

Ask Jeff 5.30.18
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Preached On: Wednesday, May 30, 2018

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All right ladies and gentlemen as we get started tonight, let me draw your attention to what we know is the circle of concerns. This is our First Baptist, Opelika prayer sheet. All the names that you see listed are either formerly a part of or are informally connected to our church body at some level at some point. In other words, you do not have to be a member of this fine church to be on this list. If you know somebody somewhere somehow that you want us to pray for, please let us know, and we will do our best to get it on the sheet as soon and as quickly as possible. That being said, as you kind of navigate through the sheet, you'll see that there are those that are in hospital type situations or care facilities, on your front sheet, as well as at home, and even those that are out of town with some type of sickness illness or such. And at the bottom we have a congratulations this week, as we've had the birth of yet another baby here at First Baptist church. I don't know what's in the water of Opelika, but we're having lots of children. They do yes ma'am.

On the backside, the other side of the coin, is the sympathy section. Unfortunately, again this week, sharing with you those that have lost loved ones as a part of our family of faith. And then those that are continuing to serve on the mission field, as well as those in military service. One quick thing about the mission field. I know you're familiar, because those of you that were here Sunday got to hear about all that is happening this summer. On any given day at any given hour this summer, there is somebody as a part of First Baptist Church that is somewhere on a mission trip somehow. And so, if you just wake up in the middle night and can't sleep, just pray for somebody who's on a mission trip, because, I promise you, we've got somebody somewhere somehow. In fact, some of our college students are even serving in a capacity for the entire summer. So, we're real familiar with the week long and the two-week trips. Sometimes we forget there are some on six weeks and even ninety-day excursions around the world, and somewhat in the local areas as well. This Saturday we have a trip taking off to what we know as downtown Atlanta, our student ministry mission trip, as well as the following week we have our first trip to Costa Rica, and as they continue to go. And then we've got Honduras coming up. We've got a group in Uganda right now as we speak. I apologize if I forget one, because I can't keep up with all of them, which is an absolute wonderful fabulous problem. But we want to be praying for them, as well as those that are on some type of short or long term, as far as years are concerned, assignment that we have on our prayer sheet. So, let's pray, and we'll get started.

Heavenly Father, as we gather tonight, we know there's a lot of names on this list. Many of them are hurting physically, Lord, some are even hurting emotionally, and mentally, and spiritually. Lord, we know tonight that there is nothing, whether it's a diagnosis, or anything else, there's nothing that we can face, or go through, or approach that you do not have absolute power and authority to handle completely. So, God, tonight we just yield to you, whether it's a brand-new diagnosis, whether it's a long-term illness, whether it's serving overseas and in some mission or military capacity. God, we just simply place them at your feet tonight.

We yield to your authority. We yield. We submit ourselves to you. We just ask you to be what only you can be, and that is that you would be God in any and all of these situations. For those that have lost loved ones, Lord, we know they grieve. We know they hurt. We pray that you would be the comfort they need, not just today, but in the days, weeks, months, and even years that come ahead. Lord, we pray and thank you for the new baby in our family of faith. God, for the upbringing, as your word says, in the fear and the admonition of you. We pray that even in these early days, Lord, that that process would already begin. And for tonight on our campus, whether it be in some other location or here in this room, Lord, we just pray that your word would be at the center of everything, that your Spirit would empower all things, and that when we depart in a little while we can know, not only as the apostles in Acts 3, people can say that we have spent time with you, but we will be empowered to live the life you've called us to live. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray, Amen.

Welcome to Wednesday nights. Not only Wednesday nights at First Baptist, Opelika but Wednesday nights in the summer of First Baptist, Opelika. We know it's a time of transition. It's a time of travel. It's a time of trips and such. And so thank you, thank you, thank you for being here in person as well as those that are on the other side of that camera that may be either a) on a mission trip or b) on a vacation business endeavor. Whatever it may be, we welcome one; we welcome all.

It doesn't matter where you're physically located now. Each and every one of you can be a part of what we're doing tonight. The way that kind of Wednesday nights roll is the first half is typically a Q&A time. You ask the questions, and I do my absolute best to guide us to what the Bible says about your question. Did you notice the specifics there? I don't have the answers. I don't know anything, but I do know places in the Bible that address the questions that we have. And that's the whole purpose of the Q& A is to oftentimes deal with subject matters or deal with issues that maybe we're embarrassed to ask in a Sunday school type environment. Here we can remain anonymous going through the website. Or maybe it doesn't come up in a Sunday school lesson, or in a sermon, or such, and you said, "You know, I've heard about it," or "I've heard somebody mention it, but we've never really talked about this." And so you have the opportunity to talk about anything you want tonight. Tonight is yours.

You can either a) submit to the database on the website fbcopelika.com/askjeff, or you can just raise your hand like many of you are very good at. You can say, "Hey, I want to talk about this. What about that?" And so we begin with that. And then later on we will

migrate toward the book Revelation chapter 10, one of the parenthetical chapters, as tonight we talk about the little book that was commanded to be eaten that would be sweet like honey but would become bitter later on. We can talk about what is that little book.

So the database tonight, we will start off there. First question, if I get it to work. There we go. It says in the book of Daniel, why is Daniel always referred to as Daniel and not Belshazzar his Hebrew name, but Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah always referred to their Chaldean names Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

That is an absolute fabulous question. In fact, if you'll go to the book of Daniel in your Old Testament, Daniel is one of the what we call the exilic prophets. What that means is that while they were in exile the Lord gives him the message, the visions, and the ability, if you've read, to interpret dreams. Obviously, the book of Daniel is one of the most, when I say that one of the most prophetic books, please understand I know he's a part of the prophets, they're all prophetic, we get that. But a prophet's role had twofold. One was to forthtell, to tell what was going on, what is truth versus error, and one is to foretell, which is to display or to share what the future would be. All of the prophets do both of those, but the book of Daniel is probably most known for its foretelling, particularly when you get into the the visions of the man dressed with the gold, and the silver, and the bronze, and such, when you get to the vision of the tree. And, ultimately, when you get to chapter 7, 8, 9, where there's the he goat, and the picture of the anti-Christ, and the end time scenarios in chapter 9. All that being said, he is often known most for his foretelling futuristic than he is for his forthtelling of truth. However, the question that is at hand tonight deals more with the forthtelling aspect, because in the very beginning of Daniel chapter 1 we have the story of the Israelites being taken into captivity, taken into Babylon. And there are these four individuals who are taken. verse 7.

