

Ask Jeff 6.21.17  
*Wednesday Bible Study*  
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Alright, I enjoy. That was a fun session of Ask Mike. I like that. That was good. Now Mike got a little taste of things because as soon as you're about to wrap, all of a sudden another hand goes up.

Let me segue real quick before we get to the Bible study about Master Life because anytime we talk about a book or we talk about a cover and when we talk about scheduling and programs, let me give you the takeaway. What is the end game? What's the goal? It's real simple. We believe that there are certain key scriptures that every believer in Jesus Christ ought to take to their heart and know by heart. Secondly, we believe that every believer in Jesus Christ ought to establish a regular daily pattern in their life where they meet with the Lord, hear from the Lord, and receive instructions from the word of God. It helps establish that. Third, it helps communicate how you can clearly share the gospel, how you can share your own and know your own personal conversion, salvation testimony, and then ultimately be able to impact a lost and dying world with those very simple tools. So that is the simple takeaway of what it provides and hopefully a very encouraging group session, so to speak.

So tonight, turn to Revelation 4. We're going to start with a quick jump through Revelation before we get to the database. For those of you that are first time guests or visitors with us or joining us by way of online, this is a Q & A Bible study where it goes anywhere you want it to go, and then we go into somewhat of a programmed Bible study but the last couple of times that we've met our Q & A has extended way into our study of the book of Revelation and I don't want you to forget that we are studying the book of Revelation. And so tonight in chapter 4, if you haven't been with us or maybe because it's been so long since we've been here in Revelation, let me catch you up to speed real quick.

In chapter 1, we have the introduction. We have the Apostle John on the island of Patmos. He receives the vision of Jesus Christ to communicate three very important things: the things which were, the things which are, and the things which are to come. Now let's be honest, when it comes to the book of Revelation, we are fascinated with what is to come, correct? We all want to know how, when, where and what, and ultimately why. All of the "to come" stuff, all the things that we're most interested in actually begin in chapter 6 of the book of Revelation.

Chapter 2 and 3 are the seven churches of Asia Minor beginning with Ephesus and ending with Laodicea. We looked at those not only as individual churches as a picture of our own spiritual life but also from 30,000 feet, they're somewhat of a prophetic voice of the history of the church of Jesus Christ from his ascension until his eventual return.

When we get to chapter 4 and 5, we find ourselves around the throne room of God. We're there in front of the crystal sea and as we're going to see tonight, there's 24 elders and there's the famous beast and/or cherubim that we'll address next time. And we have a picture in Revelation unlike any other. We're in the throne room whereas 2 Corinthians 12 when the Apostle Paul said, "I was caught up into the third heaven," this is what he was talking about.

So what we see is the Apostle John who we addressed last time, who's a wonderful picture for us of the church of Jesus Christ being taken up from what we know as earth into the heavenlies and experiencing this incredible experience. And tonight I titled it what can you expect for the believer. If you're a believer in Jesus Christ, there are two or one of two events that are absolutely positively going to happen in your life. Either A, you are going to physically die and go be with the Lord. Or B, the Lord is going to come for you while you are still alive. Those are the two options for you as a believer in Jesus Christ. Tonight, we're going to talk about what happens when one of those two events happens in your life because it's going to happen to every believer in Jesus Christ, and in chapter 4, verses 1 through 5, we have a beautiful picture through the Apostle John of our security in Jesus Christ and our future in Jesus Christ. It says,

1 After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. 2 And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. 3 And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. 4 And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold. 5 And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

Now on the outline that I've given you tonight, you'll notice first there's a very important transition that takes place. For two whole chapters, seven individual churches, all we hear about is the church, the church, the church. The word "church" isn't going to show up again until chapter 19 of the book of Revelation. Now all of a sudden a person who was seeing the churches whom we know as the Apostle John has been caught up into the heavens. It says that a door was opened in heaven and he heard a voice as if a trumpet.

You know, there are two passages of scripture in the New Testament that we collectively like to call the rapture passages. Now for some of you who hear that word rapture and it

kind of gives you a weird feeling, the term rapture literally means just to be caught up supernaturally from one place to another instantaneously, and I think we can agree that the Apostle John has experienced a rapture event in his life in this section. He was on the island of Patmos, now he's in front of the crystal sea. He was in exile at the hands of a man by the name of Domitian, now he's right in front of the throne of Jesus Christ himself. In an instant because it says there in verse 2, "And immediately I was taken up."

