

# Christianity Clarified Volume 25

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Date: 01 April 2020

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[ 0 : 00 ] What is Christianity really all about? Here, in an ongoing effort to try and dispel some of the confusion, is Marv Wiseman with another session of Christianity Clarified.

Introduction to Comparative Religions, Part 1. This segment of Christianity Clarified is the first in a listing that considers the issue of comparative religions.

These five consist of what is generally regarded as the major faiths of the world. They include Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, and Christianity.

It should be intuitively obvious that all these expressions of belief systems differ quite radically one from the others. So logic demands that someone has to be wrong.

And predictably, each group is sincerely convinced that their expression of their faith is the right one, and it's the others that are wrong. This, of course, demands that some who are convinced the others are wrong must of necessity be wrong themselves, because somebody is.

[ 1 : 08 ] The question is, who? In speaking of right and wrong, we are automatically dealing with truth and non-truth. Truth and error correspond to right and wrong.

Truth represents what actually is, while falsity or error represents what is not. Truth corresponds to reality.

The false corresponds to unreality. Today, there are those who insist that truth, particularly moral truth, simply does not exist. But such thinking simply defies logic.

To say that truth does not exist is in itself a self-defeating proposition. This is because it is only truth that allows error to even be identified as error.

Error cannot exist unless there is truth with which it must be compared. To say there is no such thing as objective truth, one is required to say there is no falsity or such a thing as a lie.

[ 2 : 14 ] Because it is truth that sets the standard for what is real. There cannot be a counterfeit if there is no genuine. It is the existence of the real that exposes the error and the false.

For one to say there is no objective truth, one would only ask whether that includes the statement he made about there being no objective truth. There can be no truth where there is no error.

But there cannot be error without the existence of truth. For truth is what allows error to be exposed for what it is. This principle is applied to all of life, and those who deal with it in the most serious ways are found in our law courts throughout the land.

The law everywhere regards truth and error to be paramount in all their findings. And so it is. Is there a standard of truth by which all religious truth claims are to be tested?

If not, there is no basis for regarding any religious claim as untrue, no matter how bizarre it may be or preposterous its tenets. Christianity clarified, being Christian, has no recourse but to appeal to the Christian scriptures as the sole standard for evaluating the truth claims of all faiths.

[ 3 : 37 ] Other faiths may appeal to their own written authorities as their standard. Listeners will simply have to decide for themselves. Introduction to Comparative Religions, Part 2 It ought to be clearly understood, and as clearly admitted, that the discussion of comparative religions, such as we are now engaging, cannot be conducted apart from a personal bias.

This is why, now, at the outset, I frankly acknowledge that I am biased, prejudiced, if you will, in favor of Christianity as opposed to all of the other belief systems.

I will make every attempt to accurately portray the positions of the different religions we present here on Christianity Clarified, but to say I am completely objective would not be true.

Likewise, one cannot imagine a Muslim discussing other beliefs without being biased toward Islam.

Of course he is, and he would be a very poor follower of Islam if he were not.

Put simply, if one is not biased toward whatever his faith may be, why then would he even be a follower of it? Complete unbiased objectivity is impossible for anyone who has a faith to not be

prejudiced toward that faith.

[ 5 : 05 ] Would this mean, then, that the only one truly objective in presenting a study of the various religions would have to be an atheist? After all, he would reject all religious belief systems as being invalid.

He would not have the problem of a bias like the adherence of a given faith would. No, that is not true. Even an atheist who rejected all religious faiths would still be plagued with the bias of his own, and it would be a bias toward atheism.

Atheism is his faith. This being the case, his disdain for all the religions apart from atheism would color his objectivity so it would not be objective at all.

And make no mistake about it, while one might try to exempt atheism from all religious faiths, it is nonetheless a faith or belief system in itself.

A faith need not be religious to be a faith. A faith is merely a belief system or a set of tenets in which one places one's confidence or trust.

[ 6 : 17 ] An atheist exercises his faith or confidence in the concept that there is no God. His faith and trust rests in his own intellect and its arrival at what he perceives to be true.

Of course, he is biased. One cannot be strictly unbiased unless he is completely ignorant of all belief systems, in which case he probably lacks the sanity and reasoning powers that prevent him from even having an opinion about believing anything.

So, in the final analysis, we rest our case that objectivity and the lack of any bias is logically and practically impossible.

It only needs to be admitted and taken into consideration when presenting the pros and cons of the many different faiths examined. This we will attempt to do on Christianity Clarified.

Introduction to Comparative Religions Part 3 It is generally agreed that there are five major religions in the world. We emphasize the word major because of the large number of adherents of these five and because of the very lengthy history of their existence.

[ 7 : 41 ] These five are in the order we will consider them. They are Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, and Christianity. Stemming from each of these five are literally scores of what we might call offshoots, sub-religions, or sects, of which one of the five majors may be called their parent religion.

They vary greatly in their doctrine and the number of their followers. Yet, in the main, it is safe to say that nearly every religious belief today has its roots in one of the five, whether Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, or Christianity.

And it is also safe to say there is great antiquity associated with each. Many are willing to attach legitimacy to one of the five they are following simply because of its endurance through the ages and the number of adherents it has been able to attract.

However, we are quick to say that no religion or belief system can be validated as true simply because of its antiquity or the great numbers of its followers.

It should also be noted that all of the five do have some commonalities in their doctrines. Yet, in a more obvious way, their differences, one from the other, usually command the greater attention.

[ 9 : 06 ] The law of non-contradiction as a principle of universal logic will not allow these religions that are contradictory one to the other to each be true.

Yet, each, of course, claims theirs is true while the others are false. But, what else could be expected? It will be the prerogative of each listener to these segments of Christianity Clarified to render their own verdict after hearing the claims and comparisons.

And again, be reminded we fully admit to our own bias in our subject matter. Even with that bias, we will labor to present the faiths we do not believe to be true in a fair and accurate presentation of their main tenets.

After all, we are not seeking to defend the religions we believe to be false only to describe and explain them in a way their own adherents would agree is a fair and accurate presentation, despite the brevity with which each is presented.

