

Christianity Clarified Volume 30

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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.

Christ and Seeming Contradictions, Part 2 There are many passages of Scripture which on the surface appear to be blatant contradictions.

None are, when carefully investigated, but many are more eager to declare them a contradiction rather than pursue an honest investigation.

We plan to deal with a number of passages and issues that provide much confusion to those earnestly looking for answers to what on the surface appears contradictory, but we feel we ought to go on in the present vein of hermeneutics.

We have much to cover in this discipline, but we promise to return later to the aforementioned seeming contradictions. Yet, to whet your appetite somewhat in anticipation for that, we do offer one more, largely because it contains both examples, that of an apparent contradiction and an illustration of another of those unfortunate pesky chapter divisions.

[1 : 20] First, let's deal with what seems to be the contradiction. Then the aspect of the bad chapter division almost reveals itself. Consider the words of our Lord in Matthew 16.28, where Jesus said, There be some standing here which shall not see death till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.

Following Miles Coverdale's rules, we ask the question, Who is speaking? And to whom is he speaking? And the answer in the immediate context, beginning with verse 24, removes all doubt. It says, Then Jesus said to his disciples. This particularizes his audience, to whom he then said in verse 28, Truly I say to you, There are some standing here who shall not taste of death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.

In other words, Jesus said to the twelve, Some of you will still be alive to see the Son of Man, that is, Jesus himself, coming in his kingdom. If this statement's fulfillment is limited to Jesus' second coming, as later described in Matthew 24, it does appear contradictory because it would require some of the apostles to whom Jesus then spoke to yet be alive even today, since Christ has not returned with his kingdom.

Thus, a clear and simple contradiction, since none of those apostles are alive today, two thousand years after Jesus stated that. But if, as we believe, Christ was speaking of the state he will possess in that kingdom when he appears in an utterly glorified body, there would be some of those present apostles alive and definitely witness that glorification.

[3 : 17] The key and fulfillment becomes rather clear if we also ignore the unfortunate division that exists between chapters 16 and 17. The transfiguration of Christ that chapter 17 opens with provides a persuasive answer and of the twelve, only three, Peter, James, and John, would witness it.

What appears to be a contradiction becomes a confirmation. Christ and Seeming Contradictions, Part 3 When Jesus addressed his twelve apostles in Matthew 16, he assured them that some of them would be alive to witness his glorification in connection with the kingdom he would eventually establish.

While the kingdom has never yet been realized, because Israel, a key component of that kingdom, remained in a rejection mode, nevertheless, the rejection of their Messiah would not prevent the disclosure of himself in a never-before-seen transfiguration.

If we ignore the bad chapter division between 16 and 17, we immediately see the opening of 17 and the witnessing of the transfiguration to be the fulfillment of the promise given at the end of chapter 16, which was, some of you, and that will turn out to be Peter, James, and John, would in fact

witness a miraculous disclosure of the person and glory of Christ never before revealed to any of these apostles.

Actually, the transfiguration was not at all something new about Jesus. What they saw when he was transfigured was precisely what their Lord had been all along, had always been, in fact.

[5 : 15] But what they saw was an unveiling of what was already there, but never before witnessed by man. Jesus simply pulled back the veil of his humanity to allow some revelation of his deity to break forth, and it was astounding.

All was a dazzling brightness and whiteness reflecting a glorious purity unknown to us mere mortals. Understandably, Peter, James, and John were stunned by it all, and added to their amazement, historical figures long since deceased in the person of Moses and Elijah appeared as well.

The unforgettable impression made on the minds of these three key apostles was forever embedded in their psyche. So much so, Peter made reference to it in his second epistle, the first chapter, when he triumphantly exclaimed, We were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to him by the majestic glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

And we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain. Allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture and applying the law of remote context, we can safely say the we of Peter's statement was none other than himself, plus James and John, while the holy mountain referenced was the Mount of Transfiguration.

[7 : 00] So here in one instance we deal with an apparent contradiction resolved, and another unfortunate chapter division revealed that would otherwise interrupt the continuity and obscure the truth.

And this is merely a scratch on the scratch of hermeneutics and its value. More. Much more to come. The Cycle of Communication We have labored to impress upon you the importance of hermeneutics, which we have defined as the science and art of interpreting the Bible.

This is because hermeneutics is committed to determining the meaning of what has been written. Establishing meaning is absolutely paramount because only in determining the meaning of what has been written can there be an intelligent response.

We see communication, all communication, as constituting a cycle. The cycle begins with the originator conveying words directed toward the recipient.

These words or message may be audible, as in one-on-one vocal communication, or in the case of the Bible, formulated as a written text. Once the recipient has received the words from the originator, their meaning must be determined by the recipient in order for him to respond with intelligence, and with that response the cycle of communication is completed.

[8 : 36] It's as basic and simple as can be. Really? Then why, pray tell me, is there so much confusion and miscommunication that takes place, especially when it comes to interpreting the Bible?

Why, indeed? May we suggest, even insist, that the difficulty lies not with the sender or originator, but solely with the recipient.

And what is the problem with the recipient? It's always the same, a faulty hermeneutic. There is something deficient in the mind and method of the recipient that causes him to misunderstand the message sent by the originator.

In the case of Scripture, the originator being the Holy Spirit who inspired the human penman to write as they did. And while there is but one originator, the Holy Spirit, there are as many recipients as pick up the writing of Scripture and read it.

