

Ask Jeff 7.11.18  
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All right, ladies and gentlemen, let's go ahead and get started tonight. Hopefully you picked up one of the Circle of Concerns otherwise known as our prayer sheet. This is what we call a fluid living document, basically that means that there is ebb and flow and there are changes, additions and subtractions at all times. We try to update it about an hour and a half before we gather on Wednesday so to have it as current as possible but it's always fluid. That being said, on the very top at East Alabama Medical Center, I'm not familiar with or sure about the exact prognosis on John, but the other three are all scheduled to go home tomorrow. So pray that they do go home tomorrow. So that will be wonderful. Obviously those in Arbor Springs, those who are dealing with situations at home, and as you can see, there's quite a bit of our folks and family friends of our folks that are in out-of-town medical situations. And at the bottom, of course, there is a sympathy section and the unfortunate situation of family members who have lost those in our church family. On the backside, you'll see those serving in the missionary field or on the missionary field and in the military. As of this week, we don't have any current babies that are being born that we know of which is kind of a surprise. There's probably one that we don't know of that's out there because that seems like what we do. There's always babies everywhere here at First Baptist which is an absolute wonderful wonderful problem. Just to let you know, in a few weeks there will be another parent commissioning service and y'all will see all of those babies lined up again which is always a wonderful wonderful problem. It's God saying, "Hey, guys, guess what? In spite of you, I'm going to give you a future." So that's a wonderful problem.

Let's pray and then we'll get started.

*Lord, as we gather tonight, for those who are hurting, you know we hurt with them. For those who are suffering, we suffer with them. For those who are struggling, God, we struggle with them. God, we know that your mercy, your peace, your healing and, Lord, just your presence can surpass all medical diagnoses and abilities and expertise and, God, that's what we're praying for, all of these families, all of these situations, particularly those who have lost loved ones, not just the ones on this sheet but the ones that we know of in our community, in our neighborhoods, in our places of employment, just all around us. God, we know that we continue to live in a world that is struggling with the aftereffects and the consequences of sin so, Lord, we pray tonight as we study your word, that you would equip us to be as you call us to be your feet, your hands and your ministers into a lost and dying and dark world. May we infuse into this world the*

*truth and the hope that is only found in Jesus Christ. God, we continue to pray for all the ministry areas that are associated with First Baptist whether on this campus or off tonight and particularly in this room. Guide us and direct us in your word and may it be the primary source of all of our instruction. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

All right, crew, as we get started tonight, some of you may be first-timers to Wednesday night here at First Baptist. Allow me to kind of share how the flow goes. Typically on Wednesday night, and I said the word typically for a reason as you're about to see, we divide it into half of a Q and A question and answer time and half of what we might call a systematic Bible study. Now as far as that Q and A is concerned, the absolute easiest best way that anybody can submit a question is by way of our website, [fbcopelika.com/askjeff](http://fbcopelika.com/askjeff). You can submit a question. You are completely anonymous. We have no idea who you are and it goes into a random database whereby we pull, so you may be thinking, well, there's hundreds of questions already in there, you'll never get to mine. You can probably talk to your neighbor and they have had one in there over a year and we still haven't gotten to theirs and they come up randomly. There is no chronological order sequential order. You are anonymous. That being said, when the question is answered, I push a little "answered" button and it sends you an email link back to when it was answered just in the event that you were not here in person. You also have the ability to put down on a scrap piece of paper and hand it to me, or do like so many do on Wednesday night, raise your hand, put it in the air, you lose your anonymity but you get to take the conversation any direction you want.

Now notice, I made the statement that typically we start with a Q and A. Tonight I want to reverse the order, just mix it up. Now I know we're Baptist and we don't change well but we gonna change tonight and the reason I want to change the order is the subject matter that we find ourselves in our book of Revelation study tonight is one of the most debated and discussed and at times divisive subject matters in the book of Revelation, it's also one of the most intriguing conversations in the book of Revelation in what I have shared with you, I think the most critical chapter within the book of Revelation. It is the discussion of, it is the identity, it is the ministry of these famous two witnesses that show up in the book of Revelation. So hopefully you grabbed one of the outlines when you came in but we're going to go ahead and start with our Revelation study. It may take us down multiple paths, it may bring inquiry and questions, or we may just go for the first half and then get into random questions. You're going to lead the conversation and we'll see what happens.

But to pick up the story in the book of Revelation 11, just a little background here. Remember, all of chapter 10 and the first 14 verses of chapter 11 are what we call parenthetical, and that means that we're coming out of the chronology of the book of Revelation. Remember that we've had seven of the famous seal judgments that have taken place, we've had six of the famous trumpet judgments, and beginning in verse 15, we have the seventh trumpet judgment. But chapter 10 and the first half of chapter 11, much like some other sections in the book of Revelation, they allow us to take a step back and kind of see the big picture.

That being said, when we pick it up in verse 3 of Revelation 11, last week we studied this famous temple. In verse 3 it says,

3 And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. 4 These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth. 5 And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. 6 These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will. 7 And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. 8 And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. 9 And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves. 10 And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth. 11 And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them. 12 And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.

