

Christianity Clarified Volume 26

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Date: 01 May 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.

First things first. Something very vital needs to be established and affirmed here at the outset, before we engage the extensive series on the interpretation and understanding of the Bible. And that something is this. Is this really a worthwhile endeavor? Absolutely everything regarding this issue of hermeneutics, otherwise known as the study of the interpretation of Scripture, hinges upon one question.

Is the Bible truly the very word of the living God? Do we, in fact, have before us a divinely inspired, infallible, and inerrant revelation from God himself, or do we merely have a book which some people believe to be that?

The latter concept does not justify expending the time this study will require. If the Bible is nothing more than an antiquated book containing nothing more than the ideas and opinions of human authors, we can expect at best to be minimally benefited by its contents.

[1 : 25] And, insofar as gaining any eternal benefits is concerned, you can forget that entirely. If the Bible is not the product of the eternal God, it will certainly yield no information that will aid us beyond this life.

Yet, if, on the other hand, the Bible is, as we are persuaded it is, the very word-for-word revelation of the eternal God as conveyed in the original autographs, then it is not only worthy of our serious study and investigation, it demands it.

In fact, anything falling short of meeting that demand is a serious disregard of God himself. So, once again, we are confronted with the all-consuming issue of authority.

What is our ultimate authority for what we believe? And why? This question will necessitate gaining an understanding as to why we hold the Bible, and it alone, in such high regard, because only if it truly is the very revelation of God himself can it command the reverence and attention we will give it.

Each of us, pursuing this academic discipline of hermeneutics, needs to be fully persuaded from good, credible research that this old book is what it claims to be.

[2 : 48] The many following segments of this particular compact disc of Volume 26 will be devoted to this subject of authenticating the Bible as the very word and revelation of God.

The principal reasons for our regarding it as such will enhance and support our upcoming study of how to approach and interpret it. We fully expect this entire matter of biblical authentication and its interpretation to be one of the very most beneficial undertakings we mere mortals could possibly experience.

Surely, it has been and continues to be such in my own life personally. During the following segments, you will be able to decide for yourself regarding the authenticity of the Bible based on the evidence presented.

Little wonder I am so eager to share it with you. Biblical Authority Challenged As recent as a couple of generations ago, the 1950s for instance, all that was needed to end an argument of any importance was to invoke what nearly everyone recognized as the ultimate and unquestioned authority, the Bible.

Especially if you could quote the chapter and verse. Essentially, that settled it, whatever it was. Anyone able to cite what the Scripture said about anything arguable was assured of prevailing in a debate, no matter what the subject was.

[4 : 32] After all, to dispute whatever the Bible said about whatever it dealt with was tantamount to arguing with and against God Himself. For after all, the Bible's authority was as unquestioned as

God Himself.

The Bible's authority could not be separated from God's authority. Not so today. Now, when one appeals to the Bible as the final word regarding an issue in question, and we confidently state, the Bible says, we are likely to be answered with, so what?

Who cares what the Bible says? Why should I believe something that ancient, hopelessly out-of-date old book says? The Bible is filled with contradictions. Besides that, it's been copied and translated and retranslated so many times, nobody has any idea what it said when it was originally written.

And another thing, how do we know we even have all the Bible? Aren't there several books missing from the Bible? And probably other books that are in the Bible that shouldn't be. These are typical of the kind of responses one may well get today when quoting the Bible as our authority.

In many cases, this attitude has been spawned by modern academia that is all too often rampant with atheism or agnosticism. In those settings, it is often considered not only acceptable, but even required to reject Christianity and all that pertains to it, that is, if one is to be considered adequately educated.

[6 : 14] Some professors even delight in ridiculing anything of a traditional or spiritual nature, and some even pride themselves on their efforts to dismantle the beliefs of their students and consider themselves to be enlightening youth by freeing them from beliefs they possessed before entering the academic setting.

More often than not, the teenage student is no match for the background, learning, and academic degrees of his older and more erudite professor. A youth entering the college or university arena is generally ill-prepared to answer the arguments of the teachers and meekly submits to the so-called superior intellect of the professors.

After all, they have the degrees, including a Ph.D., and he has written books. So, if Professor So-and-So says the Bible is not to be taken seriously, I guess I should take him seriously.

And so it goes. We'll be speaking to this. Authority, authority, authority.

Authority is the issue. Always was and always will be. Understand this age-old issue of authority and what it involves, and you have just surpassed the understanding of most of the people in the entire world.

[7 : 49] Man's reluctance and sometimes refusal to submit to duly constituted authority has been the nemesis of humanity from the very beginning. And speaking of the beginning, we call to mind the very first occasion of human rejection of divine authority, and we have to qualify this rejection by humans, because angelic rebellion against divine authority and the person of Lucifer and his fellow rebels predates that of our first parents, Adam and Eve.

Authority, even gods, can be resisted and rebelled against wherever the dynamic of volition is present. And we humans, as well as angels, are all endowed with the marvelous responsibility of a will, a volitional capacity.

Mother Eve exercised hers when she rejected God's authority and prohibition of the forbidden fruit. And Adam followed in suit with his volition when he partook as well.

And mankind was off and running in his struggle over the issue of authority and who has the right to tell him what to do and who had the ability to reward or punish him for doing or not doing it.

Man loves nothing more than being his own authority, answering to no one but himself. And it's a blow to the human ego to be reminded that we are really not in charge no matter how much we insist we are.

[9 : 18] This ever-present dynamic begins to show up in most of us around the age of two. It's probably why they're called the terrible twos. Can a sweet, innocent little two-year-old rebel against authority?

