

Christianity Clarified Volume 43

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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.

Faulty Assumptions of Angels The faulty assumption issue is one that necessitates a solid understanding, and the reason is simple. Behind every faulty assumption made by whoever made it, error is lurking.

Wrong thinking and wrong conclusions are based on the interpretation of information believed to be valid. We are all subject to this dynamic on a daily basis.

It appears that all beings created with volition engage the truth of interpreting the information given us, and then we follow with our decision to act upon that information.

If the information is not true, even though we believe it is, the results are faulty assumptions. Now, let's go back as far as we can, back all the way before Genesis 1.1.

[1 : 10] Before humans, God created angelic beings who were not physical, but spirit, like God Himself. The records given in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 29 indicate that Lucifer, described as the most outstanding of God's creation, chose to use the volition God gave him to rebel against His Creator.

Revelation, the last book of the Bible, tells us in chapter 12 that Lucifer, who became Satan, was cast out of heaven and one-third of the angelic's fear with him.

That one-third appears to have been recruited as allies by Satan himself. But on what basis could he have recruited them so they would join him in his rebellion against their Creator?

It appears it could only have been through a lie that the one-third apparently believed and acted upon. Here is repeated the tragic consequence of angels or humans believing a lie.

They tend to act upon it, because they assume what they were told was true. But it wasn't true at all. It was a lie. And believing the lie, often with great sincerity, may prove disastrous.

[2 : 29] Because nothing serves the creature so well as truth, and nothing so poorly as a lie. This same tragic scenario that Satan used to deceive fellow angels would also be successfully employed against the first humans, Adam and Eve.

And they acted upon the erroneous information given them, again, with the predictable tragic consequences. It becomes all too clear that no sooner were the volitional beings of angels and humans on the scene, but what the lie and faulty assumptions got right to work with devastating consequences.

It bears repeating, whether speaking of ancients or moderns, the embracing of a faulty assumption leading to acting upon that assumption. Folks, this is the stuff everyday living is made of.

This is reality on parade. Does this help us to understand why the world is the way it is? And why would not everyone come to understand this? There's just one reason.

They who do not see this have reached other conclusions based on, you guessed it, wrong information leading to faulty assumptions.

[3 : 46] Early Idolatrous Faulty Assumptions Part 1 The earliest of humans reveal the account of Adam and Eve who have already been considered in earlier segments of Christianity Clarified.

And following hard on the heels of our first parents, the parade of faulty assumptions marches on, exhibited in those humans who descended from them. Early on in the Genesis account, in fact, as early as Genesis 10, the account of the Tower of Babel and the person of Nimrod in ancient Babylon proves that humans had an affinity for idolatry.

It was nothing more than the substitution of false or imaginary gods in the place of the true God.

When Abram in chapter 12 was called by God, it was out of paganism God called him.

Ur of the Chaldees, now southern Iraq, was steeped in moon-worshipping and manufactured idols to represent that false deity. Abraham was an anomaly in his day.

Nearly all the population was steeped in one form of idolatry or another. Abraham's grandchildren, Jacob and Rachel, when fleeing from Laban, had with them, hidden in their belongings, Laban's household idols.

[5 : 11] These were miniature deities, much regarded like good luck charms by the locals, and those who had possession of these household deities were destined for a prosperous future in their mind.

Rachel was no doubt persuaded that she and her husband Jacob would need these as they set up housekeeping in a distant land. Laban was understandably upset because he saw the loss of those household idols, meaning the loss of his own prosperity.

Tragically, both Laban and his daughter Rachel were functioning based on a faulty assumption. Throughout the Old Testament and well into the New, the Jew, who had the incredible privilege of connecting with the one true God, would be plagued with idolatry.

In time, the number of Abraham's descendants will reach 70. There they lived in the land of Canaan, utterly surrounded by pagans who engaged in every form of idolatry imaginable, including human sacrifice.

These 70 will journey to Egypt due to Joseph's having found favor with the Pharaoh, and upon arriving in Egypt, what did they find?

[6 : 28] Idolatry as practiced by the Egyptians with their multiple deities. It was everywhere. Only with the Israelites was the concept of monotheism embraced, and then far from completely.

In fact, the principal thing God warned the Israelites against was the making of worshiping of any graven image designed to depict the true God. All around the ancient Israelites dwelt the innumerable idolaters.

The Philistines had their fish god Dagon. The Moabites had Chemosh. Plus, they all flirted with Baal, the fertility god. How could this be? Idols?

Even infecting the one people who had the truth about the one true God? How could this be? Idolatry?

And the answer is upcoming. Early Idolatrous Faulty Assumptions Part 2 The spiritual principle echoes throughout the Bible that those who have the greatest amount of light are more responsible for their actions than are those with less light.

[7 : 42] Unto whom much is given, shall much be required. Theologically, none possessed more light, more truthful information than the people of Israel, and they were to use their light to be a light to the Gentiles steeped in pagan idolatry.

On too many occasions, however, the Israelites yielded more to the lie of idolatry than did their Gentile neighbors to the truths of the God of Israel. And there were several reasons for this, and each needs explanation.

Why? Because the very same issues continue to this day. Some of them are more clever and sophisticated in their appearance, but they are the same nonetheless.

This is why on these segments of Christianity Clarified, we need to clarify the motives that led people then and that lead people now into idolatry.

There are principal reasons, and you, the listener, could probably think of others to add to them.

First, our human intellect, that is, our powers of reasoning and logic are skewed, warped, damaged, because when humanity's first parents engaged in what is called the fall, everything about them fell, became compromised.

[9 : 04] They had become deficient in ways God was not responsible for. They now, in that fall, have the seeds of death and deterioration within them, and they would pass that on to their progeny.

Humanity's fallen reasoning powers are systemic. This is what hinders us from correctly assessing information and reaching right conclusions, enabling us to take right actions.

We reach faulty conclusions, often based on faulty assumptions. Second, adversarial misinformation and disinformation.

Throughout Scripture, Satan is depicted as the deceiver, destroyer, and murderer. He plies his wares very effectively with his fingerprints on much of the evil taking place.

