

Christianity Clarified Volume 52

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[0 : 00] Christianity Clarified, Volume 52, Track 1. Unsustainable Agnosticism An agnostic attitude finds itself in popular company today.

It is a favored position of many who think they can place themselves in a state of intellectual neutrality, but they have not. The word agnostic, spelled A-G-N-O-S-T-I-C, literally means not to know.

One holding the position of agnosticism may congratulate himself in admitting that there is no such thing as absolute truth that can be known for certain.

By absolute truth, we mean truth that is applicable and binding upon all people everywhere.

Agnosticism is an appealing position because it allows for each to establish for oneself what is true or not according to one's personal persuasion.

It's a, you have your truth and I have mine. And even though our truths may be contradictory one to another, yet neither of us is wrong because we are both right.

[1 : 12] This is achieved simply because right and wrong are decided by the individual, not by any overarching authority that establishes truth for all. And one immediate result of this thinking is the concept of evangelism and missions is no longer acceptable or even needed.

Because what Christian missions is all about is bringing people from spiritual and moral blindness into the light of the truth. But, say the agnostics and the relativists, what people already believe is true.

It is true for them. And you have no right to ask them to abandon what they personally hold to be true so they can embrace what you say is true.

Well, Christians respond with, But we are not asking people to believe what we say is true because it's what we believe. We are asking people to believe what that singular, overarching authority has revealed to be true, namely, God Himself.

The moral relativists and agnostics are very close, very close to atheism. Atheism flatly states, There is no God.

[2 : 28] The agnostic does not deny the existence of God, nor does he affirm God's existence. True to the meaning of the word agnostic, he asserts, There may be a God, or there may not be a God.

I don't know. You don't know. Nobody knows, because it cannot be known. Hence, agnosticism is the only logical position one can hold.

But if it is asserted that no one can know the certainty of God, or of absolute truth, then, how is it possible the agnostic can know that?

And is he not stating that as an absolute truth? He occupies a self-defeating position. He insists that he knows what he has already insisted cannot be known.

You see, in actuality, agnosticism is a cleverly devised dodge intended to remove him from moral and spiritual accountability. But it doesn't work.

[3 : 30] And it will not work. Agnosticism is a logically impossible position to hold, over and out. Christianity Clarified, Volume 52, Track 2 Seeking God is an Opportunity The very fact our Creator God is available and capable of being sought out is extraordinary in itself.

That God is willing to be known by His creatures is His gracious and remarkable provision. It's an opportunity provided by our God to enhance or maximize the creature's experience of life by being able to connect with our Creator.

So, what are we humans to make of this God-given opportunity? One would think it would result in a high level of gratitude from humanity in general, simply for God having provided the opportunity to know and draw near to our Creator, the very source of our being.

But was that the human response realized? Hardly. In fact, the collective response from humanity was a far cry from gratitude. Instead, the response from humanity in general is found in Romans chapter 1, depicted in a very unflattering way.

And here's the way the text puts it. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks. But they became futile in their imagination, and their foolish heart was darkened, professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

[5 : 15] Therefore, God gave them over in the lust of their hearts to impurity, that their bodies might be dishonored among them. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever.

How utterly tragic and ungrateful on the part of early mankind! And how tragic that this response continues today!

The Apostle Paul reminds us of the continuation of this attitude into the very last days. In his second letter to young Timothy, Paul describes succeeding generations of always learning, but never coming to the knowledge of the truth.

Sadly, the early response of humanity to the creative goodness of God is predicted and repeated to be the present and future response also. Whether the ancient, darkened worship of animals or the secular attitude of the present, it all centers on the worship of the creature rather than the Creator. Predictably, the basis for this unflattering human predicament is related to the original fall of our first parents, they who passed this fallen disposition to each succeeding generation.

[6 : 41] It has in every way permeated every aspect of humanity. Our generation has certainly not escaped it. It has produced the present world we live in.

We cannot say mankind has made the most of this God-given opportunity to know and connect with our Creator. Now can we? Christianity Clarified, Volume 52, Track 3.

Seeking God is Our Responsibility, Part 1. Earlier sessions of Christianity Clarified, particularly in Volume 9, the principle of volition was bestowed not only upon angelic beings, but upon humans as well, beginning with our very first parents, Adam and Eve.

Volition made them free moral agents with the capacity to obey or disobey their Creator. It is also this ability of choice and reality of it that makes all of us accountable to our Creator.

Our use of this capacity for choice then becomes the basis for our eventual evaluation before God. It is the reckoning day we all must and will face.

[7 : 58] What will we do in the usage of the will with which we are all endowed? The first and foremost thing we are commanded to do with our will is to seek out the one who gave it and connect with Him.

And there is no greater need the creature has than to connect with the Creator. Therein, in Him, is where absolutely everything lies. He is the originator of it all.

So what does it mean to connect with God? It begins with acknowledging Him. We acknowledge God in recognizing Him as existing and having brought all things into existence.

It is our response to creation itself, which the Apostle Paul asserts in Romans chapter 1, stating, Because that which is known about God is evident within them, for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world, His invisible attributes, His eternal power, and divine nature have been clearly seen, being understood through what was made, so that they are without excuse.

[9 : 02] Herein lies the initial step of man responding to the Creator. It is on the undeniable basis of what God has made and is clearly seen.

Seeking God is the result or consequence of man viewing creation and asking himself that unavoidable question, Where did all this come from? Who made it, and why?

And why is there something rather than nothing? Creation is thus the vehicle God uses to reveal His own existence to man and to evoke a desire in man to know this Creator.

But that will call upon the volition man has to seek after the Creator God. Will he seek after God, or will he turn his volition upon himself, inward, and seek to become his own God?

Autonomy is very appealing to our human nature. Let's face it, we all want to be in charge of ourselves. And this self-centeredness was an immediate, powerful consequence of the original fall in Eden.

[10 : 09] It is systemic to all of humanity and goes a long way toward explaining why the world is as it is. Still, gracious provision has been made by God whereby we can rise above this.

