

Christianity Clarified Volume 07

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Date: 01 October 2018

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[0 : 00] What is Christianity really all about?

The issue remains very confusing to a large segment of our society. At times, it even extends to many who consider themselves Christian. Here, in an ongoing effort to try and dispel some of the confusion, is Marv Wiseman with another session of Christianity Clarified.

In this present series, we undertake the doctrine of the Holy Spirit of God. He, and He is referred to in the masculine gender, is not a thing, but a nit, a person.

Not only a person, but a divine person, and one who is a full-fledged, equal member of the triune Godhead. Because the Holy Spirit is commonly referred to as the third being of the Trinity, as in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, He is frequently relegated to a role of lesser authority and importance than the Father and the Son.

And this is a grievous mistake. When mentioning the members of the Trinity, it is unavoidable that one of them must be mentioned first, and another last, with the remaining in the middle.

[1 : 11] Otherwise, the only way of referring to all three members at one time is to simply use the word Trinity, which, of course, includes the three. The Holy Spirit is of equal authority, power, and rank as the Father and the Son.

Suffice it to say, the triune God subsists in three distinct persons, while maintaining the essential truth that there is but one God, not three, as Christians are often accused of believing.

Another erroneous idea about the Holy Spirit is His being merely a mystical power, influence, or divine energy. Divine energy He is indeed, but the energy is expressed through His very obvious and distinct personhood.

And, if a person, we should expect Him to possess the usual qualities and characteristics of personhood. He does. Christ attested to the person of the Holy Spirit when referring to Him in John 14, saying that He, the Spirit, will teach you all things, and He will guide you, the apostles, into all truth.

He, the Spirit, Christ said, will glorify me. It could not be clearer that the frequent usage of the masculine pronoun removes all doubt regarding the Spirit's personality.

[2 : 28] In addition, we are told in Ephesians 4 that believers may grieve the Holy Spirit. And 1 Thessalonians 5 we are admonished not to quench the Spirit.

Both negatives being possible only if the Holy Spirit is a personality, not an influence or an impersonal power. Hebrews 9 reminds us of the eternity of the Spirit when the writer states that Christ, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot unto God.

And this is followed in 1 Peter 3, when the writer explained that Christ has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened or made alive by the Spirit.

When the apostle Peter indicted Ananias and Sapphira for their deceit in Acts chapter 5, he asked, Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?

For you have not lied unto men, but unto God. Throughout the Bible, the truth is consistently set forth that the three distinct persons of the triune Godhead, consisting of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, function in their respective roles with perfect harmony and cooperation.

[3 : 48] This, the deity and personality of the Holy Spirit, are verified. We need look no further than the very first chapter of Genesis to find critical activity of the Holy Spirit of God.

Genesis 1.1 tells us that in the beginning, Elohim, God, created the heavens and the earth. And God is clearly in the Hebrew plural and rendered Elohim.

Following in verse 2, the Holy Spirit of God is referenced with the words, And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. The Hebrew word for moved is the word translated into English as brooded.

Brooded in the way a mother hen broods over her anticipated chicks in incubation. She broods over them or tends them in expectation of their coming to full development.

So too, the Spirit of God brooded over the face of the waters, preparing them to bring forth what was intended in creation. And here again, we have an unmistakable reference of each member of the triune Godhead being operative in a key activity.

[5 : 02] God, Elohim, created the heavens and the earth. The Spirit brooded over the face of the waters, and all things were brought into being by the Eternal Son, without whom nothing that was made was made, John tells us in chapter 1.

Thus, in the first two verses of the first chapter of the first book of the Bible, Genesis tells us all three members of the triune God were participants in the creation of the heavens and the earth.

How fitting, then, for the Spirit-inspired writer of Ecclesiastes to record in chapter 12, to remember now thy creators in the days of thy youth.

And yes, the plural is used in the Hebrew, thy creators. And creators is in perfect harmony with the combined testimonies of the Old and New Testaments as regards the acts of creation.

So, precisely who created the heavens and the earth? The Elohim, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, all in concert and complete harmony, befitting of the dignity and majesty of their persons.

[6 : 19] Job and the psalmist added to the drama of creation by saying, By His Spirit He has garnished the heavens, in chapter 26, and added to by the psalmist in his 104th, Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created, and thou renewest the face of the earth.

In his volume on Christian theology, Dr. William Cook wrote, Thus, each reviving spring, and each successive generation of men and inferior animals, like a new creation, is declaratory of the Spirit's presence and omnipotent energy.

End quote. How is it possible that we should know of these profound and awesome works of the Holy Spirit of God? Only by the agency of the same Spirit who has revealed His works through the revelation He Himself inspired and preserved in the pages of our Bible, the Spirit-inspired Word of God.

The operations and activities of the Holy Spirit are found scores of times throughout the Old Testament.

In every instance, the Holy Spirit was imparting something of His supernatural self to whatever it was the situation demanded. In each event, the human recipient was keenly aware that it was not Himself, but God's Spirit, that was responsible for what was being accomplished.

[7 : 51] He was always to the rescue when something beyond the mere ability of man was needed. Even from the designing of implements to be used in the construction of the tabernacle in Exodus 31, the Spirit of God came upon Bezalel and Aholiab for the fashioning of gold, silver, and bronze, all requiring craftsmanship beyond human ability to provide.

Imagine, if you will, Bezalel and Aholiab upon hearing what it was that they were to fashion, and their explaining, We can't do that!

This is too much! That would be a fair and honest admission. But when mere human agency is empowered by the divine agency of the Spirit of God, well, with Him, all things are possible.

Enter then the period of the judges, a peculiarly vulnerable time in the history of ancient Israel. Moses and Joshua are both gone. God raises up judges to preside over the nation.