Each of these recipients bring their own interpretive analysis to what they are reading. If their analysis and interpretation is the same as that which the Holy Spirit intended in the writing, successful communication has occurred.

[9 : 55] If the interpretation is different from the intended message, a miscommunication has taken place. Only if and when the two are the same can communication be said to have occurred.

And this alone makes an intelligent response to the originated message possible. We are persuaded that this is the intended dynamics that God had in mind all along.

That it is not only possible, but expected. This will become more and more apparent in our pursuit and usage of hermeneutics.

And we will all together gain a brand new appreciation and understanding of the laws of language, the essence of communication, what it is that actually takes place, why it is so vital, and why there are often so many who misunderstand the message.

The Science and Art of Hermeneutics, Part 1 It is somewhat ironic to realize that the very name hermeneutics, so often, and rightly so, associated with the interpretation of the Bible, actually has a pagan background in the derivation of the word.

[11 : 19] But it does. It is taken from the name of one of the Greek gods by the name of Hermes, H-E-R-M-E-S. His specific role was to take the messages of the other gods and transmit them with understanding to mortal men.

Hermes was the go-between or translator between the gods and men for whom the messages were intended. Even as far back as ancient Greek mythology, all understood that the message from anyone to anyone was worthless unless it could be understood.

One cannot intelligently comply or even intelligently disobey a message not understood. Because of the importance of messaging, both sending and receiving, Hermes, though an imaginary deity, his name endured and eventually became attached to the discipline of hermeneutics.

Part of the irony of it all is that God makes use of even a pagan deity to be instrumental in communicating the meaning of the word that God inspired.

Earlier, we noted that hermeneutics is both a science and an art. It is a science in that it functions within the arena of fixed rules that govern it.

[12 : 44] These we plan to reveal and illustrate as we pursue the discipline. They are not at all difficult, but easily understood, and their value will register with all who hear them.

And besides hermeneutics being scientific, it also requires a certain level of artistry for the one using this science. Even though the laws are fixed, personal skills are implemented in the use of the laws.

We understand the laws of science involved in aerodynamics, beginning with gravity and airplanes that are heavier than air, much heavier, that coupled with the power and thrust of engines that transcend the force of gravity by allowing the plane to stay aloft.

Yet, there is another dimension to all this. All pilots have the same scientific laws by which they operate, but some pilots acquire a skill level in the way they obey those laws.

A certain finesse is developed over time that produces a seasoned, experienced pilot. He has no more science available to him than has the novice in the cockpit for the first time, but he has honed his skills through practice.

[14 : 08] One can see why pilots place so much emphasis upon flying hours, time logged in the cockpit. Well, we plan to log some hours by flying this plane called hermeneutics.

We will all develop our skill level and enjoy it all the more. the science and art of hermeneutics part two.

In engaging hermeneutics that we have labeled a science and an art, there is much we can teach regarding the science because so much of it is fixed and laid out for us in those rules and principles we will be sharing.

They are there for anybody who wants to hear and employ them. But, there is much that cannot be taught about the art aspect.

The one applying the rules of the science will have to develop the art portion on their own by doing. We call this practice.

[15 : 19] In much the same way a music teacher can convey music theory and basic principles of music, it is up to the student to so apply the principles that he becomes skilled or an accomplished musician.

Anyone who has succeeded in this discipline or any other like it will tell you it didn't happen overnight. There has to be a passion for the subject driven by dedication or the skill will not come. is gaining an understanding of God's word deserving of our passion? Isn't it amazing how some people can become passionate about certain things that are truly trivial, don't amount to a proverbial hill of beans, yet they pour themselves into it with profuse time and effort with little or nothing to show for it.

Of course, entertainment, relaxation, and downtime are all a necessary part of a healthy lifestyle, but as the saying goes, all things in moderation.

And as another saying goes, if there is no God, nothing matters. But if there is a God, nothing else matters.

[16 : 39] Believing as we do that there is indeed a God, logic compels passion to accompany our pursuit toward an understanding of what God desires to communicate to us.

This is the sum and substance of hermeneutics and our pursuance of it. You will find it to be richly rewarding. Tools that will be most helpful and be one of the best investments you'll ever make consist of a Bible concordance, Bible dictionary, and a study Bible containing multiple translations. You may get by if your Bible has a robust concordance in its back, but most of these are lacking. You can visit a local Christian bookstore or go online in search of Bible study aids and several sites will become available.

There are many that would serve you well in your needs for the study that we will undertake. These are like very helpful friends that have occupied considerable space on my bookshelves for the past 55 years.

And I can promise you I would not have gained the appreciation of the Bible that I have without them. So, please, consider going shopping and locate these tools that will serve you so well.

[18 : 04] You'll be glad you did. The artistry of applying the laws. We have defined hermeneutics as being both a science and an art.

As a science, we mean it operates within a fixed regimen of rules and principles that create a standard. And as an art, we mean there are personal skills to be developed in the application of those rules and principles.

A pertinent example of honing personal skills are realized in every profession and trade. For instance, Dr. Ben Carson, the world-renowned brain surgeon, specialized in pediatric neurosurgery, had no more medical information available to him than what all his fellow brain surgeons had available to them.

Yet, he, through the exercise of due diligence in study, research, and practice, was able to hone his skills so that he surpassed the level of his peers.

Those skills quickly became recognized, and a wonderfully gifted but humble man achieved an international reputation. And you may be sure those outstanding skills did not come quickly nor easily, but only via the investment of intense labor and practice over time.