How? Only via the connection with the Creator. Here is an utterly beautiful thing. Anyone wanting to can connect with God the Creator. The problem lies in whether man wants to. And there is that volition thing again.

Christianity Clarified, Volume 52, Track 4. Seeking God is Our Responsibility, Part 2. Who is in the position to actually assure anyone they can have a personal connection to the God of creation? God is. God Himself. And how and why does He do that? He does it by responding to your response. And He waits for your response to do it.

[11 : 17] Here is how this works. God has made His eternal power available and on display through the things that are clearly made. This we saw in Romans 1.

What is our response to this clearly seen creation? Does it evoke a desire to know and connect with this Creator God? If you answer, No, then stop right there.

Your response would be, No response. At least, No positive response. And what will be God's response to that? No response.

Why are we using this word response so much? Because it is what responsibility is all about. Responding.

In order for there to be a response to anything, there must be a stimulus. Something that will cause a response. In our case here, the stimulus is creation itself, designed by God to evoke your response.

[12 : 22] So, what is your response? Is it to ignore and dismiss it? If so, God honors your response in respect to the volition He gave you.

God will not bowl you over, trample your volition, and force you to respond positively. But, God be praised, what He will do is to make Himself available as Creator and Redeemer to all who earnestly seek Him.

How great is that! Repeatedly, throughout Scripture, the invitation is there for men to seek after God. Not only is it an invitation, it is presented as a responsibility on our part.

And fulfilling that responsibility of seeking God brings incredible reward. This is the age-old principle established throughout the Bible, whether one is Jewish or Gentile.

Hebrews 11 assures us that God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. And, what then is the reward? Ha ha! Finding Him!

[13 : 33] Maximum payoff! This is what Paul was referencing when addressing the Greek intellectuals in Athens found in Acts 17. Paraphrased here, The God who made the world and all things in it gives to all life and breath and all things, and He made from one every nation to live on all the face of the earth, having determined the appointed time and the boundaries of their habitation, that they should seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him.

Though He is not far from each of us. Did you get that? It is saying God is discoverable. He is there to be found out. God is not hidden so as to be unavailable.

He's even eager for us to respond to the stimulus of creation He sets before us to evoke our questions and desire to connect with Him. But, there is a qualification to be met by those who would seek God and it's up next.

Christianity Clarified Volume 52, Track 5 Seeking God is a Responsibility Part 3 We have all heard of someone approaching a certain responsibility in a half-hearted manner.

What does that mean? It means they were not all in. It means their heart, drive, determination was not in the matter. Half-heartedness results in the failure of whatever the pursuit is.

[15 : 00] Anyone seeking God in a half-hearted manner will not find Him. God makes Himself known and available to the serious, not the curious.

The thought is reinforced in Hebrews 11 mentioned earlier where we are told that God is a rewarder of those that diligently seek Him. Diligently means seriousness of purpose.

Being diligent in seeking God simply means one is in earnest about the pursuit. It's a no-nonsense matter that means business.

And God is more than ready to be found of those seriously pursuing or seeking Him. But the half-hearted need not apply. God will not reveal Himself to those who would trifle with Him.

And about this seeking issue, another question surfaces. Is it possible one will not seriously seek God because he is afraid he might find Him?

[16 : 03] What would that entail? The fear that God may require something from you that you do not wish to provide? So the thinking might well be, so back off this seeking business because if you

were to find God, you might regret it.

That sounds like a satanically inspired impediment. How utterly foolish to think that finding God could actually be a negative. Yet, that is the kind of warped thinking man can conjure up, especially with the aid and influence of the adversary.

Be advised, however, that you have nothing to lose and everything to gain by discovering the God of creation and redemption. Coming to know Him outweighs any fantasy or fear of regret.

You could not possibly be in better hands for the present or for eternity than finding and truly coming to know the lover of your soul. Recall that comforting promise of Romans 8.32 that tells us of God's love and care for believers saying, He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things.

Did you hear that? All things. What does that mean? It does not mean God will shower you with the trinkets the world values. It means God will freely bestow upon you the all things that really matter.

[17 : 31] These are big picture items that you will enjoy throughout eternity, not the transient things of the world that are fading away. Seeking God is indeed a responsibility.

And finding Him is more satisfying and life-changing than any other possible pursuit one could ever imagine or engage.

Untold millions can testify to that reality and with no regrets, other than the regret, perhaps, of not searching and finding Him sooner than they did.

Christianity Clarified, Volume 52, Track 6. A Prior Commitment is Necessary, Part 1. The opportunity for humans to seek God, as well as a responsibility for doing so, have been considered. Both stem from the exercise of our volition which God has given us. With our will, we make the decision to seek God or not to seek Him. And as reminded in Romans 1 and elsewhere in Scripture, God has, through the things He created, provided the stimulus for us to search Him out.

[18 : 44] If we do seek to know the Creator God, it must be on His terms, not ours. His terms require a prior commitment to Him, and that involves following the evidence wherever it leads with a submissive attitude on our part before we can expect Him to reveal Himself to us.

The evidence that God is available to be known, as Romans 1 asserts, is clearly seen by the things God has made. Creation itself puts the Creator on display and advertises His availability and desire to be known.

We call this general revelation by a creation, and any man ignoring that is left without excuse. To add to this general revelation of creation, God has also provided special or particular revelation, and it comes in two venues.

One is the revelation given in God's written Word, the Bible. The other is given in God's Word, made flesh, in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. General revelation only tells us that God is, a Creator exists.

But it does not tell us who that God is, what He is like, or what He demands from us, His creatures. That is the purpose of special revelation. But if man refuses to respond to the stimulus of general revelation, neither is he open to special revelation.

[20 : 16] Contrary to what many believe, God is not hiding. He has splashed His calling card all over creation and left His imprint on every page of Holy Scripture.

If you seriously desire to seek God, you must do so with a prior commitment. It is the commitment to be responsive and obedient to God upon His disclosure to you.

It's the one requirement God has made for any who wish to know Him. In this, God sets His terms for His self-disclosure to those who would seek Him.