As I mentioned, one of the most fascinating sections not only of the book of Revelation but in all of the Bible, but particularly because it brings great debate particularly over who the identity of these two witnesses are. You'll notice on your outline here I have given you that there are two streams of thought. Now just because one has more quantifiable information on it does not mean that it is necessarily the one that you or anyone should subscribe to. So don't think in terms of quantity, let's think in terms of quality. The two options are that it's either Elijah and Enoch, or its Elijah and Moses. No one really debates about Elijah. Nobody really argues about that Elijah will be one of these famous two witnesses, but the Enoch versus Moses is where much of the great debate comes into. And so I just kind of wanted to walk with you on the reasoning why one might subscribe to one pair versus the other. But allow me to share this, at the end of the day, no matter who they are as far as their identity is concerned, it doesn't change what they do. It doesn't change their ministry. It doesn't change their death and their eventual resuscitation. It doesn't change that. So whether you subscribe to one pair versus the other, you may have reasons versus other reasons, other people may have reasons against but it doesn't change their function and their purpose, okay? So I just want to be clear about that but it is an interesting study and one worthy of discussion.

The first option is Elijah and Enoch. What is the reasoning? Well, both never died. That's pretty much it. You've got two individuals who do not experience what we call a natural

causation of death. In Hebrews 9:27 it says that all men must die and face the judgment. So it makes perfect sense that if the Lord is going to send two individuals to be a witness in the last days that are going to suffer a literal physical death and ascend up on high, it makes sense to send the two guys that have never experienced death.

Now these two individuals, Elijah, the famous story from 2 Kings, is caught up in the whirlwind and the famous song, you know, "Swing low, Sweet chariot," that's how we get that old spiritual song from. Elijah is out there, his ministry is about to be pushed over to Elisha. By the way, do you remember what Elisha's prayer was? He said, "I want twice what God did for you." And when you count up the miracles in the Old Testament, that's exactly what happened. That being said, Elijah is caught up in the whirlwind. He did not experience what we know as a physical natural death. It didn't happen, all right? Enoch in the book of Genesis 5, fascinating little sentence of Scripture right before what we know as Noah's flood, it says Enoch walked with the Lord and he was not. That's all we've got, but what we do know is that he did not die a physical death.

So both Elijah and Enoch were taken immediately into the presence of the Lord without first going into the ground, very much a rationale and a reasoning why the Lord would use those two individuals to be these two witnesses in the book of Revelation. One reason that I forgot to put in print and I apologize comes from the book of Jude. So if you can, turn one book of the Bible to the left to the book of Jude. One of the reasons that many who believe that Enoch is one of these individuals is because Enoch is the last person mentioned prior to the book of Revelation, and he's mentioned in a unique context. The book of Jude, only a few verses, a couple of pages in your Bible, speaks about the judgment of the Lord upon those who are rebelling against him. When you get to verse 14, it says, "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." I think he's saying they're ungodly, what do y'all think? I mean, it just keeps going over and over and over again. But one of the reasons that people would say, well, Enoch might be or must be one of these two witnesses is not only is he mentioned the page before the book of Revelation, the last individual mentioned in Scripture prior to Revelation, but he's mentioned in the context of judgment, in the context of the Lord executing his judgment on those who have rebelled against him in their ungodly beliefs, behavior and speech.

So if one wants to subscribe that's its Elijah and Enoch, obviously neither man died, and Enoch in particular is mentioned right before the book of Revelation in the attributes of the concept of judgment taking place, rightfully so. The other pair of individuals that people say, well, these are who the two witnesses are, is again Elijah and Moses. Now the first red flag comes up and says, "Whoa, whoa, timeout, Moses died." That's right. Moses died. According to the book of Deuteronomy 34, he was dead, he was buried, he never made it to the Promised Land, and according to the book of Jude, interestingly we keep going back to Jude, isn't it, according to the book of Jude, that the devil fought over his body with the Lord himself and Michael the Archangel.

So the reasoning for Elijah and Moses, why would this be? The first reason, we need to go back to Revelation 11, is both fulfilled the description that's found in verse 6. Revelation 11:6, "These," who are these, the two witnesses, right, "they have power to shut heaven that it rain not in the days of their prophecy." Who performed that in the Old Testament? Elijah, all right? 2. "They have power over the waters to turn them to blood and to smite the earth with all plagues as often as they will." And the argument is that that's exactly what Moses did in the book of Exodus. So those who would advocate for Elijah and Moses say, well, yes, Moses may have died, and we'll get to that in just a moment, however, his ministry in the book of Exodus and Deuteronomy very much follows verse 6 of the description of how these two witnesses are described and their ministry and their life.

The second reason is both of these men, Elijah and Moses, are the last two individuals that are mentioned by name in your Old Testament. In the book of Malachi, 400 years before the coming of Jesus Christ, they are mentioned there very specifically as the predecessors to or mentioning prior to the coming of the Lord both in the context not of a "first coming" but in the context of a second coming prophetic statement. Also, and I put on the outline here, in Matthew 11, Jesus made the statement about John the Baptist coming in the spirit of Elijah, which by the way, I know he's not the debated one, I get it, but he said to John the Baptist, he said, "If you receive me, he is Elijah," conferring that, once again, tying chapter 4 of Malachi in with the life and the ministry of Jesus Christ.

