

## Ask Jeff 9.7.17

By Dr. Jeff Meyers

sermonaudio.com

**Preached On:** Thursday, September 7, 2017

**Crossroads Ministries**

301 S. 8th Street  
Opelika, Alabama 36801

**Website:** [www.fbcopelika.com](http://www.fbcopelika.com)

**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/jeffmeyers](http://www.sermonaudio.com/jeffmeyers)

This is a friendly reminder, if you need an outline, we ran out of outlines. Our good friend, Mr. Chris, is walking around with outlines. Also, the yellow piece of paper, circle of concerns, that is our prayer sheet. He is not walking around with one of those. If you need one of those, they are actually at the entrance to the 316 Center.

Tonight, I want to welcome you to our Wednesday night activities. Some of you men came for our small group men's Bible study. You need to get out. You're not supposed to be here. That is in room 203 tonight. I just thought I'd have fun with you. But if you came, gentlemen, and you came purposefully for small group men's Bible study, that is actually in room 203. It is not in this room. We just want to make sure that you're aware. You're thinking, "This is a pretty big small group." Yeah, I get that. So but I just wanted to make you aware of that.

Circle of concerns, otherwise known as our prayer sheet, the yellow sheet of paper that you hopefully have. A couple of reminders. To those of you that are seasoned veterans, you hear this every week so allow me to repeat, please don't throw this away. Keep this as an item in your life to remember those who are either a part of our church, connected to our church, friends of our church, or even distantly connected to our church, and the prayer needs and concerns of their life. If you know somebody who needs to be put on here, please let us know in the office or just tell us personally and we will get it on there as soon as possible. As always, at the bottom of the first sheet you will see a section known as sympathy, those that have lost loved ones and such in our church family. We want you to be aware of them not only to reach out to them but to pray for them. And on the back side, you will see those that are serving on the mission field as well as those serving in the military. I do want to call attention again to a family I mentioned last week on the mission field, Chase and Kimmy Barbary. They're on the third column to the right middle. Those of you that may not be aware, they're actually serving in Haiti which is right in the midst of hurricane Irma right now. In God's providence, they're actually here on stateside for 90 days but the prayer is they don't know what they're going back home to, and so they're serving in Haiti and just wanted you to please continue to pray for not only their place but the people they're ministering to every day there in the country of Haiti. So just wanted to call attention to them.

Let's pray and we'll get started.

*Lord, tonight as we prepare for Bible study in here, Lord, we're comfortable, we've been fed and we've had a good time fellowshiping but, Lord, we know there are thousands upon thousands of people not just in Texas and Louisiana but in the Caribbean and possibly even Florida who are experiencing a series of emotions that are devastating. There's everything from trepidation to confusion to honestly fear and so, Lord, we pray that you would be in the midst of the storm, that the storm of their life and the aftermath and the going through and that, Lord, all those many people who are there as disaster relief who are providing clothes and food and clean water but more importantly the gospel, God, we pray that you would give them the strength and the endurance for these days, and you would give receptive hearts to those who are being affected, not just to the rebuilding of their physical lives but hopefully the transformation of their spiritual life. So Lord, be with those that are serving on the ground, be with those that are serving not just the Barbary's who are on stateside now, but all of those who are connected to our church family and the thousands that we support financially around the globe who have taken the gospel of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth. To those serving in the military, Lord, we pray for peace, for comfort particularly as they're distanced from families and, Lord, those that are close to home suffering the illness and sickness, disease and untold amounts of difficulties. Lord, we pray for healing where healing needs to be taking place, we pray for restoration and we pray that they would know your love for them, your mercy and your grace in untold fashion in these difficult days. As we open your word, guide us to what we need to know so that we might be better equipped to serve you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

Alright, for those of you who are here and maybe this is your first time or maybe you haven't been with us in a while, I want to invite you or, shall I say, welcome you to Wednesday nights here at First Baptist where we actually take our Bible study and we divide it into two sections. The two sections, one of those is a question and answer section where you guide, you determine everything we talk about. If you want to talk about it, we talk about it. The other section is a Bible study which we've been walking through the book of Revelation, that book of the Bible that oftentimes has more questions than it does answers.

Now typically we do our question and answer at the front side, we do our Bible study on the back side, but tonight I want to flip the script. I want to turn it upside down and here is why, because the subject matter we're going to deal with tonight in our Revelation Bible study could spin off some pretty good questions that I want to give you the time to ask because it is a subject matter that oftentimes has a lot of verbiage behind it, but also has a lot of confusion. And so tonight, I want you if you have a Bible with you, to open up to the book of Revelation 6. In the book of Revelation 6, we're going to cover chapter 6 through chapter 19 tonight. Some of you are laughing because you know it's not possible. That's right. But the book of Revelation 6 begins with a very interesting prelude/statement. It says,

1 And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see.

Now if you were with us the last couple of weeks when we were in chapter 5 of the book of Revelation, we saw that there was this famous book that was sealed with seven seals, and a strong angel shows up and it proclaims, "Who is worthy to open the book?" And it said no one in heaven, no one on the earth, no one under the earth was able to open the book thereof and the Apostle John, the same one who fell at the feet of Jesus in chapter 1 on the island of Patmos, he begins to weep because no one is found worthy to open. Ah, but the Lamb that was slain, the Lamb from the tribe of Judah, Jesus Christ, takes this book in chapter 5. The angels celebrate. The elders celebrate. The creatures celebrate. We turn to chapter 6 and the book is opened.

Now for those of you who have been waiting so patiently for all of the craziness of the book of Revelation to take place, congratulations, it starts tonight. You see, the first five chapters of the book of Revelation are very tame compared to the final chapters. In fact, in the first chapter we have an introduction, we have the Apostle John on the island of Patmos who has this vision where he sees the Lord and in such a unique way. He is commissioned to do three things: write the things which have been, the things which are, and the things which are to come. In chapter 2 and 3, we have the seven churches of the book of Revelation beginning with Ephesus and ending with Laodicea, and we spoke about the fact that they not only picture those local churches but they also picture in some respect a historical timeline between the ascension of Christ and the return of Christ. Chapter 4 and 5, very unique scene, the Apostle John is taken up into the heavens, he sees the throne room of God, he sees the rainbows and the colors and all the shouting of the angels and the celebration, and finally this famous book sealed with seven seals.

