

Ask Jeff

Ask Jeff

By Dr. Jeff Meyers

sermonaudio.com

Preached On: Wednesday, April 10, 2024

Crossroads Ministries

301 S. 8th Street

Opelika, Alabama 36801

Website: www.fbcopelika.com

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/jeffmeyers

Good evening. It is 6:30 Central Standard Time. It is my privilege to welcome you to our First Baptist Church of Opelika midweek, large group, not so large tonight, Bible study. Now, for those that are watching online, or for those that listen by way of the radio, obviously you have no way of seeing or knowing that we've got some really nasty weather that's going out there and so I want to congratulate you for braving the weather, and I also want to inform you of something that you may not be aware of. So, one of the reasons that we rarely if ever cancel for weather events is because we are actually one of the sanctioned Lee County storm shelters. So one of the things I tell people is you're going to end up here anyway. So you just might as well come to church, right? So I understand that maybe our numbers are a little smaller tonight, but hey, here's the beautiful thing, we got a whole lot of questions.

Now, for those of you who do not know, here on Wednesday nights, our entire Bible study is driven by your questions, your concerns. I'll talk a little bit more about the process in a moment. But there are times, such as right now, where we get a little backlogged. Y'all ask follow-up questions, submit a whole lot of questions and so in the next few weeks, we're actually going to have what we call a good old-fashioned cleanup, which is where we go through just 25, 30 questions one or two minutes at a time, kind of empty out the queue, and then rebuild it. We have to do that about two or three times a year. It's a wonderful problem and if one of your questions is the one that we, quote, clean out, don't worry, just resubmit it, okay? It's not like we throw it away and say it can never be asked again. Speaking of being asked again, every now and then, I don't know if this will happen tonight, but every now and then we get asked a question that for us seasoned veterans is a very familiar, repetitive question. Let me remind you, there are people watching online, there are people listening all over the world or in this room that this may be their first time or maybe they haven't been with us for a few weeks and they don't know that that's a concern or questions that we've addressed in days past.

So that's kind of your large introduction. Let's talk about tonight. How do we submit or propose questions, concerns, the best way whether in the room or outside the room is by text messaging. Area code 334-231-2313. You can text and remain completely anonymous. I have no idea who you are, your number doesn't show up, your name obviously doesn't show up. You can do it in private, in secret. Nobody knows you're asking the question. Now, if we're on a subject matter, a concern, question, whatever it is,

and you want to do a follow-up, dig a little deeper, go a little tangent to, if you'll just let us know it's a follow-up and stay on it, it will come on the screen in a different font and we will quote, stay on subject. Now, for those of you that are in the room tonight, you have the advantage of raising your hand. When you raise your hand, you get to take the conversation any direction that you would like to but let me remind you, you lose your anonymity because we can see you. We know who you are. However, your image or your likeness or your name, notice I did that in different order, will not be utilized by way of television, internet, or the radio, which is why when you ask a question in-house, I will repeat the question because those that are watching or listening cannot hear you speak.

So without further ado, let's do some Bible studies. Here we go. Question number one, "Is there significance to the number 153 regarding the fish that were caught by Jesus and his disciples after his resurrection when he was on the shore?" Now, for those of you wondering what kind of question is this, this is a really good question. Alright, go to John chapter 21. John chapter 21, we find ourselves, interesting scenario, you may or may not recall, but in the gospel accounts, particularly in the gospel of Luke, when Jesus was telling the disciples that he was going to raise from the grave after three days, he told them, "I will meet you in Galilee." Now, you remember the first time he actually saw them flesh to flesh post-resurrection was in the Upper Room in Jerusalem. Not only were they not there when the tomb was discovered to be empty, they weren't even in the right place when it was discovered to be empty. But about eight days later, we find Jesus in Galilee, the disciples have gone fishing, and there's this encounter on the shore, quote, at the end of the evening, quote, as the dawn is breaking. And I want you to hear the story as recorded in verse 1 of chapter 21. It says, "After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias," that's Galilee, by the way, "and on this wise shewed he himself. There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples. Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing." Push pause. Proved Simon Peter was Southern right there. "I go a fishing." Not, I'm going fishing. I would like to fish. I go a fishing.

Alright, here we go. "They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing. But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No. And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,)" yes, your Bible just said that, "and did cast himself into the sea. And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes. As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught." Verse 11, "Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken."

Now, is it just me, or it can't be just me because somebody asked the question, is it just us that finds it odd that the Bible actually tells us there were 153 fish? Not a whole bunch of fish. Not, oh, somewhere between 100 and 200. A hundred and fifty-three. It's a very specific number. So, there are two approaches to this quote, numerical reference in John chapter 21. One we might call a mathematical approach. more importantly, a biblical approach. You can go ahead and research. Google, search, do all you want on the number 153, I am not a mathematician. I was not a math major. However, I will tell you that the number 153 has great mathematical significance. It's one of the only numbers in the world that it is a product of all its factors added together. There's all kinds of these weird mathematical things about 153. In fact, some people have referred to it as the, quote, narcissistic number, not because it has a narcissistic issue, but because when the factors of itself 1, 5, and 3 are multiplied together, it gets the sum of them as 153. I'm not a mathematician. I just know there's a lot of really cool stuff out there about this number. This is a Bible study, not a math lecture.