The third reason is both are mentioned at the Transfiguration. Matthew 17, it says after six days that Jesus took Peter, James and John and they went up to the top of a mountain that we call the Mount of Transfiguration now. It says there that Jesus' garment, his raiment became as white or whiter than the sun, and when that occurred, there were two individuals that were with him: Moses and Elijah. Interesting when you read that story in Matthew 17, Peter, James and John did not have to ask Jesus who they were. They said, "Hey, Moses is here. Elijah is here. Let's build three tabernacles, one for all three of you." I'm sure you know the rest of the story. The Lord said, "This isn't the time. It's not the place." They went down and found the demoniac kid who was struggling with the possession of which Jesus delivered and said these will only come out by prayer and fasting. But at the Transfiguration, again just like in Malachi 4, Moses and Elijah are the two with Jesus when he is transfigured before the apostles.

The fourth reason is that both serve as a picture of John 11:23 through 26. This is the famous chapter of the raising of Lazarus, and you remember even Lazarus gets raised at the end of this chapter, the dialogue in John 11 is between Jesus, Mary and Martha. Those are the conversations. These two ladies, the sisters of Lazarus who are struggling rightfully so with their brother's death, here is a man who has raised people from the dead, who can heal the sick and the lame, and why is the one whom he loved, Lazarus, why is he still in the tomb? In that context, in verse 23, Jesus asks the sister, "What do you think will happen?" And she goes, "Well, at the last day he will raise." No problem. Jesus says, "True, but though he die, he shall live and those that live shall never die." And the statement that Jesus gives to the sisters of Lazarus is that at the end of the day there's

really two kinds of people, there are those who die believing in Jesus who will one day will be raised from the dead, and those who never experience death who will be transformed with the Lord at his coming. There are two classifications of individuals, all right? Jesus referred to both of them in John 11. There are going to be those who die, remember 1 Thessalonians, the first chronological letter of the Apostle Paul? The early believers were struggling with this. "You said, you know, that you would be the author of life, we'd have everlasting life, why are we having funerals?" And he made the statement there in chapter 4, "Don't worry about it. The Archangel is going to sound and those that are dead will rise from the grave." All that to be said, Jesus said those that are dead that come to life through him and those who never die. Those who advocate that it's Elijah and Moses say that's a perfect picture, Elijah never died, Moses did die and came back.

The last but not least reasoning for this pair of individuals is both fulfill a type of 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4 which are what we call the famous rapture passages, those who are dead in the Lord, those who are alive in the Lord meeting together in the air to be with the Lord.

So all that being said, these are the two discussions or shall I say even the disagreements on who these individuals will be, either Elijah and Enoch or Elijah and Moses. Nobody really argues about Elijah, it's really is it Enoch who never died or Moses who did die? I want to pause there because we're kind of doing things backwards, and say any questions, concepts, follow-ups, or thoughts about just the identities of the famous two witnesses? Questions, concerns, thoughts, rude remarks? We're good? Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Ah, about Enoch? Okay so the question, it's a great question. Let's just say for the sake of discussion that it is Moses, that Enoch is not the one who comes back so therefore Enoch ultimately becomes the only person, at least mentioned in Scripture, who never dies a natural physical death. What do you do with that in Hebrews 9:27, "All men must die and face the judgment"? Well, that famous statement, well, I say famous, it's famous to me because it's my wife's statement that there's always an exception to the rule but the exception never makes the rule. Interesting that in all of what we would call those general statements, there is always an exception. It is possible, and I agree with you, it's possible that he could become the only person who never dies a physical death that we're told of, and I see somebody shaking their head, "But he has to." However, Enoch doesn't do what's described in verse 6. Enoch wasn't at the Transfiguration. Enoch wasn't mentioned in Malachi 4. So you've got the evidence for Enoch is only that he never died. The evidence for Elijah is not that he did not die, it's that he shut up heaven and it didn't rain. Does that make sense?

So again, I agree with you, he would then become the only one. But let's just pretend that it is Enoch and Elijah, okay? At that point, if that is the case, then we have nobody who escapes death. So I mean, if we were in a discussion, I could argue the opposite point and say but don't we need somebody to show us that you don't have to die, you know? So

again, I'm getting a head that is shaking no. But, hey, again, people are pretty well set on who they think they are irregardless of the evidence, okay?

Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

That is correct. When that famous what we call rapturous event occurs, there will be those who never experience death. You're absolutely right. Prior to that event, there is nobody in the Scripture but you're right. So let's just pretend that it is Enoch, let's say that Enoch is not the one. Enoch never dies. To your point, sir, Enoch would join the millions of believers who never experience death as well. So there you go. Again, do you see kind of you can go both sides on this? You can go back and forth. It doesn't change the ministry, just the identity. Do not split your friendships over this. Don't leave your Sunday school class over this, okay? It's okay. As I said, everybody seems to have their opinion and it's okay. It doesn't change their ministry.

Anything else on the identities of? I'm glad you brought that up because if the rapture were to occur, that event were to occur right now, I would join Enoch, having never died.

Yes, ma'am.

[unintelligible]

He won't let you talk.

[unintelligible]

Ha, I love it and that's why we love you.

[unintelligible]

Yeah. Right.

