

Ask Jeff 9.19.18
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Alright ladies and gentleman, before we get to the serious stuff, just a PSA, a public service announcement. Many of you come up to us curious about in the months ahead. We are going to have a Tim Hawkins gathering time, presentation, and a lot of folks have said, "Hey, I am going to wait. When do the tickets go on sale at the church?" We are not going to have physical tickets at the church. You have to go online and get them. So, if you're interested in that event, please go online and do so. If you wait to get them at the church, well, you're going to be waiting until the event is past. So, that's not going to take place.

Alright, get your prayer sheet out, otherwise known as the Circle of Concerns. You will see a variety of locations and places of which we are praying for folks. At the top, East Alabama Medical Center. We are loaded up. We've got half the hospital as First Baptist, no. We do have a lot of folks that are there. Continue to pray for them and their variety of situations involved there, as well as facilities, such as Arbor Springs and others in those that are home. At the bottom of the sheet, you will see there are many that are out of town, somewhat extended distance away. And on the back side, that's right, First Baptist Opelika is back. We've got another baby that has been born. But unfortunately, there is a large section of sympathy. A lot of folks in our family of faith who have suffered the loss of loved ones over the past few days since we've met and so, we want to remember them.

Speaking of remembering them, don't throw this sheet away when you're done tonight. Please take this home with you. Make it a point to pray for those, not only who have lost loved ones throughout the week as they go through services and the need of comfort, but pray for those that are sick and ill that, hopefully, they will experience a touch from the Lord, as well as the expertise of the medical professionals, and, hopefully, they will find themselves back in a comfortable situation as soon as possible.

You'll notice at the bottom, there are those that serve on the missionary field as well as those who are serving in the military, who, as I often times mention, are a long ways from home away from the comforts of home, and they find themselves in a place where, oftentimes, they don't see the fruit of their labor like they would if they were here in the states. And so, we want to pray for their encouragement and them to be uplifted.

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

Lord, tonight as we gather as a family of faith, we know that we're not the only representatives even on this campus. That there are so many people, whether they're in our worship ministry, our student ministry, our children's ministry, our collegiate ministry, wherever they may be, our men's, women's ministries all over this campus, thank you for all those that you have brought you. But more importantly, thank you that our presence here is to hear from you, to study your word, and to be empowered by your Holy Spirit, to leave in a little bit, and to live the life that you've called us to live through Jesus Christ. And that's our simple prayer, that that is who we would be tonight. Lord, there are a lot of folks that would love to be here. They're in hospitals. They're in nursing homes. They're even at their own home. And for whatever reason, they couldn't be with us in person. Potentially they're with us online. God, we pray that you would be comfort for them tonight. That you would be the healer they need. That in some cases you would be the restorer for that which is broken in their life. And God, we pray for the caretakers who oftentimes spend a lot of hours and a lot of energy so that others are comfortable, and I know they're exhausted, and they're tired. Give them the energy, and, more importantly, give them the rest that they need this day. For those that are serving, oftentimes a long ways from home, on the missionary field or those in the military, Lord, would you just tonight, may your Holy Spirit be all of the presence they need wherever they are. Bless our study tonight. May it be focused on you and you alone. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray, Amen.

Alright, welcome to Wednesday nights at First Baptist. If this is your first time with us, either a) here in person or b) on the other side of one of those cameras in what we know as the wonderful world of the internet, we want to welcome you. And let me just share with you kind of how our Wednesday night Bible study goes. We typically divide our Wednesday night into two sections. And the reason I use the word "typically" you'll understand in just a moment. The first half is a Q&A. It's a question and answer time where you have the opportunity to ask any question you want. Tonight is about what do you want to know. What are you interested in? What are you curious about? What are you concerned about? And in some cases, you may even say, "I'm almost embarrassed to even ask a question, but I really would like to have it answered." We have set up an environment for you to do so.

You can go to our website fbcopelika.com/askjeff. And you can submit any question you want, and you are completely anonymous. Your question goes into a database that goes to my phone. It doesn't have your name. It doesn't even have your email address. Now, if you put your email address, you don't have to, but if you do, when I push the answered button, it will send you a link to the video just in the event that you were not here for whatever reason. That way, if your question comes through, you have the opportunity to hear the answer. Speaking of questions coming through, some of you may say, "Well, I submitted a question months ago. Jeff, you haven't gotten close to answering it." Well, let me answer that two ways. Number one, it may be right around the corner, because it's just in some type of algorithm that's completely random. Number two, you may have submitted it through the website, but you're really interested in getting it answered. Just raise your hand. Now, when you raise your hand, you lose your anonymity, because we know who you are. But on the other side of the equation, you get to determine where we

go. You have the opportunity to say, "Hey, let's talk about that subject more. Let's change subjects. What about this? What about that?"

And then about half way through, assuming we don't go down one of those trails that, you know, we just have to finish, we'll roll into our Bible study, which is currently going through the book of Revelation. And tonight, we begin chapter 13, which is one of the two definitive chapters in your Bible regarding a character known as the antichrist.

So, the fact that nobody's hand is in the air, I will utilize what we know as the database, and we will proceed. We push the little button. Alright, here we go. Exodus 16. Numbers 11. Was this one whole event that wiped out some of the Israelites, or two separate events at two separate times? The minute that the quail between their teeth, and they died.

Alright, so, Exodus 16, Numbers 11. If my memory serves me correctly, based on the question, this is the time of which when the Israelites begged the Lord they said, "We're just tired of eating Krispy Kreme." Some of you all got that. I am convinced that what we know as donuts is manna. The Bible describes manna as circular, somewhat beige, creamy, and sweet to the test. Sounds like a donut to me. But they got tired of it and said, "Hey, we're tired of this. We want some meat." So, the Lord said, he brought quail, and they ate so much meat that it came out their noses. I'm just telling you what the Bible says. I'm sorry. That's just what happens.