So why 153? Part of me says, I don't know, other than the Bible is very specific and gives us specific answers when it wants to give us specific answers. However, let me give you kind of a high-tight slider tonight, okay? It's baseball season. I can talk the baseball lingo, right? Every now and then, you get a pitch that comes in like, ooh, I didn't see that coming. There have been those that have claimed, and I will confess to you, I have not personally dug through Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John to affirm or confirm this, but there are many people who claim that the number of people that Jesus personally one-on-one interacted with was 153. I don't know if that's actually true or not. In other words, when you see him interact with this person, interact with this person, heal that person, deliver that person, that it's 153 people, and that, quote, when Jesus told them to fish on the other side, the exact number of fish equaled the number of people. You say, well, why would he do that? Because what did he tell the disciples when he called them in Matthew chapter 4? "I will make you fishers of men."

Now, is that the answer to the 153? I really don't know. I find it somewhat intriguing, so to speak. The most intriguing thing about this verse to me is this, the Bible doesn't say a lot of fish, it says 153, which verifies to me that when Jesus said, "till heaven and earth pass away, not one jot or tittle will pass away, that by every word of God, man shall live his life," the Bible is specific for a reason and not general in its approach. So again, 153, it's an odd number, literally, and it's there in John 21.

Any other 153 questions? Fascinating story, by the way. All right, so no one here wants to go a-fishin'? We're good? All right, we're good. All right, here we go. Question number two. It says, "I saw a video in which the person was using John chapter 1 verse 18 to prove that Jesus is not God. Can you explain the verse and offer your thoughts?" Ooh, this is a really good question. So we're gonna stay in the gospel of John.

Did you do that on purpose? Okay, just thought I'd ask. John, did you know the answer to question one was in John? Oh, okay, good.

John chapter 1, verse 18, we find ourselves... By the way, the gospel of John begins with this very well-known prologue, "In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God, the Word was God." Then it goes on describing "the Word became flesh." Then we get to the ministry of John the Baptist. John chapter 1 verse 18, I don't know whoever submitted this question if you're aware of this, I'm sure you are based on the video that you referenced. John chapter 1, :18 has become a go-to verse for individuals who want to deny that Jesus is completely God. Okay, in fact those that often visit you on a Saturday morning that like to witness for Jehovah, this is one of their favorite verses. Okay, so I'm gonna read John 1:18 and then we're gonna have a little Carnac moment. Some of y'all a Carnac moment, some of you know exactly what's about to happen. Here we go John chapter 1 verse 18, it says, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Now you're hearing that going, "What's the problem? There is no problem." Exactly, there is no problem. However, allow me to reference again verse 18, "No man has seen God at any time. The only begotten," now look down at your Bible, okay, does your Bible use the word God or does it use the word Son? Some of your Bibles will say "the only begotten God." Some of them will read "the only begotten Son." If your Bible reads "the only begotten God," y'all ready for this, Carnac moment, you do not have a King James Bible. Every other version uses "only begotten God," okay? Now, why is that important? Because a modern-day Jehovah Witness, a modern-day Jehovah Witness, if you were to do their spiritual heritage and look back at where they derive from, their source of information, their heritage so to speak, they go all the way back to the third century to a guy by the name of Arius. A-R-I-U-S. Those that adhered to Arius' beliefs and theology were called Arians, not the Aryans of the Third Reich of Nazi Germany. Arians based on his name is Arius. Now, those that believed as Arius believed in the third century, they believed that Jesus was not eternal with the Father and that he was created by God as a, quote, second tier God. That's the belief system, okay? So, if your Bible says nobody has seen God at any time but the only begotten God, those that come to your house on Saturday morning typically who would claim to be Arians or Jehovah's Witnesses as we know them today would look at your Bible and say, "Look, your Bible even tells you that he's a second tier God," okay? Here's the problem with that: Jesus is eternal with the Father and God is eternal in himself and God does not begot another God.

So the phrase, no one has seen God any time, the only begotten Son, is not only theologically correct, but I'll go ahead and give the facts for you. See, when I was going through seminary, one of the things that they did that they probably shouldn't have done, because when they did it, it made me dangerous, is they taught me how to read Greek. Now, not just read the language, but, you know, some of you have a study Bible out there, right? Some of your study Bibles, I'm sure, have the text of scripture, and then there's a line, and below the line there's commentary, correct? Many of your Bibles have that. My Bible has that. That's a common thing, correct? Well, when you go and you read what we know is the Greek New Testament, it's the same thing. In fact, you'll see the text laid out in Greek, and then there's a line at the bottom, and underneath that line, there is a list of a variety of codexes, manuscripts, papyri, all these different things out there that tell you what texts say or use what word versus what other texts use what words, and what early church fathers and early theologians subscribe to which reading. That's a fancy

way of saying that underneath that line is the proof of where all this stuff came from, right? I am here to tell you, I'm here to verify, obviously, I don't have it in person because I had no idea what the question was going to be, but I could go and show you that every single manuscript in the world says it should be Son. Every single one of them. It's not even up for debate.

So why do we make it up for debate? Because what you discover is oftentimes when a group of people get together to translate scripture, they're not really desiring to be accurate, they're here to push an agenda and they're here to advocate a position or a philosophy that is of their personal persuasion and not what is just simply there. I'm here to tell you that the reading of this verse should say there is no one who's ever seen God, the only begotten Son. Therefore, there is no evidence for a second-tier God, there is no evidence for what we might call Arianism, there is no evidence for modern-day Jehovah Witness because you see a consistency all throughout scripture, particularly this verse, that it says it very clearly that though Jesus is co-with the Father, he is in position of the Son. So, a little Trinitarian doctrine there. Don't mean to pour cold water on the hot flame of your Bible version, but it is what it is and I'm going to tell you, there are people right now who do not believe what you believe about Jesus that have been trained to use your Bible against you and when you open up your Bible, you're going to get trapped.