[unintelligible]

Well, you used the word "fair." It's not fair. In fact, didn't Jesus tell a parable about those who worked at the beginning of the day versus those who worked at the 11th hour? Hey, you know who I feel the most sorry for here? Moses. If Moses is the guy, he gets it twice. I mean, think about that. I mean, let's just pretend it's Moses, all right? They're on the Mount of Transfiguration, everything looks great, can you imagine the moment before verse 3 of chapter 11, can you see, now I know it's not going to happen this way, I get it. I can just imagine Moses going, "Seriously, I've got to go through this again? I mean, everybody else only has to do it once. I mean, I get it twice?"

You know, so again there are discussions on both sides. Here's the thing I want you to hear: whether it's Elijah and Enoch or Elijah and Moses, both pairs not only can be defended from Scripture but both communicate very important scriptural truths. Those who don't die have everlasting life or those who do die even twice can be raised back. So both truths are valid in Scripture either way you see them. So they are there.

Any more identities? We've got them? We've got it covered? Yes, ma'am. I thought he wouldn't let you talk? You're going to do it twice. Go for it. That's why we love you. And then we'll go back to the front row.

[unintelligible]

So did Elijah and he dies here.

[unintelligible]

Lazarus died twice.

[unintelligible]

Whoa, whoa, whoa, timeout. Whoa! Whoa. We just went Jehovah Witness.

[unintelligible]

John 11.

[unintelligible]

Whoa, whoa, whoa. No, no. John 11. John 11.

[unintelligible]

Yeah, sure, go for it. You got your hankie? Okay, all right. To your point, ma'am, okay, verse 11, "These things said he: and after that he saith unto them," these are the words of Jesus, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth," correct word, you've got it, "but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep." Okay, go down to verse, hold on...

[unintelligible]

Yes, Lazarus is dead. Red print, Jesus, not Jeff. Lazarus is dead. Then his sister said and it's one of my favorite verses, "Behold, he stinketh." Now I'm going to tell you, when I get a good sleep in, I've got bad breath but no stinketh, if that makes sense. So again, even Jesus said he was dead, and then you get to the next chapter, chapter 12, and it says they sought his life because of his testimony. Now I don't know if they actually martyred him but can we all testify that by the 21st century Lazarus is dead, right? I mean, he hasn't made it to this point so Lazarus got it twice too. You made the comment about the



heavenly body of Moses, can you imagine, now again, I know I'm putting personal feelings into this, can you imagine Lazarus coming out of the grave, unwrapping him and him going to Jesus going, "Seriously? I mean, seriously?" I don't think he sat there and said, "Woo, good to be alive!" I think he went, "You've got to be kidding me." Then guys come around him trying to kill him and he's like, "Isn't this great, I get to do it again."

So Lazarus experienced it twice, the widow of Nain's son twice. Anybody who Jesus raised from the dead experienced two deaths. I think the issue is, I'm not speaking on your behalf, the issue is if it is Moses, he experienced it so far apart. I mean, Lazarus could have been within a week, a month, maybe a year or two. You've got those like the widow of Nain's son who dies and then just it's just a couple of days later, but Moses could be millennia.

Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

And the word "sleep," understand, is a biblical word for death. In other words, you get the famous rapture passage that says that they shall rise out of their sleep. But Jesus said he is dead. I mean, he's cold. After four days he's cold and he stinketh. Key word. Four days dead and being a teenage boy, same smell. Just thought I'd let you know. By the way, and I'm going to say this with that camera on and I don't care. My three boys were all at camp last week, a beautiful experience, honeymoon 2.0. It was great and do you know what we discovered? That the dirtiness of the house and the smell, it's not the dogs. We thought, man, these dogs we've got, they stink. No, house smelled good. House looked good. Not the dogs.

Okay, moving on. We've got the whole Enoch, Moses...? By the way, we could discuss this literally until the cows come home but you see the evidence for and against. Next thing, the timeframe. Now this is where it could get entertaining. The Bible makes it very clear that they go for 1,260 days or 42 months, all right? Now just for a little bit of a clarification here, this time period in the Bible that, by the way, I didn't come up with this, a pastor, denomination didn't come up with this, Jesus came up with this, he called it the great tribulation, all right? The great tribulation. This is mentioned in Matthew 24. That's what Jesus called this time period, all right? Beginning in chapter 6 of Revelation going to chapter 19, it is described as a time period that is seven years in length and generally speaking divided into two sections of three and half years or 42 months.

So for the sake of argument here, we're going to put 42 months on this side and 42 months on this side. It says here in Revelation 11, that they ministered for 42 months. So we know without a shadow of a doubt that this ministry that they had where fire comes out of their mouth, devours their enemies, they shut up the heavens, miracles, all this stuff, takes place for a timeframe that is half of what we know as the tribulation. Now you know what the debate is, right? Which half or is it either even a half? I'll describe that in a moment. Here's what we know. 1. The "third temple," remember we discussed the temple last time we were together? This temple that is there in chapter 11, one thing

that we do know is when they minister, it is present, it is around, it is there. And we discussed this last time we were together, it might get built before the tribulation starts, it might get built during it. We don't know. All we know is this, that it is present. It's described, the courts, it's measured, then it describes the witnesses and their ministry and the idea you get is that their ministry takes place right outside the temple grounds. I know there have been a lot of movies made about all this stuff and they oftentimes picture them right outside the walls of the Temple Mount, rightfully so because they minister, they die and they raise in the city of Jerusalem. So it's just right there, okay?