At times, their tasks required abilities they simply did not have. Time and again, in a gracious partnering with man, the Holy Spirit provides all that man was lacking for the need at hand.

[9 : 14] In Judges chapter 6, it was Gideon upon whom the Spirit of the Lord came, and he was able to draw followers unto him and lead them to victory. Who can forget the mighty Samson, who was not Samson because of Samson?

It was because of the Spirit of the Holy One that Samson had his incredible strength. The record tells us that when attacked by a lion, Samson dispatched him with his bare hands, all because the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him.

His great physical prowess again came to the fore when he broke the ropes that bound him and subsequently slew the enemy with the jawbone of an ass. What? Could these things actually have happened?

Could God actually be God? Case closed. All the writing prophets from Isaiah to Malachi were each endowed with supernatural vision and ability to proclaim what people needed to hear for the present and to predict and prophesy what was coming in the future.

Omnipotence and omniscience, coupled with the always omnipresence of the Holy Spirit, was in each instance precisely what was needed to accomplish the plan and program of God for Israel and her people.

[10 : 34] And all these are merely instances of which we are aware because they were recorded in the Scriptures. We may safely assume there were many more that were not recorded.

God the Holy Spirit worked mightily and frequently on behalf of his people all throughout the Scriptures. Perhaps second only to his activity in creation in general, the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the creation of the Word of God may well be his greatest and most strategic contribution to the created order of angels and humans.

The Spirit of God has seen fit to provide us with a written record of key events transpiring from the Genesis creation account to the close of the revelation in chapter 22, creation to culmination.

And, wonder of wonders, this magnificent member of the Trinity not only was charged with the task of providing the very revelation of deity to humanity, but he then deigned to use human instrumentality to bring it to pass.

Scripture could have been written by the finger of God, by utilizing angelic beings, or any other method that pleased God. Yet, in his gracious and benevolent manner, the Spirit of God opted to use humans to convey the message of God to humans.

[11 : 58] Only in this way could the Bible contain the human dimension that could appeal to the humans to whom it was addressed. Peter the Apostle tells us in 2 Peter 1, No prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men, moved by the Holy Spirit, spoke from God.

The word for moved in the original Greek conveys the idea of a vessel at sea being carried or borne along over the seas as the wind in their sails carried it. In 2 Timothy 3, Paul wrote to assure Timothy, Absolutely nothing else could do the job that needed to be done, apart from the Word of God doing it.

This being the case, Timothy, I entreat you to preach the Word. Preach it because it is what it is, and nothing else can do the job it alone can do.

When Paul calls the Scriptures God-breathed, he uses the Greek word theonoustos, which literally means God-breathed or the breath of God. While that sounds like a curious expression, it really isn't, and here is why.

When we humans speak, we do so by breathing in and out as we talk. Without giving it so much as a thought, we automatically inhale and exhale our breath as we speak, and we cannot speak audibly without doing so.

[13 : 18] Breath is not only critical for existing, but for talking. Our words are all a result of human breath. The Scriptures, Paul reminds Timothy, constitute the very breath of the Almighty.

In His Word, as His Word comes forth, it is God breathing the very words through human instrumentality. This is why the Bible is called the Word of God, the words of God, the revelation from God.

And such, Paul tells us, is not true of some of the Bible, but all Scripture is given by inspiration or the breath of God. What is more? It is what it is, whether man accepts it and believes it or not.

And never does it set about to try and prove itself to the satisfaction of human critics. It merely states its origin as being from God and leaves it at that. It does not stoop to answer the petty and petulant objections of any man.

Earth's greatest treasure has been provided to us by the Holy Spirit of God in the Holy Scriptures. The Word of God has been under attack from its adversaries from time immemorial.

[14 : 34] Today is no different, but in many ways the attacks appear greater in number and intensity. One of the most frequent criticisms of the Bible has to do with its content.

Is it all there? Is something missing? If so, we do not have a complete Bible and thus may mislead someone due to critical parts missing.

Or do we have more in the Bible than what should be there? If so, we may be getting dangerous and erroneous information that never was from God, but slipped into the record by misguided or mischievous men.

In either case, whether we have more than what is real Bible or less than what is real Bible, where does this place the whole? It places the whole under a great cloud of unresolvable doubt and suspicion, which is precisely where the adversary and its human critics want it.

A Bible deficient of things that should be in it, or a Bible containing things that do not belong in it, is perhaps worse than no Bible at all, especially when the issue of authority is addressed.

[15 : 41] The canon of Scripture refers to the Bible containing all it is supposed to have and nothing it is not supposed to have in it. The end product is content actually inspired of God.

Lengthy arguments and debates have been held by religious bodies, church councils, and the like, with the idea of determining which book should be in or out. It goes without saying that there were scores of religious writings created by mere human origin over several centuries.

So the actual content of Scripture we call the whole Bible is comprised of only a small number of the host of religious writings that were available. But we may be certain of one thing.

It is folly to think that God would inspire men to write the Holy Scripture, there being the very God-breed words from Himself, and then be dependent upon mere men to see they were included in the Bible, while those He did not originate were omitted.

Men, in their arrogance and overestimation of their wisdom, have taken this task to themselves, but it never was the purview of men, no counsel or pope, to ever decide what was holy writ and what was not.

[16 : 55] Man could and did acknowledge and accept the writings of Scripture as authentic and inspired of God, but it was never man's responsibility to determine the canon.

Were God to leave the decision of determining the Holy Canon of Scripture to mere mortals, no matter how astute, would be to place the preservation of the Bible at great peril.

If God Himself did not personally oversee and directly determine the canon via His own inspiring of the content, the entire purpose of Revelation would have been compromised if not defeated entirely.

The Holy Spirit of God who inspired men to pen the Scriptures would most certainly see to it that it was preserved intact, nothing missing and nothing extraneous.