Again, please be advised that no credence is given to the concept of religious pluralism that insists on the equal validity of all religions. Such a position will not withstand the scrutiny of logic, philosophy, or even everyday common sense.

[ 10 : 28 ] Religious pluralism is merely an attempt to be ultra-tolerant and make everyone feel good about whatever they believe, whether it passes any of the tests for truth claims or not.

We simply and surely cannot embrace such a position. Religious pluralism is invalid in every way. We'll not entertain it for a moment.

Hinduism Part 1 Hinduism is generally recognized as one of the world's oldest religions and philosophies. Surely it is among the most complex and diverse, with several sub-beliefs attributing their origin to Hinduism.

Generally speaking, in all its different sects and offshoots, Hinduism is considered as the one eternal religion of India. And because Hinduism denies any existence of absolute truth, there need be no conflict or opposition to any of the various differences arrived at by their several factions within Hinduism.

Subjectivism and personal choice or preference makes any expression of Hinduism as valid as any other, and none would be wrong per se.

[ 11 : 50 ] modern-day Hinduism and the New Age Eastern mysticism that accompanies it, has undergone significant changes from its inception 5,000 years ago.

And as to the origin of Hinduism, the Hindu Yogi Rama Chakra has stated that the word Hindu itself did not originate in India, but in ancient Persia, which is now modern-day Iran.

It supposedly came from the association with the river Indus. In many respects, Hinduism is not easily defined, and this is because of all its variations, which are considerable, and each of them lay claim to authentic Hinduism.

The authority or holy books of Hinduism are called the Vedas, the term for wisdom or knowledge. Later portions of the Vedas are called the Upanishads, and they constitute a distillation or a synthesis of the teachings of the Vedas.

This sets forth a belief in pantheism, the law of karma, and the position on life after death, consisting of multiple lives after multiple deaths, commonly called reincarnation.

[ 13 : 14 ] Hinduism embraces the philosophical concept of pantheism. This asserts, as the name pantheism suggests, that all is God and God is all.

All the universe and everything in it, including humans, animals, vegetation, and mineral, comprise the single God. Thus, you are God, and God is you, and all else.

In addition, the universe is all impersonal, whether human, animal, or mineral, which, of course, places all the properties of all creation on the same impersonal plane, and this, of course, would deny the basis, then, for human value, dignity, and meaning.

Animals become a literal equal of humans, providing the rationale for the sacred cow, and the prohibition of destroying even the common rat.

Hinduism has been described as one's individual personality being merely as one drop of water, merging into the vast ocean, thus losing all personal identity in the great impersonal whole.

[ 14 : 28 ] Hinduism, Part 2 Hinduism asserts that the universe is impersonal, as well as all the components in it, including humans.

Yet, humans try to personalize themselves, and in so doing, they are subject to pain and suffering. And, it is human desire, ambition, and striving that produce the pain and suffering.

Therefore, the key to nirvana, a kind of heaven or blissfulness, is to lose yourself and your personal identity by absorption into enlightenment.

Since this physical world is not the true reality, according to Hinduism, you must escape this illusion and enter the true reality. This escape is realized by the practice of yoga and transcendental meditation.

In the practice of TM, as it is called, one is able to transcend this illusory world, and become part of the impersonal one, or the final liberation.

[ 15 : 34 ] It is also called nirvana, cosmic consciousness, absolute bliss, or a unified field of creative intelligence, or one with self.

Again, the objective is to free oneself from this personal idea to be absorbed into the impersonal whole. There, one is devoid of pain, suffering, and other aspects that accompany this world of illusion.

Precisely how this is to be accomplished is via the discipline of yoga and meditation. The word yoga in the original Sanskrit language of India literally means yoke, or yoke with God, as in entering into a oneness with God, who is the impersonal all.

The impersonal you becomes yoked or in union with the impersonal all. Achieving this allows one to escape the pain and suffering accompanied by desire.

With all the pervasiveness, or impersonality, the personal aspects required in love, compassion, and personal morality are absent, along with its attendant free will or freedom of choice.

[16:55] Everything is reduced to what Hindus call karma, the literal meaning of which is fate. In reality, with Hinduism, freedom of choice is non-existent because of fate or karma.

Your karma consists of what you are experiencing from your behavior in your previous existences, from bad behavior in your previous lives, you may be experiencing bad karma in this present life. You may have come back in this life as a worm or insect, all of which is part of your payback from earlier lives of bad behavior. This means your present suffering, pain, or deprivation is not to be alleviated or cared for by others because to do so would interfere with the payment you need to make for the settling of old debts in your previous existence.

But then again, if this suffering is also the mere illusion of reality and not the true reality, one can readily see the irresolvable contradictions inherent in the practice of Hinduism.

Hinduism, Part 3 Hinduism and the Eastern mysticism that accompanies it began making significant inroads into the Western world and the United States in particular during the last half of the 20th century.

[18:16] The popularity of John Lennon and his music group, the Beatles, stimulated an interest in Eastern mysticism and philosophy that exceeded anything previously known.

The Beatles became engrossed with the Hindu guru named Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, the founder of transcendental meditation and all of its counterparts.

Its popularity with the Beatles was sufficient to cause many, particularly among the youth, to explore its claims. This led to an upsurge of interest and involvement in Eastern mysticism and New Age teachings in general.

Notable celebrities like Shirley MacLaine and others received considerable publicity, particularly among the Hollywood and entertainment industry, giving rise to TM classes of yoga, gaining popularity and eventually invading even the corporate world.

Another Hindu guru named Bhagwan Sri Rajneesh surfaced in the United States in 1978 when Time magazine featured an article about Rajneesh's appeal stemming from his use of what was called tantric yoga.

[19:32] This involved nudity and free sex that included a variety of therapies labeled as psycho-spiritual. Rajneesh's popularity extended in the New Age movement, reaching nearly every nation in the free world.

1981, the Rajneesh's purchased land near Madras, Oregon, containing more than 100 square miles to establish what they called America's first enlightened city.