So, these two passages, Numbers, I'm sorry, Exodus 16. I want to go to these passages and read them just to make sure that we've got them right here. Exodus 16:12-13 says, "I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel: speak unto them, saying, At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God. And it came to pass, that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp: and in the morning the dew lay round about the host."

Then go to the book of Numbers 11. I just want to read the verses as mentioned to make sure I get these right. Verses 31 through 33. Actually, it begins in verse 4 of chapter 11 in the book of Numbers. It said, "And the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat?" Verses 31 through 33. And it says, "And there went forth a wind from the LORD, and brought quails from the sea, and let them fall by the camp, as it were a day's journey on this side, and as it were a day's journey on the other side, round about the camp, and as it were two cubits high upon the face of the earth." Now, let me stop there for a moment. A cubit, I know it's one of those weird measurements. That's about eighteen inches in your Old Testament. So, that's three feet of quail. Guys, that's what we call a hunt right there. I mean, can you imagine that?

So, you got three feet of quail there. It says, "And the people stood up all that day, and all that night, and all the next day, and they gathered the quails: he that gathered least gathered ten homers." And if you, a homer, a homer is like eighty gallons. That's eight hundred gallons of quail. Yeah, and they didn't even have refrigerators. Another story. Okay. "And they spread them all abroad for themselves round about the camp. And while

the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of the LORD was kindled against the people, and the LORD smote the people with a very great plague. And he called the name of that place Kibrothhattaavah: because there they buried the people that lusted. And the people journeyed from Kibrothhattaavah unto Hazeroth.” Aren’t you glad it’s not you reading this? “And abode at Hazeroth.”

Now, here’s the story. Again, they’ve had manna. And remember the rules of the manna. The Lord obeyed what we know, or not just obeyed, but he instituted what we know as the Sabbath Law. That for the first six days of the week, they were to go and get as much as they wanted, and whatever they ate, it would be fine. But they could not hold over today’s for tomorrow. You all remember what happened to the manna the next day if they held it over? Worms would come up into it. Yeah. And this is why the Lord in what we know as the Lord’s prayer says, “Give us this day our daily bread.” And so, every day was an act of faith. There was no refrigeration. There was not storage. It was we believe that everyday when we go out, the Lord’s going to provide what we need.

Now, they literally lived that. The Lord encourages us to do the same in our lives as well to trust him each and every day. But on the sixth day, they were actually to go and get two days worth, because they were not to journey and/or to work on what we know as the Sabbath. And so, on that day, it actually held over and was still good. And so, the Lord did a supernatural miracle in their midst every single week of their lives just with the manna. Week after week, month after month, year after year, because remember they go there for forty years.

They have manna every day and they begin to whine, and complain, and moan. You do realize, this isn’t the first time they’ve whined, right? In fact, when they first got in the wilderness, what did they say? “We had it better in Egypt.” No, they didn’t! They had to make their own bricks. They had to go get their own mud. They had to build everything the Egyptians wanted them to. At least in the wilderness all they had to do was go out and get manna. That was it. But they complained. They whined. They moaned. “Give us water.” Moses hits the rock with the stick or his rod. You know that story.

So, we fast forward, and they get tired of all the manna. And they say, “We want flesh to eat.” You do know to be careful what you pray for, right? The Lord says, “Fine. You want some flesh to eat. I’ll give you some flesh to eat.” And so, the quail is so much it’s thirty-six inches, or three feet, high. Notice it said, “A days journey in each direction.” You know, you can walk a long ways in one day, right? So, as far as the eye could see, nothing but three feet of quail, and they began to feast and harvest. It’s coming out their nose. It’s ugh. It’s one of those kinds of pictures. The issue that most people have with this question, and I don’t know what the person asking it did, was are these two separate events? No, it’s all one big story, okay? This didn’t just happen in a six-hour period. It’s an elongated story here.

The book of Numbers, okay, is the story of the wilderness experience. The book of Exodus is coming out of Egypt into the wilderness. So, there is going to be some crossover, as far as the chronology is concerned. But the problem some people have is

why did the Lord bring the plague? And why did so many people die? Did he not preserve them in the wilderness? He did. But remember back in Deuteronomy 1:39, because they rebelled, because they whined, moaned, and complained, he said, “The generation that does not believe, they will die before they get to what we know as the promised land.” And so, these are part of the generation that were going to die out in the wilderness. They begin to complain. They begin to gripe. He brings the quail. They receive a plague in their bodies, and they’re dead. They were going to experience death at some point in the wilderness. It took place as a repercussion of their rebellion again against the Lord. So, it’s one event explained two different passages.

Any clarifications, concerns, thoughts, issues? We’re all good with quail? Doesn’t that make you want to go eat some quail right now? Just thought I would ask. Okay, never mind. Maybe not.

Alright, here we go. Oh, this is going to be good. I love a question that begins with “if.” If God is all-knowing, which by the way he is, is it possible, somebody’s been listening on Wednesday nights, that he knew that humans would sin and thus need saving before he even made Adam? You know that is a great question to ask. Because the way you can answer this question in so many possibilities, are postulating some things, is well, if he knew, then why did he? If it wasn’t possible, did he not know everything? Do you see how you can get very philosophical there, alright?