And God will go to whatever length necessary in order to reveal Himself to any who diligently seek Him. But any who are not diligent, that is, who are not serious, need not apply, because God will not be trifled with.

If with your heart and an eager-to-submit attitude you wish to know the true God so you can respond to Him in obedience, God will be found by you. Remember our key question?

[21 : 19] If what you now believe about life's great issues is not true, would you want to know it? If so, God is available and eager to get His truth to you.

His ways of doing so and the vessels He might use are limitless. All we need is that honest and willing heart that seeks Him diligently with a desire to obey Him when He is revealed to you.

Have you these qualifications? Each must answer for himself. A prayer is suggested upcoming. I hope you'll join us. Christianity Clarified Volume 52, Track 7 A Prayer Commitment is Necessary,

Part 2 What is now being suggested to all listeners might well be called a can't-lose prayer. It is a prayer God cannot resist for anyone praying it. But it will not work for anyone who is merely mouthing the words. It is not an abracadabra or open sesame prayer to be used like some magical formula.

If this prayer is not from the heart as an honest expression of your will God will know it and ignore it because you can't con God nor will He be manipulated by anyone human or angelic.

[22 : 37] So if you have already answered positively to that previous question if what you now believe is not true would you want to know it? Then here is an everything to gain and nothing to lose prayer you may be sure God will hear and honor and you may address the Almighty with these words or their equivalent as you would fashion them.

Heavenly Father there is so much about you and about all this current subject matter I do not understand and there is so much about the great issues of origins and meaning and purpose and death and eternal destiny of which I am not at all certain but I do know one thing that is for certain I honestly do want to know.

So if what I now believe about these issues is not true then God I am counting on you to reveal that to me and with the information there will come the peace and joy that accompany it.

As best as I know my own heart and motives my desire to know you and your truth is that I might be obedient to it to the best of my ability and how and when you choose to reveal your truth to me I leave to you.

I sincerely want to make myself available when you do and meet your revelation with my obedience. Amen. Well my dear listening friend that is a prayer that cannot be prayed amiss provided it was truly meant.

[24 : 07] And it matters not whether you are Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Atheist, Agnostic, or whatever else you may be. God will hear the cry of your heart and will get his truth to you through whatever means he chooses.

You just remain committed to your decision of being obedient and trust God to take it from there. And he will. And you can see how and why this is a can't lose prayer can you not?

Our seriously minded question if what you now believe is not true would you want to know it has been answered by you in a positive way? Yes, you would want to know it.

Well, be assured God will not leave you unknowing. God will use whatever means at his disposal to get his truth to you because he wants you to know him even more than you want to know him. And, the payoff of knowing and rejoicing in the truth, the peace and the joy and eternal life that accompany it is absolutely priceless.

[25 : 19] May God richly bless you as you diligently pursue him and his truth. Christianity Clarified, Volume 52, Track 8, Good Faith, Faulty Assumptions.

It's very important that the lack of knowledge and understanding we all have be humbly acknowledged. Christianity Clarified is not set forth as some infallible corner on the truth.

It is merely an ongoing effort to expose what the Bible reveals as true contrasted with what many of different religious persuasions have regarded as true through the past 2,000 years.

In many cases, the differences are dramatic. Considerable time has already been spent revealing faulty assumptions made in good faith by early followers of Judaism, Catholicism, and Protestantism.

Even though the faulty assumptions made by all these groups were just that, faulty, nonetheless, they were adopted by their faithful followers and etched in stone doctrinally.

[26 : 30] As a result, they are still believed and upheld by adherents of all these groups and continue to be so to the present day. And it should not surprise us that these very differences are the principal things that divide us, whether they involve Judaism, Catholicism, or Protestantism.

And while their doctrinal positions were arrived at in good faith, their conclusions often contradicted others who, with their equally good faith, disagreed.

The only thing all these groups with their conclusions agreed upon was that they were right while the other groups were wrong. So, which set of good faith conclusions should one adopt?

Often, it merely depends on the group into which you and your family were born. But, your birth does not decide the truthfulness or accuracy of your doctrinal position.

Only the Scriptures decide that. And they are subject to interpretation. such provides the rationale for the origin of Christianity Clarified.

[27 : 35] And what about the accuracy of the conclusions reached and taught here on Christianity Clarified? Are we somehow exempt from making faulty assumptions of our own? Ha ha!

By no means! But we do have the advantage those earlier groups did not have, whether Jewish, Roman Catholic, or Protestant. They, particularly the Roman Catholic, made their faulty assumptions before the whole of the Bible was even completed.

Their faulty assumptions and conclusions were firmly in place before the complete canon of Scripture was even recognized in the 4th century. Still, that did not prevent them from building doctrine upon those faulty assumptions, and those doctrines become deeply entrenched among the faithful and remain in place to this present time.

Our explanation of all this will begin with the faulty assumptions of the Jews, having already dealt with that somewhat on past sessions. But we begin again with the Jews simply because, historically, chronologically, they were on the scene first, thus making Judaism the very cradle of Christianity, both Roman Catholicism and Protestantism.

Some eye-opening content begins just ahead. Christianity Clarified, Volume 52, Track 9, The Jew is Where It All Began.

[29 : 07] The descriptive terminology, the Jew is where it all began, is extremely telling. And what is meant by that is that, out of Judaism, what would become the Roman Catholic Church had its beginnings.

And it was out of the Roman Catholic Church that what would be known as Protestantism had its origin via the Reformation spearheaded by Martin Luther in the 16th century.

And from that, various subgroups of followers called denominations would emerge, each with doctrinal distinctions that separate them from the other groups.

This is where we are at the present. To all of these groups, a provocative question has been posed. Do you recall it? If what you now believe is not true, would you want to know it?

For sure, everyone should be able to answer that with a hearty affirmative. Yes, of course. Alas, it is not always so. Because some, many in fact, are so deeply entrenched and emotionally fixed in their position, they can only insist there is no possibility what they now believe is not true.