Not that we humans need any help in being wrong and doing wrong, since we are quite capable of full-blown evil on our own, apart from any aid by the devil.

[10:08] Still, his influence, described as blinding our minds in 2 Corinthians 4, is alive and well on planet Earth. In both testaments of the Bible, Satan influenced people toward idol worship.

Accompanying the oft-frenzied worship were unspeakable acts of sexual immorality. And in the New Testament, the Apostle Paul cites the many gods erected by the Greeks when visiting the town of Athens, supposedly, then, the seat of intellectual thought in that day.

Just more evidence of warped thinking. Then, in writing to the Corinthians in chapter 10, Paul advised them that those who sacrifice to their God are, in actuality, sacrificing to demons.

More evidence of faulty assumptions. Faulty Assumptions of Early Idolaters, Part 3 Our current clarification has to do with the rationale motivating idolatry.

Its pervasive presence in all the Bible reveals the hold idolatry had on so many. Several reasons exist for this. First, the warped intellect sustained by the fall allows men to convert the illogic of idolatry to be completely logical.

[11:32] Second, the adversary Satan is revealed to be a major factor in deceiving humans that the worship of idols can be very rewarding to the worshiper.

Hard as that is to believe, it is made very believable by the worshiper already functioning with the warped mind. And third, there is the lure of the majority.

The lure of the majority merely means that when a given practice is engaged in by a significant number, legitimacy and attraction stems from it.

When critical mass is reached, whole cultures and societies can be dramatically altered from previous attitudes. If people in enough numbers engage in a certain practice, that can stamp approval, even affirmation upon behavior once considered unacceptable.

In our present day, this lure of the majority dynamic has been seen to work with attitudes toward couples living together without marital commitment, the homosexual lifestyle, and even gender reorientation.

[12:42] It does not require the majority to actually participate in these behaviors, but only for the majority to no longer condemn it. This seems to be the pattern for all societal and cultural shifts in attitudes and actions throughout history.

Our present day is no exception. The principle applies as well to every area of a given society, whether it's food, clothing, styles, the arts, education, or even politics, all of which begins with perception and attitude and, of course, the emotional element.

Even the 2,000-year-old gospel has fallen upon hard times. Embracing religious pluralism that pronounces all religions as equally valid is now the mantra of the majority.

Assigning exclusivity to Jesus Christ as the only way to God, because God and the Bible say He is, is no longer acceptable by the majority. And those Christians who do so are quickly labeled intolerant, bigoted, narrow, and devoid of compassion.

History has proved repeatedly that the majority are often proved wrong, and the minority at times proved right, not because they were the minority, but because they were right.

[14:09] In the Bible, we cite the majority and minority regarding Noah and the flood, the two spies versus the ten who spied out the land of Canaan, and Gideon's paltry crew of 300 against the numerous Midianites.

Many other examples could be cited. Actually, the true majority in all issues is God plus one.

Creation's Plague of False Assumptions False Assumptions These are referred to not as merely humans' false assumptions, but false assumptions made by the angelic sphere as well.

Such was indicated in an earlier segment of Christianity Clarified. The first lie from which false assumptions would issue was used by Lucifer, later described as Satan.

He successfully recruited one-third of the angelic beings to follow him in his rebellion against the Creator. The false assumption they made was in believing Lucifer gave them accurate information. Based on that, they followed him. Then, the false assumption made by Eve, and later by Adam, was that Satan had spoken truth when he convinced them God had lied to them.

[15:44] Satan said, You shall not surely die. God told you that because he knew if you ate of that tree, you would become a god like he is.

And they believed Satan rather than God. There can be no doubt that this one, this devil, is the very personification of evil.

Christ himself describes him in John 8 as a murderer from the beginning who abode not in the truth because there is no truth in him. He is a liar and the father of it.

Could anything be clear regarding Satan's character and methodology? He traffics in falsehood in every way. It was Satan's lies, believed by his fellow angelic creatures, and then by the first parents of humanity, that set the stage for all of the conflict that followed, including ours today, that will extend until the second coming of Christ.

This account, found in the Bible, provides the only consistent explanation for why the world is as it is, how it got this way, and where it is going.

[16 : 55] You'll not find this information in any encyclopedia, but you do find the harmonious whole of it in the Scriptures. False assumptions processed and acted upon because the information given them was believed to be true but was not true is the negative stuff plaguing all the created order, angelic and human.

What has been described is the way angels and humans have been impacted by the lies that produce faulty assumptions, that produce wrong actions, that produce the misery and conflict issuing therefrom.

More specifics are forthcoming. Upcoming are details regarding Israel's Judaism and their false assumptions, the Roman Catholic Church and their false assumptions, and Protestantism and their false assumptions, plenty of which there are to go around.

And the irony is that nearly all the false assumptions made by all of those three groups were made in good faith by well-intentioned people. But that alone does not secure truth.

Hold on, it will be significant. Judaism's False Assumptions Part 1 The track record of God's creatures, including angelic and humans, stretches back prior to Genesis.

[18 : 23] And with unmistakable clarity, the record is given of how humans and angels arrived at false assumptions based on the lies fed to them by Satan himself.

And while he most certainly was not sincere, but deliberately deceiving, Satan's targets, both angelic and human, believed him.

And based on their sincere but erroneous belief, they formulated assumptions that were false and then acted upon them with disastrous consequences.

Folks, this is precisely why truth is so vitally important. Truth and its realities are planet Earth's most precious resource.

Truth and its pursuit is man's most noble endeavor. And when truth is pursued to its most logical end, one will arrive at the person of Jesus Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life.

[19 : 29] Beginning following mankind's earliest beginning, by way of Adam and Eve, we see humanity stumble through history with one major gaffe after another.

Genesis 6 records humanity's false assumptions regarding the preaching of Noah, went on for over a century. And what was their false assumption? It was in assuming what Noah was preaching was not true.

But it was. And the consequences of their falsely assuming what Noah preached was not true were so terrific it cost all remaining humanity their lives, lost in that horrific flood.