1 Corinthians 15, 1 Thessalonians 4, speak to that what I call that second possible event in a believer's life. Event number 1 that the majority of believers have experienced is they have had the loss of their physical life and then immediately been in the presence of the Lord, but there is coming a day where there will be believers according to Luke 11:25 and 26 where those who are alive in Christ will be caught up in the air to be with the Lord.

So notice it happens after the churches are discussed, a door opens, a voice as a trumpet calls him up. Now listen to the timing. Verse 2, "And immediately." Now I'm going to quote 2 Corinthians 5:8 in partiality and I'm going to let you finish it tonight. We're going to have a little listener participation, okay? "To be absent from the body...is to be present with the Lord." It is one of the most well-known verses in all of the Bible. The Bible does not say to be absent from the body and wait a few years and you might be with the Lord. It says to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. I've said this once, I'll say it a thousand more times, the day, the moment, the minute that Jeff Meyers breathes his last breath on earth, I'm more alive at that moment than I ever have been on earth because all the struggles of this earth, all the pains of this earth, all the death of this earth are no longer a reality in my life. And it says here that immediately he was taken up. I think that's critical to our understanding, that when we talk about being in the presence of the Lord, when we talk about what we'll experience, that it doesn't delay for years and it's not tangent upon something else and you don't have to wait for this or that, it's an immediate experience in a believer's life.

Now I want you to notice the location. It says he was before the throne of God. Now I'm going to allude to a very well-known famous passage of scripture tonight. It's in John 14. Now in John 14, we're probably most familiar with verse 6 which Jesus said, "I'm the way, the truth, the life; no one comes to the Father but by me." By the way, does anybody know whose question he was answering when he made that statement? Thomas. Absolutely right. Thomas, who we know as Doubting Thomas, said, "How can we know the way unless you show us the way?" And Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, the life; no one comes to the Father except by me." But you go back into verse 1 and 2 of chapter 14, some of the most famous verses in all of the Bible. Jesus says, "If you believe in God, believe also in me for there are many mansions in heaven that I have prepared for you. If it were not so, I would have told you for I will come again and call you unto myself."

Jesus makes this great promise. How many of y'all have heard that verse quoted at a funeral service? We know that there is a day coming. How many old southern gospel songs talk about a mansion on a hillside, that there is a mansion, that there is that which has been prepared for us. Why is that important to our understanding? That picture of

John 14 is not in Revelation 4 and 5. There's no mansions. There's no streets of gold. There's none of that picturesque language that we think about, and what I showed you on your outline here and for the sake of brevity we won't turn to all the passages, when you get to the end of the book of Revelation, particularly chapters 20 and 21, that's where you see the manifestation, the tangibility of what Jesus was saying. Now there's that phrase in John 14:2 that we oftentimes just say real quickly and don't pay attention. He says, "I will come again." Jesus is telling his apostles not just of his physical resurrection after three days in the tomb, he is saying there is going to come a time period in the future that I will return, we know it as the Second Coming, and then what we know as the mansions and the streets of gold, all those incredible things are actually mentioned at the end of the book of Revelation.

Why is that important? I'm going to speak personally because I know myself the best. If Jeff Meyers tonight were to breathe his last breath, I'm not going to be in my mansion tomorrow. I'm not going to be there. Do you know where I'm going to be? I'm going to be in the front of the crystal sea in front of the throne of Jesus Christ. My mansion is coming later, okay? So sometimes we say, oh, you know, somebody who's passed away that's dearly beloved and you're like, "Well, they're just up there enjoying their mansion." No, they're not. Scripturally speaking they will one day. You see, the picture in Revelation 4 is what happens to you and what happens to me as a believer in Jesus Christ immediately after either A, we breathe our last physical breath, or B when the Lord comes for us.

We're immediately in his presence, he is before the throne, notice the qualities that are of the throne and the one sitting on the throne. There's an ephod or kind of a garment, so to speak, jasper represents transparency and holiness, sardine represents redemption. Now this is something that's been hijacked, there's a rainbow in heaven and it doesn't mean what the world says it means. The rainbow was God's symbol before it was ever an agenda's symbol. The rainbow was God's sign to the world that he would not judge us by a flood again and I've got news for you, there's a rainbow around the throne of God right now. It is a picture of redemption. It is a picture of salvation. It's also a picture of judgment, that he did. Understand that when Noah and his family went into the ark, there were a lot of folks that did not enter into the ark that fateful day. So there is a rainbow, there is an emerald which in scripture means faithfulness, you see in Revelation 19:11 he's called the faithful and the true one.