Now, again, Hebrews chapter 4, the word of God is sharper than to any two-edged sword, right? I'm going to give you a Meyersism today when it comes to issues such as this, okay because I know there are some of you out there whose Bible said only begotten God and I know what you're thinking, "Well, I can go to John 3:16 that says only begotten Son. I don't have to worry about this." Well, when the Bible describes itself as sharper than any two-edged sword, those of you that have any type of military background who have been trained in this type of interaction will testify that when a blade is used against an opponent, obviously the penetration of that blade is what will cease the life of the opponent. It is the removal of that blade that will protect your life. In other words, if you get quote hung up, it goes bad quickly, right? And what I just showed you is what I like to call a little nick. Just a little nick in the blade, right? Oh yeah, you can go to John 3:16. You can go to all these other passages and shout, "Whoa, whoa, time out. Jesus is really the Son. He's co-eternal with the Father." The problem is, you get in a conversation with a Jehovah Witness, you know what you're going to do? You're going to put that blade in and you're going to get stuck and you're not gonna be able to get out because they're gonna run circles absolutely around you.

You say, what do you mean they're gonna run circles? Go back to John chapter 1, verse 1. "In the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God and the Word was God," correct? Do you know what a Jehovah's Witness Bible says? The Jehovah's Witness Bible on the last phrase says, "and the Word was a god." That's what their... none of your Bibles say that, right? None of them do, but theirs does. They've already questioned what your Bible says about verse 18, they're then going to question what your Bible says about verse 1. Do you see how that works? They're actually trained to use what you have in your hand against you and so therefore it's kind of nice not to have any quote nicks.

It says, "How can we say all scripture is inspired when some have been quote unquote created with an agenda?" You know what? That's a really great wonderful question. So 2 Timothy chapter 3 verse 16 says all scripture is inspired by God, okay? I made the comment, I put myself in the trap, there is an agenda at times with the translation of those scriptures, okay? Very important designation here, or distinction: inspiration and preservation. Okay, let me share with you the difference, okay? 2 Timothy 3:16, all scripture is inspired, it is God-breathed. In other words, in the context here, when the Lord spoke to the Apostle John, and he gave him what we know as the gospel of John, he said what he said. Preservation is the biblical doctrine of taking the scripture as it was written then and bringing it to where we can read it and understand it now in its original intent and content. Let me give you a very valid conversation that I had with an individual, I don't know who it is that submitted this question, just in the last couple weeks. Someone asked me, how can you trust that what we have of the scripture, you do know, by the way, the original letter, the original letter that the Apostle Paul penned to the church at Rome does not exist. It doesn't exist. You can't find it. It's not there. The original gospel of John, not there. Not there. So the question was asked of me, this was a private conversation, how can you really trust that what we claim we have is actually what we should really have? And I asked this individual, I said, as you went through school growing up, were you forced to kind of take an English literature test? Oh yeah, English course, absolutely. I said, let me guess, when you took English, there was probably a guy by the name of Shakespeare you had to read, right? Yeah. I said, what stories did you have to read? Romeo and Juliet, the Tempest, Taming of the Shrew, went through a list. I said, great, great, great. I said, did you ever email or text your professor and question the validity of what we had in Shakespeare's writing today to the original because you've never seen the original? And they looked at me and they said, oh. You know what happens? Why do we know that when a young person is in school today taking an English lecture, how do we know that the Romeo and Juliet story is the right story? Because Shakespeare wrote it and a couple years after he wrote it, the paper he wrote it on was starting to disintegrate, right? So what did we do? We copied it and we made sure that it was word for word and letter for letter and we kept doing it, we kept doing it, we kept doing it. Isn't it amazing today that nobody questions Homer, nobody questions Milton, nobody questions Shakespeare and goes, well, if we don't have the original copy of Shakespeare, but we do it to the Bible. Why is that? Because we don't mind Shakespeare. We just take it to pass it and get out of school. This stuff's important, right?

The issue is not inspiration. The issue is preservation. And over the years, here's where it gets fun, there are groups and there are entities and there are schools of thought who have taken a manuscript and said, we don't like the way that looks. We're going to change it to what we want it to be. And that is why at times, particularly on Wednesday night, you'll see me come to this little board and we will kind of map out some of those different groups and some of those different families to show you that there has been a path through time where we've copied correctly and there's been places where we, quote, have not. Per John 1:18, I just told you every manuscript in the world says Son, every one of them. So why would somebody change it? They have an agenda. They don't believe that Jesus is co-eternal with the Father, so they change it. And guess what? They know, you

ready for this, they know that you can't read Greek and so they go back and they quote, twist, and they turn and if you'll let me say, they pervert some things, and then every now and then, somebody who submits a question like this and somebody like me comes around and goes, I know what they did.

Follow-up question. "In your opinion, are The Message translation and The Passion translation pushing an agenda?" Oh yes. It says, "How do we know?" Now for those of you not familiar, The Message translation of scripture was done by Eugene Peterson several years ago. The Message translation, for lack of better terms, is what we call a paraphrase, meaning the Bible in novel form. What we know as The Passion translation, this was actually done about 15 years ago, I think, by a group of individuals. Ironically, on this one, one of the guys that was one of the key individuals of this translation, he and I actually went to school together. So this one's getting a little on the personal side, but here we go. How do you know that they're pushing an agenda is because you find out who was behind the translation, what was their motivation in doing it, and what do they actually believe.