So, I want to address this from several angles, okay? First is go to the book of John 17. John 17. Then, we are going to go back to the book of Genesis. I promise you. John 17, what I think is one of the most insightful verses in all of the New Testament, we find ourselves in the garden of Gethsemane. Jesus is about nine to ten hours from being placed on the cross. I mean, so we’re within one day of what we know as the crucifixion experience. He has had what we call typically the Last Supper with the disciples. They’ve gone out. Peter, James, and John are sleeping under the tree. Remember Jesus told them that the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.

John 17 is the longest prayer that we have from the voice of Jesus in the scriptures. And in John 17:5 I want you to hear what Jesus says. This is the only thing he asks for for himself. This entire prayer is either for the disciples that are sleeping or for you and me. Everything is selfless, except this one thing. He says, “And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.” Not before I was incarnated. Not before thirty-three years ago. Not before I inhabited flesh. What Jesus Christ is saying is that there was something missing, there was something absent, from his experience from long ago that because of what he is about to do, the redemption of humanity through the crucifixion and resurrection experience, that will now be made available again.

Why is that critical? Because the question alludes to, and is absolutely right, that we recognize, not just because of Genesis 3:1, but other passages, that when Adam and Eve were walking in the cool of the garden, sin had already entered the cosmos at some level. Satan had fallen. The serpent was that old red dragon, as Revelation 12 calls it. And so,

when Adam and Eve were in the garden, created by God, sin was still, or was, a reality in the world system. That's critical to the question, because it says, "If he is all knowing, and he knew they would." If he knew that there was the possibility, if he knew they were in an environment that had sin and a tempter out there, we have to open up the door that there was the possibility that they would fall into the trap that the tempter would eventually at one point lay for them. The question is, if he's all-knowing, then why do this? What's the point? What's the purpose?

I want you to go back to Genesis 1. And I want to show you something very interesting. I find it interesting. You may not find it interesting. If you don't, we'll just move on to the next question. Genesis 1:21. We're on day five of creation. It says, "And the Lord created." Now, that's an important word. The word "create" means to make something out of nothing, alright? In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. There are only two places throughout the rest of Genesis 1 where it said he created something specific in addition to that initial statement. Verse 21 and verse 26. Verse 26 is where he creates humanity, man and woman.

Verse 21 it says, "And God created" Alright, here's where we are going to do a survey. Your Bible will either read one of two things. Some of your Bibles will say, "sea creatures" or something "creature from the sea." Anybody who has that just lift your hand up. Anybody got "sea creatures?" Okay. Put them down. Some of your Bibles will read, "whales." Raise your hand if you got "whales." Whales! Do you all find that interesting? God created, in other words, something from nothing, a unique creation, a whale. Now, I know what you are thinking. What does that have to do with the question? In Matthew 12 Jesus is surrounded by a group of people who are questioning his deity, questioning his identity, questioning his validity to the term Messiah. And they said, "Okay, we really want to know if you're really the real deal. We want you to perform a sign. Not just a miracle. Don't just heal somebody on the Sabbath Day. Don't just take a loaf of bread and multiply it so that thousands can eat. We want to see something that is called a sign."

Now, many of you are familiar in your Old Testament a sign is something that only God can do, whether it be the rainbow and the Noah story, whether it be Gideon and his fleece, whether it be Isaiah with the virgin giving birth. Only God can pull it off. Humanity cannot duplicate it or imitate it. "Give us a sign." You all remember what Jesus said? "There's only one sign I'm going to give you. As Jonah was in the belly of the" what? "Whale. I, the Son of Man, am going to be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights."

Here's why I find Genesis 1:21 interesting. The only "sign" that Jesus gives is his resurrection. He bases the validity of his resurrection on the story of Jonah and the whale. And it just so happens on the fifth day, some of your Bibles read, "and God created whales." Before humanity was fashioned on day six, the metaphor, the mechanism, and the means of declaring the resurrection had already been formed and fashioned twenty-four hours before.

Now, a couple of years ago, actually, I say a couple years ago. I couple of decades ago, yes, I am getting older as my kids remind me regularly, I was interviewing at a church to be a youth pastor. It was a small little country church. One of those little places just kind of on the outskirts of central Texas. And I was there with a group of people. There were about five of them in the room. And they were, you know, asking me a variety of questions. If they were going to trust me with their teenagers, they needed to ask me some questions. And I won't go through the whole process, but there was an individual there. He was an older man. When I say older, he was probably, I don't know if he was over eighty, but he was crowding eighty. But he was the oldest in the room significantly. He never said much the whole time we were talking. And at one point in this "interview," they wanted to ask me my position on theological things and this man was designated to be the theological questioner.

So, they turn it over to him, and they said, "Okay, ask him whatever you want about theology, the Bible, whatever it may be." Here's what he asked me. He said, "Son." He said, "What do you think about Jonah and the whale?" I said, "What do you want to know?" He said, "What do you think about the story?" I said, "What are you asking?" He goes, "Do you believe that Jonah was actually swallowed by a whale?" "I do." "Do you believe that three days later that God had that whale spit him up on the shore, and then he went and preached to Nineveh?" "I do." He turned to the group. He goes, "He's good." And I looked at him. They looked at me. I said, "What do you mean I'm good?" And here is what he said to that group. He goes, "If he believes that story, he believes it all."

That's the story Jesus used. It's the only story he used to illustrate his resurrection. And interestingly, in Genesis 1:21 there is the description of a creature who in some of our Bibles we translate that word "whale" to say that the Lord already had a prepared means and mechanism to picture and provide redemption if Adam and Even fell into temptation. Is God all-knowing? Absolutely. He's also all powerful, and he's omnipresent, which means he's everywhere at all times.

I don't know if that helped with the question, but any follow up concerns, thoughts, issues? Yes, sir?