And so John is pictured before this throne and there are certain unique persons that are there. Tonight I want to talk about the 24 elders. Boy, there's been all kinds of discussion of these folks, there's been books that have been written, and I'm just going to be honest with you, on behalf of the academic community, on behalf of the pastoral community, and on behalf of all believers of Jesus Christ that have ever walked the face of this earth, nobody knows who these people are. Nobody really knows. We can speculate. We can talk. But there is no one who can conclusively say, "That's who these people are."

Now traditionally there have been people that have said, "Well, this is the 12 tribes of Israel or the representatives of the 12 tribes and it is the 12 apostles." That's tradition. There's only one problem with that, is we're going to get to this when we get to

Revelation 7, you have the original 12 tribes of Israel, did you know that two of them don't make the list in Revelation 7 and they're actually replaced by two others, and the 12 apostles, we know that Judas, he goes his own thing and goes to his own place; he is replaced by Matthias and then the Apostle Paul is called an apostle out of due time. So you technically if you want to be specific about it because you've had two replace two, you really do have 12 tribes but you really have 13 apostles and you only have 24 seats.

Now that doesn't mean, it doesn't mean that it's not the 12 tribes and it's not the apostles because I don't know and neither do you but what we do know is how they are described. The first thing they're described is elders, okay? They're described as those according to 1 Peter 5 are in authority spiritually speaking. By the way, 1 Peter 5:4 says the role of an elder or the role of one who's in spiritual authority is to shepherd the flock of God, not to lord over them. In fact, it says in verse 4 there's a reward that is given. I put on your outline though 2 Corinthians 3:18. 2 Corinthians 3:18 to the church at Corinth, the believers, it says that they are all ministers. Alright, I want you all to hang on that for just a moment, okay? So you have people described as elders, you have them wearing a white raiment. In Revelation 6 we're going to find these martyrs for the sake of Jesus Christ who are under the throne of God who are wearing, guess what? White raiment. When the armies of Jesus Christ come back in Revelation 19, can anybody guess what they're wearing? White raiment. Then we see that they're wearing crowns. The Bible speaks of this imagery in five very specific places as rewards for believers in Jesus Christ.

Why is this important? It is very possible that when I breathe my last breath or when the Lord comes for me that when I get to this place where the Apostle John is in Revelation 4, I may be able to name the 12 leaders of the 12 tribes and 12 of the apostles. It may be those guys, I don't know. But we've got very good evidence that it is possible these are 24 specific believers in Jesus Christ of which none of us know who they are, and I'm going to give you a little insight: whoever you think it might be, it's probably not. Does that make sense? We don't know who they are.

Now I have heard it humorously spoken and you know I like to utilize humor so just work with me for a moment. We've all played musical chairs. Is it possible that in heaven we play musical chairs for all of eternity and we all take turns on the 12? I don't know because we don't know who these 12 are, but we do know how they're described.

And finally what I like to call, boy, there's some fireworks. You know, there's this imagery of heaven that I want to dismiss tonight, this idea that we breathe our last breath as a believer, Jesus comes for us and we sit on a cloud for all eternity and we play the harp and we get fat and bald. That's what we're pictured like. I mean, that's the picture. However, I want you to notice what happens. It says then out of the thrones proceeded lightnings, thunderings and voices. July 4 celebrations in America can't compare to whatever that's going to look like. That's going to be an incredible experience and what I wanted you to see tonight is that when that day comes for you as a believer, the last thing you're going to say is, "I'm bored." The second to the last thing you're going to say, "Oh, I thought there would be more to it than this." And the last thing you would ever say is, "I'd like to go back." Because what we see in the Apostle John is he is immediately in the

presence of the one who saved him, the one who redeemed him, who is faithful, and you see all kinds of things happening and then it even goes onto the last part of verse 5 and it says before his throne were the seven spirits. You go back into Isaiah 11:2 and it explains what those are. What I want you to hear is he saw the total experience of being in the presence of God physically, not just spiritually.

Now here's the good news: this is not limited to the Apostle John. He's not the only one who has this. I believe because he's a picture of the church of Jesus Christ, what we discuss tonight is what every single one of us as believers of Jesus Christ have to look forward to, and when we pick up the story next time in verse 6, it's going to get even more exciting than that and we're going to see some things happening that are difficult to imagine which reminds us back in 2 Corinthians 12 when the Apostle Paul got a glimpse of this, he came back and he said, "I just, I really can't communicate what it was really like because I can't put it in words."