Local Oregonians soon developed great resentment and concern with the colony of Rajneeshites and their thoroughly controversial tactics and claims.

In 1985, Rajneesh was deported to his native India by the U.S. Immigration Service. Before he died in 1990, he declared himself to be a reincarnation of Buddha.

As noted earlier, it is not possible to precisely define Hinduism due to its several expressions noted by world religion expert Professor Ninan Smart, who stated thusly, What is the essence of Hinduism?

[20:45] It's a hard question. There are orthodox Hindus who deny the existence of God. There are others who, while not denying God, relegate him to a second place as a secondary or illusory phase of the absolute.

Amid such a variety of theological views, what remains as necessary to Hindu belief? Certainly, the doctrines of rebirth and that of an immortal soul. The picture of the world as a place where the immortal spirit within man is endlessly implicated in the round of reincarnation, has dominated the Indian imagination for about three millennia.

In addition, a complex social system has given shape to the actual religion of the subcontinent over a long period. Buddhism, Part 1 Buddhism has its origins as an outgrowth of Hinduism.

Like the parent from which it came, Buddhism is more philosophical than it is religious, despite its use of images and idols. And also, like the Hinduism from which it came, it is highly complex and contains numerous different representations of what Buddhism is purported to be.

Strange as it may seem, one may even be an atheist and fully subscribe to the teachings of Buddhism. This, as much as anything else, tends to designate it more a philosophy than a religion.

[ 22 : 17 ] Nonetheless, so far as classifications are concerned, Buddhism is most often thought of as a religion. The four noble truths that constitute the foundation of Buddhism are, one, life is suffering, two, suffering is caused by desire, three, the cessation of desire eliminates suffering, and four, the stopping of desire comes by following the middle way between the extremes of sensuousness and asceticism.

If this sounds reminiscent of Hinduism, it is because, as stated earlier, Hinduism is the originator of Buddhism. The founder, Siddhartha, Guatama, lived from 563 to 483 BC, approximately a lifespan of about 80 years.

It was through meditation, after having entered into suffering caused by extreme deprivation of food, that Guatama was said to have achieved enlightenment, and thus became the enlightened one.

The term is also translated as the Buddha. Elaboration on what Buddha prescribed as the middle way consists of eight components.

They are the right view, the right resolve, the right speech, the right action, right livelihood, the right effort, the right concentration, the right ecstasy.

[ 23 : 50 ] As is the case with Hinduism, the goal is to deliver oneself to the place where you obtain universal knowledge that results in the release or final liberation, and you no longer experience a rebirth through reincarnation.

This, then, enables one to become one with the impersonal, or the state of nirvana. In the state of nirvana, all personality and awareness are lost, and you merge into nothingness.

Then, says the Buddha, you will be at peace, having lost your own soul and personality, by being absorbed into this mystical oneness. Failure to engage this process means one must stay connected to the law of karma and be perpetually recycled or reincarnated life after life.

This continues along with the ceaseless cycle of desiring and suffering. Contrary to what many think, the Buddha himself did not believe in a personal god and actually saw such belief as an impediment to people by keeping them bound to the physical world of karma and suffering.

Buddhism Part 2 It was observed earlier that the man Gautama Siddhartha was born and raised a Hindu. Most scholars of ancient religions agreed that this man, who would come to be known as the Buddha, or the Enlightened One, was himself even opposed to the concept of a personal god.

[ 25 : 32 ] He believed, in fact, that it was due to the thousands of gods embraced by Hinduism that kept people bound to the physical world of karma and suffering.

Despite Buddha's denunciation of idolatry, this very thing has become and is a major part of Buddhism. Tourists today may visit Buddhist shrines that house literally thousands of Buddha idols that followers revere and pray to.

The world-famous Golden Pagoda in Burma, now Minamar, contains more than 3,500 idols of Buddha. Every day, thousands of the faithful climb the 300-foot monument in order to light candles and incense while praying before the statues of stone, wood and metal.

Whether one engages in the Buddhism practice of Zen or I Ching, none of them espouse the idea of a personal god. Believing that Zen, to consider a personal god, such would be unknowable.

It is with an unknowable essence they seek to unite. This entire idea leaves one in a very vague position of mystery and uncertainty regarding life's greatest issues.

[ 26 : 58 ] The principal components of Buddhism are the Mahayana and Hinayana, also known as the Great Vehicle and the Little Vehicle.

The Little Vehicle, or the Hinayana, conform to the original ideas of Buddhism, while the Mahayanists, which comprise the larger group of the two, engage in much speculation fueled by Hinduism and by shamanism as well.

Eventually, celestial Buddhists were those who are perceived as appearing on earth, now known as the Dalai Lama. The second major group of Buddhism is referred to as Zen, Z-E-N, and it does boast a following of many millions throughout the world.

Zen originated from the Japanese segment of the meditation school of Buddhist philosophy. It has received attention and coverage from leading magazines and periodicals in the United States.

These adherents of Zen believe they originated with one named Maha Kasyapa, who received the doctrine of the Buddha mind from Buddha himself.

[ 28 : 21 ] The legend claims that Buddha picked the flower in silence and in so doing, he communicated the mystical fragrance of his mind to that of his disciple.

### Buddhism Part 3.

Even a cursory examination of both Hinduism and Buddhism reveals the depersonalization of the individual as necessary to escape the chain of reincarnation so as to enter nirvana.

One can also see how the vast nation of China was especially vulnerable to communism. Both decry the personalization of the individual, and both are in rejection of a personal God even existing.

So it was not a quantum leap, but a more predictable inclination for the Asian nations as a whole to adopt communism without finding it in conflict with their philosophy.

[ 29 : 26 ] Countless examples are related by those who have seen firsthand how Buddhism works or doesn't work in a practical day-to-day setting.

Several Americans who are not Buddhists have volunteered their efforts in Buddhist countries dealing with caring for refugees. Here they were, desperate people who had fled for their lives from war-torn countries like Cambodia and Laos.