[unintelligible]

Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Correct. The allusion he's alluding to, the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil, is one of the things that, and sometimes this makes people uncomfortable, but all throughout scripture, in fact, even when you get to the book of Revelation 20 when what we know as Satan himself has been bound for one thousand years, and he comes, and there is this other rebellion, is that the Lord always provides for you and I the opportunity to believe or the opportunity to rebel. The choice, the option, the opportunity is for us. Do we believe, or do we not believe? Adam and Eve, what did he say? "You

can have everything but the one tree. That's the one thing you can't." And what did we do? That one tree. We're really good at doing that for some reason.

Anybody else on Jonah, Jesus, the sign, any of that? We're good?

Alright, hey now, this, for those of you here for the first time, we are flying through the questions. We don't normally get through this many, and I'm glad we are. Moving on words. Come one. Come on. Come on. There we go. Alright, Miss Lillian. I know you wrote this. Where are you? Miss Lillian. Miss Lillian, did you just turn, or are you about to turn ninety-six? Which one? Have you already turned ninety-six? You just turned ninety-six? Will be ninety-six in October. I didn't know which. Okay. Alright, I know you asked this question.

It says, "I've recently gotten engaged." And it says, "What book or pre-marriage study would you recommend for my future spouse and myself?" Miss Lillian, you know you could have just come to the office and asked me this. But I appreciate you wanting to know, help everybody.

That really is a good question. I know some of you in the room may be thinking, "That doesn't really apply to me." Well, it might apply to your children in a few years. It might apply to your grandchildren. It might apply to your neighbors. Here's the thing. When it comes to premarital material, several things I want to kind of just walk through, and then we'll get to our study on the book of Revelation.

One of the first questions that I ask a couple that's coming to me to be married, and I've got a bunch of weddings come up so I've got a bunch of them coming in and out. One of the first questions I ask them is this, once, you know, we do our little introductions. And I am being serious. I say, and I ask them, Miss Lillian, we're just going to have this conversation, alright? Here we go. I say, "Do you know," I ask them, I say, "Do you know where my wife's wedding dress is?" Do you know where my wife's wedding dress is, Miss Lillian? Do you know? You don't, do you? Do any of you all know where it is?

[unintelligible]

But you don't know where it is, right? Neither do I. I know you're thinking, "Why do you ask that question?" Because one of the things that I want to share with everybody getting married is twenty, thirty, forty years down the road, that twenty to twenty-five minute ceremony is not what you should be preparing for. You should be preparing for the years of marriage. Don't get me wrong. I love the ceremony. It's a wonderful celebration. But I think oftentimes we spend a lot of time and energy on that one day, and we forget it's a lifetime.

That being said, the Bible actually has a lot of passages about marriage and not many about ceremonies. Isn't that interesting? And the reason I bring that up is because the critical passage that I lead all couples to study, hopefully on their own, is Ephesians 5. Ephesians 5 has this passage, beginning in verse 20 and 21 going all the way through the

end of the chapter, where it describes the relationship of Christ and the church, you and I, to a husband and a wife. And it talks about the variety of the roles, and the specificity of the roles, and how they're to operate and work with each other. But the important thing about Ephesians 5 is that it says that they are to submit to each other. And the reason that it's critical is that all the materials that I suggest, and by the way some of you are thinking, "You haven't given a title yet." Well, there is a reason. Because there are all kinds of good materials out there, is all the materials that I suggest for people to read, whether it's based on their personalities, whether it's based on case studies, is to show them everyday application of Ephesians 5, that if you want to prepare for a God-centered, biblical, successful marriage, you ought to go into it saying this, that it is more important that their needs are met than mine are. It is more important that I provide for them than they provide for me.

And I tell couples all the time, "The minute you start using the word me, myself, or I, you're in a world of hurt when it comes to marriage." And you think about the illustration that Ephesians 5 gives us. That Jesus Christ gives completely of himself, so that we can be his bride. And therefore, we are to give our lives completely to him. So, he put us before himself. And you and I as believers ought to put him before anything else. Is that not the perfect picture of what marriage should be in a biblical context?

And so, the question is what materials do you suggest? There is a lot of good ones out there. And the minute I suggest one, there's ten more that are better. But I will say this, if it's not based on being self-less, and if it's not based on an application of Ephesians 5, then it's just the world's opinion. Let me ask you, "How's that going nowadays?" Not real good.

So, Miss Lillian, any other questions about your upcoming marriage? You're good? Alright, you're good to go? Who is the lucky guy? She can't hear me. Okay, we're moving on.

[unintelligible]

I'm not making fun of her. No, I am not.

Oh boy. Alright, now, before I read this question, you do know that all these questions are submitted by you. There is a whole world on the other side of that camera. Every given Wednesday live, there are multiple states, and even countries, that tune in, and over the course of a week, and even a month, there's a whole bunch of countries, and a whole bunch of states, that watch our Wednesday night Bible study. And so, when I read this question, I know what you're going to think. You're going to be thinking your local context. I don't know who wrote this question. You may know who wrote this question. You'll understand when I read the question.

"There is a local 'Baptist church' whose..." oh. Oh no. One of you all wrote this question. Here we go! All I read was the first line that said, "There is a local 'Baptist church.'" I'm like, well, that could be anywhere. Well, it's here. Okay. "There is a local 'Baptist

church,” there is quotes. “‘Baptist church’ whose membership with the Alabama Baptist,” alright it’s one of you all, “was recently revoked because this church approves of homosexuality, marries homosexual couples in the church, not to mention has book studies promoting what we know as the progressive Christian movement. My question is, how can they be allowed to continue to call themselves a Baptist church? This is very deceiving. Especially to unsuspecting Christians who move to the area in search of a Baptist church that preaches the inerrancy of scripture.” Thank you whoever you are for addressing every politically incorrect aspect we ever could on Wednesday night.