Ha ha! Just ask the parent who's trying to toilet train their two-year-old and let the contest of wills begin. Men have authority problems with bosses, with drill sergeants, with teachers, with judges, and so on.

And women have authority problems with men in general, and sometimes husbands in particular. And make no mistake about it, the Bible and the God behind it constitutes our number one problem of authority.

Because if we can only discount and successfully reject the authority of God and his Bible, then we are free to be our own authority. Theoretically, at least.

And here's the crux of the matter. Find reasons to reject the authority of God and the Bible, and you then pave the way to be your own authority. And that's what we really want.

[10:36] Our fallen nature that is characterized by self-centeredness demands it. But in order to be able to do that, one will have to contend with the reasons given for the authority of God and his Bible that are coming up, beginning with the next segment.

How to Approach the Bible There are three principal ways of approaching the Bible, particularly if one is not already familiar with it. So we will assume this is the case in this present setting.

There are presuppositions to consider. First, the Bible may be approached from the presupposition that it is true, and thus to be believed in all that affirms.

Secondly, the Bible may be approached from the presupposition it is not true, and is therefore not to be seriously believed, but limited to a purely literary consideration.

Or third, our presupposition is one of neutrality regarding the Bible's value. This means we really do not know whether it is truly God's Word, and to be believed or not, but we want to know.

[11:56] We want to know because we understand that the consequences and implications of whatever we conclude are truly great. The Bible is true, and is therefore worthy of giving it our time, attention, and obedience, or it is not true and not to be seriously regarded.

Therefore, we needn't heed any of its demands, but are free to simply go our own way, making our own rules as we go. Either way, with either choice, the implications and results are as great as they could be.

If we approach the Bible from presupposition number one, that it is true, we will look for and find things in the Bible that support or seem to support our already held presupposition.

If number two, that it is not true, we will look for and find things that support or seem to support our already held presupposition that it is not true. The third is the most important and the most difficult. The position of not being convinced one way or the other that it is or is not true, but we have a sincere desire to know. This is the position of neutrality, and it is also the most difficult to maintain, because it requires an objective honesty which can be hard to realize, because we all tend to be biased toward the position that best represents our personal wishes.

[13:14] If we want the Bible to be true, we'll find supporting evidence of that in it, and if we don't want it to be true, we will find supporting evidence of that. The objective honesty required by intellectual integrity can be hard to achieve, because very few of us, if any, are without our biases and preferences, and we naturally, even if unintentionally, bring them with us into whatever issue we are trying to resolve.

We can start by at least being honest about this. As best we can, we need to lay aside pro or con presuppositions and do our utmost to allow what we discover to be factual information and allow it to speak for itself, and then formulate our conclusions and positions on that basis.

This involves an intellectual honesty, as we stated, that can be and is hard to achieve, but it's the only way to go in the pursuit of truth.

Anything short of this will prove unsatisfying in any conclusion we reach. Therefore, it requires the utmost effort on the part of all of us to be as intellectually honest as we can possibly be.

Everything is hanging in the balance. Questions to be asked of the Bible Worldwide Christianity has for thousands of years made sweeping, emphatic claims about the Bible and its authority.

[14:56] Their assertion from the beginning of its inspiration and unfolding has been that it is indeed the exclusive, very word and mind of the living God who created heaven and earth.

That's the claim. The question now is, Is that claim founded and demonstrably true, or just a claim by the Bible's adherence that lacks verification?

After all, anybody can make any claim about anything they want, but claiming it doesn't make it true. The consequences of whichever conclusion one reaches are as great as they could be.

And if true, as Christians believe the claims to be, not only impacts one's life and living for the present, but on into eternity as well.

Of this much we are absolutely certain, and it is simply this, truth. If it is the truth about whatever, has nothing to fear from the most penetrating scrutiny.

[16:00] The truth will out, and eventually be seen to be factual, not fictional. Intellectual integrity requires the one searching for truth to follow it wherever it leads.

This demands serious questions to be asked regarding the Bible and its claims. For instance, does the Bible actually claim to be God's Word? And if it does, does its claiming to be make it so?

Does historical accuracy affirm the Bible? Does its diversity affirm it? Does its coherence support it? Does archaeology confirm the Bible?

Do its fulfilled prophecies support divine inspiration? Does the Bible's survival support its authenticity? Does the Bible's popular appeal affirm it?

Is it also affirmed by its opposition? Is the Bible's impact and influence on individual lives positive or negative?

[17 : 10] Does the Bible enhance society or detract from it? Are its multiple languages and translations indicative of its perceived and accepted value?

Does the Bible's contribution to the whole of human literature aid in its value and vindication? Are there any literary documents that excel that of the Bible in the historic and ongoing production of art, music, poetry?

Does any other source material make a comparable contribution to human civilization equal to or even close to that of the Bible? And does that prove anything?

Serious-minded people who are really seeking truth because they wish to align themselves with it should be asking these questions about the Bible or about any other religious document whose adherence claim is from God itself.

Truth and its pursuit is man's most noble endeavor as well as its possessing the greatest and most far-reaching consequences. Let's pursue these questions about the Bible together.

[18 : 18] Is the Bible God's Word? That the Bible clearly and frequently presents itself as the very words of God Himself cannot be disputed.

Not even if giving the Bible a superficial reading. Why not? Because of the claims the Bible makes for its originating author being the Creator God Himself.

And the Bible doesn't claim divine origin here and there, but virtually everywhere. Phrases like, Thus saith the Lord, or The word of the Lord came unto me, saying, or I am the Lord thy God, and thou shalt...

and so on. Well, just how many times do we find expressions like those in the Bible? And are they numerous enough to make a strong case?