Tens of thousands of them in desperate need of food, clothing, medical attention. And who was doing all the caring for these poor and desperate refugees?

No Hindus, no Muslims, and no Buddhists. No Muslims, 300,000 refugees cared for only by Christians from Christian missions and relief organizations.

Why was that? Why is this? For it continues to this day. The reason is because their religion forbids it.

[ 30 : 35 ] These people, these refugees, are suffering. The Buddha himself said, if someone is suffering, that is his karma. If you interfere with his suffering, you are preventing him from being purged of his sins through his suffering and reincarnation.

Each person is to be an island to himself, and his suffering and purging are to be solitary. After all, their suffering is what they deserve, and through karma they are paying off a debt that was accumulated through bad behavior in a previous life.

Even if their suffering leads to their death, they then merely transmigrate into another existence to continue their installments in that future life. They cycle however many times through however many lives it takes to get it paid off.

Still, the Christian aid workers saw the refugees not rejecting their kind help, but eagerly accepting it. There does appear to be something wrong with this picture, does there not?

One can easily see how the influence of a people's religion or philosophy, devoid of a personal God, can impact an entire nation and even retard its progress in many ways.

[ 31 : 59 ] Such, unfortunately, is the sad plight of both Hinduism and Buddhism. People continue to suffer and often suffer unnecessarily.

Islam Part 1 The word Islam means submission. Those in submission to the teaching of Islam are referred to as Muslims, meaning one who submits.

Muslims believe that Allah is revealed in the Quran, the holy book of Islam.

It is believed that Allah raised up a man named Muhammad, who was designated his principal prophet. They believe a collection of revelations from Allah through an archangel were given to Muhammad, and these comprise the holy book called the Quran.

Muslims believe 114 such revelations were communicated to Muhammad to complete the entire Quran, which are considered to be perfect in its original content written in the Arabic language.

[ 33 : 15 ] The five pillars of the faith of Islam include the Shahada, consisting of the confession, there is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet.

Secondly, prayer, five times daily, that includes prostration and genuflection while facing toward the holy city of Mecca. And three, almsgiving that involves the duty of giving a percentage of your income to aid others.

Four, fasting. During the entire month of Ramadan, Muslims are required to abstain from all food and drink, from sunrise to sunset, to atone for sins committed the previous year.

After sunset of each day, they are permitted to eat before the fast begins again the next day at sunrise. And five, at least once in the life of a Muslim, a pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca is required of all who are at all able to do so.

Some see a controversial item called Jihad as the sixth pillar. Jihad in Arabic means struggle.

[ 34 : 31 ] One application of the struggle is spiritual and inward, whereby the faithful Muslim contends with his inner self about his personal purity. The other application of Jihad is physical and

outward.

In this kind of Jihad, the struggle is against all elements, not under the rule of Islam. To these Muslims, this act of Jihad means a literal war against all that is not Islamic, in order to defeat infidels and bring all under the banner of Islam.

Those embracing this meaning of Islam are identified by the non-Islamic world as extremists or radical terrorists, such as the world has experienced over the past several decades.

These militant Muslims take the teaching of the Koran very literally. That interpretation requires the faithful to struggle in subjugating all the world to Islam, by converting them through persuasion, or by way of forced conversions, whichever is required.

Islam Part 2 The prophet regarded as the messenger of God was Muhammad, who arrived during the late 6th century after Christ and was active into the 7th.

[ 36 : 00 ] His claim was to have received the content of the Koran by direct revelation from Allah, the name given to the deity of Muslims.

It was and is believed to be his mission that of spreading Islam throughout the world and to cause people to submit to the teachings of the Koran.

This submission was to be gained through preaching and persuasion, if possible, and if not, then through the force of arms. It was and is believed by militant Muslims that non-Muslims do not have the freedom to reject Islam, but must be made to submit by force if they refuse to do so peaceably. Short of that, infidels may be permitted to survive as non-Muslims living in an Islamic-controlled society, provided they agree to a special taxation imposed only on infidels, and content themselves to live without many of the rights and privileges of other local Muslims.

Personal salvation or acceptance to the favor of Allah is never certain for followers of Islam, unless a Muslim should forfeit his life as a martyr.

[ 37 : 25 ] Only in this way can a Muslim be assured of eternal life and a blissful existence after death. This would constitute successful involvement in jihad, or the holy struggle, as found in the Koran.

The only acceptable goal in the Koran is for Islam to be established as the one and only true faith in the entire world, to the exclusion and elimination of all non-Muslims or infidels.

If this goal cannot be achieved by peaceful means via the proclamation of the Koran and its teachings, then faithful Muslims are called upon to make jihad or a holy war upon all infidels and force the world to submit to Islam.

This is and has been the principal agenda of Islam and is clearly referenced with a cursory reading of the Koran. As regards denying the freedom of conscience to non-Muslims by demanding their acceptance of Islam, they would simply assert that the will of Allah transcends the will and volition of humans.

They are, therefore, justified in forcing infidels to embrace the teachings of Islam, whether they wish to do so or not. Human volition, choices or preferences, are of no consideration or consequence in comparison to the demands of Allah.

[ 39 : 02 ] Not all Muslims agree with these tenets in their entirety, and this accounts for the division of Muslims into various groups called moderate or peaceful, and those labeled extremist, radical, or jihadists.

Islam Part 3 There are numerous distinctions about Islam that set it apart from nearly all other faiths.

Among them is the mistaken notion that Muslims worship the same God as Christians and Jews, only they call their deity by another name, the name of Allah. But such is not true.

Muslims are quick to tell you they regard the Christian doctrine of the Trinity to be abhorrent. The thought that God could consist of a plurality of persons with one of those being a son of God is completely unacceptable.

In their thinking, a triune God is a blasphemous concept. And although the Quran refers to Jesus as a prophet, it in no way places him above the prophet Muhammad.

[ 40 : 04 ] The Muslim view is that it was not Jesus who died on the cross, but another unknown who did so. Likewise to Muslims, there was then no resurrection of Christ from the dead, as Christians contend.