Let me switch from the Bible to just a book, okay? Let's just say that you're in a bookstore, I know they don't really exist anymore, but you're online, okay? And they have pictures, front cover, back cover, table contents, whatever it is. Did you know that one of the first things you do, whether you realize it or not, is you read about the author? Who wrote the book? Particularly on matters of faith, belief, philosophy, where do these folks come from, right? And you read their background. You read where they went to school. You read their credentials and you go, oh, it's coming from that perspective, right? Sometimes you'll see a book got a really neat cover, really cool title about a subject matter you're interested in, you read about the author and go, whoa, I'm not touching that. I promise you, these specific translations that were mentioned in this question, you go back and research the people behind the scenes and you will have some serious questions about the content within the pages.

Now, forget the agenda. You do realize there was no effort at all to even stay true or accurate to the original text. It was to put it in quote, novel form. One of my favorite illustrations, some of you have heard this, in Matthew chapter 4, Jesus is in the wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights. Satan tempts him with a host of temptations, three specifically that we're made aware of. One of those temptations, Satan tempts Jesus that if he will bow down and worship him, he will inherit the kingdoms of the world, right? Very well known, no question, no disputing. In The Message translation, this is how it reads, paraphrase of a paraphrase. It basically says, Satan tempted him saying, "If you bow down and worship me, I will give you the kingdoms of the world, they're yours, lock, stock, and barrel." Now, you know what that means, right? That's a colloquialism of our culture, right? But when you use a term like that, you're making it very clear, I'm not trying to stay accurate to the text, I'm just trying to give you a picture of what happened. Well, you do know sometimes pictures of what happened is not accurate to what the text says and so therefore, on some of these translations, you're dealing with agendas, you're dealing with perspectives, and when you're dealing with one that specifically has a very

small group of people from the same theological camp, they're going to produce what they want to produce and not necessarily the preservation of what is actually there.

That was a long rant, and I apologize, but y'all submitted some follow-up questions there. If there's more, that's great. If there's not, that's great. I love to talk about it. I love to nerd out. I just don't want to bore you to tears, if that makes any sense. Thoughts, concerns? We're good. Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

What's going on there? We got it. Okay, Matthew chapter 24. As you're turning to Matthew chapter 24, the question, very self-spoken, but I appreciate it, was, and when I say this, I mean it as a friend, you said that you struggle with this verse. It begins in verse 36. Yeah, verse 36 of Matthew chapter 24. Real quick background. Jesus, Mount of Olives. He has Peter, James, John, and Andrew with him. They ask him two very specific strategic questions, when shall these things be, which is a reference to the temple being torn down, and what will be the sign of your coming? Now, very quick 30,000 foot overview. If you read Matthew 24 and 25, Jesus preaches or teaches, then he tells the parable of the fig tree, and then he preaches and teaches again. I'm of the opinion he's answering the first question, giving an illustration, and then answering the second question. Why is that important? The second question is, what is the sign of your coming? Okay? Well, verse 36 is the first verse of the second discourse of the Olivet Discourse. And here's what it says, "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." I'm going to assume, sir, please correct me if I'm wrong, the struggle with that verse is if Jesus is God, why did he just admit that there was something he didn't know? Is that kind of where you're headed there? Because he said nobody knows. Nobody knows.

So several factors here. Number one, understand that when Jesus was incarnated in flesh, 100% God, 100% man, any percentage less of either, he was neither, he did not relinquish his deity. In fact, the same Jesus when pressed said, you know, right now I can call down legions of angels and whip all y'all, right? So he did not relinquish it, okay? So if he didn't relinquish his deity, then why does he somehow not know the answer to this question? Fast forward to chapter 28. Chapter 28 is an important chapter. Jesus has raised from the grave. He has appeared unto many, obviously, and I want to read verse 18. "And Jesus came and spoke unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." In other words, Jesus made a statement after his resurrection that he had access, authority, and power to everything. Correct? Now, prior to, he said no man knows, right?

Now, fast forward to the book of Philippians, a few pages to the right. We're gonna go to Philippians chapter 2. This really is a study in quote unquote, Trinitarian theology, but it's also a study in Christology too. In the book of Philippians chapter 2, I wanna begin in verse 5. It says, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God." So in other words, he's God. There's no question there, right? Verse 7, "But," you know that word's important, right? "But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and

was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

Now, how do I reconcile these passages? When Jesus was in flesh, was he omnipresent? Could he be everywhere at one time? But God's everywhere at all times. But he's in flesh, right? When Jesus was in flesh, was he omniscient? Did he know all things because God knows all things? No. When Jesus was in flesh, was he omnipotent? Was he all-powerful? Obviously not because he got hungry and he got thirsty and he got tired. But God is omnipotent. But after his resurrection, he displays omniscience. He displays omnipresence. You do realize he walked through the wall of the Upper Room and then immediately disappeared and reappeared in another place. Okay? So we see omnipresence. We see omniscience, all power is given to me. And he just says, all power. Omnipotent. So again in his resurrected body there is there is a reclaiming of the omni's, but in the flesh we just read he humbled himself to obedience and the obedience of the cross. Does that help out a little bit there?

[unintelligible]

Say that one more time? The fish of Galilee, what now? They caught the 153. He did cook some breakfast, he sure did. He did eat some which gives me hope for my resurrected body. I'm just saying. I mean, something to think about there. So that's a facet, not only does Jesus quote appear and reappear immediately, okay, he walks through walls and he eats. I can work with that. I'm just gonna be honest with you. Because it says in 1 John 3:2, one day we will be as he is. I don't know if this is what the Bible means and I don't want to ever make the Bible say something it doesn't mean, but if I'm in a resurrected body that will never die, does that mean I can eat what I want to eat when I want to eat it and not cause negative consequences to my body? Amen. I'm just saying.