It says, "Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abednego. But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself" et cetera. And so, the question at hand, if I understand it correctly, is why throughout the rest of the book of Daniel do we hear these three guys as Shadrach, Mishael, and Abednego, but Daniel stays by his original name. I think it's multifold. One, I think the Lord realizes sometimes we need help, and he wants us to know who we're talking about. Number two, I think it is critical to see that Daniel as the primary principal character from chapter 2 all the way to the end, with the exception of one little blip on the radar, stays true to the true nature and the calling of the Lord upon his life, even in the midst of exile.

Now I know you'd say, "Well what about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? I mean, they go through the fiery furnace." They do. But Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were called to pray for Daniel as he interpreted. They were called alongside him while he did some of the things that he did whereas Daniel is the primary character who not only stands true for the things of God and the word of God, but represents the people of Israel in the midst of a tribulational time period of which he foreshadows in Daniel chapter 9. And so, the Lord can do what he wants to do, the way he wants to do it, and how he

wants to do it. And he saw fit to continue to refer to Daniel by his Hebrew name rather than his Chaldean name, even though the other three guys go by their Chaldean name the rest of the book of Daniel. But he is left primarily as not only a man of faith, but a representative of the people of God. He more represents the people of God as they journey through this time rather than Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego do. So, I don't know if that helped with that situation. I know sometimes we ask questions like, "Well, why?" Well, we don't always know the why, but we can kind of see how the Lord is moving in the midst of the story in the scenario that's being told.

Any Daniel concerns, questions, names? None of that?

Did Daniel write that book? I have no reason to doubt that he did, but my academic brethren would argue with me. For those of you who may not be familiar, if you have a study Bible, oftentimes in the text of scripture there will be two parallel lines in the middle, or maybe a line at the bottom, or even sometimes the top, that will give you notes or give you commentary or ideas. Allow me to remind each and every one of us that all the words below the line or between the lines are man's ideas, and all the other words are the words of God. That being said, the book of Daniel, I would say, probably the only other book that has come under such attack as Daniel would be the book of Jude in the New Testament. But the book of Daniel has come under such attack, because when you do a strict chronology of his life it was the sixth century BC. The events in chapter 1 typically are about 607, 608 BC, and then we know that later the temple falls in 586, and this whole 70 period of exile. Daniel was in the midst of the exile, all right? He is in captivity. They change his name, even though we know him as Daniel. But I think we can all agree. Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians, they're not in Jerusalem, and they don't have a Temple Mount, okay?

The reason that's important is the academic world claims that Daniel's prophecies are so good there's no way he could have prophesied them. For example, go ahead and fast forward a little bit in chapter 2 beginning in verse 37. Nebuchadnezzar has a dream, and in his dream there is a head of gold, and then this body has shoulders and a torso of silver, and then legs of brass and feet of clay. And Nebuchadnezzar is startled by this dream. And he wakes up all of his soothsayers, and his Chaldeans, and all these gentlemen. And he says, "Ok guys. I've been awoken by this horrible dream. Tell me my dream, and tell me the interpretation of it." You all remember the story. I mean it's one of those vacation Bible school stories, what I like to call it. We love this story, because then the guys say, "Well, nobody can do that. Tell us what the dream is, and we'll interpret it." He goes, "Hey, if you guys really are who you claim you are, tell me what the dream was." And he says, "Fine. If you all are going to play this game, off with your heads." So, he commands that everybody who was in the prophetic role, of which Daniel was, was to have their life removed from them. Well, when the executioner comes to Daniel, Daniel goes, "Whoa! Whoa! Time out. Buy me some time. Just give me a little time, and I can do this." He calls Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego together, and they have an all-night prayer meeting. The next morning Daniel wakes up, walks into the palace, and says, "I got this." And he tells him his dream. He says, "Is that it?" And he says, "that was the

dream.” He says, “Only the gods could have revealed this to you.” And he said, “The one true God did.”

Then in verse 37, listen to the interpretation of it. Oh real quick, there we go, yes. It says, “Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold. Alright, so remember this dream. Head of gold, silver, brass, clay. So, he tells him, “You're the head of gold.”

Verse 39. “And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise.” And he goes on. What you're seeing here, and as you look at the description all throughout this chapter and even in subsequent passages that what we know is Media Persia fits the image that there were two arms, the Medes and the Persians. When you get to the brass section, you get to what we know as the Grecian empire or the Greek empire, and then you get into the Roman empire, and then you get into the clay. The reason that is significant is in the sixth century BC the Greeks didn't even exist. They were nowhere to be found as are described here, much less be such a power that when they disbanded it would go into the four corners of the earth. I mean we know them as one of the greatest powers of all time. And then you speak of the Romans that come in after them. They were not even heard of in that capacity.

So, how could a man describe not only the powers that be, but the way in which they would be governed, two arms four ways strong, whatever it may be. People said, “There's no way. There's no way he could have done that. He must be writing after the fact.” That's what they accused Jesus of, a self-fulfilled prophet. And what a self-fulfilled prophet is, they read what is written, and then they conform their lives to it. Well, there's no way Jesus was a self-fulfilled prophet, because no one chooses the city they're born in. And it was prophesied that he would be born in Bethlehem. That being said, there was no reason, there was no justification at all, for Daniel to say what he said to Nebuchadnezzar, because he told Nebuchadnezzar, “You may reign today, but death is coming tomorrow.” That's not what you want to tell the king of the power of the world. But he did. And he said, “Whatever you build will be taken away from you.” And as you read the rest of the story, it all comes true and as to fruition.