Alright, so, the question at heart. Yes, there is the issue of what this local congregation is advocating. Yes, there is the issue of their beliefs that we would see contrary to scripture. But really what is being asked is, why can, or why are they allowed to utilize a specific name, such as Baptist, that whoever asks the question, and many others would say, “That’s deceptive, because it doesn’t go with the standard issued belief of what we know as Baptist.” So, let me begin by saying this. You’ve heard me say it before. I’ll say it again. If you get two Baptists together, you’ve got three opinions. You do know why we have forty-seven thousand Baptist churches, right? Because we’ve had twenty-three thousand five hundred church splits. That’s why we got twenty, forty thousand Baptist churches. When you use the term Baptist versus all other denominational titles, it can mean whatever that congregation wants it to mean. For example, what we know as being a Baptist, we are the reverse pyramid. Most denominational organized entities, whether it be Methodist, whether it be Presbyterian, whether it be Anglican, Episcopal, whatever it is, every local congregation, what they believe, what they do, what they promote, and what they don’t promote is advocated by somebody or a group of people “above” them that tell them that this is what you will do or else. Now, it’s not that ugly, but in a sense, there are entities above. There is a power structure. And I don’t mean that in a negative way. That’s just the way it is. Those at the top make a decision. It filters all the way through the bottom.

We are Baptists. You do realize that the Baptists were a part of what we call the Radical Reformation. You all know what the Radical Reformation was? That was the group of people who said, “You all aren’t going far enough. We’re taking it further.” Alright? We were the original Wild West of the reformation. That’s who we were. And so, when it comes to what we call Baptists, we have what we call Southern Baptists. We have what we call Independent Baptists. We have what we call American Baptists. We have all kinds. That’s just here on the North American continent. But all of them all subscribe to what is called the local autonomy of the church. What that means is this. That as a local body of believers, whether there’s five of them or five thousand of them, they operate, and they believe as they so see fit, which, hopefully, will be based on scripture.

Now, let me speak specifically to, not only this congregation but probably one that’s being alluded to in the question, what we typically know in this part of the world as Southern Baptist, okay? Because we’re in the South, and that’s just part of it. What most people don’t realize is when Southern Baptists make a decision in Nashville, Tennessee, we can tell them, “We don’t care. We’re down here at First Opelika. We are going to do what we want to do.” And then that kind of the way we do it in the South. Say, “Hey, I

don't care what you all say. We're going to do what we want to do." But when it comes to what we know as being a Southern Baptist, there are twenty-two "articles of faith" on the inerrancy of scripture, on the deity of Christ, on the second coming, etc. etc. that we voluntarily, did you hear that word, we voluntarily associate with each other on.

That being said, there are times, as alluded to in this question, that there is a specific church that decides to advocate, promote or do things contrary to that agreed upon set of beliefs, as was illustrated in the question. When that occurs, there are times where the local association, the state group of churches, or even nationally, will take measures to de-fellowship them to say, "You're no longer a part of us, because you're going contrary to what we believe as deemed biblical doctrine." Even if they're removed, even if they're de-fellowshipped, they have no authority or ability to tell them, "Take the name Baptist off the church." They can't do that, because they have the right to name it whatever they want.

The question was, are they being deceptive? There is a lot of adjectives that you could use to describe this scenario that was described in the question. The thing that is important is this, that what we know as Baptist have a set of doctrinal beliefs, which are viably important, but I'm going to tell you I've been a part of a lot of Baptist churches, and not one of them is alike. Not one of them. And so, what I would encourage anybody to, whether the name Baptist is on the door or not, is don't strive to be a Baptist, although, I am proud to be one. Strive to be a Biblicist. Let me explain what I mean. You know there is a lot of things in the Bible that are not Baptist? Did you know there are a lot of things that are Baptist that are not in the Bible? I am just being honest. Our goal should not be to be a Baptist, or to be a Methodist, or to be a Congregationalist, or to be a Presbyterian. Our goal should be, how do we live and believe in our lives as close to the scriptures as possible, and then find a local group of believers who are of like mindedness, and empowered by the Holy Spirit to live life together. That should be our goal.

Now, here is the nice thing. Aren't you grateful that we live in a place where we can find other groups of believers who believe very similarly to us, and we can join together in sharing the gospel and in going on mission around the world? I tell people all the time when they say, "Jeff, then why are you a Baptist?" Let me give you two reasons why I am one. Number one, there is a historic and, yes, in this local fellowship there is a fidelity and a commitment to the inerrancy of scripture as a whole. Now, there is an illustration given here, and I get that. As a whole, a fidelity to the inerrancy of scripture. Number two, that there is in that a commitment that Jesus Christ alone is the way of salvation. There is no other option other than Jesus. And number three, based on those first two things, that because scripture is inerrant, because Jesus is exclusive, that the scriptures call us to go forth with the gospel in evangelism and missions to the ends of the earth. That's why I'm a Baptist. Plain and simple.

Now, I'm going to be honest with you. There may come a day when I am ninety-six that I may not be comfortable being a Baptist. Now, don't panic. The only way that that would happen is if they walk away from the inerrancy of scripture and the exclusivity of Jesus

and don't think evangelism is important anymore. There are times, and there are places in this world, and I probably shared this with you before. I've gone to other continents, and I've done evangelistic crusades where I've worked with the Methodists and not the Baptists, because the Methodists were closer to scripture than the Baptists were there. And I want you to understand. That's kind of the heart of the answer to this question. That there are collective terms, and there are general beliefs and doctrines that are held by groups and denominations, but at the end of the day, you got a specific group of people in a specific location who are living their faith out together. What do they believe? What do they subscribe to? And is that what you believe?