[30 : 26] And for these, we can only sadly say we understand their position, even though we respectfully disagree with it. Still, they are welcome to join us, and if they listen only out of curiosity, they no doubt will learn something that may even further confirm them in their belief.

Because truth has a way of working in unexpected ways. We trust the God of all truth to make known to us what He wants us to know. Several sessions ago on Christianity Clarified, volumes 43 onward, considerable time was spent dealing with the Jewish faulty assumptions, as well as the horrible and evil persecution that for millennia has been heaped upon the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

And we will not now revisit those, but they do remain available from Christianity Clarified to anyone wishing to consult them. And you can easily access them online just by going to gracebiblespringfield.com, follow the link to Christianity Clarified segments, and click on volumes 43 through 50 of Christianity Clarified.

But for now, and to begin with where it all began, we must revisit the Jewish issue with that question. If what you now believe is not true, would you want to know it?

And the same will be asked later of the Roman Catholics and the Protestants. It is a question perpetually asked of myself. Having come from a background of no spiritual belief at all, to the point of my own personal conversion and embracing of faith, I became an ardent student of the Bible for the past 60 plus years.

[32 : 14] And during those six decades of study, several wrinkles in my own belief system were discovered and needed to be ironed out. And yes, I'm still ironing, and no, I have not arrived, and anyone who tells you they have arrived and have nothing but complete 100% truth should be avoided.

In our next session, the question of what you now believe is not true, would you want to know it, will be addressed to the Jewish people. I hope you'll all join us. Christianity Clarified, Volume 52, Track 10, The Why and How of the Jew, Part 1.

What will now be set forth will sound sympathetic, appreciative, and even grateful and loving toward the Jewish people. And it is with no apologies.

And no, I am not Jewish, though the name Wiseman is a common Jewish name. It is not my real name, but my adoptive name. And no, my adoptive father was not Jewish either. My biological name is Stevens. My genetic makeup is English, French, and Scotch Irish. So then, why all this emphasis on the Jewish people?

[33 : 22] It is because on the Jewish people, it is that God has placed His emphasis, and it is reinforced throughout the Bible in the Old Testament, which the Jews accept, as well as the New Testament, which the Jews do not accept.

Both Testaments firmly assert the strategic necessity of the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to the plan and program God has designed for the ages. Does this then make us lovers of the Jewish people?

Well, of course it does, and the reason should be obvious. God is a lover of the Jewish people, even though there are some Jews who are known to doubt that. And by the way, it also makes us lovers of Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and, well, you get the point, do you not?

And why is it? Well, it's because God so loved the world, all people, that He gave His only begotten Son. So if the world at large is the object of God's love, need we any other reason for believing otherwise?

Be advised, if you will, of a humorous but true expression someone tacked on our bulletin board at church. It simply said, Just love everybody.

[34 : 38] I will sort them out later. Signed, God. Good advice for all people in all places, particularly among those who claim to love all that God loves.

So because of the strategic critical nature of the Jewish people, we are compelled to continue our very revealing study of them. Recall, if you will, that they were chronologically first involved going back to early Genesis.

And their role in history is undisputed as well as regards their role in future prophetic fulfillment.

That too is undisputed. Upcoming will be consideration of the prophecies God gave to Israel in the Tanakh, that is, the Jewish Bible referred to by Christians as the Old Testament.

To Jews, the Tanakh consists of the law, the prophets, and the writings. And it is in the abundance of these prophecies from the Jewish Bible or the Christian Old Testament that examination will be undertaken.

And the findings will prove to be startling to some and confirming to others. Each will have to decide for himself whether you are Jewish, Gentile, atheist, or whatever.

[35 : 48] And what is critical to it all is whether we have the intellectual integrity for critically examining the evidence rather than to merely resort to the built-in prejudices we all seem to have accumulated over the years.

Each will be in charge of his own biases and his own ability to be objective. We'll see how it all goes beginning just ahead. Do hope you're planning on joining us.

Christianity Clarified, Volume 52, Track 11, The Why and How of the Jew, Part 2. In both the Old and New Testaments there was only one kind of prophet.

Jewish. Exclusively Jewish. Even the New Testament, often referred to as Christian, was written in its entirety by Jewish penmen inspired of God.

And all those who first believed Jesus of Nazareth to be Israel's Messiah were Jews. Yes, all of them. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Peter, Paul, Barnabas, Silas, Thomas, all of them were seed of their ancient fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

[37 : 01] A Gentile or non-Jewish person never entered the first century Israeli scene until the Roman army officer named Cornelius came to believe in the Jewish Messiah.

And that was nearly ten years after the resurrection of Christ. Think of that. For the first decade after the death of Christ, all who believed in Jesus as Israel's Messiah were Jews exclusively. And Cornelius, being a Gentile, caused quite a stir among the Jews when he came to believe. Why? Just because he was not Jewish. And by the way, none of those Jews were regarded as or called Christians because they weren't.

What were they? They were simply Jews who'd never stopped being Jewish, but were persuaded that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the long-awaited Messiah of Israel whom God had sent.

We are told in Acts chapter 4 that there were, in a short time after Messiah's resurrection, 5,000 men who had come to believe in Jesus as Israel's Messiah.

[38 : 09] And, of course, these were all Jews, no Gentiles. Despite that rapidly growing number, it consisted mainly of what could be called the common people, as opposed to the ruling class of chief priests, Sadducees, and Pharisees.

The only exception to our knowledge were Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, both Pharisees, who, of course, were Jewish. As the number of Jews who believed Jesus to be the Messiah continued to grow, the Jewish ruling class became increasingly agitated and uncomfortable. While they attributed the common folks believing in Jesus to be nothing more than the ignorance of the masses, still they feared that the numbers might excite a revolution against the occupying Romans.

And were that to occur, then their very position and the perks and privileges the Romans gave them could be lost. Their only recourse was to level a series of threats against the apostles of Christ, warning them to stop preaching about Jesus and this resurrection.

The apostles, unwilling to comply with the Jewish leaders' demands, believed themselves under obligation from God Himself to continue preaching.

