John Calvin. You're shifting gears.

[unintelligible]

Sure.

[unintelligible]

Yes.

[unintelligible]

Yes, we do.

[unintelligible]

Alright, let me repeat because very good series of questions but very soft spoken, and by the way, very, like, this was her question, like, "I got one." The question she was asking in light of 2 Peter 3:9 that says that God is not like humanity but he's longsuffering, desiring that none perish, that all come to repentance, the passage from the Sermon on the Mount which Jesus says that ask anything according to his will and it will be done, you go into James 4, it says you have not because you ask not, then it goes on to say and you have not because you ask amiss. In other words, sometimes we have not because we just don't ask, and sometimes it's because we're not asking for the right reasons, if that makes any sense. I agree with you absolutely with kind of your presuppositions there, that if we ask and if we beg and if we plead for God to move, I believe he will. Absolutely. However, when you study the church at Laodicea, the picture you get is they're not asking and they're not desiring. So to your point, there is no, the church at Laodicea doesn't end in great revival, that specific church because Jesus is telling them to knock on the door just to be present, you know, and so that apostasy, that falling away, I agree

completely, if we would, he would answer. I get the picture in Laodicea that as we get closer to the end, people don't even desire to ask that of God.

Does that help at all?

[unintelligible]

How should we be praying? You pray for God to move. Absolutely, you pray for God to move. You pray for God to say, you pray, you pray and you keep on praying. But I would say and I'm going to speak to myself personally here, this isn't addressing you, it's addressing me, according to the parable of the sower, the seed that became unfruitful, in other words, at one time it was really blooming but now not so much, cares of this world, deceitfulness of riches, and the love of other things, phew, this world has so much to distract us from praying that oftentimes... Okay, we talk about a great spiritual awakening. If you're ever... Well, this would excite me, it may not excite you, but there's actually the journals of Jonathan Edwards, the journals of George Whitefield. Now some of y'all struggle with going to sleep, maybe you'll read them and maybe they'll help you out. But let me give you, now Jonathan Edwards was the leader of the first great awakening. Jonathan Edwards preached the famous sermon "Sinners in the hands of an angry God." Jonathan Edwards is known as one of the men that God used to bring revival to Europe and North America, okay? I want to share with you a summary of the journal of Jonathan Edwards, okay? He would rise before dark and spend several hours in prayer. At 6-7 AM, he would gather with his wife and his children and he would eat breakfast. After eating breakfast, he would walk into town, now remember this is in the 1700s, he would walk into town to the little church that he pastored there in Connecticut, and he would spend until lunch studying the scriptures. After lunch, or he would go home and he would eat lunch with his family, then he would go into the field and pray and rest. He took a nap. Then he would go back home, eat dinner with his family, he would study the scriptures, and he would teach his children.

Now that's the life of a pastor. Let me tell you what he didn't have, one of these. He didn't have cellphones. He didn't have electricity. He didn't have the ability, there was the ability to manipulate your day. Phone calls, emails, text messaging, all of the trappings of our world that we think are to our benefit may be to our hindrance because as you look at these past major revivals, the one thing you do see is there wasn't.... When I was in India some years ago, just incredible to see God move among the Indian people, and I asked one of the guys that was over there leading, I said, "How are they so fervent?" Because what they would do is, and some of you may have heard this story, they made this announcement at the church that I was serving in, they said that Sunday night would be Bible study. Monday night would be prayer meeting. Tuesday night would be Bible study. Wednesday night prayer meeting. Thursday, Bible study. Friday, prayer meeting. Saturday, Bible study. Sunday, church. Every night of the week. Afterwards at lunch I asked the pastor, "Who shows up?" He said, "Everybody." I said, "What?" Everybody shows up to church. "How long to y'all meet?" He said, "Ah, 3-4 hours." And I said, "How?" And he said, "Jeff, I've been to America, what you don't understand is we don't have sports leagues, we don't have hobbies, we don't have the distractions y'all have." He

said and here's his quote, he said, "In America, you want Jesus, over here we need him." That hurts.

So back to your original question of how do we pray, oftentimes what we consider the blessings of God, look at this place, do you know how many places believers in Jesus Christ would love to have this room? Would love to have electricity? I've got one for you, how about indoor plumbing? For some of you, you think, "Oh, that's no big deal." To a lot of places, I've been places where they don't have indoor plumbing. Hoo, not fun. Not fun at all, and having three boys, praise God for indoor plumbing is all I've got to say. But what could have been a benefit to the gospel, the lights turn on so we can stay up later sharing the gospel has become almost a hindrance. So maybe we need to pray that all of the trappings of this world don't trap us anymore because I'll tell you, right now in America today and I know y'all have heard this stat before but I'm going to tell you again: when we survey you, when we, when I saw "we," I don't do it, but when people call you and survey whether it's on the behalf of Barna, Gallop, whoever it may be, today in America we will consider you a regular church member if you show up 18 times a year. 18 times. Do you realize that in India where I was, they show up that many times in two weeks and you wonder why God's moving there and not here.