So the third temple or the temple is present when they minister. They ascend before Jesus' return. I know that's obvious but I wanted to state the obvious. When they go up in this passage in chapter 11 of Revelation, they go up at some point before Jesus' return, all right? Now remember, this is parenthetical. You don't have to put the events of Revelation 11:1 through 14 in between the sixth and seventh trumpet because we're coming out of the chronology, all right? But we do have to put these events within this entire timeframe here because it takes place during what we know as the great tribulation. The temple at some point has been built and they do ascend before Jesus comes back because it says he comes back with his army and saints of believers.

Now that being said, what are the possibilities for the timing? I'm going to give you two interesting options here and then hopefully this will spawn some more fun discussion. Option 1 is that their ministry is in the first 42 months. So it would take place during this timeframe right here. What that would advocate is two things. 1. That what we know as the temple would either be built prior to or immediately following what we know is this great tribulation event. As I discussed last time, there are many who are much more expert at the building of this famous building, that it could take place in a matter of a week or so. So don't think in terms of what we would think today. Hey, if we're going to build a church building, it's going to take us a while. It takes us a while because we've got committees and subcommittees of other committees but they don't have that, all right? They just get it done.

So you've got a temple built and it would end at the halfway point, the midway point which Daniel 9 calls the breaking of the week, is described by Jesus in Matthew 24 as this famous abomination of desolation. The abomination of desolation according to 2 Thessalonians 2 is when the antichrist walks into the Holy of Holies in the temple and he claims to be God. The reasoning for saying it's at the first 42 months is notice that here in Revelation 11, that nobody is able to fight these two guys except one person, the antichrist himself is able to conquer them, overcome them and lead to their death, and the thought is those who advocate this position, is that he eventually gets them out of the way before he commits the abomination of desolation. That's one thought.

The other thought is a selected time. In other words, it's not going to be this last section, we know that. So it may not be the first but is it possible that maybe it, say, starts here and ends here? That it's not necessarily a strictness of the first half versus the second half but possibly their ministry even overlaps this famous abomination of desolation? And I put on there such as there is one theory out there that utilizes the book of Job. The book

of Job has 42 chapters in it. Does that number ring a bell? It has 42 chapters. The book of Job has an individual dedicated to the Lord, called to the Lord, who suffers intense excruciating persecution and mocking. Does that sound like the people of God during the tribulation? His finances are gone. His family is gone. His health is gone. It's a bad situation just like the tribulation. So there are those who look at the book of Job and say is it possible that he, Job, is a type of these two witnesses? He stayed faithful, I mean, though he got upset a couple of times, I mean, he stayed faithful. The Lord rewarded him, didn't reward his friends, that Job, 42 chapters, in the 38th chapter God shows up in a whirlwind. Have we mentioned a character tonight that God shows up with a whirlwind with? Elijah. God shows up in a whirlwind in Job 38 and there are some who advocate a position who would say this, that in the last 42 months in what we would know as the 38th month, so right in here, that the whirlwind, the type of, that the saints that are in the midst of the tribulation, that these two individuals, this is when they are caught up to be with the Lord just like the whirlwind in Job 38 and 2 Kings with Elijah. If this possibility is true, then their ministry would actually begin right before the abomination of desolation and in right before the return of Jesus.

You say, "Well, why would that be the timeframe?" In very general terminology, this first half, it's bad but it's not that bad. This half is real bad. And so the idea is that the majority of their ministry takes place during the really bad time when the abomination has already taken place. It's almost as if, I hate to say it this way, we told you so kind of preaching. It's bad. You need to get on the Lord's side. And though they are not there when he returns, they ascend up, that whole concept of the book of Job gives a possible timeframe.

So when you look at the timing of these individuals, it's either the first half or it's some type of overlap though it could be very close to the end, it would not be right at the abomination and right at the end due to other questions/circumstances. Any issues on the timing of these guys? Good? All right. I know I kind of threw that out at you real quick.

Okay, here we go. Now their description. They're called olive trees and candlesticks. That may not sound like flattery but it is, I promise. And this goes all the way back to Zechariah 4. For the sake of time, if you want to go back and read it now you can or later. In Zechariah 4, a very prophetic chapter describing these two olive branches, these two candlesticks who will minister unto and speak on behalf of the Lord in the entire earth, okay? Pretty much consensus, this is the chapter describing these two guys. They are the famous olive trees, they are the famous candlesticks. What's interesting specifically about the olive trees is it says that they minister unto the whole earth. That being said, you get the idea even in the book of Revelation that these two guys are ministering unto the whole earth, all right? Not a lot of discussion, debate there, I mean, they are the olive trees, they are the candlesticks, this is the fulfillment of Zechariah 4 no matter who you claim their identity to be. These are these two guys, all right?

Now the defense of their ministry. I love this part, y'all know I do. Can you imagine having this gift? It's just incredible. Somebody comes up against you and says, "I don't like what you're saying." You're gone. I mean, that makes shaking the dust off your feet

look like nothing right there. I mean, just fire coming out of your mouth. I mean, that's good stuff right there. But that is the defense of their ministry. I know what some of you are thinking, "Why, why, why, why? Why would the Lord utilize this? I mean, that just seems so vengeful." Romans 14, "Revenge is mine saith the Lord." I mean, that's what the Scriptures say. When Jesus appears in Revelation 1 to John on the island of Patmos, when he shows up in Revelation 19, remember in both cases his eyes are as fire and judgment. All the passages that deal with the judgment of God in some capacity deal with fire. What you see with these two individuals no matter who you identify them with, okay... Now by the way, there is nobody in the Bible who has this gift outside of these two. I mean, it doesn't matter if it's Enoch, Elijah, Moses, you don't see anybody in the Bible in this manner. Once again, a unique two individuals at a unique time, with a unique purpose.