What did Jesus commission John to do? He said, "Write what you see." Next time we get together, we're going to talk about this crystal sea. What is that crystal sea? What does that have to do with anything? Who are these beasts that are around the throne of God? And one thing that's really interesting, why do the angels sing a song differently than the redeemed? There's actually two different songs when you go into chapters 4 and 5.

Alright, any questions about this tonight on Revelation or anything else before we go to the database? Speak now or forever hold your peace. Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Please, no. Thank you.

[unintelligible]

Fourth verse? Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Okay, the question that he is asking is because we're talking about angelic beings there in Revelation 4 and 5, he's talking about 2 Peter 2:4, the issue or the idea about the "fallen angels," and for those of you that were not here a couple weeks ago, we discussed this at length or some of y'all would say we discussed it ad nauseum, you know, depending on your perspective. It says, "For if God spared not the angels that sinned but cast them down to hell and delivered them into the chains of darkness to be reserved unto judgment." There was a time in the days past where a group of angelic beings rebelled against their Creator. It says they're held in chains. Here's the thing that's interesting and I

don't want to go all night on this, but you and I always think about chains as being physical chains, the Bible talks about in 2 Corinthians 10 there's strongholds, spiritual chains, and the last time I checked, you know, the devil can go as far as the Lord will allow him to go. And so are they in physical chains? I guess it's possible but according to Hebrews 1:14 angels are spiritual beings and I don't know how you can physically chain a spiritual being but the Lord can spiritually chain a spiritual being. They reserved into darkness because according to 2 Corinthians 6:2, one day you're going to judge angels. You say, "Well, how is that all going to work out?" I really don't know but it says it's going to happen. When you get to the very end when these angelic beings are finally and forever cast into their eternal damnation, those who are redeemed by Jesus Christ, the picture we get is we're actually standing with him when he makes that condemnation.

So in the past there was a group that rebelled. In the future they will be eternally condemned. In the present according to this passage that you alluded to, they are restricted to wherever the Lord allows them to go by chains of darkness. Does that help at all? Maybe? Not so much?

[unintelligible]

Correct.

[unintelligible]

Oh, oh, okay, okay. Now that statement, boy, okay, that's what we call a 2-8 curve ball right there. That one's coming right good. Here we go. He said, "I don't necessarily believe in a personal angel or guardian angel but I do believe in a 'personal demon.'" What you're referring to is in Ephesians 6 it says we don't fight against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers and rulers of darkness, and the idea that you get from that passage is that the enemy whom we know as Satan, the accuser, that he assigns, I like to call them his minions, he assigns his minions to do his dirty work because he can't be everywhere at one time. He's not omnipresent. Now the Lord is but he's not, and when you cannot be omnipresent, you have to delegate and the picture we get in Ephesians 6, there's military language being used throughout, because then it says that we wear the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the sword. I mean, that's military, correct? And so you've got this whole idea and what does the military do? You have generals and you have battalions and you have platoons and everything is split up so that eventually the private on the front lines is told to go somewhere that is a part of the agenda of the general who is delegating the battle, correct? And I think we see the same thing in our lives that if we are about the things of Jesus Christ, somehow, somehow in his very sordid economy, our enemy, the devil, is going to make an assignment by one of his minions to distract and attack and to tempt us to defeat us because it says that his desire is to steal, kill and destroy.

You said you believe you have a personal, you might at some point in life, you might have a dozen of his entities that have been assigned to a task or such. Does that make sense? In fact, those of you who have studied the life of Martin Luther, Martin Luther,

which by the way, we celebrate this year the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of what we know as the Reformation, in the movie entitled "Luther," and by the way, as we get closer to that 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we're going to show that as a church body to kind of see what took place and all that, but you see in his life the spiritual warfare that he went through, the battles of doubt and questioning where you see him even calling and crying out against the devil and to the attacks that were happening in his life. Someone I know many of y'all respect Billy Graham. I've heard Billy Graham say that in his days of preaching crusades, that oftentimes he couldn't get out of bed until 3 or 4 in the afternoon. He said, "It wasn't that I was tired," he said, "I couldn't physically get out of the bed." He said, "I had to pray myself out of the bed because the attack was so thick." Do you think the enemy wants anybody getting up in front of 50,000 people and a live television audience and telling them how to be saved and go to heaven and not hell? So what do you think he's going to do? He's going to unload. So what I would say to you and this may sound really weird, if I've said it before, I'm going to say it again: if you don't run into the devil every day, you might be going the same direction he is. And the more of his minions you run into, the more you might be on the path the Lord has for you. If that makes sense.

Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Ah, the question for those of you who were not able to hear. The question that I addressed as far as the Revelation study was what happens to a believer in Jesus Christ the moment after he breathes his last breath and I think we saw that picture. The question he asked was what happens to the non-believer? The best picture that we have in scripture is in Luke 16. We know it as the story of the rich man and Lazarus. For the sake of time, allow me to hopefully accurately summarize. I think we're familiar with this story. Remember the rich man found himself in hell and he was in torment. He was begging for a drop of water. He was crying out that no one who he personally loved would experience the same destiny in life. He was in absolute total misery. And so I think the Bible speaks clearly that when anybody breathes their last breath, they're either in a place that we refer to as heaven that we described, or a place that we would describe as hell. There is no third, fourth, fifth, or other option. And it's immediately. By the way, I could share with you and I don't want to get all spooky on you, but I could share with you story after story after story that because of what I have the privilege of doing in life, I've been at a lot of bedsides when people passed. The peace that believers have when they breathe their last breath. I've seen sweet sweet widow women who on those last few moments of their life have reached out of their bed like this, and I can only imagine what are they seeing, and I've seen people who have spent an entire life rejecting Jesus, talked about, "Give me a glass of water. I'm burning up. Somebody get me a fan." And I'm thinking what are they stepping into that we know not of?



So I think, I'm not trying to get spooky on you alright but I'm being honest with you, that a believer when they pass there is peace, there is calmness, there is expectation, and on the other side of the equation there is a much different experience. I do know a story that I'll share with you tonight and, by the way, you'll probably hear this again, so when you do just that's your nap time here in the service. My wife and if she were here tonight she would not mind me sharing this story with you at all. My wife's maternal grandmother, her mom's mom, spent her entire life in a false faith. She was what we call a Christian Scientist, if y'all are familiar with that, and spent her entire life rejecting the truth of Jesus, thinking that if she just had the right approach and if she just thought the right thoughts everything would be okay. Obviously she became very gravely ill and if you know anything about Christian Scientists, they don't go to doctors, they don't take medicine because they believe that doctors are of the devil. They really do. Maybe dentists but not doctors. No, I'm kidding, dentists. I'm kidding. My bill just got doubled, I can promise you that right now. But that's what they believe.

So she went into a special nursing home and it was a Christian Science nursing home where no medicine would be given but they would just be made comfortable. She was there and it was in the Dallas/Fort Worth area where we, Tracy and I lived. We were married. And I was working on my doctoral program at the time and a man who I've mentioned before by the name of Roy Fish, just one of the most godly men I've ever known in my entire life, not just for his academic knowledge but for his relationship with the Lord, when we went to our doctoral seminars there were two things that we did, is if you presented your paper last week, you prayed this week. That was just our system because, I mean, when you say who wants to pray, I mean, it's kind of weird. You know, you pray so that was just the system we prayed in.

So there was a man by the name of James and James who had presented his paper the week before, it was his opportunity and he asked us for prayer requests. We had gotten a phone call that morning at about 4 o'clock in the morning from my mother-in-law saying it's going to happen any moment. She's about to pass. They just knew it. Tracy and her family had witnessed to her grandmother a hundred times and continued to reject, continued to reject it. Well, we're in this doctoral seminar and what do we need to pray about and I raise my hand and I said, "Guys, we're in an evangelism seminar, we're talking about how to share our faith, and my wife's grandmother right now is on the brink of going to hell." I said, "Give her one more chance. One more chance." Dr. Fish, I'll never forget this, he looked at James and he said, "James, I've got this one today. I'm going to pray." He prayed that the flames of hell would lick her face so she would know where she would go without Jesus, and if my mother-in-law were here today she would tell you that her mom's last moments, all she talked about was how hot she was and she wanted some ice because she couldn't get enough to drink.

It's real, folks. We're not playing games here. There is a heaven and there is a hell and it doesn't matter what you do on this earth, what you do doesn't determine where you go, it's who you know. And you can be as religious as you want to be, you can go to church wherever you want to go to church, you could study whatever you wanted to go to study, and you can burn through the doors of hell. Or you can be a rascal of rascals and you can

call out to Jesus and he'll save you. It's real. I'm glad you asked the question because I think one of our problems is we forget how real hell is.