[39 : 32] Their insistence would quickly result in the first wave of persecution against the disciples of Jesus. And it was Jews persecuting Jews. No Romans or Gentiles were involved.

Roman persecution would come later. But for now, it was Jews alone who were flogging and jailing other Jews. Christianity Clarified, Volume 52, Track 12.

The Why and How of the Jew, Part 3. If the Scriptures attest to anything, it is the unmistakable presence, influence, and strategic position of the Jewish people.

This is reflected throughout the Old and New Testaments. And it has been observed that God has made the Jew, the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to be indispensable to His plan and program.

He did not make the Jewish people indispensable because He had no choice. It was because He did have a choice. He freely obligated Himself to do so. One can only imagine how this must rankle those who are anti-Semitic.

[40 : 39] They likely are emotionally vibrating just by hearing the Jewish people spoken of in these terms. But it is God who established the whole affair, and anyone not accepting that can take it up with Him.

At the same time, it should also be noted there are considerable numbers of Jews who also reject the role assigned to them by God. These, as well as the anti-Semites, need to get over it and get with the program so clearly and repeatedly set forth in both Testaments.

Sadly, there are, and always have been, Jews themselves who have rebelled against God to their own detriment. And it's no different with members of Jews in this present day.

Historically, it was the Jewish idolatry and rebellion against God that led to their Babylonian captivity and later to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 A.D.

In fact, such was even prophesied by Jesus as He wept over Jerusalem, the city He loved, in Luke's Gospel chapter 19. Moses and other Old Testament prophets repeatedly warned Israel that God would use pagan nations to destroy Jerusalem and then scatter the Jewish people throughout the nations of the world.

[41 : 58] And such, of course, met tragic fulfillment over the two millennia that followed and continues to the present day. In 1948, the state of Israel was miraculously reborn and has prospered with significant accomplishments, with many of the Jews from all over the globe having returned to their ancient homeland.

Still, most have not returned on the basis of any spiritual motivation. Most Jews returning to Israel are doing so for security reasons, coupled with the potential for freedom and opportunity in their ancient homeland rather than from any religious purposes.

Such is borne out by the fact that the majority of Israel's population today proudly proclaim themselves to be secular, not religious, not even to the serious practice of Judaism.

And all of this is also the clear teaching of the Jewish prophets in the Old Testament and confirmed by those of the new as well. And along with it all, there yet looms large the issue of Israel's Messiah and his identity.

To this, nearly all of Israel's prophets speak with great clarity. So far, Israelites as a whole are still not listening. Jews as well as Gentiles should hear what those prophets have said and make up their own mind.

[43 : 23] And that undertaking begins just ahead. Jew and Gentiles alike are welcome to join us. Both will find the content quite revealing. Christianity Clarified, Volume 52, Track 13, What Everything is All About, Part 1.

Having identified the Jewish people as God sees them, that is, critical to His plan and purpose, it follows that it should involve the entire earth and all the nations in it.

And it does. In fact, the principal reason for the Messiah even showing up as promised is that He might affect the redemption for the entire fallen planet.

When God originally created all things in Genesis 1, He described it as very good. We all know what happened. To crash the creation from its original very good to something far less.

It is this far less world that we now live in. It's characterized by negative things that could never have been a part of the very good world created by God in the beginning.

[44 : 34] It has become a world fraught with conflict, chaos, disease, and death. It is a broken world in desperate need of being fixed. A world in need of radical repair.

The biblical term for it all is called redemption. That this redemption is to be realized through a Redeemer is the core issue, the central pervasive theme of the entire Bible.

This Redeemer is further promised by God to also be Israel's Redeemer. And not only Israel's Redeemer, but the Redeemer for the entire broken world.

The scripture calls this the kingdom of God coming to earth when Messiah Jesus will be king of all the earth. Such is the overarching theme of all the Bible and the very core of the ministry of all the prophets God raised up through the ages.

This redemptive state is also called the millennium, the thousand year reign of Messiah, utopia, paradise, or paradise regained, heaven on earth, the earthly rule of God, the restitution or restoration of all things, and the messianic age.

[45 : 50] It is this for which the prophets pined and promised. And it is the Messiah who is to be the sole instrument for its accomplishment. Can you not then readily see why Israel has a fiddle as it were with only one string on it played over and over and over, Messiah, Messiah, Messiah?

It is played repetitively with great justification. It is quite literally what everything is all about and the end to which all is moving. Messiah is to be initiator of it all as the seed of the woman promised in Genesis 3.15 as well as the direct descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, then through David the king.

It ought to be abundantly apparent why the Jew and the Jewish nation is so key to it all. God could have as easily chosen the Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Assyrians, the Persians, through whom he would accomplish all of this.

He could have. But he chose Abraham and his seed for his own good reasons. And we are just now examining the Jewish prophets, their predictions, and some of the details surrounding them, particularly with the principal player, the Messiah.

More just ahead. Christianity Clarified, Volume 52, Track 14, What Everything is All About, Part 2. Our previous session disclosed the coming renovation of planet Earth to be realized through God's appointed agent called the Messiah.

[47 : 28] The word literally means the Anointed One. He who anointed or chose Him was God Himself. It is imperative this Messiah show up on planet Earth to implement all these positive changes that Earth is to undergo.

Little wonder, then, that the prophets focused so much on this special person, God's chosen one, who, by the way, will make His entrance through the chosen people.

And why do you suppose Israel is called God's chosen people if not through them the chosen one was to come? More than anything else, this is why Israel possesses this singular elevated status.

It is because through them the Messiah who will come from the tribe of Judah, one of the sons of Jacob, who was one of the sons of Isaac, who was one of the sons of Abraham.

And there you have it. Like it or not, believe it or not, accept it or not, that's the way it is because that's the way God wanted it. If God was going to choose anybody, He had to choose somebody.

[48 : 40] His name was Abraham. And it would be through Abraham, as Moses prophesied, that all the nations of the earth would be blessed. How so?