[19 : 24] And scores of youth, from babies to teens, were given a new lease on life, and sometimes life itself, because Dr. Ben Carson developed that skill.

And are you aware of the commercial airlines pilot, Chesley Sullenberger, who employed his finely honed skill in an emergency water landing on the Hudson River in the dead of winter, 2009?

The film was released in 2016, and Sully recounted that miraculous landing without the loss of a single life. It became quite clear that the average pilot would likely have been lacking the greatly honed skills possessed by Captain Sullenberger.

Yet, they would have had the same technical information available to them that Sullenberger had. But what most of them did not have was that finely honed skill set he had developed following thousands of hours and many years in the cockpit of numerous planes and in all kinds of conditions. His skillful ability allowed him to surpass the standard answers provided by the book when he faced that harrowing crisis. The decision to put the plane down on the Hudson River was not agreed to by the conventional wisdom reflected in the official standard operating procedures.

[20 : 45] Only the possession of an extraordinary skill could tell him what he needed to do. And then, even in knowing that, he still needed the courage and confidence to actually do it, all the while remembering the official manual said not to.

Captain Sullenberger's skill set, coupled no doubt with the prayers of every passenger on board, provide the reasons for everyone surviving. These men, Dr. Ben Carson, Captain Sullenberger, reflect the difference between ordinary and extraordinary skill.

Our approaching and interpreting the Word of God richly deserves every level of personal skill we can obtain. Doing so is the least we can do. So bring on the hermeneutics and let the sharpening begin.

Upcoming is our first law, the law of literality. The law of literality, part one.

A consistent employment of hermeneutics requires that the text of Scripture must always be approached from a literal standpoint. But we hasten to add a note of clarification.

[22 : 02] By approaching a given text of Scripture literally, it does not mean all Scripture is to be assigned a literal meaning. Far from it.

It will become abundantly clear that the Bible often utilizes language that is most definitely not to be taken literally, but in a figurative or non-literal manner.

This is a vital distinction that cannot be ignored when interpreting the Bible, or for that matter, any other item of literature. Christian believers who embrace the Bible as the very Word of God, and assign final authority to it, are often described by non-believers as those people who take everything in the Bible literally.

Well, that's about the most absurd and far-fetched accusation to be leveled against evangelical Christians that I've ever heard. In fact, I've never yet met one in my 60 years plus as a Christian who actually believes that.

The accusation seems to be an effort to make Bible believers appear as naive buffoons. It's a common tactic from those who reject the authority of Scripture, and we really shouldn't expect anything less.

[23 : 20] So, it is without apology, but with the clarification just mentioned, that we gratefully say we do, in fact, approach the text of Scripture from a literal standpoint, all the while readily recognizing that non-literal or figurative language is employed throughout the Bible and was never intended to be taken literally by the reader, because the writer was not speaking literally, but figuratively.

And how can we know that? Our several sessions will give ample evidence along with the guidelines for distinguishing between the literal and figurative intent.

An example for now? All right. Just one, and quickly. Zechariah 4.10 states that the eyes of the Lord run to and fro upon the earth.

Literally, it means God has all-seeing eyes and nothing escapes his notice. But figuratively, poetically, Zechariah says, the eyes of the Lord run to and fro upon the earth.

Is it not more expressive and emphatic, even dramatic, to say it in this way? Of course it is. And it provides a literary variety in so doing.

[24 : 43] All authors write in this way. It is only in legal documents that we find an absence of figurative language, and for good reason to be explored later.

But for the present, let us develop a hermeneutic fixation for the majority use of literal language, and the employ of the figurative for variety.

Both are very present. Both are very legitimate. The Law of Literality, Part Two If the central purpose for God giving us his inspired word is simply to communicate his person and his will to us, his creatures, it appears indisputable that the way of straight-talking, plain, literal language is the way to do it.

This is what we believe God has done in inspiring his word to man. The gaining of an understanding of what has been said is best realized through the employ of literal words with literal meaning.

And by literal we mean the normal, customary, everyday, accepted and understood use of words to express thoughts. This is plain talk, using plain words of vocabulary that are generally spoken in everyday human discourse.

[26 : 16] They are words that, when heard, immediately convey meaning. Literal language does not leave the hearer wondering what the speaker meant by using those words.

He knows. Literal language is upfront language, not veiled, not obscured, not a riddle or puzzlement, but plain, forthright, down-to-earth talk.

This is the straightforward use of language, most often employed in the Bible, as found in both the Old and New Testaments. And what does this accomplish?

Communication. One is reminded how Paul expressed his intent in 1 Corinthians 3.12 when he wrote, We use great plainness of speech.

He simply put it as clearly and bluntly, and literally, as he could, because he wanted to make sure he was understood. The Bible is filled with such plainness of speech.

[27 : 18] God made certain that when he inspired human penman to write his word, the language they employed would correspond to the usage and language employed by the recipients.

They would be able to get it. And in getting it, they would be able to respond to it in an intelligent fashion because they understood it.

Apart from this, communication has no purpose. And this is best done, most efficiently done, most thoroughly done, by the use of literal, normal, upfront, plain speaking language.

And that's precisely what we have in the vast majority of this incredible volume called the Bible. We take it at face value because that's the way it was intended to be taken.

And can we not immediately see why this is so? It's because of its importance. This is critical content. It's critical because of the author, the spirit of God.

[28 : 24] It's critical because of the intended recipients, man made in the image and likeness of God. It's critical because of what is at stake. What way can this importance best be put into words?