[unintelligible]

We have hope. That's right. We have hope, brother. We have hope. Sir, I'm sorry. I know you had your hand up. I apologize.

[unintelligible]

Absolutely. For those of you who could not hear, from Genesis chapter 3 all the way through the gospels the display that we have and the warning that we have is that the devil, the enemy, always wants to change the word of God. He either wants to add to it, subtract to it, or jumble it all up, and that's how most of us get messed up. But remember the very first question that Satan asked or the serpent asked Eve was, "Yea, hath God said?" And according to 2 Corinthians chapter 14, you're right, or 1 Corinthians 14, he is the author of confusion, you're absolutely right. So if we've got confusion, we know who's behind it.

So next it says follow-up, so, oh boy, this is a loaded question. Here we go. "Would the TV show, quote unquote, The Chosen, be similar to these translation in video entertainment form?" Now, understand that any time you articulate in video or art form the scriptural story, okay, you're always going to take artistic license. I mean, there's no way around it, okay? Because I got news for you, we don't know exactly what that boat looked like and how it was constructed. We know what the Sea of Galilee looks like, and by the way, if you've ever been there, they have in a museum what we call the Jesus Boat. It wasn't actually the boat Jesus was in, but it was similar to a boat of those days. Now, there is a film, by the way, that we've used for many, many, many, many years called the Jesus Film. If you're not familiar with the Jesus Film, it is basically the film of the gospels, but it actually is the transcript of the gospels is what it is. Great. However, there have been a lot of movies. I got one for you. We can pick on this show, but y'all remember the Ten Commandments, Charlton Heston? Y'all do realize that's probably not what Moses looked like.

By the way, can I tell a story Chris? Many, many, many moons ago, I found myself in Los Angeles, California. I was headed back to home. It was on a Saturday morning and you know when you get to the terminal there and you discover that you're going to be on a really large plane and there's only about eight of you there, you're like, this isn't happening, is it? I called Tracy up. I said, "Babe, there ain't no way this flight's coming back today. I don't know how long I'm going to be delayed, but there's hundreds of seats, and there's about eight of us here. There is no way." Well, 30 minutes later, they called us to board the plane. I said, well, that doesn't make any sense. The guy I'm traveling with said it doesn't make any sense. Why are we going? There's none of us on the plane. Well, then we walked on the plane, and you know who was in first class? Moses. Charlton Heston was right there and I literally got on the panel and went, "Moses!" I said, "This is why we're going." He said, "Glad I could help." I said, "Thank you. Appreciate you. Thank you." I don't know what he said or what he did, but he got us back.

But the reason I tell that story is we love some of these great movies that are based on the Bible. Sometimes there's questions about TV shows such as this one and others. Understand there's always artistic license. There's always going to be imagery that's not necessarily biblically accurate. The question we have to ask ourselves is the story and the presentation of the story accurate? That's the struggle and that's the question. I struggle personally with most film adaptations of scripture because at the end of the day you get artistic license to try to make it appear that at times can confuse the actual biblical message. That's why at times I struggle, okay?

Now, one of the big struggles with this one that has been addressed, for those of you that do not know, is that one of the chief producers is an individual who is of the faith of the Latter-day Saints. And I've heard people say, well, you know what? It's no big deal. They're getting it right. Well, you know what? If you've got somebody with a false theology, you're eventually going to get a false picture somewhere down the road. And so what I would say is I'm not one of those, oh don't watch it. What I am one of those that says if you're going to watch it, watch it with a Bible in your hand and make sure that what you see lines up with scripture and doesn't just look good. There's a lot of movies

that have said and made Jesus do things that are not necessarily biblical, but it looks good. And it sounds good. And by the way, speaking of this, I know I'm weird and I'm quirky but based on this TV show that was just mentioned, there is somewhat of a phenomenon. You know, we all like these things called memes. Okay, you know, these pictures that we do? One of the things that has come out of this show that I absolutely love, have you seen the memes out there that what would it look like in biblical days if they took selfies? Have y'all seen those pictures? It's hysterical. There's Jesus on the boat with the disciples taking a picture. It's awesome. I absolutely love it. Okay? Because I sit there and they've all got these big smiles on their face like, "Yeah, we up to something." I'm like, yeah, y'all were. Okay? There is one they've made now. It's artistic. They made a quote selfie of Moses crossing the Red Sea. I just love that because what it does is it helps us visualize what it might have looked like, right? But what it might have looked like should never supersede what it says and that's where at times it can get a little fuzzy. Does that make sense?

So, great question. Anybody else? We're good? And moving on. It says, "If Jewish people do not believe Jesus was the Messiah and the propitiation," ooh, you used one of my favorite words, "for their sins, do they still practice animal sacrifice today?" Absolutely not. There is no current animal sacrificial system in the Jewish expression of faith for multiple reasons. Number one, there is no temple. Number two, there is no mercy seat, which is the top of the Ark of the Covenant that is in the temple. Number three, we addressed this a couple weeks ago or maybe it was last week, there are no anointed priest per Numbers chapter 19 and the famous Red Heifers to perform the sacrifices. So on multiple levels and layers there is no what we call sacrificial system that can be properly instrumented by the Jewish people of today. There's just no way. It can't happen. It doesn't exist. And by the way, even though it existed in Jesus' day, it wasn't authentic, because what we know is the Ark of the Covenant that possesses the mercy seat, that when the Babylonians came in in 586 and took everything out, the Ark of the Covenant has not been seen since. So even though they may have brought Passover lambs, even though they may have brought, I mean, even the Bible says that Mary, they brought two turtledoves when Jesus was born. Yes, you can sacrifice them, and yes, you can go through the ritual, but there was no mercy seat. So there was no, quote, atonement for sins. So again, there's a lot of layers there.