You be the judge. How about nearly 700 times in the first five books of Moses, called the Pentateuch? Let's add another 1,300 times these phrases or similar wordings are found in the four major prophets and twelve minor prophets.

[19 : 33] And don't forget the historical books, because in them there are another 400 plus times that the Scripture given is said to have come directly from God.

Anyone yet unconvinced can add another 200 references to the mix that are found in the poetical writings. All told, we are tallying approximately 12,600 times for the Old Testament alone, to say nothing of more references in the New Testament.

And there, by the way, we find the Apostle Paul's inspired statement that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God. The word inspire literally means breath, having to do with air or wind.

The Bible is said to be God-breathed. When we humans speak words, we do so while breathing in and out.

Our breath is used to form words, and our words are man-breathed. The Bible uses this human analogy to let us know the source of the information found in its pages.

[20 : 46] The source of these words in the Bible is the breath of God. Paul is telling us the source of these words found in Scripture is the very breath of God Himself.

And why do you suppose this source was identified as being God Himself those 2,600 times in the Old Testament alone? Could it be due to the fact that God doesn't want anyone who reads it to miss it?

He wants to make sure that every reader knows who he is either obeying or disobeying by what they are reading. Don't be confused that it was human beings who penned the Scriptures.

God used them to give the Bible a human dimension with which we humans can identify, and He graciously condescended in doing so. Yet, while these 40-plus human writers were used and inspired of God to write the text of Scripture, they were in no way originators of the text.

That remained the exclusive prerogative of God. Using the Bible to Verify the Bible It does sound rather suspect, in fact, downright fishy.

[22 : 07] To say as a Christian, I believe the Bible is the Word of God because it says it is the Word of God. Well, logicians and philosophers would call this circular reasoning.

It's when you use a particular source to verify the truthfulness of that same source. And to do so is the same as saying, I know that used car salesman that sold me this car was telling me the truth about it because he told me he was telling me the truth.

Well, if someone uses that kind of logic, you hardly know where to begin with them. Indeed, that is circular reasoning at its worst. And Christians may be accused of circular reasoning when we say, we know the Bible is God's Word because it says it is.

The objection that such is circular reasoning certainly does sound applicable because logic says you need another source independent of the one you are trying to prove. Verification must come from elsewhere than from the thing you are trying to verify.

So how then can it be said logically and truthfully that the Bible does vindicate itself without being guilty of circular reasoning? Well, it is all due to the divine wisdom that put the Bible together in the way he did it.

[23 : 22] Because while in a very real sense the Bible is generally thought of as a book, singular, as one volume, well, it is and it isn't. It's printed, distributed, and purchased as one book, but in reality it is not one book at all.

It is a compilation of many books forged into one volume and generally referred to as the book. Yet we know that some forty human penmen contributed to this one book over a period of time spanning fifteen hundred years, and most of the writers never knew or even met the others.

While none of those writers were independent from God, they were independent from each other, with each serving as a truth verifier of the others. There is a corroboration within and among the writers of Scripture, and each is capable of validation of the claims of the others, and circular reasoning is not involved at all.

Their separation, one from the others, was chronological, consisting of different centuries and generations. Their separation was geographical, in that the writings originated from Asia, Africa, and Europe.

So both time and space separated the authors, giving each a true independence from the others. Thus, each writer was able to validate the others as they were able to validate him.

[24 : 52] And in no case was circular reasoning involved or the principle of it used. God could have put His Word, the Bible, together in so very many different ways at times and places, and yet, in His sovereign will and wisdom, He chose to give it to mankind in the way that He did.

Christians believe that way to be as flawless as the God who gave it. And, among other things, He kept it out of reach from the charge that would cry, Circular reasoning just isn't there.

Christ and Biblical Authority Everyone is familiar about receiving information that comes from a questionable source.

The issue of credibility comes into play. We all know of people who have established themselves as being less than believable. They have a track record of being reckless with the truth, and those who know them can never believe what they say.

We should beware of people like that because they can cause great damage to anyone who trusts them. It is also true, thank God, that we know people of great integrity.

[26 : 14] They have an impeccable reputation for being a person of honor and truthfulness. So, between a source not to be believed and a source to unquestionably be believed, precisely where, in which class, would you put Jesus Christ?

For the past 2,000 years, this one, identified as the Son of God, remains firmly established as the most honorable and trustworthy individual who ever walked among men.

One cannot enumerate all the positive superlatives ascribed to this Galilean peasant of history. And for any who may not concede that Jesus was the most honorable and wisest ever to be among us, who would they suggest that rivals him?

Clearly, he stands alone, alone in his integrity, his wisdom, his motivation, his selflessness, and so much more of positive virtues.

Is he then to be believed when he gives an enthusiastic and unquestioned authority to the word of God, which he quoted frequently? Never was there a tinge of doubt as to the veracity of Moses, or the prophets, or the psalmist, when Jesus appealed to them as his authority for saying and doing the things he said and did.

[27 : 39] Was Jesus mistaken in referring to the scriptures as he did, and calling these writings the very word and truth of God? He repeatedly cited scripture to be the sole source for belief and practice all throughout the four gospels that record the account of his earthly life.

Read these sources, if you will, and note the times Christ appealed to what was written as the ultimate authority not to be questioned. And why or how could it be questioned without questioning God himself?

It is written, it is written, it is written, said he. End of argument. If you have a Bible with column references, they will even reveal the very source from which Christ was quoting the Old Testament as his unimpeachable source.