A mere five chapters later in Genesis 11, following the repopulation of Earth generations after the flood, the fiasco of the Tower of Babel surfaces.

And they falsely assumed building that structure would prevent them from being scattered throughout the Earth, when in fact it would be their building it that would evoke God's decision to do that very thing.

[20 : 36] While he also confounded what was then their common language into multiple languages. Once again, an all-too-often principle is played out with the curse of faulty assumptions.

That being, the very opposite result is realized from the faulty assumption made. Again and again, when error is acted upon instead of truth, a negative consequence nearly always follows.

We need to realize this pattern has been in place and still is throughout humanity. It reinforces the value of truth each time faulty assumptions are acted upon.

Are we beginning to get the drift of this important concept? Again and again, false assumptions are so critical, sometimes even deadly, because people act upon them.

And when the information given is wrong, faulty assumptions are made based on that incorrect information, then faulty decisions and actions are taken that result in wrong consequences.

[21 : 38] All a predictable pattern. The Ultimate Faulty Assumption To be sure, the Bible contains hundreds of faulty assumptions men have made from creation and Genesis to the close of Revelation.

Add to those the untold millions men have made outside of the biblical record, including those we humans are making the world over as we speak.

Yet, there does appear to be an ultimate in the faulty assumptions men are prone to make. There are two passages that come to mind, and the first is found in Psalm 50.

God, speaking through the psalmist, made a telling statement. Following a list of sinful activities by the wicked, beginning in verse 16, activities they thought they were getting away with, the wicked are issued a wake-up call that debunked what they obviously had made a faulty assumption about concerning God.

And what was it precisely? It is stated in verse 21, where God admits, He had kept silent about their transgressions.

[23 : 05] This, no doubt, was what others among them had done also, and no one called the wicked out or rebuked them, which led them to falsely assume that God also was inattentive.

Far from it. He tells the wicked, I did keep silent about your wickedness, and my silence led you to falsely assume that I was just like you.

Far from it. I will reprove you, says the Lord, and I will state the case before your eyes. Many have mistaken God's patience and long-suffering as disinterest or detachment.

The psalmist gives the lie to that foolish, faulty assumption. Likewise, Isaiah records in chapter 55 a similar warning against comparing God's ways with man, saying, My thoughts are not your thoughts.

Neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

[24 : 14] These two passages alone, Psalm 50 and Isaiah 55, sufficiently reveal how God's ways so greatly transcend those of men.

And as you read through the scriptures, you will come upon many others revealing the same truth. To be sure, it's an ultimate folly and faulty assumption to think man and God are even remotely connected in the way they think.

Not only does man have a fallen and warped intellect, but by sure virtue of his being man and God being God, their wisdom, motivation, modus operandi, all are as different as day and night.

So for man to think God is altogether like man, it's not only a faulty assumption, but an insult as well to the infinite eternal God.

Faulty Assumptions Belong to Everyone Folks, we all need to get a good firm handle on this business of faulty assumptions.

[25 : 33] Because it is vitally connected to the very stuff life is made of. How is that? Well, our lives are made up of the things we think and what we do about what we think.

Call these attitudes and actions. Actions stem from attitudes. Our attitude is produced by our interior assessment of reality, and our actions are the exterior things we do about that interior assessment. Part of this mix, an inseparable part, is our perception of what we believe to be true. What is real? And what we believe to be true is based on the information available to us that we find credible. Information is derived from what is taught, and what is taught is called doctrine or teaching, which may or may not be true. But whether it is true or not, it still provides the rationale for what we believe, and what we believe determines what we do.

Do you not see how intricately related all this really is? And how utterly critical it is as well? As stated earlier, this is the very stuff life and living is made of, and we'd better get it right, because we shall not pass this way again.

[26 : 58] Question. What is to prevent anyone from getting it right? Just one thing. Believing wrong doctrine. And why in the world would anyone believe wrong doctrine?

Because they don't know it to be wrong. If they did, they wouldn't believe it. But they are recipients of wrong doctrine that was based on faulty assumptions. Faulty assumptions based on an erroneous interpretation of Scripture results in doctrinal conclusions written into statements of faith embraced by many to whom they are taught.

What religion's body has escaped this doctrinal minefield? None. Absolutely none. Not Judaism, Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, not Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, not, well, you do get the point, do you not?

Where then, pray tell me, can we get the truth uncontaminated by faulty assumptions? Only in the revelation God has given in His Word. And even then, it's subject to interpretation.

Get the interpretation of a biblical text wrong, and you've just created wrong doctrine, at least as it relates to the passage in question. And the interpretation of a passage is inseparably linked to the right division thereof.

[28 : 18] Wow. This thing of faulty assumptions takes on a life of its own, does it not? Yes, it does. And herein lies the very basis of so many diverse denominations, councils, synods, presbyteries, splits and splinters, cults and isms even existing, all because of doctrine devised and arrived at from faulty assumptions.

And we will engage Judaism next in its ancient and modern practice of faulty assumptions. Then we will get several others as well in due time. Brace yourself.

Okay. Cain's Faulty Assumption The whole of the Bible is absolutely riddled with the faulty assumptions people made, their decisions based on their faulty assumptions, and the negative consequences that always issue therefrom.

Please understand that the reality of sin is nearly always based on false assumptions of the sinner. This entire dynamic of false assumptions and its consequent wrong actions is systemic to the entire human race.

It's the very reason that truth itself is sometimes hard to arrive at, because our tendency to make faulty assumptions provides an ongoing obstacle.

[29 : 43] Left to ourselves, we will make faulty assumptions about all kinds of important issues, some so important they may be fatal or even eternally consequential.

Already noted, even though briefly, we depicted the faulty assumptions made by both angels and humans. Both had been endowed by their Creator with volition, and the ability to process information, allowing them to make conclusions, and then choose what to do on the basis of their conclusions.

Adam and Eve both made faulty assumptions. Eve's came by way of deception as she bought the lie of Satan, and Adam's by way of deliberate choice to follow Eve.