Simply by saying what is meant in plain, normal, literal language, which is precisely what we have and is precisely the way we should approach it.

The Law of Literality, Part 3. The Law of Literality, that is, that which approaches the text of Scripture with the idea that it says what it means in a straightforward fashion, constitutes the very underpinning of meaning.

As we have noted earlier, meaning is the very essence of communication. Any document, the Bible included, in order to understand its meaning, must be intelligible.

That is, it must be capable of being understood. It must be intended for understanding. For if it is not, communication is impossible.

[29 : 36] This justifies our calling the Law of Literality to be one of the granddaddies of hermeneutics. All understanding of a given writing must be based on the actual meaning of the words that are used.

Words mean things. It doesn't get any simpler or more basic than this. And on Christianity clarified, we are striving for simplicity.

It's true, this approach may sound somewhat ho-hum to those listening who are more familiar with hermeneutics. But since we are committed to clarification, you who are more experienced are asked to please indulge us with your patience while we try to provide critical content to those newer to this discipline.

We are confident the review will be a reinforcement to those already familiar with our subject. So, recall, if you will, we just mentioned the Law of Literality to be one of the granddaddies of hermeneutics.

And since we humans all have two biological granddaddies, so it is, we say, in a non-literal way, that hermeneutics has two granddaddies.

[30 : 54] The first being the Law of Literality, and the second granddaddy being the Law of Context. You will be hearing much about both of these in sessions upcoming, because, like grandfathers, there is so very much that will issue forth from them.

What these granddads of literality and context will beget is priceless and incalculable. You will see. And, by the way, did you already pick up on the non-literal but figurative way the term granddads is used?

A thorough investigation of granddad number two as the Law of Context will be so very revealing later on.

But, for the immediate, we conclude this present segment with a quote from a notable scholar of an earlier generation. Dr. Bernard Ram, in his stellar work entitled Protestant Biblical Hermeneutics, stated regarding Hermeneutical Granddaddy No. 1, thusly, Whenever we read a book, an essay, or a poem, we presume the literal sense in the document until the nature of the literature may force us to another level.

This is the only conceivable method of beginning or commencing to understand literature of all kinds. Well put, Dr. Ram, and we thank you.

[32 : 32] Supernatural But Still Literature In attempting to describe the various laws and principles for interpreting the Bible, it may well be that some have gained a wrong impression regarding our approach.

By that we mean some may feel the Bible deserves, even demands, an altogether different approach than other works of literature, simply because it is God's Word.

What about that? Does it? Yes and no. And here is what is meant, first by the no. The Bible does not demand an altogether different approach than what we would utilize on behalf of any other item of literature.

It demands only the same approach, because when it comes to interpreting what is written, literature is literature. Words are words.

Meaning is meaning. And for an understanding, let me say the words boat, donkey, house, earth, all mean the same thing when used in the Bible that they mean in any other work of literature, and they are not somehow mysteriously different because they are found in the Bible.

[33 : 53] This is what we meant when we answered no to the question, does the Bible demand an altogether different approach than what we would utilize on behalf of any other item of literature?

No, it does not. But we also said yes and no. And here now is the yes part. It does demand an altogether different approach than all other literature, simply because of its source.

The Bible, as opposed to all other literature, has a divine origin. It carries with it an unparalleled authority not true of any other literature.

The Bible is all about authority. The authority of the one who inspired human penman to write it. Herein lies the obvious difference between this book and all other literary expressions.

This book carries the imprimatur of God himself. But even though this is true, God does not have different rules for interpreting the Bible than those utilized for interpreting the literary writings from any other source.

[35 : 15] Yet, this is far away and enough. The authority issue looms large. As large as anything we can imagine.

The difference being equal to the difference between God and man. And how different is that? Incalculable.

That's how great. It is nothing less than a gracious condescension on the part of God to provide for us the authoritative revelation of himself and his plan and program for man, and to use men to give the record of humanness while coupling it with divine authority.

The Bible. Such a book man could not write if he would, nor would not write if he could. An Early Undermining of Literality.

A strong case has been made on behalf of the law of literality. And a much stronger case could be made. But we trust that what has been said is sufficient, so an attempt will be made to now illustrate the confusion caused when once the literalness of the text is abandoned.

[36 : 30] And yet, even before doing that, we remind you that a strong case is also to be made for interpreting a given text in a non-literal but figurative way.

And with that, when the figurative is meant, the immediate context will reveal it. And if it does not, we should look no further than the literal.

It means what it says, and it says what it means. Such is the normal manner of discourse in all languages in all ages. Primacy must be given with the literal being meant by the originator and so understood as such by the recipient.

In other words, we are practically given a heads-up notice that when something is not intended to be taken literally, such tends to be obvious. Perhaps the most sterling example of this law of literality, and what happens when it is abandoned for a non-literal meaning, is found in the very opening words of the Word of God.

What may be the most familiar portion of Scripture for the entire world and all its history has to do with the very account of creation itself. And for us humans, language and its meaning doesn't get any older than Genesis chapter 1.

[37 : 53] The controversy swirls around the meaning of the word day, which in the original Hebrew is rendered yom, y-o-m.

Despite the fact the writer, that is, the Spirit of God, appears to use language that should preclude taking it in any other way than the literal, straightforward meaning, this simply does not suffice for those who are not persuaded.

These are they who value their own logic and reason as superior to that of the plain language set forth in the text. And in doing so, at the very least, an unjustified ambiguity is created, and at the very worst, the authority of the text is simply denied altogether.