In addition to denying the atoning work of Christ, Muslims reject the concept of original sin and the need for the redemptive work of any Savior. As the name Islam means submission, and a Muslim is

one who so submits to Allah, the God of Islam, all who do not do so are referred to as infidels or those without belief in Islam and its pillars and principles set forth in the Quran.

Since submission to Allah is all-consuming in Islamic belief, the freedom of conscience for the individual is denied. This then legitimizes the use of persuasion via preaching to convert infidels to Islam, and if any will not convert because of preaching, then it is acceptable to use the power of the sword to force conversions to the faith of Islam.

Likewise, the execution of those who refuse to convert is not only justified but required by the dictates of the Quran and Islamic teaching.

A death sentence is also to be carried out by executing any Muslim who leaves the religion of Islam to embrace any other faith. Islam and its teaching places women in a strictly subordinate role to males.

[ 41 : 38 ] While Muslim men are permitted as many as four wives simultaneously, there is no such provision for women. Likewise, a Muslim man may divorce his wife at will for any cause he deems fit, but no Muslim wife can divorce her husband even in the case of physical abuse.

In many Muslim countries, a female may not appear in public unless escorted by a designated male or male member of her family. Islam is a very old religion dating back to the 7th century after Christ, although some Muslims claim that Abraham, the father of Jews and Arabs, was also a Muslim. History does not support such a claim. The faith of Islam is represented worldwide, particularly in the Mideast, and it claims followers numbering nearly one billion on all continents.

During the past two or three decades, the concept of Islam has reached unparalleled proportions in numerous parts of the world. Judaism Part 1 Of the five greatest religions in the world we have identified, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, and Judaism, by far, Judaism, despite its being one of the very oldest, is without question the smallest in number.

Jewish population today worldwide does not even comprise one percent of the world's inhabitants, but actually only two-tenths of one percent.

[ 43 : 25 ] Infinitesimal by comparison to the billions representing others. Yet, despite Judaism's small population, it has had a disproportionate influence upon the world from its inception to the present.

Probably without dispute, the man Abraham, depicted in the book of Genesis, could rightly be called the first Hebrew, or as later designated, the first Jew.

From the beginning, the principal thing distinguishing Abraham from all others of his day was his belief in and worship of a singular deity, or monotheism, the worship of one God.

No doubt Abraham was a novelty among all the Canaanites where he lived. These were engrossed in idolatry of every imaginable sort, with their idols and images representing different deities.

Abraham stood alone, and he lived under the favor and blessing of this one God whom he served. His name was Yahweh, Jehovah, Elohim, Adonai, more commonly called God in the English, or Lord, all in capital letters.

[ 44 : 41 ] The singular Jewish deity went by several names, depicting the office or function he was fulfilling. From all the possible candidates God could have chosen to be his special representative, he chose this man, Abraham, who at the time was a resident of Ur of the Chaldees, located today in the southern part of modern Iraq.

Abraham was the recipient of an extraordinary blessing, or covenant, God established with him, based solely on the magnanimous gesture of the sovereign God.

It was a promise that through Abraham and his offspring, the nations of the entire world would be blessed, provided the nations blessed Abraham and his offspring.

If they didn't, God would see to it that the nations cursing Israel would themselves be cursed.

History tells us that most of those nations that cursed and persecuted the Jew have in fact been cursed, and most of them have sunk into oblivion.

God is still working on a few others. Abraham, his wife Sarah, and her handmaiden Hagar were original parents of both the Jewish people and the Arab people, bitter enemies from inception even to this present day.

[ 46 : 12 ] Abraham, the father of both the Jew and the Arab. They entered into conflict during Abraham's time, and the conflict continues to this present day.

Judaism, Part 2 Approximately fourteen years after Ishmael was born to Father Abraham and Sarah's maidservant Hagar, Sarah herself miraculously conceived, and Isaac, who would be

designated the child of promise, was born.

Growing to manhood, Isaac would take a wife named Rebekah, and twin sons would be delivered by Rebekah. Now enters Esau and Jacob.

And the inter-family conflict begun between Isaac and Ishmael a generation earlier, will now continue with Jacob and Esau.

It would be Jacob, the younger, that would continue the line of promise. Esau would eventually become the progenitor of the Edomites, who would dwell in what is now southern Transjordan.

[ 47 : 22 ] They too, though distant cousins of the Jews, would prove to be engaged in an ongoing hostility, one that continues to this present day.

As did Isaac before him, it would now be Jacob, not Esau, that would continue the line of blessing and covenant that God originally gave to Abraham.

The story of Jacob and the trickery forced upon him by his uncle Laban is the stuff of a soap opera. Long story short, Jacob bargained for one wife and ended up with two, not only the girl he loved named Rachel, but also her less desirable older sister Leah, and not only the two sisters, but also their maidservants named Bilhah and Zilpah.

Each of these maidservants would make contributions to Jacob by way of sons and daughters. But it was Leah, the less desirable wife, who would be the most prolific.

And Leah would produce half of the sons of Jacob, who would become six of the twelve tribes of Israel, plus one daughter. Rachel, along with the handmaidens Bilhah and Zilpah, would produce two each, completing the family of twelve sons, each of whom would be progenitors of the twelve tribes of Israel.

[ 48 : 53 ] Thus the genealogy of the nation of Israel became established. And all who would be born later, in order to be a bona fide Israelite, would have to be a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Because not all sons of Abraham would be Jewish, because Ishmael and his descendant would be Arab. And not all sons of Isaac would be Jewish, for Esau would be the ancestor of the Edomites. This required one to be a direct descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, all three, in order to be a true Israelite.

And it would be Levi, the thirdborn of Leah, who would be the head of the priestly tribe, and Judah, Leah's fourthborn son, who would head the royal tribe, through which David the king would be born, and one thousand years later, Jesus of Nazareth, also of the tribe of Judah.