It appears that Adam's faulty assumption was, it was the right thing to do, or at least the preferable thing to do, is following Eve's partaking.

Both faulty assumptions would wreak havoc, death, and destruction. Not only on themselves, but ultimately on all of their progeny as well. And speaking of progeny, then along came Cain and Abel, and the drama involving the first homicide and the first fratricide.

[31 : 01] Cain would sadly distinguish himself as the first murderer. And he then made the faulty assumption, employing the principle later coined by the 50th Psalm.

In it, the sinners revealed their faulty assumptions by concluding that God was such and one as themselves. Ha-ha!

But as the sinner always learns later, God is not at all like themselves. Cain must have thought God was much like himself, and when God questioned him about the whereabouts of his brother, his lying response was, How should I know where he is?

Am I my brother's keeper? Cain had to have falsely assumed God was much like himself. He wouldn't know Cain killed him, and he wouldn't know what Cain did with the body.

Cain's faulty assumptions were what caused him to lie, and falsely assumed God wouldn't know, because God didn't witness the murder or the burial. But is there knowledge in the Most High?

[32 : 03] There certainly is. In fact, all knowledge is possessed by him with whom we have to do. Faulty assumptions abound, and provide the basis for the world being as it is, a product of corporate humanity's faulty assumptions.

Let us never make the faulty assumption that we ourselves cannot add to them. Such would be a gross faulty assumption. Christianity Clarified, Volume 43, Track 10, The Antediluvian Faulty Assumption Genesis, Chapter 6-9, recount the scenario of the destruction of humanity, excepting Noah and his family members.

These eight individuals did not make the faulty assumption that all the rest of the world had made. And what was their assumption? This flood thing.

The idea that there will be water that will cover the earth, and all will perish as a result. Noah believed God, and he built an ark that would assure survival for those who were on it.

But no one else believed that. All others made the faulty assumption that Noah was just a crazy old coot who was obsessed with an imaginary coming destruction of the entire earth.

[33 : 24] And all the while Noah was preaching, warning, and building the ark, the rest of humanity made the faulty assumption there was no truth to it. But there was.

And their faulty assumption would be their death knell. Question. Do you suppose this vast majority of humanity, all but eight souls, were sincere in what they believed?

About assuming Noah was all wrong? After all, who besides Noah and his family believe this stuff? Apparently no one.

How could so many, everybody else, be wrong, while Noah and his family are right? Come on. Here lies a powerful example about truth not being determined by the numbers supporting it.

Admittedly, the majority often are right regarding a position taken. But they are not right because they are the majority. They are right because they are right.

[34 : 27] Their position corresponds to truth and reality. Very often the minority position is wrong regarding certain issues, but they are not wrong because they are the minority.

They are wrong because their position does not correspond to reality. Numerous other biblical examples can be cited. Numbers chapter 13 records the mission of the 12 spies sent into the land of Canaan for reconnaissance.

They were to spy out the land, its size and fortification, and then bring back a report and recommendation. And 10 of the 12, clearly the majority report, said, Forget it.

If we invade this land, we will be defeated. These people are huge, and the walls of their fortresses are higher than anything we've ever seen. There's no way that we can take them.

So said the majority. There yet remain two spies who have yet to give their report, named Joshua and Caleb. But what are these two against the ten?

[35 : 33] The two affirmed all the ten had said, but added, Yet the Lord is with us, not with them, and he will give us the victory. We can take them because our God will enable us to do so.

And despite all God had done for them in the past, they make the faulty assumption that the ten were right, and the consequences of their faulty assumption would be their lingering, wandering in the wilderness till the entire generation died off.

Faulty Assumptions of Abraham, Part 1 To call someone faithful means they are full of faith.

Abraham is called the father of the faithful. Yet even he had to develop a faithfulness that matured over time. The man dubbed father of the faithful wasn't always that.

He too had his, yes, you guessed it, Abraham had faulty assumptions of his own. In Genesis 12, God called Abraham and promised him he would be the father of a multitude.

[36 : 41] Did he truly believe God, or did he fashion faulty assumptions? Clearly the latter. When he and Sarah went to Egypt, Abraham lied when he presented Sarah as his sister rather than his wife.

Truth be told, she actually was his half-sister because he and Sarah had a common father in Terah, but different mothers. Technically, Abraham was truthful in calling Sarah his sister, but morally, he was lying by disguising her as a sister rather than admitting she was his wife.

He feared to do so because the modus operandi of the Egyptians would be to kill the husband if you wanted his wife. Abraham understandably feared for his life if Sarah were discovered to be his wife.

Still, his faulty assumption was in disbelieving what God had promised him. And what was that? It was that Abraham, who was then still childless, would be the father of many.

Such would require God somehow preserving his life so he would be around the father a child. Had he not made the faulty assumption that God could not or would not deliver on his promise, he would have admitted Sarah was his wife and trusted that God would somehow deliver him from Pharaoh and spare his life.

[38 : 01] After all, he cannot have a son as God promised if he were dead. A very similar but different setting is described in Genesis 20 when Abraham faces Abimelech instead of Pharaoh.

And here he repeats the same lie that Sarah, oh, she's just my sister. Once again, it's faulty assumption number two, God cannot be fully trusted.

A faulty assumption. Two things stand out with Abraham's unbelief. And Abraham is a slow learner and God is incredibly long-suffering. Eventually, Abraham will get with the program and develop a mature, honorable faith in the God of heaven.

He really can be relied upon to deliver all he has promised. Thus, we see this remarkable man with faulty assumptions of plenty eventually enabled to lay them all aside.

And as God repeatedly and patiently reveals to Abraham that this God who called him out of Ur of the Chaldees really does keep his word. God does not make idle promises he cannot keep. [39 : 07] There has not failed one good word of all God hath promised, but all has come to pass. And this sentiment is spoken by Joshua in chapter 21 and repeated in chapters 23 and by Solomon in 1 Kings chapter 8.

He is the ever-faithful God eminently worthy of our trust. And more than anything else, God wants to be believed. His track record throughout history demonstrates his worthiness.