Everybody's good there? All right, we're going to go fast. Here we go. "Will you address the idea of, quote, saying a prayer to be saved, isn't it just believing therefore you wouldn't need to say a certain, quote, prayer for salvation?" This is a great question on so many levels and it's really, for those who do not know, this is a real hot topic in contemporary Christianity, particularly in the Western world today, is what many of us grew up with or have heard called the, quote, sinner's prayer. Okay? That is quote not in the Bible. You're absolutely right. It's absolutely not in the Bible. Okay? However, the Bible does say, and I quote it every single Sunday, whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Right? By the way, I know I quote that verse every Sunday, but if you back it up a few verses in Romans 10:9, and 10, it says that if you believe and you confess the Lord Jesus, you will be saved. That's what it says, okay? So what does it say? We believe it, we confess it, right? If we confess with our mouth the Lord Jesus, we shall, quote, be

saved. So what do we see there? We see that in order for us to be redeemed, to be reconciled, to be saved, we must believe that Jesus was, is, and always will be who the Bible says he was, and that he alone, per this question, is the propitiation for our sins, and that we're trusting our soul into his hands for all of eternity.

Now, the Bible does not have a scripted prayer or scripted statement that you and I read to articulate that. Okay? But what we do discover is the Bible makes these things clear. We have to acknowledge our sin. We have to recognize that Jesus is the propitiation per the question. We have to articulate that there is no salvation or redemption apart from him and that we're trusting him to be our Savior. So how do you say that? Well, Romans 10:13, whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. So it says you wouldn't need to say a certain prayer. You're absolutely right. But you would need to pray. It doesn't have to be out loud. I mean, most of my prayers are internal anyway, right? I will give you an example of an individual. He's no longer with us on earth. He's gone to be with the Lord. I have an individual who I'm an acquaintance with that years ago... You ever know those folks, I'm sure you have that, boy, they came to Jesus out of a rough life. I mean, just a rough life. Tough, tough upbringing. And this individual shares his testimony that when he realized he was a sinner, when he realized he was headed to hell, when he realized that Jesus was the only answer, he cried out to Jesus. And I'm going to give you the baptized version of his prayer. Y'all ready for this? He said, "God, you know I'm a blankety blankety sinner. You know I've blankety done this, blankety done that, blankety done that. If you don't blankety save me, I'm gonna blankety open up the doors of hell. Would you please blankety save me today?" Y'all do know blankety stands for other words, right? Now, some of you are going, oh my goodness, but if that wasn't an honest prayer for salvation, I don't know what is. That is a lost soul who realized, "I am going to hell. Jesus, you're the only answer and the best way I know how, I'm asking you to save me."

Now, remember Jesus said we would be fishers of men, right? You do realize that you have to catch a fish before you clean a fish and one of the things that kind of frightens me based on this question is we so sanitize things that things have to say a certain way or be a certain way and you have to say it in a certain way. I'm like, no, no, no. According to the Bible, if you just acknowledge you've got a sin problem, Jesus is the answer and you admit it and ask him to save you, you're good in your own prayer. That's why you will hear me say on Sunday morning every single Sunday morning a prayer of, "If you pray it might go something like this." I can't control what you say because it's not what I say, it's not what you say, but you have to have these certain elements, if that makes sense. You have to acknowledge he is the only way. The debate now that we have in our context and culture is there is no such thing as a sinner's prayer, that's absolutely correct, in your Bible, and where I struggle is I know individuals and I know entities that will have something quote typed out and say, "Here just read this." Okay it's articulated well but the question I have is if they read it did they really mean it? I don't know. It's not up to me. You know, I'm grateful in John chapter 5 it says all judgment is left to Jesus, not to Jeff. So I'm good with that. But again, I don't know their heart. I don't know what they mean. When I have a personal opportunity to share the gospel with and see someone quote, pray, this what we might call a sinner's prayer, I love hearing what they say

because it's so heartfelt. It's so real. It's so genuine, if that make sense. And I've had people say, "Would you just help me out? Would you give me something to say and I'll kind of repeat it?" You know that when they do that, they rarely ever repeat the same thing I say. They just say it in their own language, is what they do.

It says, "Back to the previous question, how do the Jews think their sins are forgiven if they aren't making animal sacrifices?" Well, that is a major issue. Major issue number one is because they can't be and they know they can't be. The difference, here are two words I'm going to define and draw distinction: forgiveness and atonement. Those are two very important words. You say, what do you mean? I can forgive you, but I cannot atone for you. To forgive you is to acknowledge you did wrong, wish you hadn't done wrong, we're all good now. Atonement is to make reparation or propitiation for your sin so that it is absolved. I can't absolve, you can't absolve, only God can. So the Jewish people, they believe that as they go through rites and rituals and all things, they believe they're receiving forgiveness, but they would admit to you there is no atonement. There is none. There is none. And so therefore, when you talk with them, most of them believe corporately, somehow, some way, when the Messiah, who they don't believe has come yet, does arrive, somehow he will take the inability to sacrifice and make it right, much like what happened in the Babylonian captivity days of the Old Testament. There was no animal sacrifice in Babylon. They didn't do it, right? Forgiveness not atonement. So again, I've had a lot of conversations with not only Jewish people but rabbis and such and I know we joked about the word, but most of us say we just hope that God will honor our sincerity.