So, the number one criticism is how did he get it so right? Because according to 2 Peter 1, he was led by the Spirit of God and not by man. And so, I do believe it was written in the sixth century by whom we know as Daniel. Historically, in Jewish tradition there's no question at all. The only people that question Daniel are a bunch of just hard-nosed Gentiles who don't want to believe that he got it right. Does that make sense? Because here's the problem. If Daniel's right, which I believe he is, then all the prophecies are right. Because it's so specific, and it's so detailed. We love it.

I just finished this last weekend I was on somewhat of a vacation so to speak. If you call driving nineteen hundred miles vacation, I was on vacation. But I read a fictional book, just some pleasure reading that was based on the life of and the prophecies of Notradamus. And they talked about how he purposefully wrote vaguely so it could be interpreted to be fulfilled as one would desire it to be fulfilled. These are academicians admitting this. The same academicians get upset with Daniel, because it's so specific there's no way he could have known. You can't have it both ways. If Daniel had been vague, they would argue he was so vague you didn't know what he's talking about. It's not the prophecies that Daniel gave that they have a problem with. It's the fact they were fulfilled exactly as they were spoken of which the greatest of is the prophecy of which he talked about the day the time period of which the Messiah Jesus Christ would be born in chapter 9.

I know it went a long ways around the tree there, but I absolutely believe we're dealing with sixth century BC true Jewish literature from the exile while under Babylonian captivity, not some other manufactured after the fact prophecy, if that make sense. But it is so detailed and so specific the academic world struggles with it. That's why 2 Corinthians says, "We live by faith, not by sight." Exactly. But that's a good question about Daniel.

Any other Daniel, Belshazzar? Yes, sir?

[unintelligible]

Yes. When it comes to Isaiah. I know you were soft spoken. Those of you may not be familiar with what this is in the realm of what we call textual criticism where you take the Bible as a text, and you begin to look at it, and study it from a stylistic perspective, a linguistic perspective. We know Isaiah. There are 66 books or 66 chapters in the book of Isaiah. The academic world will say, "Well there's deuterio-Isaiah, meaning there's two different Isaiahs. The Isaiah of the first 39 chapters and the Isaiah of the last 27. There are some that will even go a step further and say "There is a trio-Isaiah. There are three different Isaiahs, because the style of writing was so dramatically different. These same individuals have not read their own emails. How many times have you written an email or a text to somebody and said such and such, and such, such, such, such, but, and you turn the tide, and the tone completely changes, right? They say, well, he didn't use the same phraseology. He didn't use the same words. He was addressing a different subject. And so it begs you to change the words you use.

Now, just in case you're curious, this also happens in what we know as the Torah. There's those that would claim there are multiple authors of the first five books of the bible, not simply Moses as Jesus said it was. But any time you deal with what we call textual criticism, you have to look at the source of the person that's making the statement. Are they coming from a perspective of I don't believe it to be true anyway, and let me tell you why, or the opposite? Because we're all guilty of using lenses to read the Bible through. And if we don't believe this is inspired by God, if we don't believe it's preserved by God, and we don't believe there's any way that he spoke prophecies one hundred years in

advance, then when we read it, we go, “Well, he used a different word in chapter 52 than he did in 30. It must be a different guy.” So, what we do is we conjure up all these assertions that sound great in the academic world, but when you get down to it, and you read Isaiah from cover to cover, it does flow, but what we see is the first 39 chapters are the prophecies of and the foretelling of them going into captivity, and the last 27 are them coming out of captivity. It's two different scenarios, which would require two different approaches. These are the same individuals that struggle with Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John telling the same story different ways but not contradicting each other.

But you're right, multiple authors of Isaiah. These same people claim that most of the people that we claim wrote the New Testament didn't even write the New Testament. Their whole purpose is to discredit the word of God rather than to believe it. And so, I'm not here to ridicule the academic community. I was a part of it. I guess I am because of the degree. I mean I am a part of it. I just see it more from a faith perspective than a contrary perspective. But you're right. There are some that believe there are multiple Isaiahs. Isaiah did not have multiple personalities. He was one guy. That's all you have to worry about.

Any other of those fun little issues? Yes, sir?

[unintelligible]

Sure.

[unintelligible]

Correct.

[unintelligible]

Right.

Okay, so the question, and by the way there's ample evidence in scripture that those who we claim authorship of use others to be the physical instrument of writing the information down. The apostle Paul, I mean he tells the Galatians, he said, “Do you not see I've written in my own hand?” And you get the idea that whether it was Dr. Luke the beloved physician or another that was with him, Barnabas maybe that maybe was the technical scribe, because there is the thought that maybe even Paul had eye trouble and needed help with that. But with the Galatians he was so adamant that he said, “I've written in such large letters. I've made it so big.” And the question about well maybe Isaiah used a different scribe, and a different scribe would have had a different flair. The problem or the question that's really not a problem is the issue we have to deal with is 1 Timothy 3:16 says, “All scripture is inspired by God.” So, God is the author. We agree with that, right? No problem there. The question that we have to ask ourselves is God inspired his word through the instrument of humanity, correct? I mean you can see personality. I mean you can. I mean Matthew was an accountant, and you can tell he's an accountant,

because every story he tells you how many people were there and how long they were there, okay? Mark most likely was a young man, and he doesn't give you any details at all. He just says, "I'm here. Bye. Gone. Here we go. So, you see personality. But then there's the next layer of whose personality did the Lord use? Did he use the apostle Paul, Mark, Matthew, or did he use a nameless scribe?"