Great is his faithfulness. Faulty Assumptions of Abraham Part 2 In Genesis 15, God informs Abraham that a great reward was in store for him.

It appears Abraham is asking God what that might be. He laments the fact that he's had no children despite God telling him earlier that he would be the father of a great nation.

I don't even have an heir and one who has been born of a servant in my household named Eliezer. He stands to receive all that I leave behind. God corrected Abraham by saying, No, Abraham, not Eliezer, but your heir shall be one who comes from your own body.

[40 : 24] God then took Abraham outside and told him to view the stars above and count them if he could. Then he told him, That's the descendants you are going to have, Abraham, like the stars of the heavens.

The text then says, Abraham believed in the Lord and he reckoned it to him as righteousness. Well, precisely what was it that Abraham believed?

What was the content or object of his belief? The text states that Abraham simply believed what God told him. And God then accepted Abraham's faith in him in place or in the stead of the righteousness Abraham did not have.

In other words, God justified or declared Abraham to be acceptable to himself based solely on Abraham's faith. It's called justification by faith and it is more fully spelled out in Romans chapters 3-5.

Now the question is, just how great was Abraham's faith in what God promised him? Apparently, not great at all. Yet still acceptable because we are not declared righteous by the amount of our faith, but by the object of our faith.

[41 : 37] Abraham's object of faith was God himself. So, why is it said his faith was not at all that great, even though the God in whom he placed it was?

Well, look at the context and you'll see an utterly bizarre means of God confirming his promise. Actually, it appears that after God told Abraham what he would do for him, Abraham responded with, uh, could you put that in writing?

We conclude that because Abraham did say, how may I know that I shall possess this land you say you will give to me? A complete faith would have been satisfied merely by God saying he would do this.

When Abraham asked God, how shall I know that I shall possess it? God would have been perfectly within his rights to say, just because I said so, Abraham.

Abraham? But it appears that Abraham's meager faith was not satisfied with God merely having said it. And the truly bizarre scene that follows was actually a common business and cultural practice of Abraham's day, the standard way of confirming a solemn covenant.

[42 : 52] In our day, we contracting parties sign on the dotted line and the deal is done. But this was four thousand years ago in Abraham's day.

What follows is stunning and very graphic. We shall see as this ancient custom is revealed upcoming. Faulty Assumptions of Abraham Part 3 In Genesis 15, God revealed to Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars of heaven and he would inherit land that God would also give him.

Abraham's meager faith was not satisfied with God merely having said it. Obviously, he wanted something more binding, a guarantee, if you will. The scene that follows was actually a common business social practice of Abraham's day as the standard way of confirming a solemn covenant. The animals described in the text were cut in half with the halves of each placed in a row, each side across from its other side. Then the two parties entering into the covenant would walk arm in arm between the two rows of animal pieces.

The message conveyed in graphic detail was simple. If either party reneged on the terms of the covenant, their penalty was to be that which had befallen those slain animals.

[44 : 20] To these ancients here in Genesis 15, mean it was the equivalent of our present day of both parties signing on the dotted line. Yet, God actually and graciously condescended to confirm the covenant Abraham's way in keeping with the business contracts of his day.

So, rather than being insulted by Abraham's doubt, God graciously and patiently condescended to completing the deal in accord with the then prevailing culture, all to satisfy Abraham's doubting question, How shall I know I shall possess the land?

How can I be sure my descendants will be as the stars of the heavens? While Abraham was well familiar with the way covenants were entered into in his day with fellow human beings, he apparently never had to rely on anyone's promise by their merely giving their word.

And here is where God literally stoops to accommodate Abraham by becoming like an earthly human partner, the likes of which Abraham was familiar.

Abraham, said God, bring the customary animals used for cutting a covenant, a heifer, a goat, a ram, a turtle dove, and a pigeon, and except for the dove and the pigeon, cut them all in halves lengthwise, place one of the halves each on one side and the other opposite, and then we will walk between the animal halves.

[45 : 50] And should either of us violate the terms of the covenant, may what has happened to these slain animals occur to him. Well, Abraham was familiar with the procedure and he slew the animals and divided them accordingly.

But when the time came for both parties to pass between the animal halves, God is represented by a smoking oven and flaming torch and Abraham was under a deep sleep, clearly unable to participate in the walk with God between the animal halves.

His absence clearly revealed this covenant to be unconditional, the fulfillment of which was dependent upon God and God alone.

He was the promiser and Abraham was the recipient, no strings attached. This was displaying the utter graciousness of the covenant-keeping God despite the undeservedness of the recipients.

Faulty Assumptions of Abraham Part 4 Current content on Christianity Clarified is dealing with the issue of faulty assumptions, and we are all capable of making them.

[47 : 03] Our intent is to reveal the faulty assumptions made in history that remain deeply entrenched in the world's religious systems of today. We shall see how so many doctrines are not at all based on biblical authority.

They are, rather, the outcropping of faulty assumptions made by many influential leaders of the past brought forward to our day and appearing in numerous statements of faith throughout the world religions.

Historically, we began this treatment with the angelic spheres and then our first parents and the faulty assumptions of both groups. But now we are engaged in the faulty assumptions of Old Testament characters and Abraham in particular.

Faulty assumptions of the Jews will extend into the New Testament. And from there, we engage those faulty assumptions of the early church in general and the Roman Catholic Church in particular.

And the Protestant element is not devoid of faulty assumptions of its own, but owns a considerable number that we plan to expose as well. But for the present, we continue from an historical perspective fixating on the Jewish element and their several faulty assumptions.

[48 : 15] And up currently, is none other than Abraham, father of the Jewish nation, dubbed the father of the faithful. He was that indeed, but not always. Abraham had a faith so weak, he was afraid to believe God at all when first called by him.

Yet, through life circumstances and hard lessons he learned, he came to so fully trust in God he was prepared to sacrifice Isaac in confirmation of it. Abraham developed into a stellar saint of God, worthy of being emulated by all of us.