Principally through that Messiah who would eventually enter earth through the line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He would be that seed of the woman, referred to in Genesis chapter 3, known as the Messiah.

Do you realize that, as monumental as this is, the world at large is mysteriously ignorant about the whole matter?

Some Gentiles have suspicions that something may be up every Christmas season, but its true significance soon gets lost in all the commercialism and holiday hoopla.

And soon after, it's back to business as usual. Of course, this suits the game plan of the adversary, the devil, who wants as little knowledge of the Messiah as possible to be known.

[49 : 38] And given the overall ignorance of the masses, even in the USA, where people surely should know better, the ignorance is appalling. Satan continues to have his heyday, evidenced by all that's going on in the Western world as a whole.

Still, his successes cannot cancel out what the prophets have written regarding God's anointed Messiah. And if the prophets have written it, you may be certain it will not fail of fulfillment if God has to move heaven and earth to do it.

Despite the fact that there are scores of prophecies given in the Jewish Tanakh, which is the same as the Christian Old Testament, we will concern ourselves with only the more familiar 10 or 12 on our upcoming segments.

And we will also deal with the mathematical probability of their being fulfilled as prophesied, and precisely so. It is soul-stirring stuff, faith-affirming content, and it will be coming just ahead.

It's critical to what everything is all about. Christianity Clarified, Volume 52, Track 15, The Jewish Prophets Speak, Part 1.

[50 : 54] This and following segments of Christianity Clarified will focus on presenting evidence from the Tanakh, that is, the Jewish Old Testament, regarding the prophecies given about the Messiah God has promised to send.

Evidence must be presented, heard, and evaluated before one can reach a decision about it. It is not enough merely for a claim to be made. Anyone can claim anything.

Reasons must be given to substantiate the evidence, and they must be compelling reasons if one is expected to believe the claim. Refusing to even hear the evidence, or reaching a conclusion before hearing the pro and con of the evidence, is actually irresponsible.

It's like hearing the prosecution's evidence in a court of law and reaching a verdict before even hearing the position of the defense. Such would be unthinkable in any responsible court of law and justice.

Words of wisdom about that are expressed in the Tanakh found in Proverbs, chapter 18, verse 13, that states, Ah, one can certainly hope that no self-respecting Jew or Gentile would answer a matter, pronounce a verdict, or reach a decision without hearing the available evidence.

[52 : 16] The only thing more foolish would be refusing to hear any of the evidence regarding the claim, and such, of course, would be indescribably foolish. It may be naive, but we are assuming there are none that foolish in our audience.

So a lithony of claims pertaining to Jesus of Nazareth being the Messiah will be presented for your evaluation. And upon hearing the evidence, each can decide for oneself whether the evidence is credible.

If it is deemed to be not credible, then one's intellectual integrity ought to provide credible reasons for rejecting it. Each of you listening and evaluating the evidence will be cast in the role of judge and jury, all rolled into one.

And the only one you need satisfy is yourself. Be reminded again that whatever decision you arrive at does have enormous consequences and fallout, both in this present life and in that to come.

And it is hoped each will solemnly regard the entire matter in light of its consequences. Some of you, of course, may have already heard the evidence and reached a decision perhaps long ago.

[53 : 31] And if so, what you will be hearing upcoming will likely confirm the decision you reached earlier. Still, some may have heard only bits and pieces of the evidence and may have reached your conclusion based on that, incomplete evidence.

Sometimes that's what enables us to reach those faulty assumptions. So if that's true of you, then in your case, hearing additional evidence unknown earlier may just cause you to reconsider your previous conclusion.

In either case, you stand to be better informed with a much more satisfying conclusion. So, if you'll come along with us, I'm confident you will enjoy the journey.

We will get started upcoming. Christianity Clarified, Volume 52, Track 16. The Jewish Prophets Speak, Part 2.

It's all about the available evidence and the assessment of that evidence. But if you do not hear it, you cannot assess it. Only upon hearing it can one conclude whether it is credible.

[54 : 42] Turning to the Jewish prophets found in the Tanakh, which is identical to the Christian Old Testament, a number of specific things are prophesied by both major and minor prophets. Details which will be true of the Messiah when He comes are clearly set forth by the prophets, most of whom wrote hundreds of years before the first century.

Already treated on an earlier session of Christianity Clarified was the Genesis 3 prophecy about the seed or offspring of the woman rendering a final defeat to the serpent with the picture of Messiah crushing the head of the serpent.

In Genesis 12, 3 and 22, 17, references made that all the nations of the earth will be blessed through the seed or offspring of Abraham.

The majority of Jewish and Christian scholars believe the seed refers to none other than Messiah when He comes. It is too obvious to disagree with their conclusion.

Likewise, Genesis 49 refers to the tribe of Judah being the royal tribe, the ancestral line through which the Messiah King will come.

[55 : 55] Where He is to be born is identified by the prophet Micah in chapter 5. Bethlehem in Judah is where Messiah will make His entrance into the world.

He is further described as one who pre-existed prior to that birth in Bethlehem. In addition to the Messiah's being directly descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and further through Judah, one of Jacob's twelve sons, Messiah will also be a direct descendant of David the king, who lived and reigned in Israel a thousand years before the first century.

Add to that the prophecy of Isaiah chapter 9, stating that Messiah will occupy the throne of His father David and will from that throne dispense justice and righteousness throughout the earth. And in this same passage, the Messiah is described as the mighty God and eternal Father. Deity can hardly be spoken of in clearer terms than that.

What else can be concluded from these passages other than assigning deity to this promised Messiah? In chapter 7, Isaiah further sees the uniqueness of the Messiah being conceived and delivered by a virgin.

[57 : 15] For centuries, Jewish scholars have debated over this promised coming one. When He comes, they all agreed He will have a plethora of credentials to display.

The aggregate of Scripture references put forth by multiple Jewish sages over the centuries presents this Messiah as the most extraordinary person ever.

Well, He is that and more. In fact, it begs the question further, Who precisely can this one be? Messiah? Yes, but there is a further identity?