We who believe the Bible and its authority are placing ourselves in the camp of Jesus Christ who unreservedly counted himself as fully committed to the divine source and authority of the Bible.

Tell me, does this matter? Are we in good company? The best of company? In fact, he is the only one of whom it can be said that we believe it simply because he believed it.

[29 : 04] that's good enough. The Bible and thematic continuity.

The Bible contains a thematic continuity that becomes very apparent to one who has read and pondered the Old and New Testaments together. They constitute a beginning and an ending of a singular dramatic story.

In considering any of its individual books, the overall theme tends to get lost in the drama of that immediate book. But when one is dealt with the whole of all those books, the theme becomes undeniably clear.

And only then, in consideration of the whole, the centerpiece of redemption looms ever so large. Redemption is what it is. In the beginning, something was good.

Very good is how the God who created it all described it. Then, that good was forfeited and became not good, lost, undone, broken, ruined, utterly unlike what it had been in the beginning.

[30 : 20] From that point of brokenness forward, all the remainder of the Bible is concerned with the redemption, the restoration, the recapturing of that which was forfeited.

And this would be realized through the efforts of one promised and designated as the Redeemer. And this, this drama is precisely what the Bible is all about.

Each individual book of the Bible makes its contribution to the overall story. Sometimes the focus is on an individual, sometimes a nation, sometimes the world, but the theme remains the same, redemption.

John Milton described it as paradise, paradise lost and paradise regained. Genesis 1 and 2 begins the story and describes the original paradise depicted in that most ideal of all gardens.

And it all comes crashing down as chapter 3 opens and becomes and becomes the paradise lost of the now unfolding story of ruination.

[31 : 36] Follow the scarlet thread of redemption through all the remainder of the Bible and paradise regained confronts us when the last book, the Revelation, breaks forth in the announcement that Jesus Christ, Lord and Redeemer, has prevailed.

And he shall reign forever and ever, King of kings and Lord of lords. It constitutes an incomparable crescendo fitting only to this Redeemer.

The Apostle John concludes the Bible with this final book and a dedicatory expression to the very one responsible for it all by saying, Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood and has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father.

To him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. It is this entire extensive account traversing thousands of years of history that we call the thematic continuity of the Bible.

The Bible and Coherence In much the same way the Bible is described as thematically continuous, so also can it be described as thematically coherent.

[33 : 04] By its thematic continuity we simply mean it produces an ongoing unfolding storyline, a theme, or a dominant subject easily identified as redemption.

In speaking of the Bible's coherence we refer to its many parts cohering to each other. While each makes its own contribution to the whole none is isolated from the others.

All the books of the Bible stick together and when taken as a whole they make sense. They provide a consistency when put together that may appear lacking when studied individually.

Yet, make no mistake about it, each book has its own individual contribution to make to the whole and the whole would not be whole without those individual parts.

Much the same way our body would not be whole without all its parts. Students of the Bible soon discover this coherence upon getting seriously involved with it.

[34 : 13] In fact, its coherence seems to shout at us when we spend ample time exploring it. The Bible's critics and detractors are generally unwilling to give the book the time and attention required to allow this coherence to surface.

Most content themselves with focusing on singular and isolated instances they find objectionable, or which to their thinking fails to make sense at all.

Admittedly, there are things in the Bible that appear to make no sense at all, unless they are enlightened by what the Bible states elsewhere. Subjects found in the Bible seldom speak their full mind in one place, but require the comparing of Scripture with Scripture to get the entire picture. And when we do this, we study the Bible as opposed to merely reading it. Paul the Apostle spoke of this, at least in part, when he wrote in his second letter to young Timothy in chapter 3, saying, All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be mature, truly furnished unto all good works.

This one statement powerfully sets forth both the origin of Scripture, being the very breath of God, and the purpose for which he breathed it out through the minds of the human writers he inspired.

[35 : 52] And how, pray tell me, could the Scripture possibly do this and produce this effect in the lives of its readers if it is not coherent.

Coherence, cohesiveness, hanging together, making sense, being consistent within itself, is merely one more glorious reality that must be assigned to this book, our coherent Bible.

The Bible and Archaeology If the Bible truly is the very Word of God, as Christians say it is, its value is inherent. By that, we mean the Bible is of paramount importance and authority simply because God is its author.

It could not be more valuable than that. And if it is that, it is then not dependent upon any human authority to verify its validity, because it carries with it a built-in validity, and value that makes us call it inherent.

But as we all know, there are some who are far more impressed by what men say about the Bible than they are with what God says about it and in it. And while this is saddening, because man's unwillingness to believe God is saddening, God graciously provides evidence outside of the Bible to validate it.

[37 : 23] Actually, if the Bible is true in what it affirms as people, places, times, and events, there ought to be an abundance of physical evidence. And there is.

Archaeologists, especially over the past 200 years, have discovered one treasure trove after another of items, inscriptions, coins, pottery, and like things that coincide precisely with what the Bible relates in many places.

We ought not to be surprised at such discoveries. We should anticipate them. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1948 was nothing short of spectacular and remains as the crown jewels of biblical archaeology.

Dr. Nelson Gleck, the Jewish archaeologist of worldwide reputation, has concluded from his numerous findings, and I quote, It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference.

A colleague, Dr. William Foxwell Albright, considered by many to be the dean of archaeologists, said, There can be no doubt that archaeology has confirmed the substantial historicity of Old Testament tradition.

[38 : 40] And of the New Testament, the international scholar of repute, Dr. F.F. Bruce, spoke concerning the accuracy of Luke, who penned the gospel bearing his name, as well as the acts of the apostles.