In chapter 6 of the book of Revelation, everything changes. We're not on the island of Patmos in the first century. We're not in the seven churches of Asia Minor. We're not in the throne room. We are in the midst of the wrath of God being poured out on humanity for their rejection of his plan and his personhood, and what we see tonight and the reason I joke that we're going to cover all these chapters is I want to kind of take a 30,000 foot flyover and discuss chapter 6 through chapter 19 tonight because these chapters encompass a time period that has oftentimes been referred to as the Great Tribulation. So as you look there in chapter 6, you'll begin, chapter 6 through 19, there are certain things you're going to see. You're going to see the seals opened up. You're going to see the vials opened up, the trumpet judgments. There is one word, though, you will not see in chapter 6 through 19, it's the word "church." The word "church" or the assembly of believers has been all throughout the first part of the book of Revelation, it doesn't show up in chapters 6 through 19.

So if we're going to lay out the book of Revelation, and by the way, for those of you who are first time with us, I know oftentimes when you get to the book of Revelation there's lots of charts that come out and people love to have all these charts and pictures, this isn't a chart, this is just kind of a flyover at 30,000 feet so we can see the 22 chapters of the book of Revelation laid out.

The Apostle John is commissioned, "Write the things which are, the things which have been, and the things which are to come." Three distinct divisions. We have the things

which are past. We have the things that he has seen in the present. And we have the things of the future. Now when it comes to the future part, most of us don't struggle as far as a difference of opinions because when Jesus comes back and he descends in chapter 19 of the book of Revelation, we have the famous battle of Armageddon, we have chapter 20 with what we call the millennial kingdom of Jesus Christ, we have the new heaven, the new earth, the new Jerusalem. So basically chapters 19 beginning in verse 11, through chapter 22, can conclusively be deemed that's something that's yet to occur, that's sometime in the future.

Now there is some discussion on, "Well, which part is the past?" And for the sake of our discussion we've been having, I'm just going to easily say this is chapter 1:1 through 4:1. You say, "Well, why there?" Because it is there that the Apostle John is taken up into the heaven to see all the events that are going to play out. And so just like he says there's three divisions, there are two doors. In chapter 4, verse 1, it says a door opened up in heaven and the Apostle John went up to see all the events. In chapter 19, verse 11, a door opens up and Jesus Christ and his armies descend down. It's a pretty natural division that lays out the book of Revelation.

Now for our discussion tonight beginning in chapter 6. Now remember I mentioned earlier chapter 4 and 5, very unique, they take place in heaven. It's almost as if you'd step out of the chronology as far as the story line of the book of Revelation. In chapter 6 through 19, we have this time period that is called by many the great tribulation. I'm sure you've heard of that. There's been movies, there's been books about this, and people made a lot of money talking about it, but tonight there's no money to be made, there's no audience to draw, we're just going to find out what does the Bible say.

So how do we get this name the Great Tribulation? I'm glad you asked. It actually comes from Jesus. Now this was his idea, not a preacher's. Matthew 24, we have Jesus giving what is known as the Olivet Discourse. We are literally hours from his eventual trial and crucifixion. He is there with the disciples. He is looking down on the Temple Mount. And in chapter 24 and 25 of the book of Matthew which, by the way, is synonymous with Mark 13 and Luke 21, he discusses these famous end time events. In Matthew 24, one of the most famous chapters in all of the Bible, there in verse 21 he's discussing some of these events and he says, "And this was a great tribulation such has not been since the creation." Jesus Christ himself when describing the wrath of God being poured out in the end days. Now he doesn't say chapter 6 to 19 of Revelation. He doesn't say that. He just says the last days. He calls it the great tribulation. So when people say, "Well, why do you call this time period the great tribulation?" Because this is what Jesus referred to it as, okay? He called the period of God's judgment in the end days the great tribulation.

Now so how do we define this? How do we put parameters? Because Jesus quite honestly didn't give us dates, he didn't give us times, and he didn't say chapter 6 to chapter 19. Well, a little more insight. In the book of Jeremiah 30 and Jeremiah is like Isaiah and Ezekiel and a lot of these other prophets where their prophecies are what we would call twofold, they were prophetic about what was about to happen with either Babylon or Assyria but they had a double meaning of what was eventually going to happen in the last

days. A lot of times you look back and there's characters who, they embody what we know as the Antichrist, they don't fulfill the entity of the Antichrist, and later on we see the Antichrist character completely fulfilled as pictured by this individual who was there in their present day. In Jeremiah 30:7 when God's wrath is poured out on the earth, it is called – listen – the time of Jacob's trouble. Now the reason that's important for us tonight is when you study the book of Revelation the primary people group by which are being spoken of, and we'll discuss this at the end, are the Jewish people known as the Israelites, the descendants of Jacob.

So you have Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the 12 tribes etc., but last but not least in the book of Daniel beginning chapter 9, verses 24 through 27, there is this famous passage about Daniel's 70 weeks. Now Daniel's 70 weeks are the time of the judgment of God upon his people and their land, and as you begin to kind of unfold what all that means, we discover from the book of Jeremiah and others that each of these years is actually a synonym, I mean each one of these days is a synonym for a year. So in other words, a one week period is seven years, 490 or 70 weeks is 490 years. And as you read Daniel 9, it talks about how these weeks or these time periods are broken up, and it talks about 483 years basically from the captivity to the cutting off the Messiah, and there's this one last seven year period that the book of Daniel describes as being critical to all of our "end times" study. The reason when we go to Revelation 6 through 19 this wrath of God that Jesus called the great tribulation, that Jeremiah called Jacob's trouble, the reason you will oftentimes, in fact, most of the time see people say this is a seven year time period is based on the book of Daniel and his famous 70<sup>th</sup> week.