Canonicity, inspiration, and divine authority are inseparable and all are the work of the Holy Spirit. Illumination results when someone grasps the truth or concept previously not understood.

[18 : 04] It's also referred to as enlightenment or comprehension, and it is a priceless commodity. Illumination is the principal task of the Holy Spirit, and the chief means He uses to illuminate is the very Word of God that He Himself has inspired.

The inspiration of the Scriptures provides illumination to the reader of Scripture. The psalmist said it so well in Psalm 119 when he uttered the words, The entrance of thy words giveth light.

It gives understanding unto the simple. The truth is, man doesn't really know very much, certainly not much at all compared to what there is to be known.

God has devised a learning curve for us so as to dispel the ignorance and confusion that comes from being a fallen creature living in a fallen world.

This learning curve is provided by the information set forth in the Bible, which the Holy Spirit has inspired and provided for this very reason. God doesn't want us to be in the dark, so He has provided light, understanding, comprehension, all so we can understand what really is true and be able to orient our lives accordingly.

[19 : 20] All of life consists of decisions and choices to be made. About everything, in every venue, whoever you are, wherever you live, or whenever you live.

To make good decisions, you need good information. Truthful information. This is what the Bible is all about. It's the dispensing of truthful information.

God the Holy Spirit, who is also called the Spirit of Truth by Christ in John 16, has superintended inspiring and recording of the Bible to provide us with the illumination we need to enable us to make right decisions.

It's truly ironic that the Bible, which so many so-called sophisticated moderns reject out of hand because they think it outmoded and irrelevant, is the very thing and the only thing that can truly enlighten them.

Tragically, this they spurn to their own detriment and futility, leaving them nothing but the pursuit of the whims of the latest so-called experts after whom they grovel.

[20 : 31] In reality, God is the only expert there is. The Holy Spirit has pressed divine expertise into the Scriptures so that in them we have all we need to know to face the issues of daily life.

Let's be reminded that what the Apostle Paul wrote to young Timothy in his last letter before his execution, all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, in order that the man of God may be complete, truly furnished unto all good works.

This word, this Bible, is the very illumination of God himself. For Christianity Clarified, this is Marv Wiseman in Springfield, Ohio.

The spectacular nature of the angelic announcement that Gabriel the angel made to Mary, a Galilean virgin peasant girl, cannot be over-exaggerated.

It was and is monumental in all its ramifications. Upon hearing what Gabriel told her, that she was to conceive in her womb and bear a child, that the child was not just any child, but the one and only who would be called the Son of the Most High, and that this son of hers would be the recipient of his father David's throne, Mary was understandably perplexed.

[22 : 05] Consistent with her confusion, she inquired, How can this be? I am a virgin. It becomes obvious that Mary knew how babies were made, and that she had never entered into such a relationship with any man.

Not to worry, said Gabriel. The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you, and for that reason, the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God.

This was and is utterly astounding. It was astounding to Mary, the mother-to-be, and it was astounding to the point of disbelief to Joseph, to whom Mary was engaged.

Indeed, how could this be? A baby? A conception without a male donor or involvement? Impossible. Well, of course it's impossible.

That's why it's called a miracle. Miracles are not possible. They are impossible. If they were not impossible, we could perform them. But because miracles are not humanly possible, we can't do them.

[23 : 11] But with God, all things are possible. In fact, God specializes in performing the impossible. It's part of his job description. And here in the Incarnation, the enfleshment of deity blended with humanity so as to produce the one and only God-man, the Holy Spirit is behind it all.

And with him, the Incarnation became job number one. Joseph, Mary's husband-to-be, was told by this same angel, Gabriel, not to be afraid to take Mary as your wife because that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.

Now, precisely, where did the Holy Spirit get the immaculate, uncontaminated male sperm to implant in the womb of the Virgin Mary? From the same source that God got everything which he created, including the very heavens and earth, it's called ex nihilo, out of nothing.

God used previously non-existing materials, nothing, to make what he then fashioned into something, in this case, someone.

Miracle of miracles, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, said John. Once again, we find all three members of the Trinity operative in one of heaven and earth's greatest events.

[24 : 36] That which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit, never before and never again. But we are so grateful for this one.

For Christianity Clarified, this is Marv Wiseman. All three synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, record the temptation account of Jesus Christ.

Why John does not, we are not told. Perhaps it was due to John's emphasis upon the deity, the Godhood of Jesus, that John excludes it. We are told that God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.

And while John certainly affirms the humanity of Jesus as well as his deity, the other three gospels make more of Christ's humanity than does John. All three accounts of Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell us that Jesus Christ, shortly following his public baptism by John, his second cousin and forerunner, that the Spirit of God led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

Why in the world would he do that? Is that any way to treat a fellow member of the thrice-holy alliance of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? For one member, the Holy Spirit, to be leading another member, the Son of God, into a wretched place like a God-forsaken barren wilderness, for the specific purpose of his being tempted by the arch-enemy of man and God, none other than Satan himself?

[26 : 11] Christ, the personification of holiness, subjected to very personification of evil, how could this be? Aren't the members of the triune Godhead supposed to be friends?

The Spirit leading the Son into a hostile environment to be subject to the machinations of the very most evil of evil? Sounds more like treachery or betrayal than friendship, or anything close to camaraderie.

What's this all about? And where was God the Father? What was He doing while this forty-day and forty-night horrendous event was taking place? The Father was on the receiving end of the prayers that were offered to Him by His Son while undergoing the temptations.

But what was the point of all this? Was it really necessary? What did it prove? It proved a lot. And yes, it was absolutely necessary.

Why? Because Jesus of Nazareth has just been baptized by John and introduced to Israel as her long-awaited Messiah. Read about it in Matthew 3, Mark 1, and Luke 3.