Here, at the very outset, the human problem of recognizing and submitting to divine authority and what is written comes into play. After all, authority is the issue.

Always has been, always will be. So here, in the Genesis text, we are informed up front that the word day is defined as the combining of the morning and the evening as one day.

[39 : 16] God coupled one period of night with one period of light, and the two constituted one day, a yom. Six such passings of days and nights would constitute the creative period, with the seventh yom, or seventh day, being the day of ceasing from creation and the completion of the first seven-day week.

An Early Undermining of Literality, Part 2 We have used the example of the word day, or yom, in Hebrew, and the literality that should be assigned to it, to illustrate the importance of giving primacy to the literal meaning.

We have also made it clear that while giving primacy to literality, we are not giving it exclusivity, for we readily recognize the legitimacy of thousands of uses of figurative language throughout the Bible.

Each of these is just as inspired by God as is the use of the literal. But without apology, we dwell on this somewhat to reveal the absolutely critical necessity of having a sound hermeneutic.

A frequent objection to the day and night constituting one day in Genesis 1 is posed by those who tell us you cannot have a day and night in verse 5, along with all the plants of vegetation created on the third day, when you do not as yet even have the sun for light that isn't created until day 4, in verses 14 through 19.

[40 : 50] Did you hear that, God? You can't have plant life if you don't have sunlight to sustain it. God, don't you know about photosynthesis?

Aren't you getting things out of order here? It appears you don't know what you are talking about here in Genesis 1. Well, now, we are getting carried away somewhat with sarcasm.

And by the way, sarcasm is one of several figures of speech we will be exploring later, along with something else I am being right now, namely facetious, a related figure of speech to sarcasm.

Both appear in abundance, as we shall see, and they both add spice, color, and emphasis to language. So as regards the absence of light and the sun not being created until day 4, can anyone honestly think the omnipotent God is stymied by this?

After all, he is referred to as light himself, in whom there is no darkness. And God possesses the Shekinah, the light, the brilliant brightness of the glory of God that filled the temple when Solomon dedicated it in 1 Kings 8.

[41 : 57] And when Moses was in Mount Sinai with God in Exodus 34, it was there, and it was present at the transfiguration of Christ before Peter, James, and John in Matthew 17, Mark 9, and Luke 9.

And besides, this is the very being who created matter out of nothing, ex nihilo, a mind-blowing concept to us, but standard operating procedure to God.

And a hermeneutical principle yet to be undertaken is that of the law of context, both near and remote. Recall, if you will, we labeled context as one of the granddaddies of hermeneutics, along with the literality of language.

And the context of Exodus 20, slightly removed from Genesis, states that, in six days the Lord made heaven and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and ceased on the seventh day.

End of argument. But is the word day ever used in a non-literal way? Of course, and we'll see that in our study of figurative language that will be coming later.

[43 : 11] A Non-Literal Use of Day Part 1 Our previous segment of Christianity Clarified ended with a question.

Is the word day ever used in a non-literal sense? Having insisted the days of creation in Genesis 1 were days of actual 24 hours, as the word day, which is what yom is in the Hebrew, is a day ever used when it does not mean a literal 24-hour period?

Certainly. And one need not look far from the Genesis 1 account to find it. Merely turn the page to Genesis 2, verse 4, and we read, This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made earth and heaven.

One may object that the usage of day here is not referring to one 24-hour period. This is true. But note, if you will, there is no word of qualification with the use of the word day in 2-4 as there is with each of the actual creation days.

They are qualified either as an evening and morning constituting one day, or light and darkness being one day.

[44 : 40] Without a qualifying element or the specific numbering of a day, the word day here in 2-4 is an unparticularized or nonspecific day.

It is tantamount to saying, during the time that the Lord God made earth and heaven. It's using the word day as I would when I tell my grandson David, Back in the day when I was a boy, we didn't even have television.

Well, no one is thinking I'm referring to a specific 24-hour day on the calendar, but I mean is what Moses meant when he said, The day that the Lord God made earth and heaven.

The unqualified use of the word day allows it to have a special latitude it would not otherwise have if confined to an evening and a morning, or on the second day or the third day.

These are all confining, whereas 2-4 is not. In addition, the Bible does not employ language of technicality, but language that is phenomenal.

[45 : 52] This is why it speaks phenomenally as we all do in ordinary discourse. The Bible speaks of the sun setting and rising, even as we do. Technically, is this correct?

No, it is not. To speak phenomenally means to speak in accordance with appearances, rather than with scientific precision. This is because those to whom the Bible is directed view and assess everything based on appearances, not based on scientific detailed accuracy.

And why does it do this? To communicate to humans on a level we can understand, and we all know how things appear. The sun does appear to rise and set, despite the fact that it does not do so scientifically.

Are we obligated to correct someone who tells us of the beautiful sunset they saw last evening? Of course not. A Non-Literal Use of Day Part 2 The Bible uses the word day in many places where it does not mean a 24-hour period, nor is it particularized with evening and morning, or a combined time of light and darkness, comprising a 24-hour day.

The usage to which I now refer is like that of Genesis 2.4, in that it is nonspecific as to a precise time, yet still uses the word day.

[47 : 24] We are now referring to the most ominous and devastating period ever in the history of humanity. And this term is used repeatedly by virtually all the Old Testament prophets and many writers of the New, and it is called the Day of the Lord, which most certainly is not a period of 24 hours, but an extended period, a minimum of seven years.