Now my evidence for that is actually found in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5. So, go to 1 Thessalonians chapter 5. 1 Thessalonians chronologically is the very first letter of Paul that we have. 2 Timothy is the last chronologically. And I think this begs the question, did Moses, did Isaiah, did Ezekiel, did Daniel, did Mark, did Paul, did they know what they were doing? I think that's a valid question. Or did they just write down some stuff, and then ten years later go, "Well, I guess we've just kind of adopted this as scripture, okay?"

1 Thessalonians chapter 5. Beautiful passage of scripture of course. But I want you to look at verse 27 toward the very end. "I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren." You say, "Well, what does that mean?" When the apostle Paul would gather in the synagogue, or he would gather in a specified location with believers, they didn't read the latest greatest bestseller. What did they read? The scriptures. So, when the apostle Paul says, "Read this to the brethren," I believe he's testifying I'm an apostle called out of due time. The Lord is speaking through me to you. Please take this, I would say, on equal grounds as even we would read Isaiah. I charge you to read it to the brethren.

If you've ever been to a Jewish synagogue, which by the way Paul grew up in the Jewish synagogue, they don't read anything but the scrolls. That's it. You don't bring commentaries in. To use our language, you don't bring Sunday school books in. The scriptures is it. That's the only thing that's read. And so, when the apostle Paul says, "I charge you to read this epistle," I believe he grasped what he was doing, why he was doing it, and who was doing it through him, the Lord himself. And so, whether he actually had the pen on the papyrus or not, I think that's almost a non-issue, because the words were either voiced by Paul or technically written by Paul. He believed they were straight from the Lord. I don't see the amanuensis or the secretary, the term you used, as having any factor at all, because I don't think Paul, Matthew, they would put their stamp of approval, because "that's not what I said." I mean I don't know if you've ever dictated a letter and asked somebody to write something on your behalf. You always read it to see if it's what you meant to say. You know, I've had people even here that will write a letter on my behalf, but they don't send it out until they let me read it and say, "Is this how you would say it?" And I say, "No, that's not how I would say it, because that's not me communicating that." Well, in this case it's not even really Paul, even though the Lord uses him. It's the Lord.

Does that make sense what I'm saying? It's kind of a transmission of such. I think the apostle Paul knew what he was doing. I think the Lord even worked in his personality, so to speak. But the amanuensis, or the person maybe technically has put the pen to paper, not even a secondary, I would say even a less than, issue than the actual personality. Does

that help at all? Because I know some people say, “Well,” and then understand that most of the people who we have you could discuss the difference between Luke a doctor. Traditionally Luke was a Gentile, okay? I have a good friend of mine, David Brainter, who's the head of Jews for Jesus, and he said, “No Jeff, there's no way he was a Gentile. He was a doctor. He was Jewish.” It's just his little joke he tells.

But that being said, if you know any history of how Jewish people, the scribal industry works, where they take what we know as the book of the Bible and they scribe them, there is no flexibility. There is no, “I think I’m just going to make it say this.” If you get one letter wrong, you have to redo the whole page. So, even in that tradition I don't think there would be any reason for a scribe to take it upon himself just to make it say what I want it to say versus what was communicated for it to say. I don't know if that helps at all in that context. At the end of the day, you can trust what it says, because it says what it says. It was inspired by God, preserved by God, and we can roll with it. I have learned in my years of living, those who want to dismiss and go, “Well, the second half of Isaiah isn't authentic. So let's forget about it.” Or, “We really don't know who wrote Hebrews. So, it doesn't matter anyway.” When you begin to dismiss and eliminate scripture, it's because you don't want to be conformed to it, and you've found an excuse to eliminate it. Does that make sense? Because the passages that we “argue” about, the Torah, the first five books, Isaiah, you know, it's the gospels. No one argues about the book of Numbers. I mean, seriously! Nobody! There's not a soul out there going, “I don't know who really wrote Numbers.” But they're going to argue over genesis 1-11, because it forms everything about creation, and humanity, and the entrance of sin in the world. But numbers, “Eh, who cares.” So, I don't know if that helps at all.

Any other textual issues? Daniel issues? Jude issues? Any issues? We're good with those issues?

All right, back to the board, as they say, even though it is an electronic board. You gotta be kidding me. I'll just read it as it's written. “As a Baylor graduate and a former cheerleader, would you describe football as the real opiate of the masses?” Now, for those of you who don't know what that's based on, Karl Marx the communist said that religion was the opiate of the masses, that it was a means of deadening people to not deal with real life. And by the way, obviously, in many parts of the world, particularly in communist countries, religion in any form is illegal. Religion is the opiate of the masses was a statement by Karl Marx. And so, the question is, is entertainment, has sports, has football in particular, has it become the opiate of the masses? I don't know if it's become the opiate of the masses, but it has become the preferred addiction of the masses.

I'll tell you a story. It happened several years ago. There's an organization known as leadership network. Leadership network specializes in large churches, so to speak. And I was a part of a group where there are pastors at a certain age with certain sized churches that we all gather together about every six months and just kind of exchanged ideas and such, because, if you look at it, there's very few very large churches and a lot of small churches, and they have different issues and problems. All that being said, we were in a what we call a crop pot session, where we're just kicking around ideas, just

brainstorming. And we're talking about all these different ideas that guys have about reaching their community and such, and one of the ideas that was brought up and discussed was what about having a Saturday night worship service, the goods, the bads, the uglies, and such. And the guy that was facilitating said, "I would encourage each and every one of you to consider this, except Jeff." And everybody looked around and said, "Well, why not Jeff?" And they said, "Well, because he pastors in the SCC. A Saturday night service will never work in the SCC." He's right. Did you know, because we keep the worst attendance that we have for our Sunday worship services are during football season, not the summer, because we're more interested in football than even our own family vacations, and sometimes they're the same thing.