Nobody is able to come against them until the beast or the antichrist is allowed to overcome them which gets to their death. I use the term resurrection and ascension. Let me tell you why I use the term resurrection. When we talk of Lazarus, which we spoke of earlier, the widow of Nain's son, I like to use the word resuscitation because Lazarus was dead and though he was raised, he was raised to die again. A resurrection means raised to never die again. When these two guys come back to life, they never die again. So don't confuse resurrection of these two guys as an extreme parallel with Jesus, please. Completely different. But to be resurrected means to never die again. Lazarus raised, died. Widow of Nain's son raised, died. Those are resuscitations. These two guys are truly resurrected because they come back to life from the dead after three and a half days and then they never experience physical death again, and if it is Moses, he's going, "Phew, I don't have to do it a third time," at this point.

But that being said, their death, how does this happen, the means? It's the beast. It's the antichrist. He is the only one who has the authority, power and ability to go against them with the flames of fire. Why is this important? Remember the book of Job that I just referenced here? It was Satan himself who the Lord gave the leash to how far he could go. And so again, the permissive will of God allowing this to occur. It's like the Lord said, "Okay, after 42 months, then I'll cut the leash and you can have them." But nobody else had the authority just like in the book of Job.

The manner. Notice I put decapitation with a question mark. These guys die. Their bodies lay in the street for three and a half days. The Spirit of God comes back into them and then they ascend on high. The question, though, how did they get killed by the antichrist, okay? Go over to the book of Revelation 20. We have a multitude of people in the book of Revelation who experienced death. There is an earthquake that leads to death. There is wormwood that leads to death. There is famine. I mean, there is death everywhere, okay? There are martyrs in Revelation 6 that obviously are dead. These two guys are dead. In the book of Revelation 20:4 it says, "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." Now the reason I went to that

passage of Scripture is notice it says that all of those who witness for Jesus had their heads removed. You get the idea, generally speaking, that in the context of this time period of life that that is the means of death. Do any of you find it ironic that again even in the 21st century we see this happening prolifically again in our culture? It's becoming, I don't want to use the term accepted but can we at least say a normal activity to watch on TV, particularly in the Eastern world? Now I don't know about y'all but 30-40 years ago, we never heard of anybody getting decapitated. They got shot. They got electrocuted. They got whatever. But nowadays, how many times do we see a video of people having their heads removed over in the Eastern part of the world? It's unfortunately becoming more and more common. Here in Revelation 20, it says those who bore witness were beheaded.

The reason I put a question mark, the reason I put it there is you cannot definitively say how these guys were killed by the antichrist. You just can't say it, all right? But there is evidence based on chapter 20, that is possible that their heads were removed. Does that not parallel John the Baptist and one of the witnesses without question is Elijah? Do you see the parallel there? Just kind of an interesting foreshadowing there. Why did Herod have him decapitated? I believe it was a foreshadowing of the eventual purpose of Elijah within the book of Revelation. So that being said, I put a question mark, we don't know but if they were decapitated, it brings an interesting interpretation in just a moment.

So we know that they were killed. The celebration. This is what's eerie. In verse 10 of this passage, they that dwell upon the earth, they rejoice over them. They make merry. They send gifts one to another because these two prophets tormented them that dwell on the earth. I know this may sound weird but it almost sounds like Christmas. They're celebrating, making merry, and they're sending gifts one to another because these two guys are no longer living. What's also interesting is they not only are dead but they're celebrating, they don't put their bodies in the grave. They're just there in the streets for three and a half days. How long was Lazarus in the grave? Four days and he stinketh. Those of you who know anything about the business of death, you give a body three and a half days and you're going to have some issues, and so you have a very morbid, nasty picture.

Again, let me go back to the Middle East today. We've been unfortunately subject to some pretty graphic videos over the last 20 years of what's happening over there and you notice that when they decapitate or when they eliminate their enemies, they throw parties around their bodies lying in the streets. It's almost as if we're getting conditioned to think this is going to be normal when this happens one day. But nonetheless, they celebrate. It's just an interesting parallel to Christmas. Hear me clearly: I'm not saying it's happening in December. That's not what I said, okay? But they celebrate the death of these witnesses similar to how we celebrate the birth of a Messiah. Wow, you talk about a similar expression of two completely polar opposites expressions.