Judaism, Part 3 Even though Judaism has its origins in the men, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, it did not really arrive at what can be called a national status until they were in Egypt, and then, led out of Egypt as a corporate kind of body, under the leadership of Moses, destined for the return to the original homeland of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

[ 50 : 27 ] And even though these patriarchs were monotheistic, and had already maintained a system of animal sacrifice as a requirement from the Lord, they still did not have a structured system of worship, or what might be called a prescribed worship, until God gave such upon their arrival at Mount Sinai.

It was there, after spending forty days in the mount with God, that Moses descended with the tables of the law written in stone by the finger of God himself.

Included were the contents found in Exodus, with instructions for the building of the tabernacle, and all the divine requirements for sacrifice, worship, legal procedures, and an entire ethic that would be observed by the Jewish people.

This was all referred to as the Mosaic Covenant, which, although not originated by Moses, nevertheless, God chose to convey it to Israel through Moses.

And in all, it contained over six hundred laws or commandments, far more than the Ten Commandments, which may be considered a condensation of the law in general.

[ 51 : 45 ] Great importance was given to their maintaining their singular worship, and their recognition of the one true God of Israel, who had called them out of the land of Egypt, and, along with strict prohibitions from being influenced by their surrounding neighbors, like the Canaanites, and the numerous clans and branches.

Observance of the weekly Sabbath, which was the seventh day of every week, and the various feasts, and their designated as Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles, plus the holiest day of the year, called Yom Kippur, on the Day of Atonement.

All these would be an integral part of Israeli life, and remain so to this day, particularly among observant Jews. Throughout the succeeding years, Israel as a nation would rise and fall, morally and spiritually, over and over again.

God dispatched numerous prophets who delivered the Word of God to the nation, along with promises of blessing or cursing from the Almighty, depending upon the obedience or disobedience of the Israelites.

Historically, Israel experienced a time of rule by various judges God raised up, and then, eventually, they would be ruled over by a series of kings, some of whom would be godly men, and some who would be detrimental in every way to the spiritual and moral health of the nation.

[ 53 : 18 ] So, in essence, to say Israel has a checkered past, one would find that authenticated by the record of the entire Old Testament.

Judaism, Part 4 There has never been a race of people emerge on the scene of humanity quite like that of the Jewish people. Without doubt, Abraham and his descendants were charged with being the human vehicle through which God's promised Redeemer, the Messiah, was to come.

This harkens back to the earliest ages of man when God, in Genesis 3, promised that He would send a Savior, a Messiah or anointed one. This one would succeed in combating the effects of the moral and spiritual fall of the original parents, Adam and Eve.

The promise would not be fulfilled for 4,000 years after it was given. In the meanwhile, every Jewish heart and every generation longed for God to send that promised Deliverer.

After all, it was this promise, this One who was to come, that permeated so much written by Moses and all the prophets. Faithful Jews in every generation lived in the fervent anticipation of the arrival of this long-awaited Messiah.

[ 54 : 43 ] Yet, when He came, as announced in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John of the New Testament, the Jewish religious establishment chose to disqualify this Jesus of Nazareth.

They did not believe Him to be the one foretold by Moses and the prophets, and were, in fact, conspirators in His crucifixion by enlisting the Roman Pontius Pilate to carry it out.

Most Jews, to this day, continue to reject Jesus of Nazareth as their long-awaited one, and the New Testament that tells of Him. Gentiles, that is, non-Jewish people, have exacted a horrible price upon the Jew with massive ignorance and arrogance driving them.

They charge the Jew with the crime of deicide, that is, the killing of God, and have persecuted and treated them horribly, culminating in the Holocaust of World War II, when Hitler's killing machine exterminated six million Jews.

Ignorance and arrogance, coupled with an irrational hatred, can allow for this kind of atrocity. But behind it all, apart from the ignorance and arrogance of Gentiles in their brutality toward the Jewish people through the ages, lies the evil machinations of an even more sinister sort.

[ 56 : 16 ] And that one is Satan himself, who, as the arch enemy of God, has attempted to thwart God's plan and program of the ages. Knowing the Jewish people to be the strategic necessity of God's plan, because God so ordained it in the calling of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and then crystallizing his plan in providing his own son, Jesus of Nazareth, born of Mary.

Little did Satan know that in inspiring Judas and others to contribute to the death of Jesus, he was actually furthering the plan of God he so vehemently opposed.

Jews today remain in unbelief of it all and quite unaware as to their real Messiah. Christianity Part 1 While it certainly was not the intent of Judaism, there is no question but what Judaism is rightly called the cradle of Christianity.

As the saying infers, there would be no Christianity had it not been preceded by its parent faith, Judaism. The connection is obvious and simple.

Christianity is essentially about Jesus Christ, who he was, why he came, who sent him, what he did, and why it matters. And those inquiries and their answers has Judaism all over them.

[ 57 : 43 ] Not only so, but one might go so far as to say that Christianity is in reality the culmination of Judaism. It is Judaism arriving at its logical conclusion.

Little wonder, then, why so many Jewish people who do come to faith in Jesus Christ as their Messiah and Savior, almost to a person, do not refer to themselves as a converted Jew, but as a completed Jew.

One can readily understand the burden of the New Testament letter to the Hebrews, since it speaks so clearly about going on or moving forward in one's faith through the embracing of Jesus of

Nazareth as the long-awaited Messiah, rejected, crucified, and risen from the dead. Consider also that for approximately the first seven to ten years after the ascension of Christ, virtually all those who had believed in Him were full-fledged Jews, completely in tune with the law of Moses.

And while these Jews that did embrace Jesus as their Savior, they in no way ceased to be Jews. They remained as Jewish as the day they were born, in the same way as Jews today who come to believe on Jesus as their Messiah and Savior.

[ 59 : 07 ] They do not stop being Jews and start being Christians, they simply become a believing Jew. The critical issue regarding Jesus of Nazareth all through the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, as well as the Acts of the Apostles, focused on His identity.

Was He, in fact, the very one of whom Moses and the prophets did prophesy? Or was He not? There is no middle ground. He was or He wasn't.