[27 : 23] Israel had been waiting for their promised Messiah for four thousand years, and now along comes a carpenter from Nazareth in Galilee of all places who is claimed to be the fulfillment of God's promise.

Is He up to the task? John said He was the Messiah, the long-awaited deliverer, the consolation of Israel. Well, He would have to be one far more qualified and far more pure than anyone else, one in possession of impeccable moral credentials to qualify as Israel's Messiah and Savior of the world.

That was the purpose of the temptation. For Christ to emerge from the severest test possible, administered by the most evil foe in existence with all His holiness and purity intact.

In His stellar performance of steadfastness in the face of supernatural temptation, by the master expert of temptation, Christ maintained His credentials.

His impeccability was vindicated. A perfect example of the cooperation and harmony of the members of the Trinity is exhibited in the earthly life of Christ.

[28 : 36] Not only was the Savior conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of Mary the Virgin, He was present at the baptism of Christ in the form of a dove, subsequently led Christ into the wilderness for His temptation experienced by Satan, which ordeal would confirm His moral fitness as Israel's Messiah and Savior of the world.

Later, He will be offered to God by the eternal Spirit and then raised from the dead by the power of the Spirit. In this session, we also find the Holy Spirit thoroughly operative in the earthly teaching and miracle-performing aspect of the Messiah's ministry.

The singular burning issue in the life of Christ and His public earthly ministry was, was Jesus of Nazareth the one spoken of and promised by God through Moses and His prophets or was He not?

The implications of either answer were staggering. Many, particularly His most faithful followers, were persuaded that He was indeed the Messiah of Israel.

Peter's great confession uttered in Matthew 16 while at Caesarea Philippi reflected the conviction of many, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

[29 : 51] But how would Jesus be able to verify His credentials? What could He do to make His case? First and foremost was His teaching. Of Him it was said, Never man spake like this man, for He spoke not as the scribes and Pharisees, but with authority.

Mark tells us in chapter 1, secondly, and even more dramatically, Christ vindicated His claims to Messiahship via the many miracles He performed.

After all, if He claimed to be the long-awaited Messiah sent from God, He should have evidence to demonstrate that. He did. Verily, He did.

Healing all manner of diseases, exorcism, authority over the very elements of nature, and capping all the miracles by exercising authority over death itself, man's most dreaded and powerful enemy.

Jairus' daughter, the son of the widow of Nain, Lazarus, dead for four days, and then the ultimate, demonstration of His own life, gloriously restored in the resurrection.

[31 : 03] How did He do all these things? He tells us quite clearly about the source of His power. In the twelfth of Matthew, Jesus is confronted by the religious establishment who accused Him of casting out demons by the power of Satan.

He gave His famous answer steeped in pure logic by saying, If Satan casts out his own demons, how shall his kingdom stand? A house divided against itself cannot stand.

Then He went on to say, But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then is the kingdom of God come unto you. Clearly, Christ claims He works in concert with His dear eternal friend and counterpart in the person of the Holy Spirit, a member like Himself of the triune Godhead.

In 1 Corinthians 15, the inspired apostle relates the very essence of the gospel in a very succinct way.

One might call it the gospel in a nutshell. Even though it is bare bones minimum, it still contains the essential ingredients of truth one must know in order to be saved.

[32 : 16] Here it is, said Paul, For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.

There it is, death, burial, and resurrection. They sum up the objective for Christ ever having come into the world. Death, burial, resurrection.

This is the why of the incarnation. Why there was that manger in Bethlehem. It was all about death, burial, and resurrection. And this is why there was a place called Calvary where He was crucified.

All about the death, burial, and resurrection. These are the historical realities, this triad of divine accomplishments, that provide the very pivot point for all humanity of all times, bar none.

Nothing more central to all time and eternity than the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Nothing more consequential to all of humanity for all time than the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, the very focal point of time and eternity.

[33 : 32] These are the facts that were the producers of the gospel, the good news. Without the death, burial, and resurrection, there is no good news God has to reveal.

Because of these incredible events, the good news came into being, the essence of which is that Christ died for our sin. And is it not so very fitting that the Holy Spirit acted in concert to contribute to making the gospel an historical fact?

How so? It was through the eternal Holy Spirit that Christ was offered to God upon that cross. We are told that in Hebrews 9. And 1 Peter 3 informs us that Christ also have once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.

The word quickened literally means to make alive. Hence Christ was offered through the eternal Spirit and subsequently made alive by that same Spirit via the resurrection.

Then Paul tells Timothy in 3.16 that Christ was justified in the Spirit. What a package! In all the redemptive events accomplished by the Redeemer, they were done in loving, cooperative concert with the Holy Spirit and the Father, eternal inhabitants of the eternal Godhead.

[35 : 00] And today, the Holy Spirit remains on the job just as he has since the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ occurred 2,000 years ago. He, through this gospel and man's believing it, supernaturally regenerates the one believing so as to make spiritually alive that which was spiritually dead and separated from God.

Prior to the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, he informed his disciples that even though he would be leaving them, they would not be without comfort.

The reason being that the Holy Spirit, another member of the triune Godhead, would compensate for the absence of himself. Being omnipresent, there was no time or place devoid of the Holy Spirit.

Yet Christ told them in John 14 that in addition to the Holy Spirit being with them, he would now be in them. Chapters 14, 15, and 16 provide more details about the Holy Spirit than any other passage in the New Testament.

Peter, the apostle, in his great Pentecostal address, recorded in Acts 2, informed his Jewish countrymen that the Holy Spirit was responsible for the phenomenon they had experienced.

[36 : 21] The rushing mighty wind that filled the entire atmosphere where they were gathered in the temple was God himself visiting them. What is more, this special divine visit, enabling all present to hear the message in their own language, was in direct fulfillment of the promise God gave to Israel through the prophet Joel in chapter 2.