Yet it is referred to as the Day of the Lord, in 1 Thessalonians 5.2, the great day of the wrath of the Lamb of God, in Revelation 6.16.

Plus all the following references to the word day, which again is certainly not 24 hours. For instance, in Zephaniah chapter 1, the extensive multi-day time is called the Day of Wrath, the Day of Distress, the Day of Wasteness, the Day of Desolation, the Day of Darkness, the Day of Gloominess, the Day of Clouds, the Day of Thick Darkness, the Day of the Trumpet, and the Day of Alarm.

All of these are in reference to the same period of time involving the Great Tribulation, and all are described by the word day. In the context of each, it is clear that much more time than the 24 hours associated with a normal day is involved.

So how do we know when a day is 24 hours, as in the creation account, or when it refers to an extended period of time, which in the case of the Day of the Lord, covers a minimum of seven years?

[49 : 14] Well, the answer quite predictably is found within the context. And the context reveals that the coming conflagration brought upon the world by God Himself transpires over years, not a day.

In fact, one may read Revelation 6, where Christ the Lamb of God breaks the first seal of the seven-sealed scroll, through Revelation 20, that records His second coming, all of which concludes the Great Tribulation.

Here, you will discover that all of these chapters, 13 in all, together referred to as the Day of the Lord. And we insert here another law we have yet to discuss called the Law of Context, and it, along with the Law of Literality, we have labeled as Granddaddies of Interpretation.

In the vast majority of instances, the immediate context will disclose whether a given term or word is to be taken literally or figuratively, and in most of those cases, it is obviously the literal.

In the case of the Day of the Lord, it is not, and that, too, is clarified in the context. The literal is our primary language.

[50 : 31] The case has been made regarding the law of the literality of language. Simply stated, the vast majority of all literature utilizes literal language in its expression.

And we have described literal to mean the plain sense in the use of words. Literal language is the most common, ordinary, customary, everyday, cultural way of speaking or writing all over the world and throughout all of history.

When someone says what he means and means what he says, he is speaking literally and expects to be taken literally. By far and away, this is the most common way humans have of communicating with each other, regardless of the language or dialect they may be using.

The literal is not only the language of personal one-on-one communication, it also is the language of literature at large, including what you read in the daily newspaper, what you hear on radio and television broadcasts, and literal language is an absolute necessity for all laws of government bodies and for all legal contracts.

We find only literal language employed in insurance policies where everything must be spelled out in precise terms so there is no possibility of ambiguity.

[52 : 08] Sometimes extreme care is used in spelling out the terms of a contract so as to preclude anyone deriving a different meaning from the terms that are expressed.

In fact, these precautions are taken so seriously in order to assure that those who read the contract arrive at the same understanding.

In fact, it's for this very reason we even secure the services of one who is trained in compiling language of this sort. We call these people lawyers and we even coin the language they use in drawing up laws and documents as legalese.

Their literal language in use of terms and conditions is very precise and also it tends to be very boring. Have you carefully read your auto or home insurance policy lately?

Not exactly thrilling prose is it? Nor is it intended to be. It is intended to be so plain and so clear that it cannot be made to say anything other than what was intended.

[53 : 25] And whereas a lawyer might call his contract binding, simply meaning that the parties agreeing to it are bound to its terms, we lay people might use the term ironclad.

It's an ironclad contract, meaning it is strongly reinforced so it cannot be dismissed. But then, ironclad is not literal, is it?

No, it's figurative. And figurative introduces us to a biblical aspect of language we surely must grasp, and we will, upcoming. The Purpose of Figurative Language Another volume found to be valuable in the discipline of hermeneutics is entitled Interpreting the Bible by Dr.

Berkeley Mickelson, published in 1963. Insight is offered regarding the Bible's usage of figurative language that we know you will find valuable and enlightening, as we relate to you some of his examples.

This listing is but a pittance of those actually found in the Bible. But even so, you will gain a new appreciation for the variety and power found in non-literal language.

[54 : 39] And after all, this is why writers sometimes escape from using literal, straightforward language. First, it is for variety of expression.

The figurative adds color and emphasis to a thought. That is not as well conveyed by using the literal. For example, Jesus could have said to his disciples when he sent them out, I send you forth as harmless ones who shall go among those who are vicious.

Well, that would have been literal, but not nearly as expressive and powerful as when instead Jesus actually said, Go your way. I send you out as lambs among wolves.

Which carries the greater impact? Lambs and wolves, of course. Figurative language provides color as opposed to the literal, which is as black and white.

Figurative language provides variety of expression and allows a respite from reading everything literally. It gives the reader a mental break. All of us use figurative language repeatedly, all day long in ordinary conversation without even giving it a thought.

[55 : 55] When someone asks us, Is it raining outside? We could reply, Yes, it is raining profusely. But aren't we more likely to say, It's raining cats and dogs.

But does anyone expect to look outside and see Siamese and tabby cats, along with cocker spaniels and German shepherds falling from the sky? So why would we say that?

For emphasis, for impact. And it does convey the reality that it really, really is raining hard.

Likewise, when describing that someone you talked to recently, became very angry when you informed him of something.

That would be literally true. But if you said, He really blew his top. That adds another level of emphasis to what was said literally.

But does this mean you were lying because the top of his head didn't really blow off? We say, Well, of course not. It's just an expression.

[57 : 00] You weren't lying because the top of his head didn't really blow off. And we would defend our statement by saying, It's just an expression.

It's just a saying. Well, the Bible uses these kinds of expressions in great abundance, as we shall see. Meanwhile, let's continue to think in terms of literal language being like black and white, and the figurative being like living color.