Or is there? Christianity Clarified, Volume 52, Track 17, The Jewish Prophets Speak, Part 3 God raised up numerous men in the faith of Judaism to be prophets and priests.

The priests were to represent men before God, and the prophets were to represent God before man. The prophet had two primary tasks. One was to deliver the message of God to Israel concerning the current issues that were taking place among the Israelites.

[58 : 27] Rebuke for their sin and rebellion was a frequent theme hammered by nearly all the prophets. They called out fearlessly the idolatry that was so rampant in Israel, which eventually led to their captivity and dispersion throughout the entire earth.

In addition to the warnings of the prophets about Israel's then-present sins, they also addressed issues about Israel's future. Sometimes the prophets' message predicted dire consequences that would soon befall the Jewish nation.

That is, things that would shortly come to pass upon their having spoken of them. Other issues involved prophecies delivered that would be reaching far into the future, sometimes many hundreds of years ahead of the time they were spoken.

One thing both prophetic utterances had in common was the certainty of their fulfillment, just as the prophets predicted. And the reason for the certainty of their fulfillment was due to their origin having come from God Himself.

The prophet was merely God's spokesman or human mouthpiece. And this is precisely why the phrase, The word of the Lord came to the prophet Isaiah, saying, and thus and so.

[59 : 51] The message following would be whatever God wanted to convey to His people. The prophet's task was merely to deliver it. The content and authority of those prophetic utterances came from God and cannot be dismissed without serious consequences.

Israel's idolatry and disobedience always resulted in those serious consequences coming to pass. In fact, the most persuasive proof that the prophets spoke with divine authority was the inevitable fulfillment of what they predicted.

Confidence in what has not yet come to pass being fulfilled is found in the abundance of prophecies that have already been fulfilled. So anyone prepared to dismiss yet unfulfilled prophecies as being untrue need only examine those that have already come to pass, and in considerable detail.

In no other area of prophecy is this principle of fulfillment so critical as that involving the Jewish Messiah.

He is the very heartbeat of all the prophets have foretold. Literally, everything prophetic eventually is tied to the future promise of this coming one, God's anointed one called the Messiah.

[61 : 13] Absolutely nothing compares to His identity, the purpose of His coming, who is designated by God to be the Messiah of Israel and the Redeemer of the world.

So very, very much prophesied about Him lies ahead and will be undertaken. Christianity Clarified, Volume 52, Track 18, The Jewish Prophets Speak, Part 4 Jesus of Nazareth has been set forth by the Christian community as the long-awaited Savior of the world and the fulfillment of the Messianic promise God gave.

And when He was formally introduced to Israel as their Messiah in John's Gospel, Chapter 1, the response on the part of the Jews was mixed. Some believed Him to be the Messiah, and some did not.

That division remains to this day. For the most part, it should be recognized that good faith was held by both, those who accepted Him and those who did not.

But even good faith on the part of either did not deny or validate the claim. The tension still remains as to the true identity of Jesus of Nazareth.

[62 : 23] And one thing is certain. Jesus cannot be both. He cannot be the true Messiah and also not be the true Messiah. And any deluded souls who believe that, that they can create their own reality, is just that, deluded.

But even if one is honestly deluded, they are deluded still, and their good faith or sincerity will not alter the reality. And what do we mean by creating one's own reality?

It's just this. Those who propose to do that tell us, look, if you believe Jesus is the true Messiah, then He is, for you.

But, if you believe He is not, then He is not, for you. While that reasoning may sound appealing, certainly politically correct, because no one need be wrong, despite their holding contradictory positions, it will not at all pass the test of simple logic.

The issue is not whether Jesus is the Messiah is true according to your personal belief or preference, but whether it is objectively true according to the evidence presented, never mind our opinion, whether pro or con.

[63 : 41] In the name of everything that logic requires, this must be the issue, and absolutely so.

Can you imagine trying to impose a creation of your own reality on the scene of any duly constituted courtroom, who, after hearing the evidence and presentation of the prosecution and the defense, the jury returns to deliberate and reach a verdict as to whether guilty or not guilty.

Now, if half the jury says guilty and half says not guilty, it's called a hung jury that reaches no verdict that either frees or imprisons the subject.

The inability of the jury to return a verdict of guilty or not guilty does not mean the defendant is guilty or is not guilty. He's one of the two, and He cannot be both, and He cannot be neither.

We can accurately say that much of the world is like a hung jury regarding Jesus of Nazareth. But the indecisiveness of many does not alter the objective identity of Jesus.

He is the Messiah or He is not the Messiah. You can take your pick, but you cannot pick both nor can you pick neither. And this is why Jesus also said Himself, He who is not with me is against me.

[64 : 58] Jesus understood simple logic, and so should we. It all depends on the evidence and your assessment of it as a member of the jury. So please, bring your best brain, and we'll get to the evidence starting just ahead.

Christianity Clarified, Volume 52, Track 19, Jewish Prophets Speak, Part 5. As stated on past sessions of Christianity Clarified, the promise and coming of Israel's Messiah to be sent by God is the premier focus of the Jewish people, dating back to the third chapter of Genesis.

In verse 15, God promises Eve, a special descendant of hers will one day come to earth. He will be God's remedy for the removal of the curse placed upon all of humanity as a result of our first parents' sin and failure.

Numerous Jewish prophets spoke of this monumental promise, and of the many mentioned, we shall note those more obvious and their fulfillment. While no one is asked to agree with our assessment, we do respectfully appeal to the intellectual integrity of the listener to at least hear the evidence and then draw your own conclusion.

We begin with the prophesied place of birth for the Messiah found in Micah chapter 5, written 500 years before the first century A.D., when Israel would then be occupied by the Roman army.

[66 : 27] The text reads, But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you one will go forth for me to be ruler in Israel.

His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity. Micah's language requires one vested with deity so as to have existed from the days of eternity.

Such an one as this must be a Messiah who would be God in the flesh. An equally stunning prophecy from Isaiah is in chapter 9 of the Jewish Tanakh.