And Dr. Bruce spoke thusly, It may be legitimate to say that archaeology has confirmed the New Testament record. And Yale archaeologist Dr. Miller Burroughs concluded, Archaeological work has unquestionably strengthened confidence in the reliability of the scriptural record.

More than one archaeologist, said Dr. Burroughs, has found his respect for the Bible increased by the experience of excavation in Palestine.

These findings by multiple recognized experts, who never set out to prove the Bible in any way, nonetheless, found their discoveries to be amazingly conformative to numerous biblical statements.

Again, we should not be surprised, but even expectant, that such would be the case. And so it is. The Bible does not need archaeology to confirm it, but it does that, nonetheless.

[40 : 04] Languages and Translations of the Bible The numbers associated with the languages and translations of the Bible are simply staggering. The totals so far outstrip every other literary composition that nothing else written by anyone else even comes close in comparison.

And while this in itself does not prove the Bible to be God's Word, it certainly does prove the value that has been assigned to it by mankind over the centuries. The Encyclopedia Britannica reveals that by 1966 the whole Bible had appeared in 240 languages and dialects and one or more whole books of the Bible in 739 additional languages, a total of 1,280.

This is astounding. Add to that the 3,000 Bible translators who were engaged in the work of translation between 1950 and 1960.

Literally hundreds of millions copies of the Bible have been printed and distributed by the British Bible Society, the Bible Society of Scotland, of Ireland, the German Bible Society, and American Bible Society, totaling over a billion and a half.

Add to these the scores of publishing houses over the globe in multiple languages who printed Bibles to be sold for a profit. To say the Bible stands alone in its translation of languages and circulation worldwide is a considerable understatement.

[41 : 41] And let's not forget, these already numbered in excess of a billion copies are of whole Bibles. One should add an additional millions of New Testaments and lesser portions of individual books from the Bible.

Prior to the invention of the Gutenberg Press in the 1430s, man was limited to the laborious, painstaking task of copying all writings by hand, one letter after another.

And what was that which enjoyed the most frequent copying? The Bible, of course. Even then, no other literary item could begin to keep pace with the production and demand for copies of the Bible. Many scribes devoted the entirety of their lives to this most tedious but rewarding task of producing copies of the Word of God. Because of the time and effort required by producing handwritten copies, the demand was far greater than copyists were able to meet, and the demand only increased with time.

Each copy produced increased the demand for more. Are there any other works of literature that even approach the demand and production of that of the Bible?

[42 : 58] Not a one. The grand old book stands alone in every category of comparison. Does not this fact alone justify one's serious investigation into a book that has elicited this unparalleled demand and interest?

Little wonder, some of the world's greatest educators of the past insist that one who has no working knowledge of the Bible cannot consider himself to be truly educated.

We agree. The literary contribution of the Bible Without fear of contradiction, the contribution of the Bible to every area of literary undertaking is simply astounding.

Whether one loves the Bible or loathes the Bible, there is no disputing of this fact, and we emphasize fact as opposed to opinion. Biblical subjects and themes are the stuff of myriads of hymns, poems, works of art displayed in museums and galleries worldwide.

Add to these the architectural accomplishments erected worldwide in majestic cathedrals. And how can one omit the thousands of hospitals and schools worldwide that owe their origin to the concepts and teachings found in the Bible regarding the care and duty we have to fellow human beings?

[44 : 31] And were not these sympathies and undertakings generated by the many themes found throughout Scripture? In considering music alone, compositions from the simple Jesus Loves Me to the masterpiece of the immortal Handel's Messiah and a plethora of classical productions, the Bible has made the most dramatic impact perhaps as much as all other sources combined.

What other items of literature even begin to approach that of this revered old book? Name just one if you can. Our church hymnals overflow with the works of Charles Wesley and his contribution in excess of six thousand hymns.

Offerings greatly beloved from Isaac Watts, Bach, and Beethoven, the prolific pen of the deeply spiritual Fanny Crosby, are but a few of the thousands of names you will find on musical works in multiple languages the world over.

How can these be accounted for? Can anyone honestly attribute all this to nothing more than just an interesting old book? Hardly.

It appears that only a callous mind and spirit with an axe to grind could possibly dismiss the Bible's profound influence on literature, art, music, and architecture worldwide.

[45 : 55] To say nothing of inspiring man's benevolence to his fellow man. Intellectual honesty should compel even the most committed of atheists to admit the influence of the Bible in these, as well as unnamed areas, is simply profound and without equal.

Given that, what would you even put in second place? Shakespeare might merit a distant second, a very distant second, and yet, don't forget the many references to the biblical verse or theme that the bard had woven into his plays.

While all these examples of the Bible's contribution to art and literature do not in themselves prove the Bible to be of divine origin, yet, is not this the kind of influence one would expect it to have if it were?

And from all the poems, music, and art derived from the Bible, do they not each contribute mightily to the peace and comfort of the human soul in a way not provided by any other source.

Mankind is profoundly blessed by the power and the beauty of Holy Writ. There is nothing in the world to compare with it.

[47 : 11] The Popular Appeal of the Bible Another telling aspect about the Bible that points to its supernatural origin, even if it doesn't prove it is of supernatural origin, is its undeniable popular appeal.

Of all places and times, no literary document has approached that of the Bible in its popularity among the masses. It has been this way from its arrival, which believers assert came directly from God himself through the human penman he inspired to write it.

Apart from this reputed source, which alone should account for its popularity as well as its authority, how else can we explain its massive appeal through the ages?