So oftentimes when we come to this time period, it's the great tribulation or it's Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week. I will share this with you. As you study the book of Revelation, in particular chapter 6 through 19, it is hard to do so apart from the book of Daniel because the book of Daniel is so explicit in the prophecies of the end times and then, of course, the book of Revelation just lays them out. So that's how we get the evidence for calling it the great or the tribulation.

Now the other aspect we've got to discuss and for some of you this may be a little bit of a review but this is very pertinent, is the order of the tribulation in the book of Revelation. You say, "Well, the order is right there. It's right in the middle." That's correct, however, there are three main views that people have in regards to the events of the book of Revelation and all of them have the word "millennium" in them. That is a Latin word for one thousand. In the book of Revelation 20:1-6, we have a passage where it talks about Jesus Christ sitting on his throne for a thousand years. Satan is bound in the lake of fire for a thousand years. His saints reign with him for a thousand years. In fact, over and over and over it talks about this thousand year time period. Well, in the Latin language that thousand years means a millennium, and so the three main overviews or interpretations of this perspective of the millennium has everything to do with the great tribulation.

Now the first view is known as post-millennialism. Post-millennialism, by the way, the word "post, after," these terms are in reference to the actual physical return of Jesus

Christ, okay? So a post-millennialist believes that Jesus Christ returns after the one thousand years, okay? And in their system of belief, the earth goes through all of its trouble and discussions, but there is this time period known as the great tribulation that precedes the thousand years of sinless life on earth as propagated by the church of Jesus Christ, and after a thousand years of peace, then Jesus returns. For those of you going, "Seriously? There's a lot of folks that believe that?" Well, there used to be and then this thing called World War I happened and then World War II came around the corner and most post-millennialists went by the wayside because if you think about it, for 200 years leading up to World War I, that was the great missionary movement and all the great awakenings that were happening and we were under this idea that, well, maybe the whole world is going to be converted, then Jesus will come back. But in post-millennialism, understand the great tribulation takes place before the church establishes peace on earth for a thousand years.

In amillennialism, by the way, the letter "a" in Greek just means "no," an amillennialist does not believe that the thousand years mentioned here is literal, it is figurative, it is a picture of the ups and the downs, the goods and the bads of life from the time of Christ until the time of his return. And so therefore they do not believe that there is a literal thousand year reign as mentioned in chapter 20, and so therefore the tribulation in their perspective is not a literal seven year time period, that is a figurative time that there are times of greater intensity, of difficulty than others. And so this time period between chapter 6 and chapter 19 discusses great difficulty, hardships, persecutions, difficult but not restricted to a specific time period.

Now pre-millennialism, as you can see by the prefix, "pre," means "before." The idea is that Jesus Christ returns before what we know as the millennial reign mentioned in chapter 20. The overwhelming majority of believers, particularly those of an evangelical nature, are pre-millennialists. Now they can divide themselves into a thousand other different groups once they get there simply put because Jesus comes back in chapter 19, the kingdom is mentioned in chapter 20, and most of us in math understand that 19 comes before 20, and so therefore Jesus comes back before the reign and the great tribulation is not the time period before the church does something great, but is actually the end of the church going into apostasy, everything is in a horrific state and it's the last seven years of sin's dominion on the earth before Jesus comes back and judgment ensues and he sets up his kingdom.

Now the reason that is important for our study tonight is this concept known as the great tribulation, as most people, including myself, see it, it is the last great hurrah of the enemy, the Antichrist and sin on planet earth. Once this event takes place, everything else after that with the exception of one rebellion known as Gog and Magog is taken care of completely by the Lord Jesus Christ. And so when we talk about this great tribulation, this is the last seven years, this is the coup d'etat of sinful humanity in these chapters.

So that being said, that's the order and then we get to these famous seven seals. This is really why I wanted to do the 30,000 overview or 30,000 foot overview tonight, is because when you open up to chapter 6, the first seal is opened, and you'll notice the first

seal opens, then there's the second, the third, the fourth, then there's a lot of woes that happen and, by the way, when the Bible says woe, it's never good. A lot of woes happen and then you've got the fifth seal, the sixth seal, the seventh seal opens and this is in chapter 8, verse 1. This is where I get the opportunity to tell a really bad preacher joke that most of you have heard. When the seventh seal is opened, there is proof there are no women in heaven because it says when it happens there was silence for 30 minutes. Ladies, I've got something to comeback. Psalm 116:11 says all men are liars. Just go for it, alright? So I'm an equal opportunity offender. I offend everybody so it's all good.

Now the reason that is important, there are three layers of judgments that we see in these chapters of scripture. There are the famous seven seals. That's what most of us are familiar with when it comes to the book of Revelation. There are also the seven trumpets and there are the seven vials for a total of 21 discussions of the wrath of God being poured out on earth and those who rebel against him.

Now here are the two opinions and this is critical to kind of this 30,000 foot overview tonight. When you look at the judgments of God that are laid out in these chapters of the book of Revelation, there are two main streams of thought. One of those thoughts is that you have the seven seals and that the seven trumpets are just a more detailed explanation of the seven seals, and that the seven vials are a more detailed explanation of the seven trumpets. In other words, the first seal, the first trumpet, and the first vial or bowl are all the same judgment, just explained three more intensive ways. The second seal, second trumpet, and the second vial or bowl are the second judgment for a total of seven judgments of God.

Now for the sake of time and energy tonight, allow me to share with you I have gone through and I have read and I have read and I have read these judgments laid out and all seven of them when you lay them out together, they do not perfectly overlay. Some of them do overlay pretty well, in particular, the sixth judgment. The sixth seal, the sixth trumpet and the sixth vial when you overlay them look pretty similar with some intensity, but some of the others do not overlay quite as well. And the thing that I struggle with is the seventh seal doesn't actually have a pronouncement of judgment, it just says there was silence in heaven, and then the next thing you know, you have the seven trumpets. And so there is technically no judgment poured out with the seventh seal but there is with the seventh trumpet and with the seventh vial.