Yes, sir. Back to the first question. I don't remember what the first question was. Oh There it is 153. Have you been researching? Okay, just articulate, go for it.

[unintelligible]

Oh wow, yeah, is that the end of the question? Alright, I can't wait to repeat this.

[unintelligible]

Right. Correct. So the initial question is, do I believe that in the modern church, they are filled with a lot of false converts or non-converts? The corollary was because they may have acknowledged the facts about Jesus, but there's not a genuine understanding of their sin condition and propitiation. My answer to all of those questions is an absolute yes, sir. Now, I don't know if you know, but somebody in this room, somebody in this room, wrote their doctoral dissertation on lost church members. Does anybody want to guess who it was? Right here. That's right. Alright. Now, y'all know who one of my favorite characters in the Bible is, right? Nicodemus. Nicodemus was my case study. Nicodemus went to church every time the door was open. Nicodemus gave generously. Nicodemus prayed. Nicodemus did everything that he knew he was supposed to do but when he met Jesus, what did he ask Jesus? "What must I do to have eternal...?" In other words, this isn't doing it. And what did Jesus say? "You must be born again." And Nicodemus said, "I don't get this." And Jesus said, "How can the master of Israel, basically the lead, how

can you not get this?" And Nicodemus said, "I don't." You know what Jesus said four verses later? "For God so loved the world he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." So without repeating my dissertation, what was Nicodemus' problem? Nicodemus' problem was that he thought his eternal standing with God was based on the standard that he or somebody else created and he had met.

Now, how does that relate to today's terminology? There are a whole lot of people that think they're going to heaven one day because they're Baptist or Presbyterian or Methodist or whatever. That doesn't work. There's a whole lot of people that think they're going to heaven one day because they live in the South. That's true. There's a whole lot of people one day they think they're going to heaven because they hadn't done that, fill in the blank on whatever that is. Correct? In other words, they have created a theological system in their mind that articulates a faith that they can subscribe to being adequate that may, or in this case, may not match up with the gospel. To your point, no acknowledgment of sin, the depravity of sin, the propitiation of Jesus, and the need for atonement. Big theological words that even a child can believe, correct?

So, that being said, how bad is it? Well, let me go back to a guy by the name of Billy Graham. Billy Graham said, I mean, in the highlight of his ministry, we're talking the '70s and the '80s. I mean, and it was a different world than it is now. Billy Graham made this statement, half the people in church on Sunday morning are lost going to hell. That was 50 years ago. Well, can you imagine what the percentage is today?

So when I was working on my research, I'm going to go ahead and go there because I can. Here we go. One of the things that I did is that we created a research mechanism or model where the church that I was currently serving in, as well as churches my friends were serving in, that we surveyed adults that were active in a Sunday school class. These are not people that just showed up for the first time. I mean, these are folks that are there, they're plugged in, they're members, whatever. I worked with a sociologist, a friend of mine that was a sociologist, to create a quiz or a test where they would not know what I was asking because that's what you do in research, right? If I just came out and said, hey, do you think you're a lost church member, what do you think they would say? Ah, no, correct? So we created this list. We had three what we called trigger questions. Three questions that if you answered them erroneously, we might have an issue. One of those questions was, even though I believe Jesus is the only way to heaven, there are other people who can get to heaven by way of other means. Would you agree that if someone acknowledged that question, they don't understand the gospel, correct? We had three of those questions, okay? If somebody answered two of the three wrong, we put them in the camp of we may have a major issue here and we probably have somebody who doesn't understand the gospel. These were Baptist churches with people who were members of those churches who went to Sunday school regularly, and 19% of them failed. 19%.

So, Billy Graham was probably right. Why? Because in the book of James, you know what it says? The devils acknowledge Jesus and believe who he is. It's not about believing that he came in flesh. It's not about believing that he was God. It's not even

about believing that he lived without sin or went to a cross and rose from the grave. That's great. It's not about believing the story. It's about acknowledging why the story is critical for you and me. Jesus didn't go to the cross to prove he was God. He was already God. He knew he was God. He went to the cross because our sins needed to be propitiated. The blood sacrifice had to take place. Our sin led him there, and he went to the cross for me, for you, and everybody else, and he rose from the grave so we could be saved. That's not articulating the facts of Jesus. That's articulated a faith in Jesus.

Now, let me get a little more serious. To your point, sir, are there a lot of people going to show up to heaven one day and again, we have to kind of personify this where God says, "Hey, why should I let you in?" There's going to be a lot of people who say, "Because I believe Jesus was God." What does that have to do with it? Just believing Jesus is God, the demons believe Jesus is God. That doesn't change anything. So to your point, there are a whole lot of folks today who believe that because they either go to church or don't do certain things or believe certain facts about Jesus, that may not be real believers. That's a scary thought, is it not? I think it is.

By the way, you know in Matthew 25, Jesus told a very famous parable about the wheat and the tares. By the way, it doesn't say wheat and weeds. It says wheat and tares. A tare looks just like the wheat until you cut it down. You know how you tell the difference between a tare and a wheat? You gotta look at the inside, not the outside. It's a good illustration that Jesus gave us, wasn't it?