Not only does he figure very prominently in Genesis chapters 12-25, but in the New Testament book of Hebrews chapter 11, his faith is extolled as a grand example of what it means to believe God.

But, as stated earlier, Abraham did not arrive at this exemplary status quickly, nor easily. Maturity often comes through pain and deprivation.

In fact, that is the route it almost always takes. And now, we are revealing some of Abraham's pain. It came from disappointments of life and the hard blows that it can deliver.

[49 : 25] By the time we arrive at his life in Genesis 20, Abraham remains childless, God having closed the womb of Sarah. It's true, the womb of the servant girl Hagar had been opened and Abraham, at the insistence of his wife Sarah, impregnated Hagar, to whom Ishmael was born.

Yet, that was a far cry from a baby born of Sarah, the wife he loved. And why did Abraham father a baby by Hagar? And why did his wife Sarah actually suggest it?

Even seemingly insist upon it. Could it be, could it be, that Sarah and Abraham also made some boyous, faulty assumptions?

And indeed, they did. Not in any way detracting from the sovereignty of God yet. What were the consequences of this slave girl being a surrogate mother for Sarah?

Ha ha! A regular Old Testament soap opera, as we shall see upcoming. Ha ha! Faulty Assumptions of Abraham, Part 5 God had promised, and promised, and promised, yet, no babies, and certainly no baby boy, to carry on the family name and provide an heir for Abraham.

[50 : 45] Year after year, month after month, Sarah's menstrual cycle once again signaled that there would be no baby conceived this month. The years dragged on, no doubt filled with confusion, doubt, and depression, wondering why God had not made good on His promise of a son.

Or, did God actually promise that? Or, did Abraham and Sarah want it so badly, they merely imagined it, or dreamed it.

Being barren for so long and terribly disappointed that she had not been able to give Abraham a son, Sarah began to rationalize.

Actually, what she did was, yes, Sarah made a faulty assumption, and she even persuaded Abraham to go along with it. We can almost hear Sarah now.

Abraham, didn't God tell you that you would be the father of a great nation? But He didn't say that I would have to be the mother, did He?

[52 : 00] Well, no, Abraham would have replied, not in so many words, at least. Abraham, that must be it.

Maybe that's what God meant all along. The focus is on you. Not me. Don't you see? Not only that, Abraham, but everyone all around us knows that it's perfectly acceptable if a man's wife doesn't give him a child after seven years of marriage.

The husband can lie with another woman who becomes a surrogate mother, and the child born of her becomes the legal child of the father. Abraham, we have neighbors who've done this very thing, and there's no shame scandal about it.

Now, Abraham, I want you. I insist that you go in to my handmaiden, Hagar, and see if she will conceive a child by you. Well, us moderns today must remember that in vitro fertilization was not known then.

Abraham and Hagar would have to partner in the old-fashioned way if a child was to be conceived. And how could this be wrong when it seems so right? We do not know if Ishmael would result from a one-night stand or if several attempts were made, and one can only speculate that all may have felt justified in the transaction when they knew conception was accomplished and little Ishmael was the result of it.

[53 : 31] Perhaps, perhaps they even considered the entire affair to have been a confirmation of what God must have intended all along. But God never intended any such thing.

Abraham and Sarah had teamed up in making, yes, another faulty assumption, another that would produce significant negative consequences, upcoming.

Faulty Assumptions of Abraham, Part 6 In Genesis 15, Abraham told God his only heir was a slave boy who was born in his own house named Eliezer.

No, said God, it will not be Eliezer, but your heir shall be one born from your own flesh. God corrected Abraham's faulty assumption about Eliezer.

And arriving after that, another faulty assumption arises, and it begins with Sarah and is agreed to by Abraham. The faulty assumption was that even though Abraham was destined by God to be the biological father of the child, such did not require that Sarah be the biological mother.

[54 : 45] They could have a surrogate, and who knows but what God had provided Hagar for that very reason. And if she conceives and has a child, the child becomes the legal heir of Abraham and Sarah, not the biological mother, Hagar.

Hagar will conceive and bear Ishmael, and to Abraham, Ishmael is seen to be satisfactory, but not to God. In chapter 17, God reaffirms his promise by saying, Sarah will have a son also, and she will

be a mother of nations and kings.

Abraham's reply was, That really isn't necessary. Oh, that Ishmael might live before thee. In other words, Abraham is telling God that as far as he is concerned, Ishmael's birth fulfills God's promise for a son.

Oh, that Ishmael might live before thee. Let him be the one. Quite the contrary, says God, that will not do. Sarah, your wife, will yet have a son whom you will name Isaac, and I will confirm with him the covenant I have made with you.

Isaac will be born at this time next year. And as for Ishmael, he too will become a father of twelve princes, and I will bless Ishmael and make him fruitful.

[56 : 08] But my covenant will be with Isaac. When Ishmael's already thirteen or fourteen years of age, Isaac is born to Sarah, who is well past the childbearing age.

Chapter 21 opens with, The Lord did for Sarah as he promised. Well, of course he did. God would not even know how to go about not keeping his promise.

Subsequent history will reveal the negative consequences from Abraham and Sarah's faulty assumptions as faulty assumptions almost always produce. And Ishmael's descendants will be hostile to the descendants of Isaac through the ensuing centuries, including our twenty-first century. The Arab population, largely Islamic, has been and continues to be the bitter enemy of Isaac's descendants who now comprise the modern state of Israel as well as the Jews living in various parts of the world.

And no rivalry in world history has matched that existing between the offspring of Isaac and that of Ishmael. The hostility continues between these ancient relatives to this very day.

[57 : 20] The descendants of Ishmael have joined the descendants of Esau and together they strongly oppose the descendants of Isaac and Jacob.

Faulty Assumptions of Isaac Part 1 When Rebekah, the wife of Jacob, was pregnant with twins, the text in chapter 25 reveals a physical struggle occurring between these twins that must have been puzzling to Rebekah.

We are told she inquired of the Lord as to what was going on and God revealed to her the contention between the twins would even accelerate after their birth.

It was also revealed to Rebekah that not Esau who would be born first would be the dominant son but Jacob who would be second would actually be the dominant one.