The answer appears to be found in its subject matter. There is no source anywhere that speaks so profoundly, so consistently to the human condition.

Concerning mankind, we can only humbly admit the Bible has our number. The book knows us, and it tells us all about us. We may and should blush at the ugliness it reveals about ourselves, but we are in no position to honestly deny it.

[48 : 35] Yet, in this same book, we find men to be of sterling character and moral turpitude. Morally, we are both embarrassed and encouraged by the examples of bygone humans.

And speaking of bygone, gone where? How? Why? Only the Scripture set forth answers to these questions. Apart from what the Bible reveals by way of answers, we have absolutely no clue as to our origin or that of the universe.

We've no idea why we are here or why anything is here. Purpose, meaning, value, destiny, all remain one gigantic question apart from what the Bible reveals.

These items of information alone are sufficient to generate an ongoing popular appeal. And ongoing is emphasized because every new generation that arrives has the same questions about themselves.

Where did I come from? Why am I here? Where am I going? Why does it matter? Or does it? One will not find believable, consistent answers to these and other important questions apart from the Bible.

[49 : 53] The answers are just not out there. But they are in there, in the pages of this amazing, God-given, inscripturated revelation called the Bible.

Doesn't it make sense that if God is responsible for the creation of the universe and our being here, if indeed we are the result of God's creative act, doesn't it make sense that the Creator would want to communicate to His creatures, particularly to those said to be in the likeness and image of Himself?

The Bible says He has and did, and He communicated all He wants His creatures to know in a book called the Bible. It does not reveal all we would like to know, but the doctrine of divine inspiration says it is all we need to know, and we are so grateful.

Opponents and detractors of the Bible, part one. Those who oppose the Bible constitute a considerable number. Atheists, of course, must disparage the Bible, since it claims to have been given by God.

But since atheists deny there is a God, that, in their thinking, spells doom for the Bible and its authority. But not all detractors of the Bible are atheists.

[51 : 24] There are plenty of people who, while believing there is a God, or gods, if you will, nevertheless must reject the Bible of the Old and New Testaments as being the revelation of that

God, or at least the God of Christians and Jews.

And who are these people? Well, they number in the millions, hundreds of millions, in fact. Among them are Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, and a Muslims, and those of lesser religions.

These are all obligated to reject the Bible as the authoritative record of the true God of creation, because if they don't, that means they and their religion, plus their own holy books, are all wrong. There is no way non-Christians can accept the validity of the Christian Bible without, at the same time, declaring themselves to be wrong with their religion and their holy books.

One simply cannot have it both ways, because the contents of the Bible and the contents of their holy books are completely contradictory.

[52 : 38] Somebody has to be wrong, and each group, including the Christian group, each say, we're right, it's all the other folks who are wrong.

And then, not to be outdone, along comes the atheist, who declares all of them to be wrong, and all of their religious books wrong as well, because there is no God.

In the final analysis, the Bible is an either-or proposition. The Bible and its authority is in or out. It is, or it is not, the Word of God.

Nothing in between has any existence in logic. Because pure and simple logic dictates the Bible is given from and by God through the human instruments He used to provide it, it is thus fully authoritative to the exclusion of all other claims for authority, or it is not.

It cannot be the Word of God and not be the Word of God at the same time. And it certainly will not suffice to say the Bible is God's Word, kind of.

[53 : 58] This, too, is devoid of rationality. And there are those who desperately want to deny this either-or in an attempt to soften the issue. And they seek to disarm the rigidity of the hard decision either way and may have good motives for doing so, namely, finding some common ground.

Yet, such efforts are merely avoiding the issue, providing a superficial, muddy middle that still fails the test of logic. Opponents and Detractors of the Bible, part 2.

The Bible has a long and painful history of rejection. This is simply to say that God and His authority have a long and painful history of rejection.

That history, of course, continues into the present, and the rejection will continue on into the future, right up to the time of the final wrap-up in the book of the Revelation.

Rejection of this divine authority commenced in Genesis chapter 3, and the rejection of God's command and authority by Mother Eve. Then, when Adam joined her as an accomplice in rejecting God's authority for Satan's authority, everything started downhill from that point.

[55 : 21] The world remains on that path like the proverbial snowball rolling downhill, gaining in size and speed as it hurdles on. Human rejection of divine authority will reach critical mass with the grand showdown in Revelation chapter 19, and we will then see whose authority ultimately prevails.

In the meanwhile, a new generation of rejectors, including the latest batch of atheists, are writing best-selling books listed by the New York Times.

These are very capable, articulate, and somewhat compelling authors who have made a lot of money and gained worldwide fame here and abroad. Their arguments, old and well-worn, have been adequately answered by Christian apologists over the years.

But still, the likes of Daniel Dennett, Christopher Hitchens, now deceased, Sam Harris and Richard Dawkins, who might be dubbed the international dean of atheists, command a greater following than might be supposed.

After all, they have ready-made allies with massive populations the world over, because the crown jewel of communism is atheism.

[56 : 38] It flourished in the old Soviet Union for 70 years as the official party line. Even so, multitudes of Russians never really bought into atheism, despite its officiality.

And then there are the billions-plus in Asia, who also embrace atheism as the state pseudo-religion, if you will. In the English-speaking world, which continues to grow, this latest flourish of atheist authors have cashed in on a new generation of people.

These are ripe for their cleverly written, best-selling books promoting atheism. Most of these simply see themselves as too sophisticated to consider the Bible as any kind of authority.

Because the problem of a good and powerful God alongside the existence of evil is to most atheists irreconcilable. The existence of evil is far too raw to deny, so the only thing left to deny is the deity.