You say, "Why are you using so much, you know, words to describe this?" Because I'm of the belief, now this is me, if you disagree with me, it is not going to keep you or I from heaven, okay? This is a secondary issue here. I'm of the belief in the book of Revelation that the judgments are successive. Here's what I mean by that: the seventh seal opens up the trumpets and it is the seventh trumpet that opens up the vials. Now let me show you what that means. That means you've got, for lack of better terms, you've got seven seals and on the seventh one it opens up seven trumpets, on the seventh one it opens up the seven vials or the seven bowls which means that the seventh seal actually contains 14 judgments, not just one. In other words, what I believe we see in this period of scripture is you see an exponential judgment of God, not just an overlay.

So the intensity picks up at a rapid pace, and so what we know as the most severe of the judgments of God is actually, for lack of better terms, it's kind of back-loaded at the end, and you almost get a sense when you read through there that there's a false security that people fall into. "Oh, well, that was bad but it wasn't too bad. And well, that got a little worse but we can make it." By the time the seventh one opens up, it's bad. They're starting to hide themselves in the cleft of the rocks, yet they still will not repent of their sins. And so these seven seal judgments, they're either an overlay or an overlap or they're successive. I tend to side with the successive one. I've got dear friends of mine that believe in an overlay, and guess what? We're still dear friends. So we can have the right to disagree but I do think as you read through Revelation 6 through 19, you do see an intensity begin to build with the judgments as they continue on.

Next, the key component of the tribulation within the book of Revelation. I mentioned Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week and those who take a literal interpretation of this 70<sup>th</sup> week say that this is seven years in length. The key component is an item, again, that Jesus mentioned known as the abomination of desolation. Now if you play Scrabble, that gives you a lot of points if you can put that all together. The abomination of desolation is an event that takes place that was mentioned by Jesus again in Matthew 24:15, as being the time where according to 2 Thessalonians 2, the Antichrist character, by the way, Antichrist means not Christ. You get the idea and we're going to study this specifically next week. He comes in peace. He comes with signs. He comes with wonders. Allow me to make it, he comes as a good guy but turns out to be a really bad guy. The abomination of desolation according to 2 Thessalonians and mentioned by Jesus in Matthew 24:15, the Antichrist goes into the temple of God in Jerusalem, that's mentioned in Revelation 11, and he goes into the "Holy of Holies" and he declares he is God. So what we know as the devil in flesh claims to be the one true God. Jesus says this is the abomination of desolation, in other words, nothing that bad has ever happened before, alright?

Now in Daniel 9:27 it says that this event occurs in the middle of the last week, and so those who want to take a literal seven year period of this famous great tribulation put that right at the 3 ½ year period. This is critical because even though you see the judgments of God being poured out and we'll study this throughout the next weeks and months and possibly years as we begin to study this, the judgments are bad, don't get me wrong, but as soon as this event takes place, allow me to say it, it just becomes hell on earth. There's no other word to describe it. I mean, it is incredible what happens as soon as this abomination of desolation occurs. That is why in verse 15 of Matthew 24, Jesus says when this happens, he then goes on to say run for the hills. He says I'm sorry for those who are with child because it's going to get real bad and pray that it doesn't happen on the Sabbath because you're going to have to run for the hills. It gets real bad, real quick, but that's the key component here when studying the great tribulation. Don't get me wrong, it's bad before but it's not near anything like this. So oftentimes people will say, well, the first half of this time period, it's bad but, eh, livable. The second half, not so much. And so that kind of gives you that key event.



Next thing is the key personality, the Antichrist. Yes, it is the Lamb, it is Jesus Christ who opens up the seven seals but as we going to see next week, I'm of the belief that that first seal opens up, that is the Antichrist character himself and he is the one who is calling all the shots. He is the one who's leading the rebellion. He is the one who masks himself as the ruler of the world. He is the one with signs and wonders. He is the one that has the deadly wound but he heals. He is the one that puts a mark in the right hand and in the forehead of any and all that they may buy or sell or do any kind of transactions. He is the character, listen, that all the world revolves around. To use our terminology today, he is a narcissist, egomaniac. The entire world must bow down and worship at his feet. Now do you see why Nebuchadnezzar in the book of Daniel was a picture of the Antichrist? He created this incredible statue and said when you hear the music, everybody must bow. The Antichrist gives a mark that everybody must receive. So he's kind of this key figure that commits this key crime known as the abomination of desolation at this very key moment in the book of Revelation.

Next is the geographical emphasis within the great tribulation. I've got bad news for you, you're not going to find the United States of America, we're not listed there. In fact, all the geographical areas that are described, the primary place is a place we call Israel. You're going to find places such as Syria, Babylon, Egypt, what we know as modern-day Turkey. Isn't that amazing where it all started is where it's all going to end. So when you start to study this time period in the great tribulation in the book of Revelation, isn't it amazing that in our culture today these are places we're familiar with again because we see them on the news every single night. So there is an emphasis, in fact, there is a revised of Babylon, there is the city with seven hills, all these places that are found in what we know as that Middle East genre of the world.

Last but not least, the key demographical people that are within this tribulational period. As you begin to study chapter 6 through 19 of the book of Revelation, the one key people that I want to focus on that you see the Lord working through in the midst of all the craziness are what we know as the Jewish people. In fact, in chapter 7, it says, "And I saw the 12 tribes and I saw 12,000 out of the 12 tribes." That famous 144,000 that we hear about, that happens in chapter 7. Those are the descendants, those are of the 12 tribes of Israel. You see them as witnesses, you see them as propagating the truth, you see them as we'll see this later, once this abomination of desolation takes place, the picture you get is these are the folks who, for lack of better terms, have the scales removed from their eyes, they see the truth of Jesus Christ and they begin to propagate his truth to the world at large. And so primarily beginning in chapter 6 through 19, the book of Revelation, you don't see the word "church" but you see the 12 tribes of Israel pop up again.