Figuratively speaking, of course. The Bridge Between Literal and Figurative, Part 1 During the next number of sessions, a consideration of the Bible's frequent usage of figurative language, as opposed to literal language, will be engaged.

To be sure, the vast majority of biblical content is expressed using literal meanings and is understood only in a literal, straightforward way.

And we plan to give no more time to this because there is really only one singular, lone, exclusive way that literal language can be used.

[58 : 16] And how is that? Literally. Literally. Of course. There is only one literal way of saying anything. Literally. But now, in contrast to the literal, we undertake the figurative.

And how many ways are there of saying something figuratively? It's almost endless. The Bible uses so very many figurative expressions, as we shall see.

In non-literal language, that is, figuratively speaking, scores of impressions in both the Old and New Testaments are used. And why is this?

Why doesn't all literature, the Bible included, limit itself to speaking in strict, plain language? Well, who would want to read it?

Can we extend an invitation to you to curl up on a cold winter's night with a good book devoted to a detailed explanation of the typical life insurance and accident insurance policies and their coverage?

[59 : 25] You won't find any figurative language in those, only literal. And boring. To be sure, it must be so because there are numerous legal ramifications that must be covered, and the literal language that strives to be precise and avoid ambiguity is the only way that such can be realized.

So, the literal, boring, technical, but precise jargon has to be employed. Legal liability and compensation are involved, which can translate into huge sums of money.

Now we understand why only literal language is involved in contractual transactions, don't we? As the saying goes, follow the money.

Money stands to be gained or lost, depending upon how a contract is prepared and interpreted. So, there is a legitimate necessity for both literal and figurative language.

We all use both constantly in everyday conversation without even thinking about it. But when the Bible uses both the literal and the figurative, we do have to think about it, if we expect to arrive at the meaning of what was written.

[60 : 45] And that is what hermeneutics is all about. We strive to determine the meaning of a given text, whether Moses or Paul or John or whoever is speaking literally or figuratively, and what difference it makes.

After all, as stated earlier, only in establishing the meaning of a text of Scripture can we fashion a proper response to what is written. The Bridge Between Literal and Figurative, Part 2 The necessity of building the bridge between literal language and that which is non-literal or figurative must be established before we can move on to the numerous expressions of figurative language in the Bible.

And here is that bridge. That which connects the literal and the figurative is a clear understanding of what the literal is before one attempts to understand the figurative.

Simple. In other words, all uses of figurative language must be anchored in an adequate understanding of the literal. Because if we don't know the meaning of the literal, we can never grasp the meaning of the figurative, because all figurative language is dependent upon the literal that underlies it.

For instance, on a recent segment, we defended our preference for the figurative when we quoted our Lord Jesus as having told his disciples, I send you forth as lambs before wolves.

[62 : 18] Now, it is clearly understood, or should be, that Jesus was not speaking literally but figuratively. Yet, if one does not understand the meaning of literal lambs and literal wolves, the analogy cannot be grasped.

So herein lies the hermeneutical principle. It is the literality. It is the literal meaning of any given term or word that provides the basis for understanding the meaning of all figurative language. If you don't have a frame of reference of what the literal is, you will never be able to grasp the figurative, because the figurative is the fruit or that which flows from the literal. Actually, this should impress upon us all the more just how critical literal language is. Even if an expression is not intended to be taken literally, you cannot understand the meaning of it if you don't understand the literal from which it was taken.

This is the bridge between the two of which we spoke. I know, I know. This is really simple, but my purpose is, as the title of the program says, it's a clarification of Christianity.

[63 : 38] And as such, I can say along with the Apostle Paul, which I think puts me in pretty good company, I use great plainness of speech.

We strive to try and make sure that no one who hears this program comes away saying, I wonder what he was talking about.

But now, seriously, is not that the very thing that too many people say to themselves upon reading a passage from the Bible? I wonder what the writer here is talking about.

Well, that's the very question we are trying to prevent people from having to ask. And how can that possibly be done?

Well, apart from hermeneutics, it can't. So, bring on the hermeneutics, and that's what we'll be doing.

[64 : 41] A Figure of Speech Called Simile, Part 1 During the previous segment, an example of the first figure of speech we will address was illustrated.

We didn't call it by name then, but we'll do so now. It's called simile, S-I-M-I-L-E. And, as it sounds, it is related to the word similar.

Simile is one of the more frequently used figures of speech in both Testaments. Recall the example we gave you that was taken from Luke 10, when the Lord told the 70 disciples he was sending them forth, and they would be as lambs among wolves.

There is no contradiction between his use of lambs in Luke 10 and his use of sheep in Matthew 12, because the difference is in the two different sendings. What appears to be a contradiction is resolved when we realize that in Matthew 10, Jesus was sending out his original twelve apostles, whereas in Luke 10, it is an altogether different occasion when he is sending out the 70 disciples. To the 12 in Matthew 10, Jesus said he was sending them out as sheep among wolves, but in Luke 10, he told the 70 he was sending them out as lambs among wolves.

[66 : 06] Both sheep and lambs are very vulnerable, lambs even more so than sheep. Sheep, we would think, could at least run faster than little lambs. Maybe the difference was that the 12 had received much more instruction over time than had the 70.

After all, the 12 were much closer to the Lord and his teachings than what the 70 were. Perhaps that meant they were a little more able to fend for themselves than were the 70, whom Jesus classed as lambs, not sheep.