Does that help at all? So we need to get on our face. And by the way, I'm going to share this story before I do some announcements. People have asked me through the years and I know some of you may have heard this, but it's just too good, I've got to share it again. Through all my years of preaching and teaching, people ask me, "Have you ever seen revival? Have you ever really seen it?" Several years ago, I was in a small little community in the Panhandle of Texas and it's the only time in my life that I can honestly, if I were to breathe my last breath tonight, I would say that's probably the one time I saw God move like I've never seen God move in my life. I'll never forget it was a small community. The superintendent of schools came up to me one day and he just was weeping. He said, "Jeff, every kid in the school district is here tonight. Every kid." That was a small community but every child in that community had heard the gospel.

One night, I gave the invitation and this is how you know you're having a revival, it's a little punchline but it's true, you know you're having revival when the town drunk and the mayor both get saved on the same night and it's not the same person. I'll never forget standing up and giving the invitation. It was probably the number of chairs in that room was about what we have here and I'll never forget that the mayor came down this aisle. I'll never forget that the town drunk came down this aisle. And they came down to the front and they saw each other and they just embraced because they had both met Jesus that night. Businesses weren't shutting down but they were pausing to do Bible study. Schools were interested in standardized tests but not as much as the things of God. The whole community was just transformed.

That revival started on a Sunday. Now it didn't look like that on Sunday, I mean, it took a while for the Lord to get people's attention. That Saturday night because it was up in the Panhandle and I lived in the Dallas/Fort Worth area at the time, it took a long time to drive up there, so I drove up on Saturday night and the pastor had told me to meet him in

the church. Now it's just a small little community church. And so I drove up, there was a car in front, there was a light on, I thought, well, that's the pastor, he's in there. I'll just walk on in. The door was open, walked in, I called his name. Couldn't find him. Couldn't find him. So I just kept walking around the church. I'm pretty comfortable in churches so I just started walking around. Couldn't find him. I did not know that he was at the parsonage next door. That wasn't and he wasn't in the building. I turned the corner and I heard a noise. I can't describe the noise except that it was groanings. I thought somebody was hurt. I didn't know what was going on. I was rude, I opened the door and there was a woman probably in her mid to late 40s prostrate on the ground just crying out for God to move in that little community. And he did. And he did.

Was she the only one that prayed? I don't know but I could waste all of your time, hopefully it wouldn't be a waste of time, all the great revivalists of days gone by, the Charles Finney's of the world, there was a man by the name of Nash who would go before him three weeks at a time, would gather 10-12 people and they would spend every waking moment in the basement of a local church praying for three weeks for God to move before the man ever preached.

So to your question, I know I've gone and gone and gone, the problem isn't God, the problem is us. Come on, I like a come on. You see, some of y'all if you get, see, some of y'all, you're Baptists. Some of y'all need to become Baptocostal. Baptocostal means you're not scared to respond. Some of y'all are some ameners. Some of you are some praise the Lord's. I'm a come on. Come on. And you gotta get somebody to say come on. I mean, you've gotta get some of that come on.

Anybody else? Anything else? I know I went off on revivals. I could go on all night about that. Anybody? Anything? Y'all good?

Alright, we'll go one quick question tonight and here we go. Do you believe if a person is truly saved and then turns their back on God and dies living in sin, does that person go to heaven? Basically I would like to hear your thoughts on once saved, always saved. Well, that's a nice clear-cut non-controversial issue.

Okay, I'm going to be quick tonight because there's some things I want to share with you tonight as far as announcements that I think hopefully will be exciting in your life. Let's begin with John 10 and then before we get to John 10, I want to share something very very important with you, I believe, to answer this question. In the Bible there are certain terms that are used for our salvation and none of those terms include the phrase becoming a Christian. You know that term becoming a Christian, it basically precludes that it's this process of evolving, that I just became. Let me tell you what the Bible words are: saved. Saved is a Bible word which means you were lost and you were rescued. Reconciled means that you were distant, now you are close. Redeemed means you have been bought. So there are Bible words for salvation that none of them include a process type description.