So, that being said. I can speak personally. Here at First Baptist we believe in the inerrancy of scripture, the exclusivity of Jesus, and the necessity to share that with everybody we come across. End of story. There's a lot other things, but those are the most important things that distinctively say, "That's a Baptist."

Now, on the humorous side, you do know there are three kinds of Baptists, right? There's Bahptists. Have you all ever met a Bahptist? They usually come to church, and they sing their hymns like this. They're Bahptists. They're very formal. They're sometimes pretentious, but they're always dignified. Then there's Baptists. Just a Baptist. And then some of you all are Baaptist. You know what I am talking about? You are Baaptist. You know what a Baaptist is? You don't care what anybody else thinks. You're Baaptist. Is that not the three Baptists? That's who you got! You got Bahptists, Baptists, Baaptists.

So, alright, any other Baptist questions? No Baptist questions? You all are good? Yes, ma'am, in the back row.

[unintelligible]

Okay.

[unintelligible]

Right.

[unintelligible]

Right. So, the question is, and if you couldn't hear her soft-spoken voice, please note sarcasm, is she's been a Baaptist. You said, "Baaptist." You do know that, right? She's been a Baaptist all her life, and she's never walked through those twenty-some odd points. Again, that does make for a very exciting Bible study of "Hey, for the next, you know, five months we're just going to study what do Baptists believe." But I would say this. If you are in a local congregation that believes, and preaches, and teaches the Bible as it is written, over the course of time, you will hit all of those items. Does that make any sense? You will hit the inerrancy of scripture. You will hit the deity of Christ. You will hit the substitutionary death. You will hit the bodily resurrection. You will address what the structure what the family, the second coming. You will address all of those issues. By

the way, that's why personally, I like, and I advocate preaching through books of the Bible, the Bible in totality, but going through a section of scripture in totality, because over the course of time you will address all of those issues without saying, "Oh, by the way, this is point number seven in the Baptist Faith and Message."

Does that help at all? So, being a Baptist all your life, I can promise you, you have studied, learned all of those aspects, whether you knew it or not. But just in case, you say, "Well, I'm kind of interested in that." Go to our website. Go to fcpelika.com, and look up, and on the tabs, and there is actually a link to what those are. You can click on that little link, and you can see what they are. Now, here's the neat thing about that link is that under each and every one of those statements, and by the way there is a brief statement, and then you can go to a page that's got a full statement. There's about twenty to thirty scriptures under each one of them that are advocating or supporting this statement that is made. Again, it's not just a group or a council that got together and said, "This is what we believe." This is what the Bible says, and this is thus what we believe.

Alright, one of the last points of what we know as the Baptist Faith and Message is on the soon coming, second coming of Jesus Christ. Transition. Book of Revelation chapter 13. Revelation 13.

As I mentioned earlier, this is one of the two definitive chapters that we have in scripture regarding whom or what we know as the antichrist. The other one, just for your curiosity, is 2 Thessalonians 2. Revelation 13. Now, there is a lot of passages all throughout your Bible that allude to, describe, mention, but as far as a, I would say, a consistent quantity in one area, this is one of the two.

Revelation 13. I'm just going to read the first two verses tonight. Those of you who are veterans to Wednesday night, we're not going to be through this chapter in the next week or two. Anyway, I just think it's one of those chapters that begs us to go through very methodically. Revelation 13:1 says,

1 And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. 2 And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.

Now, next we're going to pick up on verse 3. Notice it says, "And one of his heads received a deadly wound." Alright? So, we'll pick that up next week, hopefully. But in these first two verses, we have this description of whom we know as the antichrist. Spoiler alert. The word antichrist is not even used in the book of Revelation. The term is the beast, alright? And it's used dozens of times in the book of Revelation. The term antichrist is actually only found in the book of 1 John 2 and 3. Now, there's other terms to describe this individual. He's called the "Son of Perdition." He's called the "Man of

Lawlessness.” But the most frequent terminology, particularly in the book of Revelation, is the term the “Beast.”

Now, some of you all have heard this before, but I grew up in north Texas, and the golf course that was in my community at the time, hole number ten, if you played it from the tips, or what we know as the championship teams, was nicknamed "The Beast," because it was six hundred and sixty-six yards long. Well, that’s the famous number of the beast, which is the last part of chapter 13. So, for those of you tonight that are going, “I want to know about the number. I want to know about 666.” That’s actually the end of this chapter. I’m sorry.

But tonight, we begin with this description, and I will go ahead and share this with you. This is not an easy section of the Bible. I don’t think it is necessarily confusing, but it takes a little time, because we’re not only going to compare chapter 13 to chapter 12, we’re also going to go back into the book of Daniel chapter 7. And so, I think on a subject matter of a personality that is this significant in scripture, it begs us to kind of walk through it somewhat slowly, not to get in a hurry here.

But kind of a clarification. In chapter 13, what we know as the beast, the antichrist, the beast is called a king, but the beast is also called a kingdom. Okay? Notice in chapter 13 verse 18, with the famous mark of the beast, it says, “Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man.” And so, what we know as the beast, the antichrist, is specifically called, his number is that of a man. But, back in verse 1 it says this beast rises up with the heads, and the horns, and all the stuff taking place there. And so, the beast is both a man and a kingdom. Okay? And one of the things that we’ve got to clarify is when is the scripture describing the person, and when is the scripture describing the entity that this person is the head thereof?