But in both cases, one of the most frequent figures of speech used throughout the Bible is found in both settings. And that figure is called simile.

And it's most often used with the word as or like. I send you forth as lambs in the midst of wolves. And the figure of simile is also used in the sending of the 12 in Matthew 10. I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. The simile continues using the word as when Jesus says, Therefore, be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves.

[67 : 18] These usages of lambs, sheep, and wolves much more vividly convey the great disparity between the disciples and the world with which they would be confronted.

After all, the world is energized by their master, the devil, who is characterized as the god of this age in 2 Corinthians 4. You may be sure the comparison and meaning was not lost on the disciples, who were very familiar with lambs, sheep, wolves, and doves.

Anyone can readily see how much more vividly the sending transaction becomes with the uses of as lambs and as sheep. Despite their seeming vulnerability, they all, the 12 and the 70, would be able to conduct themselves with the shrewdness of a serpent while being no more threatening than

a dove.

A truly remarkable arrangement, all wrapped up in the figure of speech called simile, because they were energized by Jesus. A Figure of Speech Called Simile, Part 2 In his monumental volume entitled Figures of Speech Used in the Bible, E.W. Bollinger amassed a listing in excess of 500 different figures of speech, many from the original Greek and Latin.

Bollinger was a linguistic master and obviously one of the rarest students of the Bible ever to pick up the old book. His grasp of grammar and syntax is astounding, and this book he published in 1899 is by far and away the most thorough ever written.

[69 : 01] But with all due respect to this most erudite of scholars, we on Christianity Clarified will limit ourselves to the dozen or so most frequently employed figures of speech found in the Bible, certainly not all of them, but as stated, those used most often.

The current figure of speech may well be the most frequently used. Both Testaments record hundreds of similes, and that is a literal statement, not figurative and not hyperbole, but I get ahead of myself.

Hyperbole is frequent and critical also, but that's later. So now we will focus just on simile. In most instances, simile utilizes something concrete and well known by applying the concrete or literal to a spiritual or moral truth.

Through the prophet Jeremiah, God says in chapter 23, Is not my word like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces? It does not mean God's word is a hammer, but it does mean God's word has hammer-like characteristics to it.

Like a hammer pounding on a rock, God's word has a smashing, pulverizing capability to it. That's a simile. Something physical and well known like a hammer is applied to something that is not physical, including the human will or human opposition.

[70 : 35] And like the rock that cannot withstand the hammer blow, so also nothing can withstand the power of the word of God when it goes forth to conquer.

Is not my word like a hammer that breaks rock in pieces? Jesus consistently used simile scores of times during his earthly ministry, and one of the most vivid being Matthew 23, as he wept over the city of Jerusalem, saying, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not.

Literally, Jesus meant he wanted Jerusalem to be with him. But figuratively, it speaks much more vividly to use the, as a hen gathereth her chickens.

It's all about truth, but truth with color and emphasis not conveyed by the literal. The power, the drama, the pathos is in the figurative, not the literal.

And both are literally true to the subject, but the figurative packs a punch that the literal does not. And after all, the end of it is communication.

[71 : 52] You've just heard another session of Christianity Clarified with Marv Wiseman. Preview of Volume 31 Please be reminded of our established definition of hermeneutics as a science and an art of interpreting the Bible.

It is a science in that it functions within the discipline of fixed laws of language and logic, and it is an art because it calls upon the individual expertise of the interpreter and his skill in utilizing those laws.

The first law we considered was on earlier volumes, wherein we emphasized the law of literality. It was learned that the law of literality constitutes the basic underpinning of communication.

Words mean things. Most communication conducted by all people of all times has occurred in the bedrock of literality. Most things people say to each other are meant to be taken literally and are so understood.

Thus, the literal meaning or the law of literality we dubbed a kind of granddaddy, a grandparent to all the types of offspring that flow from it.

[73 : 21] And we went on to illustrate how it is that even when expressions are not intended to be literal, but are meant to be figures of speech, even these are dependent upon the meaning of the literal in order to be understood figuratively.

So, here we are. We have the critical consideration, and I hope understanding, of the bedrock importance of the literal behind us, along with the realization that the vast majority of the Bible was written from a literal standpoint and was fully intended to be taken literally as well.

And having said that, thus establishing the primacy of the literal, we then engage the logical offshoot of the literal, which is the figurative.

We concluded the legitimacy of the figurative is tied to the need for variety, emphasis, and color to be provided in speech that is not literal, but figurative.

But we also emphasized how connected these are with a kind of bridge. And the observation was made that all uses of figurative language are dependent upon an understanding of the literal before one could grasp the meaning of the figurative.

[74 : 43] Having the law of literality behind us, we engaged on this volume 30, a consideration of the first of a dozen or so examples of figures of speech belonging to non-literal or figurative language.

And only a few examples of hundreds of uses in the Old and New Testament were covered. More are forthcoming on volume 31, upcoming that will spring new life into our understanding of the Bible.

Literary gems that sparkle throughout Scripture include simile, already briefly looked at, metaphors, metonymy, synecdoche, personification, apostrophe, ellipsis, zeugma, oposyopesis, euphemism, meiosis, hyperbole, and interrogation.

Believe it or not, we all use these figures of speech daily without even realizing it. The Bible uses all of them as well, and much more.

This is an incredibly extraordinary book. But you already knew that. Soon, you'll know it more and more.

[76 : 04] This is Pastor Marv. Thanks for being with us. Much more ahead.