Secondly, you do see a group known as the redeemed. The redeemed, our word for that are those that are saved, for lack of better terms. Chapter 7, beginning in verse 9 it says, "And I saw from every tongue and every nation and every people, I saw those who believed." And so in this horrible period known as the great tribulation, yes, you see an emphasis on the 12 tribes, they're not the only ones that are in God's good graces, you also see the Gentiles, the Samaritans, the people groups of the world who do not buy into

the antichrist propagation. They are also a part of the redeemed, or as we would say, the people of God.

And last but not least, you have the resistant. There are those who refuse to repent, in fact, we'll talk about this when we get there later. In 2 Thessalonians 2 it says that they believe the lie. They will not repent, in fact, there I've got it on your sheet, in Revelation 16:11, chapter 9, it says that even though the wrath of God is being poured out, fire and hail and brimstone is coming out of heaven, they still will not repent of their sins. And so in the book of Revelation 6 through 19, this horrible time period known as the great tribulation, you have the Jewish people, the vessels of God's redemption plan beginning all the way back in Genesis 12, you see them as the propagators of his plan, you see all people who will repent, capable of repenting and you see the resilient.

Now which one of those three groups do you think are the most numerous? The resistant, in fact, those that oppose the things of God, so much so that when we get to chapter 19, this famous battle of Armageddon, there is a numerical possibility that billions of people, that's billions with a "b," are awaiting Jesus' return to fight against him. Remember there's only 144,000 of the 12 tribes and, yes, there was a group that were redeemed and called out of the nations and the people, but the most numerous are actually those who are resistant to the things of God.

Now tonight, that is just a quick 30,000 foot overview of this time period known as the great tribulation. Beginning next week, we'll go back into chapter 6, verses 1 and 2, and we'll start to peel away each and every one of those individual seals and the trumpets and the Antichrist, but I wanted you to get an idea of what we're dealing with here, in particular the terminologies: the great tribulation, the abomination of desolation. Those are phrases Jesus himself used. The concept of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week, that's not a preacher term, that's a book of Daniel term. And so a lot of these things that you've heard of or are hearing of, I wanted you to see where they were in relationship to these chapters in scripture.

Now as we transition to more the Q&A, any questions about all this, concepts, concerns, issues, thoughts? Yes, ma'am.

[unintelligible]

Great question. Do I think that the thousand years that's mentioned in Revelation 20, is that a literal thousand years or is that term just a metaphor for an extended period of time? Here's why I go literal. 1. There's no reason just to say, well, it must be metaphorical. In six verses, seven times the Lord uses the term one thousand years, the same Lord who in the book of Deuteronomy said out of the mouth of two or three witnesses. He gives us seven. He just says a thousand years so many times, it's almost as if he's saying, "Can you not get this?" You know, that's my opinion and I have no reason to believe it's not literal, if that makes sense.

Now I have good friends that do believe it is metaphorical, it's just a period of elongated time, the same individuals who go into 2 Peter 3 that says a day with the Lord is as a thousand years, a thousand years as if a day. The interesting thing about that is that 2 Peter 3, most people take that passage and go back to Genesis and say, "Oh, when the Lord had day one, it could've been a thousand years. We don't know." But chapter 3 of 2 Peter is all about the second coming. A day to the Lord is a thousand years, a thousand years to a day, you do understand that when you start studying the second coming, this period is called the day of Christ or the day of the Lord? It's almost as if he's saying, "Hello, that thousand years that I mentioned seven times, it's the same period that I'm talking about in 2 Peter." Because it says after that it says that the earth will be melted with heat. Well, guess what happens in chapter 20 of Revelation? After the thousand years, it says, "Then I saw heaven and earth dismiss with a great ball of fire."

And so I do believe in a literalness of that because of the abundance and frequency of the term, the correlation between 2 Peter 3 and everything else is so literally spoken and fulfilled, why would that not be as well? Does that help?

Alright. Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Ah, the new heaven and the new earth. The new heaven and the new earth actually begin in chapter 21. Chapter 21 is the new heaven, new earth, and the new Jerusalem. In fact, oftentimes this is where we say eternity begins. Yes, sir, follow-up.

[unintelligible]

Well, yeah, Methuselah was 969 years back here.

[unintelligible]

Are you talking about during the millennium or the new heaven, new earth? Well, in the new heaven, new earth, we are in immortal bodies. There is no thousand years. We're in beautiful, gorgeous 6'5" bodies, all of us.

[unintelligible]

What now?

[unintelligible]

Ah, in the one thousand year reign, okay, sorry. I got distracted. I apologize, I got....

[unintelligible]

Oh, where the church? Okay. Your church. Alright, now, the way I read the book of Revelation. Here you are, you're the church, right? We're going to put you in... Do you know what? I'm gonna get fancy. How about red? Blood of Christ? Yes, okay? Here we go. Here you are, right here.

[unintelligible]

Yes, ma'am. In other words, you're going to go up with Christ, you're going to come down with Christ and that is where most of the difference of opinion comes is how much, if any, the "church" has to go through this. We're going to discuss a lot of that at length in the days ahead, but for simplistic terms, Jesus said, "I'll never leave you. I'll never forsake you." And it's Jesus who opens up the seven seals and I think if he's never going to leave me, never going to forsake me, then he's never going to open up the seals of his judgment on me. But that's a simplistic answer so you come back, you reign with him, we talked about that last year, as saints, and then the final judgment we're actually with him and the new heaven, new earth, new Jerusalem begins and then it says that our bodies are immortal at that point. There is no Methuselah of 969 years.

Now during this millennium period which, by the way, is mentioned a lot in the book of Isaiah 59 and other passages, it says that in those days, it says that the child shall be as the old man, that that longevity of life that we saw back in Genesis 5 returns again because no longer, the devil is in what we know as the lake of fire, Jesus is sitting on his throne and you see those longness of days return. But you and I as the church, the ones in red, we at that point have already come back with him, we've already got our glorified bodies. We're reigning with him. We're not in a limited capacity, we're in an immortal capacity.