And one thing I put on there is that they’re actually used interchangeably, alright? Go back to the book of Daniel chapter 7. And by the way, when we are in chapter 13 of the book of Revelation, the book of Daniel is going to be very important to us. But Daniel 7 there is this dream that is interpreted by Daniel. And let me go ahead, as you’re searching for Daniel 7, let me go ahead and clarify something that will be important later in this study. There is a dream in Daniel 2. And there is a dream in Daniel 7. And oftentimes, people say, “Well, the interpretations are the same.” They can’t be the same. And here is why. Remember the dream in chapter 2? There is a head of gold. There is the chest that is silver, and the bronze, and all the different items, and it’s Babylon. It’s Media Persia. It’s the Greece. It’s Rome. The problem is that in Daniel 2, Daniel makes this statement, “You, Nebuchadnezzar, are this head.” You are the head. When the dream in chapter 7 takes place, Belshazzar is the head of Babylon, not Nebuchadnezzar. And so, if Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold, then we’ve got to take a step forward in chapter 7. And so, just kind of giving you a warning shot in advance. Oftentimes, people say, “Well, chapter 7, chapter 2, same story second verse.” No, it’s a little different, because it comes at a different time in the life of the Babylonians.

Okay, so, chapter 7 verse 17. Oh, that's not what I meant to do. I meant chapter, oh, hold on. Hold on. I will get there. I was in Hosea. I apologize. Hosea has nothing to do with the antichrist, just in case you're curious. Daniel chapter 7 verse 17. There it is. It says, "These great beasts, which are four," these are the four beasts that are a part of the dream, they "are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth." Now, kings are men, correct? Alright. Now, go to verse 23. It says, "Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces." And the reason that I laboriously walked through that is because I want you to see that as we talk about this antichrist figure, there is a lot of passages that are talking about him as an entity or a person, and there is a lot of passages talking about the kingdom or the entity by which he is reigning over. And sometimes they're used synonymously, sometimes they're used separately.

So, moving on. Back to Revelation 13. There is a contrast between the activity of the dragon in Revelation 12 and the activity of the beast, seven heads and ten horns. Both of them are. Okay? But the difference is in what I call their origins, alright? So, we're just going to walk through this verse by verse. That's why I've laid it out for you. Back in Revelation 12, and by the way, if you weren't with us the last two weeks, Revelation 12 describes this cosmic battle between whom we know as Satan and the Lord and the battle over, not only the people who we know as the Jewish people, but also the battle over whom we know as the Messiah, the redeemer of humanity.

And so, back in chapter 12 verse 13, it makes this statement. "And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth." Alright? What does chapter 13:1 say? "The beast came out of the sea." So, the dragon whom we know is Satan is cast into the earth. The beast comes out of the sea. So, we see a difference there.

The next passage I want you to see in chapter 13 verse 11, it says, "And I beheld another beast." Just when he thought it wasn't clear enough, there is another beast that shows up. It says, "And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth." And so, we see the dragon, whom we know as Satan, in Revelation 12 being cast to the earth. We see the beast coming out of the sea, and another beast coming out of the earth. And you'll notice on your outline I put a bunch of asterisks there, because something that's very important for us to understand in Revelation 13 is this, that everything that Satan is and does, none of it is original. None of it. everything he is, and everything he does is an imitation of, or shall I say a fabrication of, the truth that is found in the Lord himself. And we know throughout scripture, according to Deuteronomy 6, there is one God. But we also know that he manifests as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We're going to discover in Revelation 13 what many people call the satanic trinity. Revelation 16:13 kind of gives us some clarification here where it describes as "And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon." Who is the dragon? Satan himself, right? It says, "And out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet." And so, what we're going to see in Revelation 13 is there is this beast that we know as the antichrist. There is also another beast. Then there is going to be mention of the false prophet. And I just don't want there to be confusion, because what we see is, as he reigns on the earth as

the antichrist, he is going to operate much like the Lord does in what we know as the Trinity. Obviously, the Trinity is of the Lord. The satanic trinity is much the opposite. But I wanted you to see that.

And I gave you a reference to Numbers 22. You say, “Why Numbers 22?” Because this is the story of the prophet of God who is, shall we say, he manipulates the people of God to fall into the trap of the enemy. And in this story, you have Balak who is a false king. Okay? You have Balaam who is a false prophet, and you have Baal who is a false god. And the whole story revolves around these three entities, working as, or with one single purpose. And so, it’s just an illustration that we have all the way back in the book of Numbers of how, even what we might call the forces of the persons of evil operate as an imitation of or, shall we say, in the same fashion of, as the Lord himself.

Now, as an aside, this is why Ephesians 6 is important when it says, “We don’t fight against flesh and blood, but against principalities, powers, rulers of darkness.” Don’t you realize that Satan orders himself just like the Lord orders his governance? All he does is imitate. All he does. That’s all he knows how to do. And so, we see the same thing happen here in chapter 13.

Alright, so, that being said, back to chapter 13 verse 2. Is it clear as mud? Okay, good. Just checking. Chapter 13 verse 2 we notice, or I am sorry, verse 1, we notice that there are different crowns, okay? Chapter 13 verse 1. “And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.” Now, back up one chapter into chapter 12 verse 3. It says, “And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.” And what I put on your outline there, and this is why I’ve written so much on it tonight, is just so that you’ll have a reminder in the days ahead of what we’ve studied, is in Revelation 12 there are seven crowns upon the heads, and Revelation 13 there are ten crowns upon the horns, and the name of blasphemy is upon the heads. And we’re going to understand the significance of this in just a moment.