Now here in Acts 2, on this particular day of the Feast of Pentecost, God was making good on his promise. Peter went on to say, If you, being responsible for the death of your Messiah, will now repent, reverse yourselves, and be baptized in the very name of Jesus, whom you earlier rejected, God will give you the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The result is that 3,000 did so because the truth Peter spoke penetrated their hearts. They knew they had been wrong and could not undo their wrong, but they could admit it.

That, to admit one is wrong and has been wrong, is a quantum leap. Man's fallenness and ego hates to repent and acknowledge his wrong.

Yet the Holy Spirit stands by to bless with his indwelling and presentation of himself as a gift. We know of 3,000 Jews who did just that.

[37 : 55] A new phase in the ministry of the Holy Spirit begins here in Acts 2. But do not be deceived into thinking Peter's message was unanimously received by his audience.

We are enamored by the fact that there were 3,000 who came to faith, but subsequent passages in Acts make it clear that the vast majority of Jews remained in their unbelief.

For sure, we know the religious establishment remained entrenched in their opposition to Jesus as the Messiah. We are not told how many were actually present when the 3,000 believed and were baptized, but it is entirely likely there were many more thousands who did not believe besides the 3,000 who did.

In any case, the Holy Spirit has now manifested Himself in an entirely new way. For Christianity Clarified, this is Marv Wiseman in Springfield, Ohio.

It is critical to understand the reasons behind the arrival of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2.

[39 : 06] Failure to do so has resulted in severe confusion and disagreement among Christians. There are few issues that have divided believers so much as Acts 2 and its interpretation.

Consider, first of all, what was it that made the day of Pentecost the day of Pentecost? It was not the arrival of the Holy Spirit. It was not the rushing mighty wind, and it was not the speaking and hearing in languages not previously known.

While it's true, these all occurred on this day of Pentecost here in Acts 2, yet none of them nor all of them made this the day of Pentecost.

Then what did? The Jewish calendar. This day, like the day of Atonement, like the Feast of Tabernacles or the Feast of Passover, they all arrived at the same time on the Jewish calendar every year.

What made this Feast of Pentecost very unusual was that it was not merely an annual feast day or the calendar. This day of Pentecost here in Acts 2 was as none other.

[40 : 15] The Holy Spirit chose an already established and well-fixed date to make His presence known. The prophet Joel told Israel this day was coming several hundred years earlier in Joel 2.

But there was no hint as to when the day would be. Peter tells his audience, this is it. This which you now see and hear is that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel.

So now we have a Jewish apostle named Peter addressing a crowd of several thousand Jews in the complex of the Jewish temple talking about the Jewish Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, regarding a promise given by the God of the Jews who delivered the promise through the pen of Joel, a Jewish prophet.

Does it strike you that this is an exclusively Jewish situation? A careful reading of the context will confirm that it is precisely that.

This was a continuing opportunity for the nation of Israel to reverse themselves and embrace Jesus, whom they crucified as their long-awaited Messiah, sent from God.

[41 : 32] Miracles of the caliber that Jesus performed would remain to be performed by the followers of Christ in the presence of the community of Israel. These are all recorded in the first half of the Acts of the Apostles.

It appears that as long as the possibility of Israel accepting Jesus as their Messiah was in question, the miraculous manifestations of the Holy Spirit continued.

When that option expired, due to their continued unbelief, the miracles ceased. The Holy Spirit had a very strategic role to fulfill during this critical transition phase in the life of Israel, and it was all in fulfillment of a divine promise recorded in Joel's prophecy, chapter 2.

There are several very important ministries the Spirit of God conducts in the lives of all who are believers, no exceptions. In fact, without the Spirit of God performing these spiritual operations, one cannot be a believer.

They are all supernatural and cannot be accomplished in any other way apart from the gracious intervention of the Holy Spirit. Included among these supernatural realities, without which no one can be a Christian, are these, regeneration, baptism, sealing, and indwelling.

[43 : 00] Each of these is a purely spiritual phenomena. There is no water in this baptism, no tape in the ceiling. The regeneration and indwelling are likewise spiritual.

The physical body is not regenerated, nor is the physical body indwelt by the Holy Spirit. His Spirit baptizes and indwells our Spirit.

A text clearly teaching spiritual regeneration is found in Titus, chapter 3. It says, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.

Let's focus on the washing of regeneration and immediately upon hearing washing some are very quick to plunge into water. But this is a mistake because while water baptism clearly has its place in the Bible, this is not one of them.

Water is, however, a very legitimate metaphor for cleansing because this is what water does. Water can and does cleanse the body. But our bodies are not the problem.

[44 : 08] The problem lies where water cannot reach. No amount of sprinkling, immersion, pouring, or effusion can penetrate to where the real problem lies. It is in the non-physical human spirit that every person possesses.

Our problem is inside of us and only God can get inside of us. This He does when one comes to a personal faith in Jesus Christ.

Upon believing, the ever-present Spirit of God comes inside our very being and spirit and does something that no other entity can accomplish. Titus tells us in chapter 3 that we are regenerated and renewed by the Holy Spirit.

We know what it means to generate something. It means to begin something. Our words genetic, genes, generation, and even Genesis, the first book of the Bible called the Book of Beginnings are related to this word.

To regenerate means to begin again or to renew the beginning. It's a spiritual do-over. It is all about spiritual life because prior to our believing in Jesus Christ we were dead, spiritually dead toward God.

[45 : 24] Then we are regenerated, regened spiritually and made alive within ourselves and alive toward God. It's also called being born again.

It's characteristic of all who are believers. No exceptions. And it is a spiritual dynamic provided only for those believing.