Does that help at all? Yes, ma'am.

[unintelligible]

Ah, the question is what is the difference between the red line, known as the church, and the redeemed of chapter 7, verse 9? Chapter 7, verse 9 is speaking specifically to those that believe during this time period. During this time period, alright? Now what's interesting about that and, boy, you've opened up a can so are you ready for this one? This is where it gets fun and this is why I wanted to give you an overview tonight, then we'll get into the details. There is great evidence that as you get toward the end of the seven years, that these redeemed are actually caught up as well because it says that the army of the Lord is with him when he returns and we'll discuss that as we get to the end of this. But there is a redeemed out of this time period. This redeemed is in what we call the third heaven. They join together before they return. Does that help? But you're here. You're good.

Yes, ma'am.

[unintelligible]

Now do y'all know why I did this first because I knew the questions would come? Yeah.

[unintelligible]

Okay, so the question is do we, the church, do we avoid what is known as this "great tribulation"? Now just like I mentioned, there's pre-millennialism, amillennialism, post-millennialism, even within what we call pre-millennialism, which the majority of folks in this room and in evangelical Christianity would lean toward, you have what we call pre-tribulational, mid-tribulational, and post-tribulational which means some of you are pre-millennial pre-tribulational. Now you know what you are. Because that is a phrase to describe your view of when the church actually "is taken out." A pre-tribulationalist believes that the church is taken out before the tribulation begins. A mid-tribulationalist believes it happens right at or after this abomination of desolation. A post-tribulationalist believes it happens right toward the end. And we'll discuss all those details. I would say that there is great evidence for this, there is pretty good evidence for this, and there's I don't believe much evidence for this, if that makes any sense. But we're going to discuss all that. I think what is critical, this is just me being very overly simplistic tonight because we can get into all the verses and the passages and the this and the that, but Jesus told me he would never leave me, he would never forsake me, and he'd be with me to the end of the age, okay? I have real difficulty reconciling him pouring out the wrath of God on me after saying he would never leave me or forsake me. Some people who believe in a mid-tribulational rapture call this a pre-wrath rapture, and what they mean by that is they believe that the church, the red line, will have to endure the coming of the Antichrist and some of these great difficulties but they won't have to endure what we know as the trumpets and the vials and just the horrific stuff that we see in this latter half. I know I made that more confusing and I apologize but some of you are pre-millennial post-tribulationalists. Some of you are pre, pre. Some of you are amillennialist. I mean, there's all, there's a thousand different combinations, okay, and for that I hate to make it confusing.

Yes, ma'am.

[unintelligible]

Yes, ma'am.

[unintelligible]

Ah, great question. The question is we come, no matter what your opinion is here of when we go up, we all coming down. Is that right? Yeah, we are all coming down with him. In fact, it says he's pictured in chapter 19, he's on a white horse, he's got a double-edged sword coming out of his mouth, and by the way, his feet are like brass, his eyes are red, and it says that his loins have been girded up. You know that when they're girded up, that means it's over, alright? And it says King of kings, Lord of lords, and what we know as the battle of Armageddon takes place. This is actually best described in Matthew 25. In

Matthew 25, it talks about this event, that when he descends, when the battle is over, it's called the judgment of the nations and he says, "Those who are on my right hand go into life everlasting. Those on my left hand go into the lake of fire prepared for the devil and his angels from the foundation of the world."

Here's the interesting thing. You remember this famous story where he says those in life everlasting, they say, "Lord, how did we know?" Do you remember what he says? "When I was hungry, you fed me. When I was thirsty, you gave me a cup of cold water." And that's a really interesting passage of scripture but as you study these chapters in the book of Revelation, you see that it is the redeemed who are ministering to these Jewish people who are running for their lives from the Antichrist and those who, for lack of better terms, survive and live through this tribulational period do not give in to the Antichrist, they do not battle Jesus Christ, they come into the millennium and they are, for simplistic terms, the "subjects" of the reign of Jesus Christ. And somebody mentioned or brought up the fact that after a thousand years Satan is loosed and he deceives some. Who are those he deceives? I'm of the opinion it would be those who came out of the tribulation, lived through this millennium and the decision has to be made for Jesus or not.

[unintelligible]

The question is will they reproduce during the millennium? I would think so if it says the children are of the age. I mean, it makes perfect sense because it is life on earth. Someone has almost pictured it as a revisit to the garden of Eden, if that makes sense. Their life, there is no more temptation but there is life as we know it and that the redeemed, the red line here, are those that Revelation 5:10 and 1:10 says, that we are those that are reigning with him as kings and priests.

Does that help at all? Now do y'all know why I did this first tonight? I knew there would be questions. You and you. Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Yes, those that either live through or are born in this time period would be the ones of which when the devil comes back at what we know as the battle of Gog and Magog and he deceives some. They would be the subjects of his temptation.

Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Alright, that is a great question and I'm glad you asked it because I'm going to have fun tonight. Alright, here's what he asked. He was asking, okay, we talk about this... by the

way, when we use the term "rapture" okay, the word "rapture" is not actually found in your Bible but that is the word for being caught up, and in 1 Thessalonians 4 it says that they were caught up into the heaven. Now it's not just an end times word because in the book of Acts, do you remember when Philip shared with the Ethiopian eunuch, remember that story where he shares and shares the gospel, and he's actually the first personal evangelism experience that we have in the book of Acts? It says after Philip baptizes him, he was caught up, and it's the same word as 1 Thessalonians 4 which by definition, rapture means supernaturally taken from one place to another in an instant. Think of that, that's the definition of a rapture.