He would be the child of promise carrying on the line from Abraham and Isaac. Culture-wise, this was the opposite of the way the birth order worked. Ordinarily, it was the firstborn son that was the principal heir who would receive not only the recognition but also a double portion of the father's estate when he passed on.

[58 : 38] And it is clear when God told Rebekah that it would be the older of the twins, Esau, who would actually be subservient to the younger, Jacob. Now what we do not know is whether Rebekah told her husband Isaac what God had told her.

The text does not tell us she did or did not. Whether she did or not, one thing becomes very clear in the upbringing of the boys and that is they were radically different in almost every way.

Early on, Jacob seemed sensitive to spiritual matters involving long-term implications while Esau manifested more interest in things present, the material and the temporal.

And at stake amid all of their differences and their futures loomed the issue of the birthright and what all it entailed. By culture, tradition, and all they knew, the birthright belonged to the firstborn of the two, definitely Esau.

Both parents developed a favorite of their two sons, Isaac took to Esau, while Rebekah apparently developed a greater interest in Jacob. And Isaac cheered on the physical exploits of his older son Esau, and he especially liked the edible results of Esau's ability to put meat on the table, in particular a dish prepared from a successful hunt.

[60 : 00] Esau, physical, more materialistic, impulsive, was caught up in the temporal. He was the here and now, a man of action. Jacob, not nearly so much in the physical, but more attentive to things beyond the physical, especially to the birthright and the long-term consequences thereof.

Those emphases, plus others, revealed these twin boys Jacob and Esau to be radically different. It will come into full flower regarding the controversial issue of the birthright and what all would issue from it.

It's hard for us Westerners to grasp this birthright benefit thing because it's rooted in Mid-Eastern culture, not ours. But the Bible is of Mid-Eastern origin, and its contents can only be understood from that vantage point.

Something about this whole affair, including Rebecca and Jacob's deception, may just surprise you, and it's up next.

I think you will find it interesting. What we are now saying was a faulty assumption on the part of Isaac may well also be a faulty assumption of my own.

[61 : 20] And this is because I am assuming that Rebecca did tell Isaac what God had told her about the older of the twins, that it was Esau who would actually be subservient to the younger Jacob.

God was bypassing the traditional and cultural assignment of the firstborn and was instead bestowing it upon Jacob the younger.

And my faulty assumption may be in assuming Rebecca had told Isaac of this. And my assumption is based on the unlikelihood that something as monumental as this certainly would not have been kept from Isaac but Rebecca would have told him.

And that, I fully admit, may be a faulty assumption on my part. If, and I say if, Rebecca told Isaac of this, it did not appear to change his mind or his determination to give the patriarchal blessing to his favorite and firstborn, Esau.

Such would have meant the prevailing custom of the day would be given priority over what God had revealed to Rebecca. And such being the case certainly would constitute a faulty assumption on Isaac's part.

[62 : 39] He made it clear he intended to give his blessing to Esau, not Jacob. Rebecca, knowing the fullness of the picture, whether or not she told her husband Isaac, would do and did do whatever was necessary to assure that Jacob and not Esau got the blessing.

High drama here, is it not? Traditionally, Jacob and his conspiring mother are made the culprits of a grand deception in causing Isaac to think Jacob was Esau.

And historically, mother and son are excoriated for having deceived the poor old Isaac, whose hearing and eyesight was badly failing him.

Add to that the reputation with which Jacob was saddled by being a deceiver. And one thing is certain, no matter where blame is placed, the right son, Jacob, and not Esau, did receive the blessing.

And later events will clearly reveal Jacob to have been the son of God's choice to perpetuate the royal and priestly line and occupy a place of prominence as one of the patriarchs of Israel.

[63 : 59] And such will also be confirmed in the New Testament passage found in Romans chapter 9. In fact, Jacob's name will eventually be changed by God himself who will rename Jacob and call him Israel.

And that name change is recorded in Genesis 32 when Jacob wrestled with the angel at the brook Jabbok. Well, one thing is yet lacking and it relates to the significance of the blessing.

What was that all about? And why was this thing called the blessing such a big deal? That's upcoming.

Faulty Assumptions of Isaac, Part 3. During previous sessions of Christianity Clarified, we undertook an extensive study of hermeneutics. And in it, we pointed out the necessity of bridging the gaps existing between us and the Bible.

We told you there are language gaps, historical gaps, geographical gaps, and cultural gaps. This latter gap, the cultural, simply reveals that the customs and practices of everyday life in biblical times and places differ greatly from our own.

[65 : 24] Failure to recognize this finds us trying to force our present culture back upon the culture of biblical people, and the differences are often radical.

One such difference involved the patriarchal blessing that was customarily bestowed from father to son. It was a solemn and binding act not to be taken lightly.

Esau did take it lightly. So lightly, in fact, he was willing to forego it for a bowl of soup to satisfy his hunger. Esau was shallow, psychologically, and obviously very impetuous, not at all concerned about the future, but fully engrossed in the now.

Birthright? Yeah, you want this old birthright, Jacob? You can have it. Just give me some of that soup. So shallow was Esau's thinking.

He told Jacob in Genesis 25, Hey, I'm at the point of death. If I don't get something to eat, yes, you can have the birthright. What good would it do me if I'm dead?

[66 : 33] Jacob knew and valued highly something that went with the birthright. It was the blessing of the father, and it was very important. The reason was due not only to the temporal benefits in assuming the patriarchal position that was held by the father, but it involved spiritual implications as well.

And Esau simply did not value that like Jacob obviously did. And so did his mother, Rebekah, especially as she recalled what God told her about her sons when she was yet carrying them in her body.

We Westerners have great difficulty of trying to enter into this blessing custom with any real degree of understanding. Again, it represents a great divide existing between the ancient Easterners and thus modern Westerners.

And in addition to the status enhancement, there was another issue that entered into the custom of the blessing. and it appears to have been limited to those found in the Old Testament as well as being exclusively pertaining to those of Abraham's seed.