So, by the way, I'm gonna give my little Meyersism here. I know you've probably heard this before, but it bears repeating. We're all gonna be surprised one day when we find some preachers in hell and some prostitutes in heaven. Y'all can take that to the theological bank. Why? Because there's a lot of false preachers out there that do not know Jesus and do not believe the gospel, and they're going to hell. And there's a lot of people whose lives have gotten twisted up, torn up, and everybody else gave up on them, who genuinely repented of their sins and asked Jesus to save them one day, and people can't get over who they used to be. That articulate that one just, but that's a real one. I wanted that on my tombstone. My wife has voided that one out. She said, I know I'm not in the grave. I just don't want to be next to that. I said, okay, fine. It is what it is.

Yes, ma'am? Yes, ma'am?

[unintelligible]

Yeah, oh, when people say my whole family is Christian, yeah, but what do they mean by that? In America, when somebody says my whole family is Christian, what they basically mean is we're not Muslim. I'm not joking, that's what that means. Or it means we celebrate Christmas. By the way, the further you go east, you get into the Carolinas, I find this hysterical, up in Virginia, if you kind of drive these kind of winding mountain roads, and you see this some here, not so much, but you'll see like a sign on a pole, like advertising business, and it'll be like for a welder. Somebody who, you know, they have the art of welding, they want to... It'll say, you know, so-and-so welding, and then it will

say, fine Christian man. You know what that is Southern lingo for? I'm not going to lie to you. That's what it means. You don't know if he's a Christian or not. But that's a lingo that we've adopted, unfortunately, in our culture. My family is honest. My family is this. My family is that. We're all Christian. No, no, no, no. And by the way, just because your mom is a Christian doesn't mean you are. I heard people say, well, my granddaddy was a preacher. I'm like, who cares? That doesn't mean anything. You know, Billy Sunday, Billy Sunday, the great evangelist, prior to the technological revolution, one of only six men who face-to-face led over a million people to Jesus Christ, only six, before TV, radio, and all that, okay? One of only six. On, when I say his deathbed, in his last week of life, it was recorded by those that were in the room, he made this statement. He said, "I've led a million people to the Lord, and my own son is in hell." So guess what? If the son of Billy Sunday doesn't get in on the coattails, then neither do we.

Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Yes, he did. He asked me, do I want to bring it up? Of course I want to bring it up. For those who do not know, there's an individual by the name of George Barna. He basically runs a group called the Barna Group. They research Christianity and our beliefs, okay, and what we claim to believe. And basically, he did a test of what he called the evangelical Christian test because you know my grandmother was a Christian whatever. What he said was what was an evangelical Christian, okay? Someone who would subscribe to all these... now you can't read the heart, I can't read the heart, but someone who says I believe the Bible is true. I believe that Jesus was born of a virgin. I believe that Jesus lived a sinless life. I believe that he miraculously and physically rose from the grave. Satan is real and Jesus is coming back. Now, listen, it had nothing to do with sin. It had nothing to do with propitiation. Can we just say those are the basic facts? He only surveyed people who claimed to be regular church members and he discovered a frightening thought that among Baptists, by the way, we scored one of the best, only about 20% of us that he surveyed could subscribe to all those things. Did you know that over 52% of people in America who claimed to be Christians denied that Satan was real in his survey? Well, then who led us astray in Genesis 3?

Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Christianity is a relationship, it is not a religion. If you go to what we know as the Middle East right now, most of those countries, most of them have a predominant religion known as Islam and did you know that when you're born, you get their version or identification, what we would call birth certificate. On their birth certificate, it says Muslim. You're born a Muslim. Did you know you can be born a Jew? You can't be born a Christian because it's not a religion it's a relationship.

Yes sir.

[unintelligible]

Randy Travis, now we're talking theology. Boy, we have really scaled it up. Well, there you go. I'm gonna trust you on that one. You know, I love when we get some good theology from country western music. By the way, country western music occasionally has some pretty good theology and then every now and then not so much. Just thought I'd let you know.

All right, we're down to just a couple minutes. It says, "How will we know that it is God returning and not the devil in disguise?" Okay, so what this question is talking of or speaking of is what we call the Second Coming, okay? And so the question is, how will we know that he who comes is not the devil in disguise because in 2 Corinthians chapter 11 it says marvel not that Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. So how will we know? You know what the beautiful thing is? And I know we talk about this a lot on Wednesday night. According to Titus chapter 2, you're not looking for the return of Jesus, you're looking to be taken up by Jesus.

I want to conclude. Go to Titus chapter 2. We've got two minutes here. Let's do it real quick. Titus chapter 2. The end of the pastoral epistles. Titus chapter 2. This is written to believers, okay? Verse 11 of chapter 2, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Notice it didn't say the return, it said the appearing. Remember those passages in the Bible that say there's coming a day where the dead in Christ and alive in Christ will raise and meet the Lord where? In the air? His appearing. Okay? So as a believer in Jesus Christ right now, we're not sitting here trying to decide is that Jesus or is that the Antichrist because according to the scripture, there's coming a day where we're caught up to be with the Lord and then we'll return with the true Christ so you don't have to worry about being deceived by the Antichrist. And what does it call that? A quote, glorious hope, right? So again, we don't have to worry about that because we're going to be caught up to be with him and return with him so the deception of the antichrist does not impact you or I.

So, time's out. Let's pray. Let's roll.

Lord Jesus, thank you. As we spoke of so often tonight, just the simplicity of salvation, the depravity of our soul and our sinful nature, the satisfaction that you provided through your birth, your life, your death, your resurrection, God, and as we talked about all those things, I do pray that we would understand that it is about a relationship with you. It is about the propitiation of our sins. It is about the one-day glorification with you. It is not about a head knowledge or deeds or actions. It is all about you. God, help us to be focused on you alone. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.