The consequences and implications of however one answers that question are simply stunning. More than stunning, they are of eternal significance.

Contrary to the standard Jewish opinion through the ages, and including Jews today, they, of course, do not view Jesus as their very own Jewish Messiah, but regard Him merely as a prophet or rabbi of some note.

Christians identify with the Apostle Peter's declaration about Jesus when he boldly declared, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. Ironically, these first Jews who believed were persecuted by the Jews who did not believe, and the principal persecutor was a Pharisee from the tribe of Benjamin, none other than Saul of Tarsus, later to become Paul the Apostle.

[ 60 : 37 ] Christianity, Part 2 Christianity sets forth the entire Bible, the Jewish Old Testament and the New Testament, as the sole basis of authority for faith and practice.

Christians believe Jesus Christ to be not only God's Son, but God's sent one. The reason God sent him was prompted by the Father's love and grace for a fallen humanity, and the reason the Son was willing to come was because he shared in that love and concern of his Father for that lost humanity. It was this complete transaction from the incarnation of God's Son, Jesus, into a human being born of Mary the Virgin, on through his sinless life, death on the cross, and resurrection from the dead, that comprises what the Bible calls the Gospel, or Good News.

John 3.16 is often and accurately referred to as the Gospel in a nutshell. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him might not perish, but have everlasting life.

It's reinforced in the epistle of Paul, formerly Saul of Tarsus, when he penned the following to the church in Corinth, Greece, saying as he did in chapter 15, 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.

[ 62 : 21 ] When anyone who admits their own sin and recognizes there is nothing he can do to satisfy a holy God, he is then invited to put his trust in Jesus Christ who died for his sin, and he will receive from Christ forgiveness, cleansing, pardon, and eternal life.

All on the basis of who Jesus Christ is and what he accomplished on that cross in reconciling the world unto God. Christians, then, have the responsibility and the privilege of relating that gospel or good news to others that they, too, upon believing, might be saved from their sin and its penalty. Contrary to every other system of belief we have examined, whether Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, or Judaism, it is Christianity alone that offers forgiveness of sin and a right standing with God based solely upon what God has already done for man through Christ rather than what man can do for God.

Christianity alone is the only faith providing the basis for assurance of eternal life because it rests upon the provision and performance of God, not of man.

The Christian rests his confidence upon what God has done and what God has promised for those who trust in the only provision God has made for man's sin, that of the death, burial, and resurrection for our sin.

[ 64 : 04 ] Christianity alone offers this. Hallelujah! What a Savior! Christianity, Part 3 As mentioned in Part 1 of this series, the earliest and only believers in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ were as Jesus was.

They were Jews. In fact, it appeared that Jews exclusively were those who embraced Jesus as their Messiah and Savior. Then, several years following Christ's ascension back to heaven, the first non-Jew we are aware of also came to faith in Jesus.

Read about him as Cornelius in Acts chapter 10. And he really caused quite a stir and no small confusion among the Jews, simply because this man was not a Jew, but a Gentile and a Roman army officer as well.

God used the apostle Peter to present Jesus to this man and his family, and apparently they all came to faith as Gentiles in this Jewish Savior. Shortly thereafter, following this upheaval caused by admitting a pagan Gentile to the faith of believers in Christ, the apostle Peter then begins to fade from the scene in the book of Acts.

After being the principal player in the first half of Acts, Peter now gives way to another who will not merely welcome non-Jews as well as Jews to put their trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins, but will even have the special designation and commission of being the apostle to the Gentiles.

[ 65 : 43 ] Now, an entirely and previously unheard of dynamic was underway. Of all things, the believing Jews and believing Gentiles are both informed they have been made into one new entity called the body of Christ.

This was a spiritual organism, not an organization. Now, the distinctions and historic barriers that had always separated Jews from Gentiles has been eliminated.

It was Paul, the apostle alone, who dared write to the Galatians in chapter 3, saying, There is neither Jew or Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

And to the Ephesians in chapter 2, he wrote that Jesus Christ had reconciled both Jew and Gentile into one body by the cross.

To the Jew of Paul's day, such was utterly unthinkable, for the Jew had always prided himself in his distinctions, and was required by God to be separated from Gentiles.

[ 66 : 56 ] Now they are being melded together with no distinctions? The Jews were right in searching the Old Testament to authorize such a thing, and they couldn't find anything, even alluding to such a union.

This is why Paul called the whole matter a mystery, that is, a sacred secret. While this had always been in the mind of God as an ultimate intention, God never let anyone in on it or even hinted at it until he revealed it to Paul the Apostle to the Gentiles.

You can read all about it in Ephesians 3. Jews today reject the whole affair, and even Gentiles, including many Christians, have never come to grips with it and its implications, which are utterly amazing.

The Conclusion of it all As might be expected, each of the major religions claims a kind of exclusivity for itself, while branding all the others as being in error and unworthy of followers.

One might exclude Buddhism from a claim of exclusivity since it is so fluid, ambiguous, and philosophical, while not even holding belief in a personal God as a necessity or even particularly desirable.

[ 68 : 15 ] The same might be said of Judaism when thinking about exclusivity, because while most Jews who embrace Judaism claim it is right for them, they in no wise are prepared to fault others for not being converted to Judaism.

Jewish doctrine and belief today, particularly among most Jews, is vague and quite controversial among their scholars. But make no mistake about it, Islam, Hinduism, and numerous lesser beliefs labeled as cults, and they are numerous, all claim that those not embracing their particular beliefs are wrong.

They see their beliefs as exclusive and brand all others to be an error. And so does Christianity. And while all of them may be wrong, logic demands that all of them cannot be right, for contradictions abound.

It is Christianity alone that claims to have a living Savior who has promised life from the dead to all who believe in Him. Christianity does claim to be exclusive and alone to be true, while all others are false.

But this isn't because Christians make that claim for it. God makes it, and He quite clearly spells it out in John 14, 6, Acts 4, 12, and the general tenor of the entire New Testament.

[ 69 : 40 ] Someone has asked, why Christians should be thought narrow or bigoted because they have received from Jesus Christ something that no one else has ever offered.