And it had to do with prophecy. The Hebrew father's blessing contained a prediction or prophecy of the son's future and his accomplishments. And when blessing Jacob, whom he thought to be Esau, the contents of that blessing and prophecy are very significant and included, May people serve you and nations bow down to you and may your mother's sons bow down to you and cursed be those who curse you and blessed be those who bless you.

[68 : 10] Question. Was all this pronounced upon the wrong son or the right son? More coming. A Blessing Laden with Prophecy Once the blessing of Isaac was given to Jacob rather than Esau as intended, nothing could be done to change that.

The blessing was given even though unintentionally to Jacob rather than Esau and its being withdrawn was not possible. That too was ingrained in their culture.

When Esau learned what happened he was deeply sorrowed and angry. Well, could not Isaac also give a blessing to Esau? Of course.

And he did. But it would not and could not be the blessing and its prophetic content he gave to Jacob. It was a blessing but completely different from that prophesied about Jacob.

And you can read all about it in Genesis 27. Esau's blessing included his living by the sword. That was prophesied of him. And so would his descendants live by the sword.

[69 : 27] In addition, Isaac prophesied that your brother Jacob is the one whom you will serve and you will rebel against him. So, just check the history between the descendants of these two brothers.

the epitome of this blessing and prophetic picture that seems to be exclusive for biblical personages, particularly those in the Old Testament, is going to be exhibited in Genesis 49 as we fast forward several years from Jacob receiving the blessing in disguise of his brother.

Now, the roles are going to be very different. Now, it will be Jacob who is giving the blessing years later and its attendant prophecies to his twelve sons who are gathered around him as he weakly lies on his deathbed.

Before breathing his last, Jacob pronounces and prophecies upon his sons from the eldest to the youngest in the order of their birth. Jacob sees far beyond his immediate sons gathered around him.

Beyond them, he tells them what their descendants will be like in their strengths and weaknesses, their successes and failures. And recall, if you will, this deathbed scene and its predictions occurred while they were all still in Egypt.

[70 : 46] And of these twelve sons we are drawn to Judah, who was Jacob's fourth-born son. It is he that will be the progenitor of the tribe that will bear his name, the tribe of Judah.

And of Judah, an amazing prediction is given by Jacob. He tells them that the scepter will not depart from Judah. What's that all about? The scepter was the rod of royalty.

It was an expression, a physical object, it was an expression of a physical object that belonged to one ruling royally with great authority. It is an unmistakable reference to the one who would one day be designated as the lion of the tribe of Judah, none other than Messiah the prince, who would one day arrive and receive obedience from all the people.

And looking far, far ahead, Jacob predicted the rule and reign of this special ruler would be a direct descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He would be Jesus the Messiah.

It all places great importance upon the blessing and the prophecy. You've just heard another session of Christianity Clarified with Marv Wiseman. A preview of Volume 44 Upcoming.

[72 : 18] While it is certainly true that the Bible, being the inerrant, infallible, inspired Word of God, it is also true that our interpretations of the Bible do not enjoy the same reality.

The Bible is subject to interpretation, and we have interpretations aplenty of nearly every doctrine in this grand old book.

And it is out of these differing interpretations of the same passages that cause one group to believe and go one way, while another believes differently and goes another way.

And all do so in good faith. This is how and why denominations, councils, synods, presbyteries, conventions, and the like come into being.

More than anything else, it is due to having arrived at different interpretations of various passages of Scripture and the different emphases that various groups place upon the passage in question.

[73 : 23] This is precisely why so much time was spent on earlier CDs of Christianity Clarified dealing with the subject of hermeneutics. For those not familiar with the term, it is simply the academic discipline dealing with the art and science of interpreting the Bible.

And in our opinion, the best advice ever given to accomplish that task has been given often on Christianity Clarified. It is a quote from Miles Coverdale who in the year 1535 gave us the first complete printed English Bible and along with it he offered these valuable guidelines and we say valuable because it is our opinion that this quote originating from Coverdale represents the single most valuable literary statement outside of the Bible ever to exist.

Along with the quote we offered the sentiment that if only the world's ministers and scholars would adhere to Coverdale's rules much that divides Christendom and has for hundreds of years would simply evaporate.

Here is the quote Miles Coverdale It shall greatly help ye to understand Scripture if thou mark not only what is spoken or written but of whom and to whom with what words at what time where to what intent with what circumstances considering what goeth before and what followeth.

This quote so valuable would prove to be a uniting force for all of Christendom because so many would be arriving at like interpretations of a given passage that would automatically unite us rather than divide us with diverse interpretations such as we have now.

[75 : 31] However don't hold your breath waiting for that to happen. Yet we do feel compelled to do what we can in our little corner of the world. So currently we are identifying a multitude of faulty assumptions made in the past that have been the basis for many of the diverse doctrines different groups have arrived at.

Already noted were several faulty assumptions of Judaism the embracing of which proved disastrous for the Jews and the same can be said for Roman Catholicism that follow Judaism. The faulty assumptions made by early Catholic figures that continue to be embraced today are completely lacking in biblical support.

But not to be outdone the Protestant faction derived from its Catholic origins has fared no better than have the Catholics. The Reformers whom so many congratulate for abandoning their Roman Catholic roots entered the arena of making faulty assumptions of their own and they to this day continue to separate believers from believers in a way that neutralizes the impact that might be made on the world if we were united.

And are we immune from making faulty assumptions of our own here on Christianity clarified? While we point out the faulty assumptions of others may we have some of our own?

[77 : 09] Of course. So let's all be on guard and try to spot anything that does not comport with the truth of scripture. Are we of Christianity clarified offering you some kind of guarantee?

Of course not. But we can offer you only a good faith attempt behind the conclusions we reach. But wait, didn't all those who came up with the faulty assumptions we have already revealed, didn't they arrive at those with good faith also?

Oh me, see what we're up against? Well, you'll find out more with Christianity clarified, volume 44 ahead. Meanwhile, this is Pastor Marv Wiseman.

Thank you so much for being with us. May the Lord richly bless you.