No exceptions. The Spirit of God regenerates. Titus chapter 3 The gracious operation of the Holy Spirit, a member of the triune God, is of incalculable importance to every believer in the spiritual body of Christ.

So important, in fact, that the Apostle Paul makes a startling statement about it in the 8th of Romans. It's very forthright and unambiguous, said he, If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

With unmistakable clarity, the Apostle equates being a Christian with having the Spirit of God dwelling within. The Titus passage reinforces this in chapter 3 by telling us that to make us Christian, the Holy Spirit regenerates and renews us.

[46 : 41] Anyone not having been regenerated and renewed does not belong to Christ. But you may. How may you? In the same way as those already Christian.

In the only way as those already Christian. To the spiritually renewed is much like being regenerated. Both with the prefix re- speaks of something over again.

It is, in every sense of the word, a spiritual redo. It is upon believing upon the Lord Jesus Christ as one's personal Savior from sin that the Holy Spirit accomplishes the regeneration and the renewing in the human spirit of the person who comes to Christ.

How does he do that? We have no idea. We are not told how he does it, but we are told that he does. He actually makes us spiritually alive whereas we were spiritually dead.

Paul describes this incredible reality in writing to the Corinthians in chapter 5 of his first letter sent to them. He says, Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation.

[47 : 55] Old things are passed away. Behold, all things are become new. What does this mean? How does this work? Isn't the believing person the same person he was before he believed?

Yes and no. Yes, in that he looks the same, yet there is something strikingly different about him. Without understanding how, the world looks different than before.

One feels different than before. Values and opinions once held as fixed begin to morph into something completely different, sometimes even the opposite of before.

What's the explanation of this? It's the gracious, life-altering change internally brought about by none other than God the Holy Spirit. These are changes that cannot be produced on a psychiatric couch.

This is not reformation. It's regeneration, and only the Spirit of God can affect it. Little wonder it's often referred to as being born again.

[49 : 02] It's a very apt description, and it is common to all who are in Christ. It is also utterly foreign to all who are not in Christ. Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

And for Christianity Clarified, this is Marv Wiseman in Springfield, Ohio. The Romans 8 text is quite clear in its assertion that anyone not possessing the Holy Spirit of Christ is none of his.

This being the case, the equally clear matter of concern must be with how one obtains the Spirit of Christ. What are the necessary qualifications for receiving the Holy Spirit?

Answers are diverse and numerous, largely depending upon one's denominational connections and the particular position held by its governing body. But if we limit ourselves to what the Scriptures say, as Christianity Clarified seeks to do, the issue becomes quite clear.

Simply put, in order to receive the Holy Spirit of God or of Christ, one must receive the person of Christ. How is that done? It is done as an act of the will.

[50 : 16] Receiving Christ and believing on Christ speak of the same spiritual dynamic, incapable of being separated. Believing and receiving are both volitional acts.

To believe means to assert that a thing is true and we wish to align ourselves with it by embracing the truth that is claimed. To receive means to open oneself to the taking of that truth that is claimed to be one's own.

To accept it because you believe it and you want it. In this case, that which we want is the person of Christ himself. When we believe on Christ, it simply means we have heard the gospel, the good news that Christ died for the sins of the world in general and my sins in particular, that God placed human sin on Christ and Christ's righteousness on the one believing him.

This is the great doctrine of justification by faith, meaning that solely upon the basis of exercising faith in Christ are we justified or declared to be righteous before God.

When one does that, the Spirit of Christ responds by entering the very life and human spirit of that believing individual. The believer now possesses the Spirit of Christ because he possesses Christ himself.

[51 : 40] The entire matter is one that is wholly spiritual. In addition, it is wholly personal, not institutional. Receiving Christ and believing on Christ are synonymous and both are realized via the willful and deliberate decision of the individual person.

While a church or other religious institution may and should set forth Christ as the only one God has provided for human salvation, it is Christ himself, not the institution, proclaiming him that is the way to God.

This puts the responsibility upon each person who is a recipient of the volition God gave him. We are accountable as individuals. We may not delegate nor relegate the business we have to do with God to any church, pastor, priest, or rabbi.

When anyone believes on the Lord Jesus Christ and receives him as their personal Savior, the Spirit of Christ and of God enters the believing one to take up residency therein.

This wonderful reality, in addition to several more benefits God makes available to all believers, is true of all who come to Christ. few issues are as confusing and divisive among believers in Christ as our present subject, the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

[53 : 07] The leading cause for confusion is in assuming the word baptize is synonymous with water. Yet, in most instances where the word baptize is used, it has nothing to do with water.

Perhaps it will help to clarify the issue by understanding there are two distinct ideas set forth in Scripture as regards baptism. They are, firstly, what we will call ritual baptism.

This does involve the use of water, H₂O, however one applies it, whether by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion. The subject has water applied in some manner. It's called ritual baptism because it is a rite, R-I-T-E.

John the Baptist made his ritual baptism quite clear when he stated, I indeed baptize you with water, but one comes after me who will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

This is Matthew 3, Luke 3, Mark 1, and John 1. In this singular statement by John the Baptist, he refers to the rite of baptism which he performed upon all who came to him and embraced his message.

[54 : 12] He then clearly contrasted his water baptism with another kind of baptism that the Messiah coming after him would provide. His baptism would not be with water but with the Holy Spirit.

This we would label spirit baptism as opposed to water baptism. One is wholly immaterial and non-physical, that of the Spirit.

The other is very material and physical, water. The water rite of baptism is that which a human subject, whether a pastor, priest, or rabbi, performs upon the recipient.

The spirit baptism is the spiritual operation performed upon the recipient without the agency of any other human. The agency performing it is the deity himself.

John the Baptist said he, the Messiah, Jesus, would be the agent administering this baptism and it would consist of being baptized with the Holy Spirit.