Secondly, using those terms "saved, redeemed, reconciled, bought," nobody in your New Testament ever becomes unsaved, unredeemed, unreconciled. In other words, we see pictures of people struggling in sin. 1 Corinthians 5, there's a man whose sin is so bad in the church he's removed from the church so that he does not affect or infect the church body. Nobody, you never see God say, "That person is now unsaved." How many times do you see believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved? It never says do this and you'll become unsaved. Those terminologies, the reverse of those biblical terminologies are never used.

Alright. John 10:28. It says, "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." Now I think that's a pretty important verse because I've had people who want to argue that you can lose your salvation and say, "Well, I know that no man can pluck me out but I can jump out if I want to." Are you a man, generally speaking there? Well, of course you are. Well, if no man can, that includes you too. Does that make sense?

Now I want to take you to one of the most controversial passages in all the Bible to close tonight. Go to Hebrews 6. Everybody struggles with it so let's just hit it head on in light of this issue. Hebrews 6 is this famous passage that if you've tasted of the Holy Ghost and fallen away, there's no way to be reconciled. Alright, here we go. It's in verse 5 of Hebrews 6. Now I hope because of the brevity of this answer I don't bring confusion because if you go back up into chapter 5, it basically says that you need to be eating meat but you're eating spiritual milk because you're not where you need to be. Then chapter 6 says you need to get back to the basics of what is biblical doctrine, okay? When you get to verse 5, it says, well, let me go back, verse 4, "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." Let's just be honest, that verse as read says if you've tasted of the Holy Ghost and you fall away, no good, right?

Alright, go over to the book of Jude to the right. Remember, we mentioned him earlier, to go to the book of Jude, go to Revelation, hang a hard left. Revelation 24. Jude, verse 24, I apologize, Revelation doesn't have a chapter 24. Jude, verse 24, "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling." So notice back in Hebrews 6, if they fall away. Jude, verse 24, says Jesus keeps you from falling. Back to Hebrews 6, it is impossible seeing they crucify the Son of God.

So here's what I want to end on tonight. Those who advocate that you can lose your salvation, everyone I've ever talked to advocates that you can get it back. Not according to Hebrews 6. Hebrews 6 says if you fall away, there is no more hope. So therefore if you want to advocate that you can lose your salvation, if you lose it, you can't get it back. In fact, people says, "Do you believe in once saved, always saved?" I say, "Absolutely." They say, "I don't." I say, "Well, then if you don't, you have to believe in twice lost, always lost." Did y'all get that? If you do not believe in once saved, always saved,

because you were lost and then you got saved, if you get lost again then you have to believe in twice lost, always lost.

So to those who would advocate that you can continually lose your salvation, how is the Holy Spirit going to convict you to repent if according to Hebrews 6 say it cannot happen? No one can pluck you out. You have a relationship with Jesus Christ when you believe upon him and the best example that I've got are my own children. They are birthed of me, well, primarily my wife but they're birthed of us. They have my blood, they are born of me, I have a relationship with them, and there are times they don't like me, and there are times I don't like them. But that strain in relationship doesn't affect their standing. They're still my child. And there are times we struggle and we rebel against the things of God but it doesn't revoke our standing with God.

Alright, that's the quick and that's the easy. Okay, a couple of announcements. Oh, go ahead. Yes, ma'am.

[unintelligible]

Oh sure.

[unintelligible]

Yeah, saying I think I'm saved is like saying I think that's my dad. You know, you either are or you're not. Have you ever heard people say this, it cracks me up, "Well, she's barely pregnant." No, there's no barely pregnant. You either are or you're not. You know, "Well, they're barely saved." No, they either are or they're not. Great point.

Okay, a couple of announcements tonight I want you to make aware of, well, actually there are several. 1. There is an incredible, wonderful lady in our presence tonight known as my wife to my left, your right. She has a table over here with Vacation Bible School supplies. Vacation Bible School is coming very quickly. We already have over 600 children registered. Over 600 and that does not include the ones who will come last minute or the ones that are going to come via various ministries that are involved in our community. And so my wife is over there, she has ideas as far as supplies and stuff and, honey, you need volunteers to help put some things together between now and then, is that correct? Alright, so if you would like to assist in Vacation Bible School leading up to Vacation Bible School as far as the supplies are concerned, please see her on the way back.