Now the key is when does this take place? Now anytime you see language such as resurrection, rapture, etc. the Lord uses agricultural terms and agriculturally speaking and this is really pictured well in the book of Ruth in the Old Testament, you have what are called the firstfruits, you have what is called the harvest, and you have what is called the gleanings. Now we all know the firstfruits are those, they bloomed early or they came early and it's not the main crop but it is still to be harvested, correct? Then you've got the main crop and it's wonderfully pictured in the book of Ruth. Remember when Boaz says, "You can go and take the fringes"? The gleanings were those that, listen, everybody gave up on and thought it doesn't matter. He said, "Oh, yes it does. Go and pick up the gleanings." The reason that is important is because I'm of the opinion that you actually see three distinct times in scripture that we would define as a rapture. Now here's where people have a lot of disagreements. People always want to fight on when the rapture is going to take place and I have good friends of mine that completely disagree on this but the thing I want to share with them is, I think they've all got the right intentions and they all just need to calm down for just a moment because the Bible says to rightly divide the word of God.

So, for example, 1 Thessalonians 4 when it says we shall be caught up in the air to meet the Lord in the air, the dead in Christ shall rise first and then those who are alive shall come later. You know the old preacher joke, right? Why do the dead in Christ rise first? Because they've got six feet further to go. Alright, so that happens. In 1 Thessalonians 4, there is no even hint of any of these events. There is no hint of an Antichrist. There is no hint of the abomination of desolation. It's like life is just going about normal and all of a sudden, pfft, they're going. In the book of Matthew 24, there is another event. Remember Jesus says, "As in the days of Noah there will be two in the field, one will be taken, one will be left. There will be two at the mill, one will be taken, one will be left. Two in bed, one will be taken, one will be left." Guess what? In Matthew 24 in that context, there is tribulational language all over the place. I mean, it's talking about all kinds of horrific things that are happening, the fig tree, the days of Noah, and so we have scriptural references to a rapture without tribulational events, we have scriptural references to rapture with tribulational events. And this is what I think is the linchpin to the discussion: in Matthew 27:51-53, it says that when Jesus Christ rose from the dead, many of the saints of old rose with him and walked in the holy city. If that's not a rapture, I don't know what is. In other words, I'm of the belief that at the resurrection of Jesus when the Old Testament saints rose, that is your firstfruits. At this event, that is your harvest. And at this event, you have your gleanings.

Now he asked a very great question. When does this one happen? Technically, I don't know but I'm going to have a shot. Are you ready? You're going to think, "Well, how do you, what's your shot?" Alright, just work with me. The book of Job, alright? This is fun. Well, I think it's fun, you may not. Here we go. The book of Job has 42 chapters in it, alright? You do understand that this great tribulational time period is in two sections of 42 months, that's how the time chronology works out. The book of Job, or shall I say the character of Job is a perfect picture of someone dealing with and walking through this horrific time period known as the great tribulation. All of his money is taken away. All his family is taken away. His health is taken away. Everybody opposes him and yet he still will not curse God. What happens at the end of his life? He receives twice as much blessing as he had in his life. You say, "Well, what does that have to do with anything?" The book of Job is 42 chapters in length. It's in chapter 38 that God shows up in a whirlwind and he speaks to Job. Now I can't put that in concrete but I would say if you pressed me, because I really don't know, but if you pressed me I would say it would probably take place somewhere with a few months left per the picture that Job gives us.

Alright, that was nice and easy. Anybody else? Yes, ma'am.

[unintelligible]

Preterism. Yes, ma'am. That's another fun word.

[unintelligible]

Right, okay. So the first question of the two was, "I have a friend that believes in preterism," kind of explore that. Preterism is the belief that all of the events, particularly the book of Revelation but as outlined in Isaiah, Jeremiah, all the prophetic things that we talk about end times, that all those events actually took place in the first century, particularly with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 AD. Probably the most famous adherent to preterism today is a guy by the name of Hank Hanegraaf who's known as the Bible Answer Man that has a radio program and such. He is an advocate of what we know as preterism. I struggle with preterism because when you look at the prophetic elements, not just the book of Revelation but other passages, they were metaphorically or in picture fulfilled but not literally. For example, when the sixth trumpet sounds, it says the stars fall out of the sky, okay? The stars didn't fall out of the sky in 70 AD, what they claim is they say, "Well, when Jerusalem burned, the smoke was so dark we couldn't see a third of the stars, it was as if they fell out of the sky." Metaphorically sounds good. I struggle because Nero they claim was the embodiment of the Antichrist. Nero never claimed to be God. Was a horrific man? He was awful. I mean, he was a horrible guy. Do you see? That's where I struggle with the preterism.

So the second question is how important is this? When you stand at the pearly gates of heaven, Jesus isn't going to ask you what was your eschatological perspective and you're going to go, "I was a pre-millennial pre-tribulationist." And he's going to go, "Wrong one, I'm sorry." No. It is not a matter of salvation. I think it is important, here's why I



think it is important. I'm going to use big words so put up with me. Eschatology is the idea of study of end times. Your eschatology drives your ecclesiology or your view of the church. If you believe that everything has already taken place and that there is nothing prophetic that's yet to occur, okay, then you and I are just hanging out until Jesus returns. And so you don't see these tensions within the church and the world, etc., and so therefore if you're a post-millennialist, you believe that the church actually has to rid the world of sin. And by the way, historically speaking if you study particularly the early days of the Reformation, there were some key characters who we oftentimes revere who would go into towns and kill people who did not believe because they thought the elimination of the pagans would bring Jesus back quicker.

Your eschatology drives your ecclesiology and so is it a matter of salvation? No. Is it a matter of fellowship among believers? Yes, because one group says, "Hey, we've got to hang on and endure the race until the end." The other group says there is no race. And so it's just a different perspective but, again, here's what I tell people: if you believe in Jesus Christ alone for salvation, it doesn't matter if you're pre-, post-, a-, or preterist, you're all going to be in heaven together, you know? And as I tease with my friends, I'm going to say and when we all get there, you're gonna find out I was right. But it's all good. No. It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter. It really doesn't.