[55 : 11] Further, it appears that receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit as mentioned by Peter in his Pentecostal message in Acts 2 is synonymous with being baptized with the Spirit.

In the epistle to the Corinthians, chapter 12, the apostle Paul also refers to baptism and the Holy Spirit, but there is a difference that should not be ignored. In the four gospels, Christ is the baptizing agent who baptizes with the Holy Spirit, but in the epistles, it is the Holy Spirit who is the baptizing agent and he baptizes believers into the spiritual body of Christ.

It would appear that both are accompanied with the spiritual regeneration of the person being baptized and both are devoid of water. Why there should be this difference is related to there being a difference in the programs under which they were functioning.

In the gospels and early acts with Israel, the nation, at the center, Christ was the baptizer with the Holy Spirit, but in the epistles, the church, which is the spiritual body of Christ, at the forefront, the Holy Spirit does the baptizing and he baptizes believers into the body of Christ, whether Jew or Gentile.

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit of God in the very life and body of the believer is one of the most comforting and assuring truths of all scripture and of the life experience of the Christian.

- [56 : 39] This indwelling means precisely what it seems. It is the very act of the Holy Spirit of God taking up residency in the spirit of the individual Christian from the moment he becomes a new creation in Christ Jesus until the time of his physical death when the believer becomes absent from his body and present with the Lord in heaven.

Granted, it is a stretch to say that God himself dwells within our being. Are we claiming too much? Many would say so. I would be the first to admit it sounds preposterous.

Then, on what possible basis can a rational person make such a claim? God says so, and God cannot lie. The determining factor about any of the claims made by Christians is always the same.

Never is it due to our worthiness. We are not worthy. Never is it due to our feelings. Our feelings are fickle and unreliable.

Never is it due to our church or religious dogma. They all differ considerably. It is, and must always be. Thus saith the Lord.

- [57 : 55] So, where does the Lord say individual believers? All individual believers are actually indwelt by the Spirit of God. The most compelling verse that comes to mind is found in 1 Corinthians 6.

Here, the inspired Apostle Paul is rebuking the Corinthian assembly for their cavalier attitude towards serious spiritual matters. He chides them in saying, What?

Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which you have of God, and you are not your own? For you are bought with a price.

Therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. Their being indwelt by the Spirit of God had nothing to do with their being worthy of such a favor.

They clearly were not worthy, nor are we. The Spirit of God's indwelling of each believer is due solely to the gracious operation of God Himself, despite our unworthiness.

- [58 : 58] Couple this passage with Romans 8, but you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

The believer is in the Spirit, and the Spirit is in the believer, inseparably so. It is part of what being a Christian means. Christ alluded to the indwelling nature of the Holy Spirit in the very life and body of the believer shortly before his death in John 14, when he told his apostles in the upper room the night of his betrayal, And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it sees him not, neither knows him, but you know him, for he dwells with you and shall be in you.

Following the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, the Holy Spirit became available to believers in a way different from his previously being with them. Then he would be in them, as he now indwells all who have faith in Christ.

The sealing of the Holy Spirit upon the life and person of every believer is one more divine, gracious provision of God to instill a sense of comfort and security in the Christian.

Few things increase our index of appreciation more than realizing our safety and security in Christ. God does not want us to serve or worship him because we stand in abject fear and horror of being disowned by him, but because we are so grateful to him for what he has done for us through Christ.

[60 : 52] Another reason for our comfort and gratitude is the sealing of the Holy Spirit. To understand this sealing, we appeal to the meaning behind the word in that day. For instance, Matthew 27 refers to a sealing at the tomb of Christ.

We are told that when Jesus was placed in the tomb, they went and made the sepulcher sure, sealing the stone and setting a watch. The sealing of the stone did not involve mortar or plaster.

They simply rolled the massive round stone, probably four or five feet in diameter, and perhaps six to twelve inches thick, over the entrance to the tomb and then placed the signet seal of Rome upon it.

The seal was an embossed emblem, used and authorized only by the government of Rome. None could remove or tamper with the seal of Rome apart from serious penalty.

All the power and authority of mighty Rome would be brought to bear upon anyone having the audacity to ignore this seal. A similar placing of the royal seal by the Babylonian king in Daniel 6 expresses a similar usage.

[62 : 06] It is to this historical cultural context we must appeal for understanding what was meant in Ephesians 1. The text reads, After listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation, having also believed, you were sealed in him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance with a view to the redemption of God's own possession to the praise of his glory.

Did you get the meaning and application of this? The authority behind the sealing is God himself. The signet or seal that is applied is none other than the blessed Holy Spirit of promise.

Himself, the Spirit, is the seal. Later, in Ephesians also, chapter 4, we read, And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption.

Again, the same inspired apostle tells us in 2 Corinthians 1 that God has sealed us and given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

In each instance, the sealing of the Holy Spirit, which seal is the Holy Spirit himself, took place immediately upon believing on the person and redemptive work of Christ on one's behalf.

[63 : 30] It is one more amazing and gracious benefit applied by God to all believers upon welcoming them into the household of faith. Many Christians live spiritually impoverished lives unnecessarily because they know so little of what God has provided for them as a part of the incomparable grace package that belongs to them.

The truth of the sealing of the Spirit is often one of those provisions. Knowing where one stands as a believer in Christ and having the assurance of that standing is the next most important thing to the standing itself.

This is because the human heart cries out for security, certainty. Knowing where you are with God and knowing that you know is the very basis for Christian confidence and stability.

Confidence that is not cockiness or arrogance. The knowledge that we are secure in Christ is never based on our goodness nor our intentions. It is based solely and squarely on the merits of Jesus Christ, who He is and what He accomplished on our behalf.