Now involving what we know as Ask Jeff or our Q & A. The last couple of weeks I've shared with you a couple of announcements. Announcement 1 is very pertinent to you. Next Friday night, that is on June 2, we're going to have a marathon Ask Jeff right here from 7-9 o'clock. It doesn't matter how many show up. If there's three of you, if there's 300 of you, it's a Friday night and we're just going to dig into the Bible and just have a good time. If you want a question in advance and you have the right to raise your hand, but if you want a question in advance, we have set up a separate email account for that. It

is askjeffal for Alabama @gmail.com. Again, you are anonymous. We won't know who you are unless you tell us who you are and you have the right to do so, but I won't share that with others. But we encourage you as we prepare for next Friday night, 7-9 o'clock, come have a great Bible study on a Friday evening and have a good time. It kind of relates to the question you asked, ma'am, earlier about what we do on our free times.

That being said, in addition to that, I mentioned last week that askjeff.net, that website is now up and active where you can get all the things related to the questions and when we answer them and where we answer them, and how we answer them. The same information there is the same on the First Baptist, Opelika website. There's no difference, it's just you don't have to dig through the website, you can go straight to it.

Last but not least, here is big announcement number 3. It's crazy and it's fun but let's go for it. Several years ago, I had or I had the privilege of taking a group to what we know as the Holy Land. Now we're not going to Israel, don't get excited. Took them to the Holy Land and, you know, you tour the Holy Land and at night we gathered up and there in the hotels wherever we were staying, we had a time much like this, just a Q & A where I saw this, what does this mean, how does that site reconcile with scripture etc. And we would have Bible study every night for about two or three hours, and on that trip to Israel, somebody made a statement to me, they asked me if I would ever be interested in doing something and I kind of thought about it and I've kind of let it percolate over the years, and about a year and a half ago I looked at doing it and it wasn't able to happen, and the thing that was asked of me was would I ever be interested in taking an Ask Jeff cruise where you hit the waters, you do Bible study in the morning and you do Q & A at night, a lot of times like you've seen some of these other ministers and pastors do. And so I'm crazy enough to say, "Sure, why not? Let's go for it." So the big announcement tonight is next year in 2018, March 10-17, what happens to be the Opelika spring break time, if you are interested and we have enough people, we're going to go for it. We're going to go buffet our bodies. Paul said buffet your bodies, the Baptist version is buffet your bodies. But there is an opportunity.

Now we have to have a certain number of folks that go to actually make the trip happen. I believe that, is that number 75? Now I know what some of you are thinking, "75 folks." Well, y'all may be surprised at every Wednesday night we gather there's more people watching through that camera than there are in this room. All you've got to do is get to Cape Canaveral, FL to get on the boat, so to speak. So we might have folks that come from Minnesota, we might have folks that come from Canada. I don't know what that is, but if you're interested and that possibility and all the details, next to my lovely wife is our not so good looking business administrator, Chris Wood, who handles all the aspects of the church. He's got information, fliers, prices, all that kind of stuff. And so I just wanted you to be aware of that as we go through the next 90 days or so about that possibility. Years ago somebody asked me and said, "Man, would you ever be willing to do this?" And I've just kind of pushed it, pushed it, pushed it, and I said, "You know what? It is time to buffet the body. It is time."

So if we get enough folks, we're going to go for it. If we don't get enough folks, we won't do it, okay? I will tell you that we have access to the newest, greatest, biggest, largest boat that there is right now and I've been promised that if I get on it, I won't get seasick like I normally do. It could make for some fun Ask Jeff sessions. Me on Dramamine answering Bible questions. No, it's going to be fun. But I do want you to know, yes, it's a fun time, enjoyable, relaxing, but the way that we've got it scheduled out and we've got schedules over there is if this trip makes, we're going to have Bible study every morning together, we're going to do a Q & A Ask Jeff type thing every evening together with your fun whatever activities in the middle as you so please. So that's just one of the things we're looking at doing if people are interested. If they're not interested we won't, but I hope you are interested and we'll go buffet our bodies and do a little Bible study on the water.

So let me pray for us and then we're going to dismiss.

Lord, as we walk out of this place tonight, God, we have read, we have studied, and we have even at times, I guess, kind of even questioned what does your word really mean for our lives. And God, I thank you that because of the blood of Jesus Christ, because of our belief in him, that we can be secure and we can be safe, and we can know that nobody, no man, not even ourselves can pluck us out of your hand. Thank you for the security of that relationship. So God, I pray as we leave this place, Lord, that we will have more security in walking in faith with you wherever you take us. And Lord, on the way out, whether it's a future Bible study opportunity or serving in Vacation Bible School in a few days, Lord, if you've called us to do it, let us just follow. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Alright, Vacation Bible School, my wife. Buffet your body with Chris.