God has got to go. Yet, despite all these detractors, God won't go quietly. He and his pesky Bible still command the all-time best-seller numbers year after year after year, clever detractors notwithstanding.

[57 : 58] We are so glad. And it's hard not to gloat. Fulfilled Prophecy, Part 1 Because everyone is interested in what is coming in the future, it's understandable that matters of prophecy generate our interest.

Reason is obvious. If we know what is to transpire in the future, preparation can be made in the present so as to take advantage and benefit when that future time of fulfillment comes.

This is the rationale for the illegal insider trading that goes on in the stock market that has put more than one investor behind bars. Lots of publicity surrounded a so-called seer or prophetess a number of years ago named Jean Dixon.

The media touted her predictions at the end of every year as to what she forecasts for the new year upcoming. It's interesting they never touted the flimsy number of her predictions that actually came to pass.

Add to that the utter nonsense of the horoscope and the misplaced confidence thousands put in the position of the stars. People who would never consider trusting what the Bible says will wait with bated breath as to what the horoscope reading for the day is for a Leo, a Scorpio, or a Taurus.

[59 : 26] Go figure. But not to be disputed is the incredible accuracy with which scores of prophecies in the Bible have already come to pass, many of them predicted hundreds of years prior to fulfillment.

In fact, it is because of the undeniable accuracy of prophecies already fulfilled that we may have complete confidence in the fulfillment of biblical prophecies that are yet unfulfilled.

One may well be amazed to learn that approximately 25% of the biblical content actually involved the future at the time the words were written.

The major reason for God revealing future events for his prophets to record was to allow the reader's opportunity for prudent preparation. Prophecy, then, among other things, is a gracious gift of God, as is all of Scripture.

Another important reason was to reveal the fact that the Spirit of God who inspired the writer to record the prophecy knew precisely what the future held. Only a being who truly knows the end from the beginning, who calls things that are not as though they are, would have that ability.

[60 : 45] Little wonder that Joshua on his deathbed told Israel in chapter 23, You know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one thing has failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spoke concerning you.

All are come to pass unto you, and not one thing has failed thereof. As if to echo Joshua's sentiments, Solomon, when dedicating the temple in 1 Kings 8, said, Blessed be the Lord God that has given rest unto his people Israel, according to all he promised.

There has not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant. Well now, how could anyone expect less from this God who brings to pass all he has promised?

Fulfilled Prophecy, Part 2 Of all the evidences that may be considered to authenticate the Bible being the product of divine revelation, there is one in particular that has been so befuddling to the Bible critics and detractors.

It is that of the abundance of fulfilled prophecies. Because try as they may, the skeptics simply can't offer any of their naturalistic explanations that will satisfy even themselves.

[62 : 19] Not only the number of prophecies given, and their later fulfillment, but the specific and detailed description of those prophecies are stunning, simply stunning.

They are such that a claim of coincidence cannot be entertained by anyone thinking rationally.

There is no logical human explanation that satisfies anyone who seriously looks into the matter.

And of all the prophecies given, none is so critical or so undeniable as those pertaining to the person and work of Jesus Christ. Multitude of prophecies are given regarding the coming of Christ and what he will accomplish.

These are referred to as messianic prophecies, and the Old Testament abounds with them. The first one surfaces early in the biblical record found in Genesis 3, where verse 15 promises that God will send one who is called the seed of the woman, and this one, when he comes, will be injured by Satan the serpent, yet this one, in retaliation, will succeed in crushing the head of the serpent

adversary with a fatal blow.

A brief study of the remainder of the Bible reveals undeniably that Jesus Christ is that seed of the woman. He is attested to in the four Gospels, and Galatians 4, verse 4.

[63 : 50] Adding to the intrigue of it all is the fact that this prophecy was given by God 4,000 years before it was actually fulfilled by the birth of Jesus the Messiah in the town of Bethlehem.

This was the first advent of our Lord, commonly called Christmas. And by the way, that little town of Bethlehem we sing about every December, was also prophesied by another prophet named Micah in the fifth chapter of his book, Five Hundred Years Before Jesus.

And the Lord Jesus was born, saying, But thou, Bethlehem Ephrata, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, whose goings forth have been from of old, even from everlasting.

And please bear in mind that while these and other passages in the Old Testament predict the first coming of Christ, which is fulfilled in the New Testament, they pale in comparison to the huge number of prophecies throughout the Old and New Testament that depict his second coming in every bit as much detail.

Christ the Messiah is prophesied regarding his second coming many more times than the prophecies about his first coming. All of this and more is simply devoid of any human explanation.

[65 : 13] Only a divine mind and provision will suffice. Fulfilled Prophecy Part 3 We offer no human explanation for the hundreds of Old Testament prophecies being fulfilled in the New Testament, because there is no human explanation.

Prophecies as distant as 4,000 years between prediction in the Old Testament and fulfillment in the New can't be humanly explained. Such was the case with the prophecy in Genesis 3 regarding the coming of the seed of the woman and the birth of Christ as that seed four millennia later.

The Apostle Paul further recognizes it in Galatians 4 and verse 4, but that is the mere tip of the proverbial iceberg. Regarding prophecies about Christ, referred to as messianic prophecies, consider Isaiah 7, 700 years prior, says he would be born of a virgin.

Matthew chapter 1 says he was. Psalm 2, a thousand years prior, says he would be the son of God. Matthew 7 says he was.

Genesis 12, 2,000 years prior, says he would be a descendant of Abraham. Matthew 1 says he was. Genesis 49 says he would be from the tribe of Judah.