God did not save you for you to be in a dither of worrisome anxiety as to whether or not you really belong to Him. Fear and its removal from the human experience is one of the many things God says you no longer have to contend with.

- [64 : 59] God has not given us the spirit of fear but of love and power and a sound mind as Paul wrote Timothy in 2 Timothy 1. Another wonderful ingredient of assurance for the believer is located in 2 Corinthians 1 wherein the apostle stated it thusly, Now he who established us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God who has also sealed us and given the earnest of the spirit in our hearts.

Sealed? earnest of the spirit? What is the earnest of the spirit? The word earnest is borrowed by the apostle Paul from the world of business.

There, earnest money was required as a down payment guarantee that the balance of what was owed would be forthcoming. Earnest money is good faith money.

When Christians are said to have been given the spirit as an earnest, it is God's way of guaranteeing He will complete that for which He has made a partial or down payment.

It assures us that God will conclude the transaction He has begun in us. To the Philippians in chapter 1 we read that He that has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

- [66 : 20] The Holy Spirit Himself who indwells each believer is God's down payment guarantee that He will finish what He began in each believer. What is it about the Christians that remains unfinished?

It is the redemption of our physical bodies that are yet subject to death. When God completes the transaction, our bodies will also be redeemed and glorified according to 1 Corinthians 15.

This mortal body will put on immortality, this corruptible body will put on incorruption. Then we will be a finished product.

until then, we are given the Holy Spirit who indwells us as God's earnest payment that the balance will surely be forthcoming. It is a glorious truth that reflects the faithfulness of God.

The indwelling Holy Spirit is Himself both the seal and the earnest or down payment of our salvation. This is the basis for our comfort, our security, and our stability as believers in Christ.

- [67 : 34] The person of the Holy Spirit and the doctrines attending Him have suffered at the hands of Christian fanaticism. Such has been true in every generation. Some have the mistaken notion that to be under the control of the Holy Spirit one must exhibit bizarre or weird behavior.

Some manifest animal sounds and flaky physical gyrations as an evidence of the Holy Spirit's influence. Little wonder people looking on and witnessing such a debacle want nothing to do with that kind of religion.

While some may exhibit weird behavior due to the influence of others who have told them such as a necessary evidence of the Spirit's control, perhaps even extending to handling of snakes, they fall in line mimicking their role models from a sincere heart.

Others engage the behavior from nothing more than the activity of the flesh, and God has nothing whatever to do with it. A believer under control of the Holy Spirit does not forfeit his volition, so is mysteriously dominated by the Spirit.

1 Corinthians 14 reminds us that the Spirit of the prophets are subject to the prophets, and God is not the author of confusion, but of peace. Yet the Holy Spirit is assigned the source of the unbecoming behavior, and non-Christians who may be watching do not have any basis for discernment.

[68 : 56] It's nothing new. God gets blamed for a lot of things he has nothing to do with. It's another instance whereby God may suffer negative consequences from his friends as much as from his enemies.

What then is to be expected from believers who truly are under the influence of the Holy Spirit? How should they act? What is acceptable and God-honoring behavior from those under the control of the Holy Spirit?

We are told quite clearly in Galatians 5, Those led and controlled by the Holy Spirit should produce the fruit or the kind of activity in keeping with the nature and ministry of the Spirit.

We are not left to wonder what this is. The inspired apostle tells us exactly what should be the behavior pattern of the Christian who is led and controlled by the Holy Spirit.

Look for love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and temperance. These are described as the fruit of the Spirit, or the character qualities the Holy Spirit produces.

[69 : 58] It's also no coincidence these are the very character qualities demonstrated by our Lord Jesus Christ during His sojourn on earth. We can also confidently say these are the qualities that, when exhibited by Christians, tend to draw others to them, not shrink back in avoiding them.

The Christian who consistently manifests these qualities is, in His very behavior, a powerful evangelistic tool that makes the Christian faith attractive to non-Christians.

What is more, this fruit of the Spirit in the daily life of the Christian is designed by God to be the norm, not an exception. Call it standard operating procedure, if you will.

And no one can call the exhibition of the fruit of the Spirit fanatical, or bizarre, or weird. Supernatural? Perhaps. And it is. The fruit of the Spirit is generated by God the Holy Spirit Himself, and He is as supernatural as there is.

You've just heard another session of Christianity Clarified with Marv Wiseman. The next compact disc of Christianity Clarified will be disc number eight.

[71 : 19] Previous discs have focused upon the authority of the Bible, the character and nature of the triune God, including attention given to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, allotting 20 segments to each, a consideration of the different names and titles assigned to deity, all were presented as precursors to the arrival of man on the scene.

In disc eight, it is time for man's appearance. An explanation is offered for the meaning of man being created in the image and likeness of God and what this entails.

Acknowledgement is given as to the controversial nature of the phrase, particularly as regards the spirit component imparted to man by the Creator. How do we describe the human spirit?

And does it differ from the soul? If so, how so? Of what does the human spirit consist? And what is its purpose or function?

How does the human spirit undergo regeneration? And what happens to the spirit at the point of physical death? These and other related issues involving the thoroughly engrossing part of our humanity are explored, not in detail, but in brief, as is our objective on Christianity clarified.

[72 : 37] Added to all the foregoing is the frank admission that we really don't know or understand very much about ourselves, after all. Any good medical doctor will be willing to confess there is much about our physical bodies that escapes our mastery.

How much more is this the case about our spirit selves? It will be an honor if you will accompany us on this next Disc Number 8 of Christianity Clarified.

Computer users may log on to gracebiblespringfield.com and follow the links. You may download any of the materials listed free of charge or burn your own copy.

The address again, gracebiblespringfield.com Thank you for being part of the audience of Christianity Clarified. Thank you.