You know, I've had people before and they're being, I know what they mean but they really don't understand what they're doing. They're saying, "You just got saved because you didn't want to go to hell." And I'm like, "You're right." I mean, they're absolutely, "Yes!" You know, people say, "Well, I don't just believe in that hell insurance." I took out a policy. I mean, I have life insurance because one day I'm going to die and I want to provide for my family. Y'all don't get me there quicker than I want to get there, please. My joke is when that happens, I'm better off and just make sure she buys the yellow Porsche. That's all I ask, okay? But, yes, I understood I was a sinner. Yes, I understood Jesus was the solution to my sin problem. But I realize the consequence of me not having Jesus address my sin problem. Yes, I wanted a relationship with Jesus. Yes, I did not want to go to hell. So when people say, "Well, you just got saved because you didn't want to go to hell," you're right, I didn't want to go to hell because I realized that's where I was headed if it was not for Jesus. It's real.

Anybody else on that positive subject matter? Nothing else? We're good? Okay, moving on. Thank you, though, appreciate that. Let me get to the database. By the way, for those of you that are new, this database is completely random. Questions you submit online typically [fbcopelika.com/askjeff](http://fbcopelika.com/askjeff) or you can go to the Ask Jeff app and submit them there, or you just give it to us on a piece of paper.

It says, "Greetings, my friend," that's what it says, "Greetings." It says, "Jeremiah 11:11 states that God will bring evil on them, I'm paraphrasing. I understand that God allows bad things to happen but this implies more of a deliberate act. Will you please explain?"

Absolutely. Go to Jeremiah 11. Now just a reminder of the context of Jeremiah 11. Jeremiah 11, the southern kingdom is about to face the same consequence as the northern kingdom. What we know as the northern 10 tribes have already fallen to the Assyrians, they've already gone into captivity, they've already been taken out of their land, but the southern tribes have gotten prideful and said, "Oh, it'll never happen to us." So the Lord continually sends his prophets to the southern kingdom to say not only listen to thus saith the Lord but listen or observe what happened to your neighbors to the north because it's about to happen to you. And it did happen to them. And Jeremiah is a very unique one of the prophets. Most people believe or most people that study this believe not only was he pre-exilic, meaning that he wrote prior to the exile, but he was also an exilic prophet that wrote during the exile. We have individuals such as Ezekiel who was only an exilic prophet, Daniel who was an exilic prophet, but there's also the belief that Jeremiah kind of crossed from being before the exile into the exile.

But in Jeremiah 11:11 it says, "Therefore." Now you do understand if the word "therefore" is there, it's there for a reason? Yes, so we need to back it up just a little bit. Alright, so let's back it up to verse 8. Now remember, he's speaking to the southern kingdom. He's speaking to those who were rebelling against God. He said, "Yet they obeyed not, nor inclined their ear, but walked every one in the imagination of their evil

heart: therefore I will bring upon them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded them to do; but they did them not. And the LORD said unto me, A conspiracy is found among the men of Judah, and among the inhabitants of Jerusalem. They are turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, which refused to hear my words; and they went after other gods to serve them: the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken my covenant which I made with their fathers. Therefore thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon them, which they shall not be able to escape; and though they shall cry unto me, I will not hearken unto them. Then shall the cities of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem go, and cry unto the gods unto whom they offer incense: but they shall not save them at all in the time of their trouble." So the picture we've got is the people of God are rebelling against God, they're making false gods, they're worshiping false idols, and the Lord says they have broken their end of the covenant, they will not hearken unto my voice, therefore I will send an evil spirit and when I do so, they will cry out to their false gods and they will not answer.

Now I know we struggle with this and we say we know God allows bad but why would he ever purposefully initiate something that we would call evil? 1. Why did he do it? He did it to get their attention, did he not? Alright, I want you to turn to Revelation 6. I'm going to answer this question with Revelation. I know y'all are shocked we're going to Revelation. Revelation 6. We're going to talk about the famous seven seals. You know about the seven seals, the first four seals are the famous four horsemen of the apocalypse. Verse 1 of chapter 6 of Revelation, "And I saw when the Lamb," now who's the Lamb? That's Jesus, right? "And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see. And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given." I'm not going to continue reading, it's about the famous seven seals. Who opened up the wrath of God on planet earth? Jesus. Did he just allow it to happen? He opened the book. Why? Because what we see and what we'll see later in the book of Revelation is the people, the inhabitants of earth in Revelation are in the same place as they were in Jeremiah, they're thumbing their nose at God and saying, "We don't need you, God." And he says, "Fine, you don't need me? Experience the other side of me."