Now the resurrection, the timing, three and a half days. It says three and a half days twice, almost as if the Lord is saying, "Don't generalize this, it's three and one-half days." Now again, go back to the question mark on decapitation. Let's just say for the sake of

discussion that they were decapitated and they celebrated and they allowed their bodies to lay in the streets. That means that we had two dead people but we had four segments, correct? That means that when they were raised, somehow that head rolled back. Do you get the picture? Crazy is what... Can you imagine all these people celebrating, looking at what just happened and going, "Oh my!" I mean, this isn't we had them on life support and thought they were dead in the hospital, these guys are dead, trampled on and potentially decapitated and their bodies are spoiling in front of everybody and they are literally raised from the dead three and a half days later. Why is that important? You remember there's this passage in 2 Peter 3, a day with the Lord is as if a thousand years, a thousand years is as if a day? Three and a half years here, three and a half days, you get this parallel. And I also put here Matthew 12:40 which, by the way, opens up a whole other discussion that we probably don't have time for tonight, but Jesus made it clear that when he died he would be like Jonah in the whale, three days and three nights. Three days and three nights, and if you've ever done the research or you've ever had any kind of discussion on the chronology of the Passion Week, I'm just going to be honest with you, it doesn't fit tradition. But Jesus said three days and three nights. That's what Jesus said, kind of like he said Lazarus is dead. Well, three and a half days would include three days and three nights.

So the resurrection of these two guys not only picture the timing of their ministry and the resurrection but they also picture the resurrection of Jesus. Again, we have the same picture or timeframe to emulate. Then their ascension. There is this great little phrase, "Come up hither. Come up. Be raised." Interesting. It only happens or that phrase is only used three times in the entire Bible. That's it. Three times. And I know some of you have kind of studied where I'm about to go or experienced a talk about this. There is this famous rapture event that takes place in the Bible, 1 Corinthians 15, 1 Thessalonians 4, and in those passages of Scripture, we've discussed them tonight, somebody is supernaturally instantaneously taken from here, or unless they're dead they're in the grave, and they are taken into the presence of the Lord. I mean, it is an immediate supernatural experience, correct? By the way, just so you'll know if you don't know, we're going to study Acts 8 this Sunday with Philip and the Ethiopian. You do know that Philip is raptured, right? He is taken from one place to another place supernaturally and instantaneously. He's not taken up into heaven but rapture literally means from one place to another supernaturally, instantaneously. It does not have to be "into the heavens."

That being said, one of the things that I've discussed over time and I'll discuss again tonight in brief is when you discuss this famous rapture event, I think one of our problems is we try to take all the passages that discuss it and slam them into one solitary moment in time. The Bible says in Matthew 27:52 that when Jesus rose from the dead, many of the saints of old were raised with him, and so they were supernaturally raised, taken up, and then Jesus ascends. By the way, you do know in Acts 1 they said as he went he will return again? He's going to return with some folks, is it possible he went up with some folks? It says the saints of old were raised. We have this famous passage that we alluded to in 1 Corinthians 15, 1 Thessalonians 4, that those who are alive in Christ, dead in Christ, one day will be raised with Christ. You read those books of the Bible, you read them frontwards, backwards, upside down, inside out, and there are no passages

anywhere around those two that allude to this event at all. I mean, there is no abomination of desolation. There is no mention of the beast. There is none of this wild stuff of judgment. But in Matthew 24, we do have an incident where it says that there is going to come a time where people are supernaturally raised and it is in the context of tribulational type imagery.

So the idea is, the possibility is that what we call the rapture may actually take place in three stages. Remember, Jesus talked about the firstfruits, the harvest and the gleanings. Remember Boaz in the book of Ruth, the firstfruits, the harvest and the gleanings. Is it possible that those that were raised in Matthew 27 were the firstfruits, one day this big rapture event is going to be the harvest, and then one day we're going to have some gleanings over here? If that is the case, then it opens the possibility that when they are taken up, much like when Jesus was taken up, the other saints of the Lord are taken up with them. "Come up hither," is the same phrase used in John 4 when he said to come up in his vision, John, a picture of the church, and I put this on your outline, and the book of Proverbs 25:27, you say, "What do you mean the book of Proverbs 25?" It says that the righteous man is called up hither. Three times this phrase is used and it all describes being taken into the presence of the Lord. I don't find it accidental, the phrase is used three times and we have three potential evidences for people being caught up to be with the Lord.

So what that brings up is the possibility that their being caught up and their being ascended is bigger than just the two of them. It's possible that there would be a collection of saints that would be raised because when we get to the end here, when Jesus comes back, he comes back with his saints. Now let me go and ask the question before you do. When Jesus comes back, Matthew 25 says there are going to be some whom he says, "Hey, you're on my right hand, go into the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the earth. Those on the left, go to that which is prepared for the devil and his angels." What do you do about the fact that there are some there who, for lack of better terms, are on his side? Well, you've still got a gap of time here. There's still a timeframe for those who "get on the Lord's side."

And last but not least, they go up in a cloud just like Jesus did in the book of Acts, and just like in Revelation 19 he is coming out of.

Fire hydrant of information because that clock is ticking back there. I just wanted to go for it. Any thoughts, concerns on the death, resurrection and ascension of these guys and the picture that they give us?

[unintelligible]

Oh yeah. The question is we miss all this? Oh yeah. Again, let me go back to those three rapture concepts real quick because this is what's important. When it comes to what we know as this rapture event of the church, there are really two, well, there are three streams of thought. Thought number 1 is what we call a pre-tribulational rapture, okay? Pre-tribulational meaning it happens before this event. There is what we call the post-

tribulational rapture which means it comes at the end of this event. And there is even a very popular belief known as either the mid-or what some people call the pre-wrath rapture and the pre-wrath means that before the abomination of desolation, before it gets really really really bad, taken up, all right?