Namely, forgiveness for sins and eternal life based upon the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ and the pure grace of God. Ultimately, then, how can the several deities of the other religions be classified?

In the Bible, there are false gods and idols all throughout, and all were a plague to the monotheistic Jews. Their heathen neighbors worshipped the likes of Dagon, Molech, Ishtar, Baal, Astarte, Artemis, Beelzebub, plus many more.

And they all had one thing in common and behind them all. The Apostle Paul clearly identified them in 1 Corinthians 10 when he stated that there is in them and behind them demons to which they are blindly sacrificing.

Along with these false deities named, we must add those of Allah, Vishnu, Buddha, and all others that exalt themselves beyond men toward deity.

[ 71 : 01 ] While Christians should respect all people because they bear the likeness and image of God, we are not to respect all people's beliefs we know to be in error.

What fellowship hath light and darkness? The Christian Response to Error An all-too-common opinion about the Christian response and attitude toward what we clearly see as false religions is rampant today.

It's from sincere and well-meaning Christians and it goes something like this, of course, I don't agree that those non-Christian religions are true and I certainly wouldn't recommend them to anyone.

Yet, I believe we should respect all religions. No, we shouldn't. And we should be kind but clear that we do not respect them.

Who gave us the right to respect or legitimize anything that we know is not true? We do not have license to affirm or agree to what we know to be false. What we must respect are the people who are ensnared by any of those false religions simply because they are a human being for whom Christ died and they are of great value because they are made in the image and likeness of God.

[ 72 : 19 ] And that alone makes us obligated to respect them as a person. But that is far different from respecting, agreeing with, or even giving a positive nod toward what that person believes.

Christians who have embraced Jesus Christ as the way, the truth, and the life must out of loyalty to our Lord reject every false way. Now to be sure, this rejection must be in a kind and a compassionate way, not by way of ridiculing or castigating someone's belief for the sheer purpose of proving ourselves right and them wrong.

We are not to be about winning arguments but winning people to Christ via a loving and kind presentation of the gospel. We all need to remind ourselves that before we came to faith, we were as blind and as lost as those engulfed in any of these religious errors we've considered.

A powerful reminder of this reality is given by the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 4 when he says, If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

It's clear that followers of false religions are not the enemy of Christians. They are those who are captive and blinded by the God of this world. And the God of this world is clearly Satan himself who is also the prince in power of the air.

[ 73 : 48 ] He continues about the evil task of blinding, deceiving, and misleading all he can. He has successfully deceived you and me also until that day we put our trust in the only one who can save.

And when we did, we are told in Colossians 1 that God delivered us from the power of darkness and has translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.

So whoever you are, my dear friend, or wherever you are, if you have not been so translated from spiritual darkness to spiritual light in Jesus Christ, then your position is in no way better than those we have identified as following false religions.

Come to Christ today if you've not already done so. Jesus Christ, and he alone, is the provision that God has made to address the reality of the human sin problem and provide forgiveness.

You've just heard another session of Christianity Clarified with Marv Weiser. Preview of Volume 26, Upcoming.

[ 75 : 05 ] To say I am excited and eager to engage the upcoming Volume 26 is a gross understatement. Actually, I am euphoric about it. And I am because I know what this material meant to me when I engaged it as a much younger man 58 years ago.

It was an intense and extremely enlightening investigation into hermeneutics, otherwise known as the science and art of interpreting the Bible. We've all heard it said that one can make the Bible say almost anything.

It's all in how you interpret it. Well, this is true, but it is not valid, and we are going to go where very few Christians have ever gone, and also, that includes many of the clergy.

We will examine the sound and proven principles and laws of biblical interpretation that will enable you to unlock and appreciate the Bible like you never imagined possible.

And all the while, your confidence in its inspiration, authority, and integrity will make quantum leaps. Hermeneutics, a name given to the academic study of interpretation, is a word derived from, of all things, a pagan deity.

[ 76 : 23 ] He was the Greek god Hermes, from which the discipline of hermeneutics is derived.

Hermes was the fictional messenger god who was assigned to deliver information from the gods to mortals.

The Romans had a counterpart in their pagan deity called Mercury. Detroit named one of its cars after Mercury, a name that signified speedy, a fit designation for a car, don't you think?

But the florists were not to be outdone by Detroit because they borrowed the logo from the lineup of Roman gods. You've seen the emblem on the FTD commercials when you order flowers to be sent. He's a being of fleet foot. He has little wings attached to his helmet and his feet. And the idea, of course, is he will get your flowers to the destination before they wilt or whatever.

We also named one of the planets in our solar system, Mercury. So, messages and their importance go back a long ways. Suffice it to say for now that we will in an unhurried fashion explain and explore what is meant by hermeneutics being both a science and an art.

[ 77 : 46 ] In what sense is it each? Most importantly, you will learn in a painless but exciting fashion basic keys and principles for examining a text of Scripture.

and arriving at exciting understandings and truths that will really stick to your spiritual ribs. So, if you want to come with me, I'd love to welcome you.

If you are already receiving Christianity Clarified on a regular basis, then you will receive Volume 26 automatically. But if not, you are hearing this present CD then obtained in some other way.

And if so, you will need to write and request it at Grace Bible Church 1500 Group Road. And that's spelled G-R-O-O-P.

1500 Group Road, Springfield, Ohio, 45504. and just drop a note saying you would like to receive Volume 26 of Christianity Clarified.

[ 78 : 50 ] Or, you may go online at Grace Bible Springfield, that's all one word, GraceBibleSpringfield.com and follow the links.

This is Pastor Marv Wiseman on behalf of the Barbara Wiseman Memorial Fund saying, thank you so much for being with us and God bless you. Realest Months Until next time, you guys will make sense of Rav train to be with usáp Know greatest incredible episode, 2017, revelation zusjal seleni harm of and free to be with us in a Christian and the Holy lo that accusation in■■ Verfügung and coups pause Well hello Johnson andTA Bye