Here's the part I struggle with. In a room this size and particularly with the amount of people watching online, I promise you there are major differences of opinion and I want to propose that it's okay to disagree. It's okay. This isn't a matter of salvation, it's not a matter of, "Well, you know, I can't be a part of that church. I don't agree with the pastor." Well, I mean, my wife doesn't even agree with everything I say, so it's okay, you know? And so we're happily married. And so don't make this a matter of it's so important that we have to separate. I've got an old friend of mine that makes this statement, now this is on your views of end times, you can't do this on views of salvation. He says hold hands with somebody as long as you can hold hands with them, but separate when you have to separate. This is not a hand separation issue. Does that make sense? I can walk hand-in-hand with someone who completely disagrees with me on the rapture and we can still share the gospel with other people without problem. 99.8% of what we're going to believe is going to be the same.

Why do I think it's critical to spend this much time on it? Because I'm of the opinion that a literal understanding of the book of Revelation should put within us a greater desire to live our faith because we see that every day we're closer to the end, and I think it expedites are encouragement to live our faith. That's why I think it's important, if that makes sense. I don't know if that helps at all but I want y'all to hear, I've got friends at every position known to man, if that makes sense.

Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Great point. So that is, by the way, that is in Matthew 28, what we know as the great commission.

[unintelligible]

Oh, I'm sorry. His question. I apologize. His question was why did Christ use the term, "I will not leave you nor forsake you. I'm with you, lo, I'm with you." And by the way, I know people who are scared of flying that say that's why you shouldn't get in an airplane, he says, "Lo, I'm with you." He says, "Lo, I'm with you to the end of the age." His question is why did he not say I'm with you throughout all eternity? That's a wonderful question. What I personally believe Jesus is saying there is much like I've pictured here, is he is saying that when he says "lo, I am with you," this is his body, this is the church, alright, I believe what he is saying is, "I will never leave you. I will never forsake you," this marks the end of an age here, if that makes sense. When the great tribulation begins, this is a different, in biblical terms it's a different age, there's a different mechanism taking place. The world is different now. Even Jesus said this is the great tribulation, this is Jacob's trouble, this is different, and so what I think he is saying is, things can get bad and things can even look worse but in my opinion he is saying, "You don't have to worry about getting into this area because I'm going to be with you, I'm not going to forsake you, you're not going to have to walk into this." If that makes sense.

So by the way, and I do want to say this, because I am a defender of this harvest rapture before the tribulation, people ask me, "Well, how bad to you think it's gonna get?" Let me give you my answer. I don't think the day after the rapture is going to look much different than the day before. Does that make sense? In other words, I think it's going to look bad and be bad but we're not going to have to experience the actual wrath of God. Does that help out with the end of the age question, I'm with you until the end of the age?

Anybody else?

[unintelligible]

Okay, now that's in Revelation 6 which we'll get to in about five months. There are those, it says the martyrs who lost their life, they're under the throne of God, or they're in the place we know as heaven and he says, "Wait just a little longer. I'm going to give you a white robe." I'm of the opinion in chapter 7, verse 9, those are the redeemed who have lost their life during this time period for the sake of the gospel. Does that make sense?

Anybody else before we wrap up? We're good? Oh, in the back.

[unintelligible]

Yes.

[unintelligible]

That is a great question. He said no matter what you are pre-, post-, a-, whatever, you believe Jesus is coming back in some capacity, a preterist, as you mentioned, believes all those events have taken place in the past, are they in the family of faith? Alright, I don't question the faith of my friend, well, he's not my friend, but I've read a lot of his books, Hank Hanegraaff, because faith, salvation is based on Jesus and his blood, not based on preterism, if that makes sense. However, because everything is metaphorical, they believe that this reign of Christ, they believe that that was initiated in the church, that he is reigning in our lives, he's reigning in our hearts, it's a metaphorical reign, that the body of Christ is the picture of the reign of Christ in the earth, and one day we will return unto him. So they do believe in the return of Christ, it's already happened, but it was metaphorical in the lives of his people. Even though I don't agree with them, that's how they would explain it. Does that help? I didn't say I liked it, I just tried to explain it.

I saw one more and we've got to go. Time is up. Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

That's a great question. The question is if the church leaves during the "rapture," what does "salvation" look like during that tribulational time period? It's in Revelation 12. It's actually the chorus of a song we sing. It's in chapter 12, beginning in verse 11, and it says, and by the way, even though chapter 12 is a parenthetical chapter pulling out, it's describing this. It says, "And they overcame him," that's "him" being the Antichrist, "by the blood of the Lamb, the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives unto the death." That means the overwhelming majority, if not all those who are a part of the redeemed in this time period, physically death is almost a guarantee. They don't take the mark and so you can't buy, you can't sell, and you're being hunted, for lack of better terms. Here's one of the things I'm going to say. There's a reason we call this the age of grace, "For by grace were you saved through faith, not of works lest any man should boast." Here they're redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, the word of the testimony and they loved not their life unto the end.

I want to conclude with the commentary of a dear friend of mine in regards to this statement. Do you know what a prepper is? A prepper? Yeah, prepper is somebody who, they're ready for war at any moment. You know, he's got a bugout bag. Y'all know what a bugout bag is? Yeah, he's one of those guys. In fact, he may be watching or listening but I've got to tell you a little story about this guy. He used to be on my staff a little while back. He walks into my office one day and y'all know what a guillie suit is? I mean, he's full camouflage head to toe. He looks like a shrub in the hallway of the church and he's holding a hunting rifle and he says, "[cough] Boss, I don't feel good. Can I go home?" So that's the character that we're dealing with, okay? Here's what he says, he says, "I know the Bible says I don't have to go through the tribulation, but I'd like to try it just for one week." And the reason he says that, let me pull back, is because when you read this, those who are true believers, you get the idea that very very few of them come out alive at the end. That's why Jesus said run for the hills, it's going to get bad.

We've got to wrap up. You've got your kids waiting on you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Let me pray for us.

*Lord, as we dismiss from this place, no matter what our opinion, what our perspective, may our focus always be on the fact that because of the empty tomb we can be your children even if we disagree about the details. Lord, may we go forth in the assurance of who you are in our lives. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

God bless. Next week we'll do it again.