700 years before the first century, he wrote, For a child will be born unto us, a son will be given unto us, and the government will rest on his shoulders, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

There will be no end to the increase of his government or peace. On the throne of David and over his kingdom to establish it and uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore.

[67 : 42] The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this. That's Isaiah chapter 9. And there is no question this speaks of the Messiah. But who is this Messiah?

Christians believe it to be Jesus of Nazareth. He fulfilled the first part of being the child who was born and the son who was given. Yet he did not fulfill the later part about establishing the kingdom. That awaits, we believe, fulfillment at his second coming. So Christians believe Jesus the Messiah makes two appearances to earth with his second still future. The Jews see but one Messianic coming that has not yet been realized and that when Messiah does come, he will fulfill all that is prophesied of him in that one future coming.

So it is up to each of us to decide which view best fits the description and the demands of the text. Is it Messiah in two separate appearances as Christians assert? Or is it Messiah in but one yet future appearance as seen by the Jews?

Whichever your answer, the consequences are enormous. So let's choose well. Christianity Clarified Volume 52, Track 20, The Jewish Prophets Speak, Part 6.

[68 : 59] The prophet Micah in Chapter 5 of the Jewish Tanakh clearly identifies the village of Bethlehem to be the place of birth of Israel's Messiah. Although Micah's prophecy would not be fulfilled until 500 years later, the New Testament Gospel of Matthew in Chapter 2 states clearly, Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king.

Well the Christian position is that this could not possibly be more clearly fulfilled than what is written here. But we must remember our Jewish friends do not accept the New Testament which contains that statement in Matthew Chapter 2 to be a valid part of God's revelation.

Jews traditionally believe the Old Testament only, called the Tanakh, constitutes the entirety of God's revelation. Consequently, any evidence that Christians see as plainly set forth in the New Testament is simply rejected by the Jews.

The Old Testament Isaiah 9 passage prophesies their coming Messiah as a child that would be born and as a son that would be given.

And again, in fulfillment, John's Gospel in the New Testament records the following in his Gospel Chapter 3 by stating, God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him might not perish but have everlasting life.

[70 : 28] As regards what Isaiah prophesied also in 9-6 about the Messiah occupying the throne of David when He comes, saying, here is what the angel Gabriel related to the Virgin Mary when He told her she was to be the mother of the Messiah.

Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High and the Lord God will give to Him the throne of His father David.

Well, it's hard for these passages reporting the fulfillment of what the Jewish prophets recorded hundreds of years before to simply be dismissed. And they are not dismissed by Christians but provide confirming evidence of Jesus being the Messiah the prophets spoke of.

Still, it is not at all convincing to our Jewish constituents who reject their validity as their being not the Word of God since they are found in the New Testament.

And once again, we are confronted with an either-or situation. Either the New Testament is a valid part of God's divine revelation along with the Old Testament or it is not.

[71 : 39] Christians say it is, Jews say it is not. And both positions are held in good faith. So listeners will have to make up their own mind. It is the Christian position that enjoys support from untold millions of Christians who greatly outnumber the Jews who hold the opposite position.

Yet, as demonstrated earlier, those holding the majority position are not right simply because their numbers are larger. The majority position has often been proven wrong in the past.

It is also true the minority position is not right because those who hold it are fewer in number.

Whichever group or position is right is right because their position corresponds with historical and evidential reality, not because they are greater or lesser in number.

And it only gets more intriguing upcoming. Christianity Clarified Volume 52, Track 21 Preview of Upcoming Volume 53 As announced on earlier volumes of Christianity Clarified, there are reasons why Jews, Catholics, and Protestants differ, sometimes greatly, regarding issues of doctrine.

That we are divided and have been for even hundreds or two thousand years is undeniable. On the part of the supernatural, and when we speak of supernatural, we're talking now about Satan, he delights in the separation and differences among all theists.

[73 : 08] There are, of course, theists, and there are atheists. Atheists are already solidly under Satan's influence, even though they do not believe Satan even exists.

But we theists are different. Theists believe there is a supreme creator God who orders all things after the counsel of his own will. But theists are sufficiently divided so they cannot present a united front before the world and Satan who is described as the God of this world, especially in 2 Corinthians chapter 4.

So, how is it that we theists have managed to split up ourselves, thus weakening our influence and thoroughly confusing the watching world? Can you not see how those uncommitted to any position might even despair knowing what to believe, even if they wanted to believe?

Because leaders of Catholics, Protestants, and Jews all speak convincingly of their position, yet they differ radically from each other. And with the leaders of each being viewed as the so-called experts as regards faith, that poor old uncommitted, confused world throws up their collective hands with, well, if these guys who are supposed to be the experts can't agree on who or what is right in this business of religion, how in the world are the rest of us lay people supposed to figure it out? Ha ha! They have our sympathy. So, in an ongoing, admittedly flawed effort to address this very issue, Christianity Clarified has come into being.

[74 : 51] Our efforts have been geared to the daunting task of trying to reveal where each group has gone astray and the faulty assumptions responsible.

So, who are we that we should or could do this? And is Christianity Clarified somehow vested with supernatural authority or insight that makes us inescapable of making faulty assumptions of our own just as we believe others did in the past?

Ha ha! Well, by no means. We claim no special unction or unique insight that guarantees the truth of our conclusions. And we are not at all exempt from making faulty assumptions of our own.

And if we do, and it comes to the attention of one of you, our listeners, we would sincerely appreciate your revealing the same to us so we can correct any wrong conclusions we have made. Naturally, of course, we would expect our faulty assumptions and conclusions to be met with compelling arguments that you could support by chapter and verse regarding any of our perceived errors.

[76 : 04] So, this concludes Volume 52 of Christianity Clarified. Volume 53 that is upcoming will continue with faulty assumptions held by ancient Jewish teachers, particularly in regard to the identity of the long-awaited Jewish Messiah, the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

This is Pastor Marv Wiseman and the good folks at Grace Bible Church in Springfield, Ohio, saying thank you so very much for your interest and joining with us. May the Lord richly bless you.
Thank you.