Now for those who would advocate these two positions over here, they always and rightfully so, go to Matthew 24. You read that passage there will be two in the bed, one taken, one left, two in the field, one taken, one left. The passage in Luke 21, the parallel says there will be two women at the mill, one taken, one left, and it talks about the days of Noah, it talks about the wrath of God. I mean, it is very, let's admit it, it's tribulational sounding, correct? Absolutely. But the passages in 1 Corinthians and 1 Thessalonians, it just sounds like life is going about its business and they're gone. And so I think the error comes, at least in my discussion with people, that people look at Matthew 24 and go, "Well, it's just figurative. You know, life's just bad." And then the other side looks at the passages in 1 Thessalonians and go, "Well, it doesn't have to say it's bad for it to really be bad." Why are we making it say something other than what it just says? There was a "rapture" in Matthew 27. The saints rose. They took off. They're gone.

So we have a rapture other than this one no matter which one you subscribe to. I just believe there's evidence for all of it and so what that would mean is, I'm going to go back beyond the board here, Old Testament saints, those that were believers, Matthew 27, they were brought up with Jesus at the resurrection. You and I, to use that statement, I believe scripturally this is us. We're going to be taken whether you're alive or dead, okay? I mean, because we don't know when it's going to take place, the Bible doesn't tell us when. It could be 500 more years. If it's 500 more years, we are both going to be dead, right? That's going to happen, I mean, medicine is good but it's not that good. So we're going to be taken, all right, but I do believe that those who are believers and we can discuss this later in Revelation, in this time period, they're going to have an experience as well so that we all return together.

Again, it fits the agricultural theme, it fits the three theme, and it just allows, this is why I'm big on this, it allows the Bible to say what it says where it says it without forcing it to say what we want it to say to fit our opinion. One of the things I tell my post-tribulational buddies, we're both right. And they say, "Well, we both can't be right." And I say we can be if we let 2 Timothy say, we rightly divide the word of God." We can both be right which really messes their minds up. That's okay, I like it. But for you and I today right here in this place as a believer in Jesus Christ, I think scripturally the evidence is that we will not be a part of this horrific event. We don't have to worry about the abomination of desolation. I'm not going to get to see on earth the fire coming out of the two witnesses. I mean, I'll be honest with you, there's part of me that would love to go up to them and say, "Can I borrow that gift?" I just think it's going to be amazing to watch, but according to Scripture we are all part of all of it, not in it but above it, if that makes sense.

Does that help you out? Maybe, sorta, kinda? You're right here, you're good.



Now again, I want to be clear on this, so I advocate that position, there is very good evidence for a rapturesque event in the midst of this horrific time period, the problem is when you make all of the rapture passages fit this one or when you make them all fit this one because even though I believe in a pre-tribulational rapture, I cannot deny Matthew 24 is very tribulational.

Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

The 144,000 that are in the midst of this, to your point, you're right. They've got to get taken. By the way, when we get to that 144,000, that means the people who knock on your door are wrong because it says they're all male and they've all never consummated a marriage and they are all Jews, and everybody that comes to my house is female and married. Just a thought. So but the 144,000, you're right. We know them for a fact that they're going to be a part of this time period as well as other believers and other martyrs as well. So again, it goes back to rightly dividing, acknowledging that it says both, putting it at the right time, at the right place.

Anybody else on that one? We're all good? If we're all good, we've got four minutes left.

[unintelligible]

Could Moses? We're going back to Moses.

[unintelligible]

If it's Moses and Elijah...

[unintelligible]

Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

It's very possible. What he said if you couldn't hear him was, if it's Moses and Elijah, when the event is about to happen, Moses looks at Elijah and says, "Don't worry, been here, done that. We've got this. No big deal." That's right, and I still bet Elijah is looking at him, "Are you sure?"

So again, back to the identities, hear me clearly: it's fun to discuss, it's fun to debate, everything on this outline from timeframe down doesn't matter who they are. They're still the olive branches. They're still the candlesticks. They're still exhibiting the power of God no matter which two are there. By the way, very extreme minority position. Very extreme but just in case you go home and decide to Google tonight. There is a slim group of people who actually believe that these two men will not be any of those characters but

two unique people that the Lord will use. If they are, they sure do look like Elijah and Moses.

So yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

It might be Job?

[unintelligible]

Well, if it is Job, then that poor guy is getting what he prayed for because he said, "God, just let me die." God said, "All right, I'll let that happen." So again, yeah, but Job, and again, Job is a fascinating character in light of all this stuff because he's, again, like Joseph is to Jesus, he's a type of. Do me a favor, though, don't read Revelation into Job, use it as a type of, "Oh, that's an interesting parallel," if that makes sense. And just as a reminder before you leave, if you ever have somebody on social media befriend you and their name is Zophar, Bildad or Eliphaz, run. You don't want them as your friends, I can promise you that.

All right, let's pray and we'll roll.

*Heavenly Father, thank you so much for the unsearchableness of your word. Lord, so much there that we'll never really know but yet just enough to give us confidence in our faith in our relationship with you. Thank you that no matter the identities or what the timeframe is, that our relationship with you supersedes all questions and all concerns. God, I pray, though, that as we go out of here tonight, that we'll have more confidence and more surety not only in the truth of your word but in the confidence in the events that are going to come one day in the future. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.*

Roll on out. If not before, I'll see you Sunday. Acts 8, we're going to have a rapture.