All that to say, the statement the opiate of the masses means to deaden the people, so that they don't deal with or reckon with reality. Has sports become that in our culture? It's become one of many things that's done the exact same. We center so much of our schedules and lives around them. I love sports. I'm a sports fan. I encourage it. Some of the greatest lessons I ever learned were on the sports field dealing with coaches and with other players, and that's what I encourage. I mean, I know some of you have coached in the past, and I appreciate all of that. But I do think we'd all have to admit we've taken it just a tad too far. Have we not? It has become the cog of the wheel of many person's lives that everything else comes secondary to. The Lord said, "Seek first the kingdom of God, and all these things will be added unto you.

And so, I will say this. In reference to my past, not only my alma mater, but former activities, it was a very gregarious activity twenty-five, thirty years ago. It's even more so now. And it's increasing. And the revenue in the tv and such, and we could go on and on and on. I just want to challenge each and every one. So, I'm a sports fan. Always will be a sports fan. I like sports. But it needs to be put in the proper place in our lives and not the primary place in our lives whether we are watching, attending, playing and such. But I will say this, that sports is utilized in the Bible. And I don't mean the silly jokes, okay? And you all know about the silly jokes, right? God is a baseball fan, because in the big inning God created the heaven and earth. No, no, no, no. None of that stuff. You know that he loved tennis, because Joseph served in Pharaoh's courts. I got all those jokes. But the apostle Paul talked about, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities." What was he utilizing? An example of an athletic endeavor to give us a visual. He talks about that I run my race not as one that gains a temporal crown but won an eternal crown. He even says at the end of his life, "I've run my race." He utilized that twice. He also talks about that he does not beat himself against the air like a boxer. You know, one that tries to box their shadow. It's a futile activity. That there was a purpose in his endeavors. And the word that the apostle Paul uses for sin, okay, all throughout the letters of Paul, was actually an archery term that meant to miss the mark. Let me put it in modern day terminology. He used the term airball. You know what an airball is, right? It's when you miss the rim completely in basketball. It doesn't matter if you missed it by an inch or by a mile. It's an airball, correct? When you miss the mark, when it says for all have sinned, it doesn't matter if you've done a little sin or a big sin. You've missed the mark. You've all missed.

That being said, sports terms are used all throughout scripture to give us illustrations and definitions of doctrine. But I don't think any of us would say they're the primary focus of scripture. But they're utilized frequently in scripture. And so again, is it the opiate of the masses? It has quickly possibly become so. And whoever decided to expose my past I appreciate you so much.

Any other sports thoughts? We're good? Okay, we'll move on. That being said. Come on. All right. Come on. There we go. It says, "How do you know that you are saved without a doubt? I have doubted my salvation most of my adult life. I cannot get it settled in my heart and mind." Whoever wrote that or sent that in by email, I know you're struggling, and you're hurting, because I think the thing that we have to disseminate between, and I've heard this. This is not original to me. And so, I'm going to use it. There's three things that I want you to hear tonight. There are the facts. There is faith. And there are feelings. The facts. Real simple. Here are the facts. Man, generically speaking, humanity has fallen into sin and has no means of reconciling or redeeming themselves to their Creator on their own merit. That's a fact, correct? Jesus Christ was not only prophesied but fulfilled those prophecies in coming what as we know as the Messiah, the Redeemer who would allow his life to be given, his blood to be shed as the propitiation, big fancy word for the punishment for our sins, so that upon his resurrection, and he's coming back from the dead, that humanity now could have a means of being redeemed, being reconciled to their Creator. Those are the facts, correct? Pretty simple.

The next question is faith. What does it mean to exercise faith in those facts? Well, we typically teach it to children. And by the way, I think we need to teach it to adults. It's as easy as ABC. That we accept the fact that we have sinned. We have missed the mark. We believe that Jesus Christ is the only means of resolving our sin problem, and we call upon or confess him to be our Savior and our Lord. That's faith, right?

What about feelings? Feelings is determining your reality based on your environment. I tell people all the time. You know, some people say, "Well, I just felt the Holy Spirit." I said, "Well, it might have been the Italian food from last night. You don't know what it was." I get real nervous when people say, "I just don't feel this," or "I don't feel that." Your feelings can be one thing, and it does not change the facts. I've had people tell me, "I just don't feel like Jesus can be the only way." I don't care how you feel. Facts are facts, no matter how you feel about it. Faith is an exercising of the facts in one's life. And one's feelings do not necessarily determine whether one has exercised faith or not.

Now, that being said, 1 John chapter 5. We're going to make it simple tonight. I already used the ABCs. And this is gonna really dovetail well to the previous questions regarding textual criticism, authorship, and all that kind of fun stuff. 1 John chapter 5 verse 12. It says, "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." Unless I read incorrectly, every single one of those words is one syllable, right? It doesn't take a whole lot of knowledge or thought. I mean, if you have Jesus, you have life. If you don't, you don't. Verse thirteen. "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God." That's faith, right? "that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." The only way to reconcile

feelings with facts and faith is to trust the facts in the words of God that verify the faith of which we exhibit and believe. In other words, someone says, "I struggle with how can I know." Because the Lord said it. If you are going to rely on your personal feelings for your security of faith, you're in for a miserable future. I can promise you that. Because some days you feel it. And some days you don't. Some days you feel like you and the Lord couldn't be closer. Some days you feel like you scream and holler, and you wonder where is he. That's reality, is it not? I mean, that is just what it is. And if we allow that to dictate our facts, we're in trouble.

Let me give you some good biblical examples. How about Job? I know he was in the Old Testament, but he was sick, lonely, on a dunghill, and everybody criticized him. How do you think he was feeling out there? Feeling pretty bad, wasn't he? What were the facts? When you read chapter 41 and 42, the Lord had never left him, and you see that Job had never ceased to believe, even though he struggled with his belief. He did not allow his environment to do so. How about King David? You know that whole Bathsheba thing didn't turn out real well, right? All right. In Psalm chapter 51 David responds to being discovered of his infidelity when Nathan the prophet has come to him, and he cries out to the Lord about his despair and his sin, but at the end of the passage he talks about that it's not by sacrifice of bulls and goats, and that it's about a relationship with the Lord. In other words, I cannot allow how I feel right now to dictate my relationship with the Lord, even though sin has taken place.