There is also a different description. In Revelation 12:3 this character is called a red dragon. In chapter 13 he is called a leopard, a bear, and a lion. He is not called a dragon. But we would also say, “Well, he’s operating in the same fashion and form, but described differently.” And the reason this is important is you see the same intent. You see the same motive. You see the same purpose, but two completely different descriptions, okay? Which leads to, what I put on your sheet, the possible interpretation. Don’t you like it when I use the word “possible?” Here is what I put. “He, Satan, is a red dragon until he is incarnated into the beast. Thus, the differences are before manifestation and after.” In chapter 13:2 the beast gets his power from the dragon.

Now, let me peel some of the layers of the onion there. Jesus Christ is God in flesh. Correct? By the way, ma’am, that’s one of the points. Just to go back to your question earlier. We recognize that we understand, we realize that, that God himself for the purpose of redemption, for the purpose of the forgiveness of sins, he came and allowed

himself to be within the confines and the boundaries of flesh to live among us, walk among us, talk among us, so that he could offer the only sacrifice that could save us. We all agree with that, right?

The antichrist, the beast, did you remember what I said what the devil does? All he does is imitate the Lord? What we're about to see in chapter 13 is the physical limitations, boundaries, whatever you call it, of the person of Satan himself in flesh. All he's doing is imitating the Lord. The Lord came in flesh to save us. The antichrist comes in flesh to deceive us. Do you see the different directions, but the same methodology? Same thing taking place. And so, what's important for us to see is in this story in chapter 12, where it gives kind of this big picture of how the Lord and the enemy Satan have been fighting throughout the ages and throughout the years, there comes a point in chapter 13 where the dragon, Satan, will do an imitation of the Lord, he will find himself in the personification of what we know as the beast, and he, as we read chapter 13, will do miracles, signs, and wonders.

Does that sound familiar to the person of Jesus Christ? In fact, I would go ahead and advocate in advance that when the antichrist does show up, and later on we'll talk about potential identities, the number, and all that such. I just really don't believe he's going to have on a red suit, horns, and a tail. I just don't. In fact, what I really believe, based on chapter 13, is he's going to come as the answer to humanity's problems, providing solution for things that they've desired for years, and years, and years, and giving them what they want, and not what they need. See, Jesus came giving us what we needed, even though we didn't want it. The antichrist comes giving us what we want, when actually we don't even need what he's offering. And so, kind of just that contrast of chapter 12 and 13. What I want you to see in this story in the book of Revelation is we see this battle that's been happening for thousands of years come down to just a few years, and we see the inhabitation of one entity known as the beast, or the antichrist.

Now, here is the comparison of Revelation 13 to Daniel 7. So, before we close tonight, go back to Daniel again. Hopefully, you still have it open. Not Hosea. Daniel. I'm the one that opened Hosea a while ago. But the book of Daniel 7. I'm going to read verses 1 through 8. And by the way, I know there's a lot of great studies out there about the book of Revelation. If you ever read a book, or you read a study, or you walk through a study of the book of Revelation, and there are not a bunch of allusions to the book of Daniel, don't do that study, because you have to do them together because a lot of what is prophesied in Daniel comes to fruition in the book of Revelation.

So, Daniel 7. Now, I mentioned earlier Daniel 7 a little different than Daniel 2. Those kind of sound very similar. It says, "In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed: then he wrote the dream, and told the sum of the matters. Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another. The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it. And behold

another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh. After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it. After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast,” this is critical to our study of Revelation 13, “a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns.” Are we connecting dots here? Alright? So, this is the four beasts. “I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things.”

So, as we kind of wrap up tonight, kind of at the bottom of your sheet, how are they alike? The entities in Daniel 7, as well as the beasts in Revelation 13, both come out of the sea. Unlike what we saw in Revelation 12. How are they different? In Revelation 13, in order, it’s a leopard, a bear, and a lion. By the way, I’m not going to overly emphasize it tonight. We will in the weeks ahead. Notice it says, “Like a leopard.” Like, that’s a simile. In other words, there is a comparison to. So, it says, “Like a leopard, feet of a bear, mouth of a lion.” In Daniel 7 it’s a lion, a bear, and then a leopard. How are they the same? We’ve already discussed this. There is this interchangeability of the kings and the kingdoms. And here is the possible conclusion as we wrap up tonight. That the fourth beast in Daniel, the one that’s like none other, the fourth beast that comes out of the sea, the fourth beast, as we just read, the eyes of a man and mouth speaking great things, that it is the fourth beast that is actually the same as the beast in the book of Revelation 13, whom we know as the antichrist.

And as we go forward, and as we study the characteristics thereof, in chapter 13, one of the things to take note of is that there are these other beasts that are listed in Daniel 7, and, also, we talked a little bit about Daniel 2, that are precursors to. And we will go back into those passages in the next couple of weeks and kind of see what were the events, what were the precursors, what were the things that lead up to the person of the antichrist? But next week when we come to Revelation 13 beginning in verse 3, we’re going to see that one of his heads receives a deadly wound, and we’re about to see an entity who is worshipped, who is elevated, who performs signs and wonders, even the possibility of what we know as the resurrection.

Again, the only tool in the tool box of the enemy is to imitate the truth of the Lord. That’s why Jesus said in Matthew 24, he said, “Do not be deceived.”

Let’s pray, and we’ll wrap up.

Lord, as we depart from this place, you yourself told us not to be deceived. Lord, you told us that we should rely on the very simple truth of your Word. Lord, tonight as we’ve discussed a multitude of issues, from the book of Genesis all the way to the book of Revelation, I pray that no matter what name is on the door of this building that we would

be people of the Book, that we would believe the words of your Book, we would live the words of your Book, and we would desire to tell each and every person we see the truth therein. As we leave this place, may we simply be people of the Book. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray, Amen.

Go get your kids! If you didn't bring kids, don't go get any kids!