His wrath, yes, ultimately is to judge but purposefully it is to get our attention. When he came to the Israelites in Jeremiah 11, it says he sent an evil spirit. He didn't want them to worship false gods, he wanted them to turn from their false gods. You go later in the book of Revelation and it says that humanity still did not repent of their sins. So does God allow at times what we would call evil to occur? Absolutely. But what we do see in Jeremiah and in Revelation 6, there are times because as you brought up in 2 Peter 2, sir, the Lord is the one who controls the chain. And you remember the story of Job where Satan came and said, "Hey, how far can I go with Job?" And he goes, "You can go that far." You say, "Well, he allowed that." He allowed the parameter but he did not necessarily give the specifics of what would happen within that parameter. Notice it says then there were boils all across his body. The Lord didn't say, "Send him boils." The Lord we could say in Job's life allowed and/or sent an evil entity to oppress Job. Now in the case of Job, very different than Jeremiah because we see God proving and testing and showing his faithfulness in the face of adversity because Job said, "Should I curse God

and die? Shall I do that to the one who's blessed me with all these things?" Now his wife said, "Curse God and die." He said, "I'm not going to do that."

So to the question about Jeremiah, what we see is according to Colossians 1:15 and 16 which, by the way, our young people learned this week at Vacation Bible School, the Lord created everything that is visible and invisible and all of them are ultimately subject to his authority and his control, and if he so desires to utilize that for his sake and for his agenda for us to repent then, listen, the enemy must subject himself to the will of God. He cannot say, "Nope, not gonna do that." The Lord said, "Too bad, you're on my chain. I'm going to send you."

So Jeremiah 11:11, it's one of those hard verses but what we see is God purposefully allowing this and instigating this so his people will turn to him. But they did not. They don't in Revelation either. Here's my suggestion to you: whether you want to say it's allowed, whether you want to say it's purposeful, if you see anything similar to this happening in your life, turn. Don't be like the Israelites.

Any questions about Jeremiah 11? Anything in regards to that? We've got it all covered? Wow, we're flying tonight. Here we go, next one. Moving on. It says can you explain, I don't know, Luke 22:35-38?

Okay, Luke 22. I'm going to confess something to you, I don't have it memorized. So let's turn to Luke 22:35-38. Ah, yes. Alright, so before we get to these specific verses, there are certain passages in the gospel that are very what sometimes we would call apocalyptic or eschatological, end times, let's just say that word. In the gospel of Matthew it's chapter 24 and 25. In the gospel of Mark it's chapter 13. In Luke it's chapter 21 and 22, alright? But 21 mainly but then a little into 22 and 22 beginning in verse 35 it says, "And he," that's Jesus, "he said unto them," his disciples, "When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing. Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one. For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end. And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough."

Now we're going to have some fun with this in the very few moments that we have left because what I purposefully did not do was read the second half of the question until I read the verses. It said how do we look at these verses in light of Christians bearing arms? Because Jesus makes this statement, "Hey, there was a time where I sent you without money, without protection, you just went and you dusted your feet off but there's a day coming where you're going to need a 'sword.'" Alright, so we're going to do a little chronology here. So Jesus makes this statement in Luke 22. They say there are two swords, correct? He says, "That's enough. That'll be good. Two swords is good." Alright? Now in Luke 22, he says, "That's okay, you can have a sword." All's good there. Alright, as you go forward not only into Luke 23 but now we find ourselves in Matthew 26, the garden of Gethsemane when Jesus is taken by Judas and the whole betrayal by the kiss,

right? Do you remember any incident in that garden where a sword comes up? Ah, Peter. Remember what Peter does with that sword? He takes Malchus' ear off.

Now have y'all ever wondered why the ear?

[unintelligible]

Because he ducked? That's a very good observation. Kind of makes it sound like you've been in a similar situation. But he had his ear taken off. Now I'm of the belief and I don't want to belabor this question, that when Peter went for Malchus, he was going for his head. I mean, I don't think he was playing around, do y'all? If he was going for his head, he would have been going horizontally, correct? Well, you said he ducked, I don't think he did this, I think he did this and that ear was taken right off. Here's my point: what did Jesus tell Peter? "Put it up." He said, "Put up the sword." But a couple hours earlier he said, "I sent you out with nothing but there's a time that you're going to need your sword." The boy said, "Oh, here we go. We're gonna get a good fight going." And Jesus said, "No, no, no, not now." Here's what I want you to see, is soon thereafter Jesus says no sword. Is he contradicting himself? Absolutely not because he said there's a time coming. It's not this time.