[66 : 46] And Luke 3 says he was. Isaiah 11, 700 years earlier, said he would come from the family of Jesse. Luke 3 says he did.

Jeremiah 500 years prior, said he would be of the house of David. And Luke 3 says he was. Micah 500 years earlier, said he would be born in Bethlehem.

Matthew 2 and Luke 2 said he was. Isaiah 1, 100 years prior, said he would be a priest.

And Hebrews 3 and 5 says he was. These are but a pittance of the some 61 prophecies and their attendant fulfillments listed by author Josh McDowell in his groundbreaking book first published in 1972.

And they are concerned only with Messianic prophecies. Josh McDowell's book remains as perhaps the most important ever authored in the field of popular apologetics.

[67 : 56] And it's appropriately called Evidence That Demands a Verdict. It contains scholarly, well-researched evidence, fully footnoted and documented. In it, Mr. McDowell cites prominent mathematician Peter Stoner as to the mathematical probability that Jesus Christ could have fulfilled the prophecies given of him merely by coincidence.

Despite 61 such prophecies of Christ, Mr. Stoner focused only on eight in particular. The mathematical probability of Christ fulfilling just eight of those 61 prophecies by coincidence proved to be one in ten to the seventeenth power.

Please write the number ten, then add seventeen zeros to it and see if you can pronounce it. I can't. As was stated earlier, there is no human explanation for these miraculous prophecies.

Hermeneutics is the ultimate in academics.

It was decided at the outset of this present series of studies that if we are to engage the detailed, extensive subject of hermeneutics, we ought to be certain the subject matter and the payoff will be worth our investment of time and effort.

[69 : 19] Hermeneutics is the academic term applied to the study and interpretation of the Bible. It deserves as much, if it is, as we insist, planet Earth's greatest possession.

When inducted into the U.S. Army in 1954, each of us recruits were presented with a Gideon pocket New Testament. Inscribed in the flyleaf of the book, an unknown author had penned the following sentiments about the Bible.

The Bible, says he, contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable.

Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you.

It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword, and the Christian's charter. Here, paradise is restored, heaven opened, and the gates of hell disclosed.

[70 : 32] Christ is its grand subject, our good the design, and the glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet.

Read it slowly, frequently, and prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure. It is given you in life, will be opened at the judgment, and be remembered forever.

It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labor, and will condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.

We heartily concur with the expressions of our anonymous author. As a nineteen-year-old soldier, utterly unfamiliar with that Bible then, I had no idea how it would impact my life for the succeeding sixty-plus years.

How and why did it do this? Simply because, in this book, between these covers declared to be the word of God, the Lord of heaven and earth has chosen to reveal Himself, as He has revealed through no other venue.

[71 : 47] Need we any reasons beyond that? We think not. We have every confidence that those joining with us in the endeavor will discover themselves anew as well as the God we serve anew.

The benefits to be derived from this undertaking are incalculable. You will not want these benefits to stop with you. God will use them, not only in you and for you, but through you as well.

Great insight and joy awaits us. We urge you to give this every consideration and apply yourself to this upcoming series.

You've just heard another session of Christianity Clarified with Marv Wiseman. A preview of Christianity Clarified, Volume 27.

Hermeneutics is the technical academic term used to describe the discipline of the art and science of interpreting a literary document. In our present case, that document is the Bible.

[73 : 03] In the preceding segments on this Volume 26 of Christianity Clarified, evidence believed to be compelling concluded that the Bible is indeed the very God-given inspired revelation of the Creator and Sustainer of the universe.

If this finding is true, and we believe it to be so, then this, in and of itself, justifies every reverence, every consideration of every time and effort devoted to the study and understanding of its contents. That is biblical hermeneutics. You will not spend your time in a more worthwhile endeavor than this. You who are prepared to undertake this content now may very well be skeptical of the claims just made for it.

But we suspect that will not be so once you are engaged in the material. Included will be a thorough introduction to the Bible, its structure, divisions, and categories, the value of the literal and the figurative in language, the supremacy of context in understanding all of literature, logical and standard guidelines applying to the Scriptures, the existence of and the bridging of the gaps that separate us today from that of the biblical writers, including the language gap, the historical and geographical gap, the culture and customs gap, the approach to interpreting the parables and miracles of our Lord, and the key of their content, plus an appreciation of the progressive revelation of the Bible, the ignoring of which may be more responsible for the divisions existing in Christianity more than anything else.

These items and so much more will stick to your spiritual ribs and increase your understanding and appreciation of the Bible more than you can possibly imagine.

[75 : 03] It has done this for me, particularly during the past 45 years of the 60 years ago since I placed my trust in Christ and developed a hunger for the Word of God.

It has been so richly rewarding that I want everyone to experience it as well. If you have received this CD of Volume 26 automatically, then the upcoming Volume 27 of Hermeneutics will come your

way automatically as well.

But if not, and you wish to obtain Volume 27, you may phone Grace Bible Church at 937-322-3113 between the hours of 9 a.m. and noon, weekdays, Eastern Standard Time.

Or you may log on to our email address, gracebiblechurchatgracebiblespfd.com That's all one word.

gracebiblechurchatgracebiblespfd.com And leave an order on an email.

[76 : 16] Christianity Clarified is provided free of charge and is underwritten by the generous gifts of Grace Bible Church to the Barbara Wiseman Memorial Fund. This is Pastor Marv Wiseman thanking you for being one of our listening audience.

If you wish, a free download is available for those wanting to burn their own compact disc. Thank you again for being one of our listening audience. God bless you.

God bless you.