Over, and over, and over, and over, and over again throughout scripture you have individuals, men and women, who find themselves in environments that are not wonderful. And so, feelings would not necessarily be great. But the feelings never change the facts or the faith that was exercised. In a nutshell, the only way to line up your feelings with your faith is to trust the word of God. That's what we got. We've got to believe that it says what it says, why it says it, and that it's true, and that we believe that it says what it says. Once we base it on feelings, we've removed ourselves away from the word of God, and we're subject to whatever kind of day we're having that day. And some days we don't have very good days.

Now the last illustration I'll give. I had the privilege this weekend of performing the wedding ceremony of my niece. My favorite part of the wedding ceremony are the rings. They are. Those of you who have been at a wedding ceremony that I've officiated, the reason I love the part about the rings is because, I mean, you say the vows, you say the I dos, but the ring goes with you. And one of the things I encourage every couple I have the privilege of marrying is I encourage them to wear the rings in the good times and in the bad times, when they feel like it, and when they don't. Can you imagine, and unfortunately there are people that do this, can you imagine if we took our wedding ring off, or placed it, on based on how we felt about our spouse that given day at that given time. I mean that would be difficult, would it not? Because if it's "Well, how do I feel?" I mean, you get in a fight, "Well, yeah," put it in my pocket, "I am not feeling. This isn't going real good. Oh wow, we made up." Okay, put it back. This ring, the fact of the matter is, a relationship was established when it was put on, and the feelings that take place do not dictate the facts of the relationship, even if there's distance or despair. Why

do I know that? Because vows were exchanged. A ring was exchanged. How do we know that for our own personal faith? Because the word of God says, "I've written this that you might know that you have eternal life."

Every time I have the privilege of sitting down, whether it's a child or an adult, and leading them to the lord, the first thing I do is take them to 1 John 5:13, because here is what I tell them. The first thing that the devil's gonna do in your life once you get saved is try to talk you out of the fact that you got saved. He's going to get you to question. He's going to get you to doubt. He's going to get you to worry. He's going to get you to wonder. Because if he can get you to do all that stuff, wondering if you really are, you'll never live your faith in your salvation. You will never live it, because all you do is worry about it... And one other thing I'll share with you before we transition to the book of Revelation is you never find anybody in the New Testament that asked this question. How do I know that I really am saved? You know what they ask? How do I get saved? I got news for you. Because some of us have been saved so long we forget what it's to be lost. Lost people don't care. Lost people don't go around going, "Well, I wonder if I'm good or not? What does Nicodemus say? "How can I be born again?" What does the woman that, you know, had been married six times, the woman at the well, what does she say? "Where can I get this water?" They don't say that, "Well, you know, I'm thinking I'm okay. Maybe. I don't know. I went to VBS once." You don't get that. They know it.

So, one of the things I encourage people is, if you've ever struggled, questioned, you've ever doubted, lost people don't doubt their salvation. They know they're lost. But for those of you who are doubting, go back to the word of God. What does it say? Who does it say you are? And what are the facts? What is the faith irrespective of the feelings, because feelings come and go, and sometimes you just had a bad meal. I mean it happens. And you just got to deal with it.

Anything on that before we go to Revelation? All right, yes, sir?

[unintelligible]

The question is, if you couldn't hear, and by the way you have a very loud voice, but some may not have heard the question, is what about these preachers, always makes me nervous, because somewhere in another room these preachers means me, what about these preachers that almost specialize in getting you to doubt your salvation? Now, there are several I think motivating factors. I have sat under, been under, been a part of, and seen exactly what you're talking about. There is something that we call retreading. You all know what retreading a tire is? Like the big eighteen wheelers. Take a tire that the tread's getting low, and they actually go back, and they recut it, and they retread, and they retread, and I've known people that have been baptized five times, because they felt like their life had taken a wrong turn, or maybe they had like King David fallen into sin. And well, "I would have never done that if I really had been saved." Ha! Read the accounts of the guys in the Bible and say you mean you wouldn't have done that. These guys were messed up. They did some horrible things.

That being said, what is the motivation? I cannot speak on behalf of those guys, but numbers always sell. What I mean by that is the more notches I can get on the belts, the more decisions I can claim that have been taking place, the more notoriety, the more publicity, sometimes even, the more finances that come in. I can't speak for all of them, but I can speak for me. You might be surprised how many people I talk out of getting baptized, because what will happen is you'll have somebody, this is a standard issue story, okay? This happens not every day, but a lot in my life. Someone will say, "You know, I was a teenager, and I was active at my church. I was at youth camp, and I know when I was sixteen years old I was at youth camp, and I got saved. I know I did. I prayed for Jesus to save me, and everything was great, and then I went to college, and it's never been the same. It's been awful. And I've just lived in sin for ten years, and I just need to get saved, and I need to get baptized. I need to start over again." I'm like, "No, you don't need to start over. You just need to repent, because the relationship didn't go away, but the fellowship did, shall we say. In other words, the intimacy, the walk. You don't find anybody in your New Testament that gets unsaved, unreconciled, unredeemed.

And I know that's a big discussion people like to talk about "losing" your salvation. I get all that. But there are some guys that specialize in taking people who come to church having just gotten out of a prayer meeting with the Lord and convince them that because of some thought they had or something that occurred they're really not safe. They need to get saved again. And they specialize in you doubting. At the end of the day, and again I'm being critical, and I admit it, what would drive them to do that? Your security then becomes dependent on their ministry rather than the Lord. But think about that for a moment. Because oftentimes they're not guiding people to scripture. They're guiding people to logical thinking, rational thought. "Have you considered this," or "What about that?" Yeah, how many times have you ever witnessed or been a part of those services, they're usually most of the time not quoting scripture to you. They're talking you through to get the masses.