Then we have the cross, do we not? The cross event takes place. Jesus dead, buried, three days, raises again. We have 40 days, I know I'm giving you a chronology here, then Jesus ascends. He ascends on high and at this point in life it's been approximately 2,000 years since he's returned. Don't worry, the Bible says in 2 Peter 3 there will be scoffers in the last days that say when is he coming. Then it says a day is a thousand years, a thousand years a day. It's only been a long weekend. Don't panic. It's okay. So we have this time period right here. When Jesus comes back, who's with him? Who's with him? We are. And what are we called? We're called armies. Those of you that were in the Navy, Air Force, Marines and Coast Guard, I apologize, he called it armies. He said the armies of heaven are with him. Do you remember what Jesus possesses on the white horse? A sword and his armies possess what? A sword.

And so Jesus was saying there's coming a day where you'd better have a couple of swords with you. And by the way, when you read and we're going to get there eventually in Revelation 19, I hope to get there before the year 2021. We'll get there eventually but what we see is that the armies of heaven are coming and they're descending in what we know as the battle of Armageddon where the blood rises to the bridle of the horse, and the picture you get for the armies of the Lord, us, is that we receive wounds but they're not permanent. It's a real battle with real blood. It's not spiritual. It's not ethereal. It's not picturesque. It's real and there's real people with real white robes bearing real, what? Swords. What did Jesus say? There's a time coming.

Now it's at this point, now it's been approximately 2,000 years, correct? It's at this time that I want to quote one of my famous quotes from one of my favorite friends that passed away recently by the name of Dr. Gene Williams. He made this statement, he said there is nothing that has to happen before Jesus comes back for us, there's a lot of things that have

to happen before Jesus comes back with us. There are some things that have to happen before he comes back with us that may happen before he comes back for us. The reason that is important is because all along this path of history the Lord could return at any moment. That's up to his discretion. That's his decision, not ours. And so when he told Peter, "Put it back, two swords will be good," you do realize in God's economy the return could have been in five years, it could have been in 50 years, or it could be in 2,000 years. So Jesus was not contradicting himself.

Now to whoever asked the question and it's 7:30, we've got to go, I want to leave you with this thought because the question was about defense and such. Though I appreciate the passage that was alluded to, allow me to take you to another one. Jesus made a statement in the Beatitudes, that's the Sermon on the Mount. He said, "Blessed are the meek." Meek. Jesus did not say blessed are the weak. The meek by definition means you humbly stand your ground. Meek does not mean retreat. It means to stand ground in a humble honoring fashion.

Jesus also made this statement, he said, "Turn the other cheek." Now you know how Christians have interpreted that for years? They've interpreted that as get beat on and get beat on again and get bludgeoned. But the problem is we're Westerners, we're Americans and we don't understand how they operate in the Middle East. For example, they don't hit like we do over there, alright? There's two hands, there's the right and the left. The right hand is the hand of power and of judgment. The left hand is of filth and discretion, okay? If you are going to "slap somebody" over in the Middle East, you're going to use your left hand because it's the hand of dirtiness, if that makes sense. You're going to really pop them. And do you know how you do it? You do this... pop them. Alright, they don't throw jabs. They don't throw hooks. Please tell me you're impressed a Baptist preacher knows the difference between a jab and a hook. Okay, they don't do that. No upper cuts, you know? They pop like that. Jesus said turn the other cheek, here's the interesting thing and we don't have time to illustrate it, maybe we'll bring this up later, and so just imagine this is going to be somebody's head. It's too late to call up a volunteer. Aren't y'all glad we ran out of time? But if this is somebody's head, alright, and I pop them, if they turn the other cheek my hand's going to miss them. Do you know what Jesus was saying? Stand your ground. Don't give in but don't get beat up. Did Jesus allow himself to? Jesus made this statement in John 12, "Nobody takes my life lest I give it." You know, we say they killed Jesus. They didn't kill Jesus. Jesus allowed his life to go. Big, big difference.

Let's pray. We've got to get out of here.

*Lord, as we dismiss from this place, thank you for equipping us with the sword of truth, with the word from you. God, whatever the situation, whatever the circumstance, whatever is happening in our life, God, I pray somehow the words we read, we studied, the commentary that was given will help us to understand, and more than anything, God, thank you that we don't have to spend eternity in a place called hell because of Jesus. It's in his name we pray. Amen.*

One last announcement as you leave tonight. Those of you that are interested in going on the water in about 8-9 months from now, a little Ask Jeff on the water, we've got a table set up back there. August 1 is the drop-dead line for to make everything happen. So just thought I'd let you know. I love y'all but I've got to go pick up a kid and go to a meeting. So I'm leaving. Bye. Love you.