Now, you all know that for six years of my life I traveled in vocational evangelism. Let me tell you a story that happened to me more than one time. I would roll into a town, typically, you know, doing a Sunday through a Wednesday revival, or maybe a weekend, you know, Bible stuff, whatever it may have been. This is a story I heard from more than one pastor. Here's what they would say. They'd say, "Jeff, a year ago we had an evangelist sitting here, and he wrecked the place. You do that again, and I'll never use one again." I said, "What do you mean, they wrecked the place?" And I've had guys say, "I've had guys giving an altar call, and they basically say, 'If you love your dog come to the front,' just to get people to come to the front." I've witnessed that. I don't know if you have. I've been in environments where they will so talk you into doubting yourself that anybody and everybody wants to get saved again, because they've all questioned. They've all sinned. We've all fallen. You know, at the end of the day, you have to question what's the motivation? It can't be the word of God, because the word of God says, "I've written these things that you might know that you have eternal life." And one day I'll stand before God, and he may look at me and say, "Jeff, you are so off the mark."

I cannot tell you how many people I've talked out of getting baptized again. Oh, I'm going to tell you, we could double our baptisms here if we wanted to. Easy. Everybody who called me or emailed me and said, "I want to get baptized." We could double. But I said, "Okay, let's talk about this. Why do we need to get baptized?" "Well, it's been a rough ten years." "That's not a reason to get baptized. You get baptized because you got saved." "Well, I got saved years ago." "Well, then you don't need to get baptized." "Yeah, I do. I want to." Ah. Feelings. So, what do you think I do with folks? I walk them through the facts. I walk them through their own expression of faith and say, "Well based on that, you don't need to be baptized. You just need to live right."

Does that make sense? Here's the problem. When you tell people, "You just need to live right," that's not a notch on your belt, and it doesn't make your newsletter look good. Now I know that's an ugly thing to say, but understand when there are ministries and preachers who specialize in doing what you're talking about, they always advertise how many people made a decision. It's always about a number. Now, numbers do represent people, but the question you've got to ask is, "What was the number, and why was the number, and did we even need the number?"

Does that help at all? So, my security is what the word of God says, not in the eloquent tongue of someone convincing me of something that is contrary to the word of God. Now, hear me clearly. If you need to be baptized, we're going to baptize you, plain and simple. You know baptism is an expression on the outside of a reality on the inside, plain and simple. But you don't need to do it thirteen times, okay? Sometimes you just need to live right, if that makes any sense. And I tell people, I'm going to say, "Hey you can go get dunked again, but that's not going to help your situation. Just because you get baptized doesn't mean you're not going to struggle with temptation. It doesn't mean you're going to deal with bad decisions." Does that make sense? I mean, but some people find it as a cure all, and they're just dying to jump in the pool, or whatever it may be, but there's a lot of that out there, unfortunately.

And I apologize if I seemed overly critical about that. Even the apostle Paul talked about those who preached with a different flavor in a different angle. I'm not criticizing them in the message of salvation. I am criticizing the motivation to talk people into not being saved. Now, I do believe that you should believe that you know that you know what you know, but if you know it, go on with it, if that makes any sense. We are all going to mess up. The apostle Paul admitted in chapter 7 in the book of Romans the things he wants to do he doesn't do. The things he doesn't want to do he does. But you never see the apostle Paul go jump in the baptistry again. Just a thought there.

All right, we're out of time almost.

Revelation chapter 10. I apologize. But that was a good topic. Revelation chapter 10. By the way, did you notice my new contemporary Revelation 10.2 on your outline? Sorry. I was just having fun. Revelation chapter 10. If you were not with us last week, we are in what we know as one of the parenthetical chapters of the book of Revelation. What that means is we're stepping out of the chronology of the book Revelation. These chapters,

chapter 7, chapters 10, potentially chapter 14, as we discussed last week, and a little bit of chapter 16, take us out of all of the famous seals, and vials, and the mark of the beast, and it kind of gives the picture sometimes looking back lots of years in the past or many years in the future as we're going to see in just a moment, to kind of give us what we oftentimes would call color commentary. That means that today we pick it up in verse 4 of chapter 10. And by the way, we're probably not going to get through this outline tonight. So just bring it back next week. It says,

4 And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not. 5 And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, 6 And swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer: 7 But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets. 8 And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth. 9 And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. 10 And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.

Now, in this passage of scripture, by the way if you were not with us last week, one of the things that we talked about in the first three verses is this angel that shows up is described in language that is eerily parallel to Jesus Christ as circled about with a rainbow and the feet that are burning and such. And so, we talked about what is called a Christophany in the Old Testament, the character known as the angel of the Lord, possibly the pre-incarnation manifestation of Jesus Christ who always was, always will be, but was physically present with us for thirty-three and a half years.

That being said, we continue that context in verse 4. This same angel, it says that he uttered seven thunders. Now remember in the book of Revelation you've got seven seals, right? You've got the famous seven seals. You've got the seven vials. You've got the seven trumpets. I put those in the wrong order. I'm sorry. Seals, trumpets, vials. Here we have seven thunders. I want you to see what I put on your outline. There is no specific reference in scripture to what this entails. If somebody comes to you and says, "I know what that is." No, they don't because we don't know what it is, because he was told not to tell us what it is.

Now, there is a lot of good ideas and a lot of good thoughts. In fact, one of the things I shared with you on the parallel here is in Psalms chapter 29 it speaks about the Lord, and his voice, and how he speaks. Not only that he speaks things into creation, but that he

keeps things within their bounds. It talks about the power of the voice of the Lord. That's Psalms 29. In verse 3 of Psalms 29, it says, "The voice of the lord is as a thunder that roars." That's really all we've got to help us. We know that this mighty angel is an eerie parallel to the person of Jesus. We know he speaks as a voice of thunder. We know there are seven of them.

Now the question comes up, is this another series of judgments that we're not given the details of? We don't know. We have literally no idea. We know about the seals. We know about the trumpets. We know about the vials. There are seven thunders that are given for us. We just are not given the details. The only thing that gives us any detail, and it's a little bit later on when it says that time should be no more. Remember this is parenthetical. We're stepping out so to speak. And so, the question that we've got is, are these seven thunders potentially not limited to the book Revelation, but have been spoken throughout all of what we know as time? We just don't know. I don't want to belabor us anymore with stuff we don't know, but I want to encourage you don't try to make it something it's not, if that makes sense. We just know that the Lord spoke seven thunders. We really don't have a clue what they are.

But then in verse 5 it says, "And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven." Now, this is probably as far as we're going to get tonight, because I believe this is a fascinating study in scripture, and particularly in regards to the person of Jesus Christ when it comes to standing, and when it comes to being seated. Now, what I put on your outline here about the place. Revelation chapter 20 verse Revelation chapter 21. So, flip a few pages to the right. Notice in chapter 10 remember it's parenthetical, we're taken out of time here. It says, "He had a foot on the sea, and he had a foot on the land." But it says that time was no more. Now, if you go to chapter 20 beginning verse 11, it says, "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them." So, can we just all agree that creation as we know it is gone? Is that a good agreement there? It says there was found no place for them, right? They're gone, alright? This is a fulfillment of 2 Peter chapter 3 by the way, but nonetheless, "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead." That's interesting. I thought all the creation was gone. But it says the sea gave up the dead.

Now, the reason I bring that up is there are places, for example, even in the book of Genesis chapter 1, where it talks about the Spirit of God hovering over the deep, there are places like Psalms 104, where it talks about the seas, that sometimes the word or the concept of a sea is not a strict reference to a literal physical place as we know it. But I hate to use this. It's not really a figurative, but it's really more a spiritual reality that oftentimes, if you look at the context of scripture is utilizing the abode of the demonic. Leviathan in Job chapter 41 who is called the king of the earth, a picture of Satan. Where does he come out of? The sea. Again though, that chapter in Job is really not about some

physical creature in a physical body of water. It's talking about how Satan maneuvers in our lives, and yet he comes out of the sea.

So, there's all these kinds of passages that we see in regards to sea that are not like a physical body of water. But then you go to chapter 21. It says, "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea." And so, that being said, when this passage of scripture says that this mighty angel has one foot on the land and one foot on the sea, and then later it says, "And time was no more," even though it's parenthetical, and it's pulling us out of the chronology of the book of Revelation, what I think chapter 10 is doing or helping us do is fast forward to the end of the book to see how this is all going to wrap up because I want you to think about how the book of Revelation has been going up to this point. In the beginning of chapter 6, you have the famous seven seals that are open. Then you've got the famous trumpets. I mean, you've got the woes. I mean, things aren't going well. You've got martyrs under the throne of God. You've got people being persecuted. you're about to have people who have their heads removed from their bodies, because they won't take the mark of the beast. I mean, it's not going well. But all of a sudden, in chapter 10, it's almost like okay we're gonna give you the last chapter right now and let you know that there's gonna come a time where there is time no more and the Lord himself is going to wrap all this up. And so, we kind of have that picture there with the concept of being on the sea.

Here's the interesting thing about posture. And I know we're down to a few minutes. In Acts chapter 2, I'm gonna just go through these to leave you hanging, and then next week we're going to actually read them, okay? Feel free to go do so this week. In Acts chapter 2, Pentecost sermon Peter says that Jesus rose from the dead, and he sat on the right hand of the Father, okay? Colossians chapter 1 verse 3 says, "After he paid the price for our sins, he sat on the right hand of the Father." Romans chapter 8:34 or Hebrews chapter 10:12, all of these passages say that after Jesus accomplished not only the mission of the cross, but the mission of the resurrection, that he sat down, okay? Critical. He sat. In fact, Hebrews goes on to say, "He sits," so that he can make intercession for us to be a mediary between us and the Father, alright?

What's interesting is there are several places where Jesus is standing. Acts chapter 7 at the martyrdom of Stephen. That's a fascinating one we'll hold until next week, and in the book of Revelation chapter 5 when Jesus the Lamb of the tribe of Judah who takes the book out of the hand of the one on the throne, which possibly is this little book, and what we see here, not only in chapter 10 but chapter 19, when Jesus returns physically to earth, he is in a posture of standing. In fact, his vesture is up to his thigh, and it says "King of kings and Lord of lords." You say why is that significant? Because what you see in the scripture is that Jesus went to the cross, rose from the dead, and he sat. When Jesus stands up, he's coming back. In Revelation 10, even though we're out of the chronology, what is the posture? He's standing. So, we're dealing with a passage that's talking about the wrapping up of all things. Particularly it says, "Time will be no more, and the mystery of God will be completed."

Next week, I know we had a short time, we're going to focus on the standing and the seated part, because there's a fascinating study there, particularly in Acts chapter 7 with Jesus standing at the martyrdom of Stephen. Let me give you a hint. I don't think he was going, "Way to go Stephen." Golf clap. Let's pray.

Lord as we depart from this place, we thank you for the facts. Lord, thank you that even though we have sinned and rebelled against you and your work that you loved us enough according to your word that you're willing to send your Son for the sacrifice of our sins. Thank you, Lord that you've given each and every one of us the opportunity to exercise faith, to confess you as Savior, and to confess you as the forgiver of our sins. Lord, I pray for all of us tonight that we would never let our feelings dictate our faith based on the facts. It is the name of Jesus Christ we pray, Amen.