

Christianity Clarified Volume 54

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[0 : 0 0] Christianity Clarified, Volume 54, Track 1, Religious Pluralism Nonsense. Statistics reveal there are hundreds of millions of adherents to the faith of Christianity, including both Roman Catholics and Protestants.

But what they believe to be true as regards issues of life and death, purpose and meaning, connecting with God and ultimately arriving in God's presence following death, is radically different from what Muslims believe about the same issues, and is also radically different from what Hindus believe about those issues, which is also radically different from what the Buddhists believe about the same, and on and on it goes.

The only thing all of the aforementioned groups have in common is the belief that their particular faith is the right one and all of the other folks following the others are wrong. But Religious Pluralism comes to the rescue, along with a dash of political correctness thrown in for those trying to decide which of the previously mentioned is actually true and the right one to follow.

And the pleasant, politically correct, and peace-generating answer is, they are all equally true and equally worthy of following.

Each has equal validity. Religious Pluralism says God is at the top of the mountain, and while there are many different paths up the mountain, they all arrive at the same destination connecting with God at the top.

[1 : 3 3] Well, isn't that nice? That way nobody need be declared wrong or in need of changing their belief, because whatever it is they believe or don't believe is just fine.

But for anyone willing to scrap political correctness for the simple logic and common sense, it is inevitable that these beliefs, while representing only the major groups, cannot possibly all be right, since they are mutually contradictory to one another in what they affirm.

But while they may not all be right, they all can be wrong. And that would make the atheist right, because he rejects all faiths as being in reality non-existent.

And the followers of each, according to the atheist, are living under the delusion that a being called God actually exists. So what's the answer?

Well, only by having a singular authority address the issues of origins, purpose, meaning, and destiny, only then can we rise above this nonsense of religious pluralism and political correctness into the welcome, fresh air atmosphere of objective truth.

[2 : 4 9] To repeat our often emphasized mantra, the issue is authority, always has been, always will be. And the plethora of religions that contend to be the truth all ring with the unmistakable sounds of error and falsehood.

They may take diverse paths in promoting their error, but they all have common sources from which they derive their error, because all error is contrary to the truth of God.

And all error stems from one of two sources, or a combination of both. And they are deadly, revealed just ahead.

Christianity Clarified, Volume 54, Track 2, Satanic Influence on Humanity Recalling the only possible sources of information, whether good or bad, holy or unholy, they were revealed to be derived from the minds of men, the mind of Satan, and the mind of God.

A fourth does not appear to exist. Most of the information upon which we humans rely is, of course, the minds of our fellow humans, including our own mind, plus current and past humans whose information we consider worthy.

[4 : 13] And by information it is meant all information or data about everything, including the religious. The second possible source is that of the adversary, Satan himself.

And of him, we are warned he is a liar and there is no truth in him. He is also a murderer and a destroyer, and one of his names is Apollyon.

The third and only reliable source for truthful information is found in the Scriptures which were provided by God for the very purpose of revealing truth and exposing error.

All error or untruth is generated by the fallen intellects and reasoning powers of us fallen humans, or by Satan himself, or a combination of the human and satanic.

They are behind every evil thought and deed contrary to the truth of God, and they are behind the multitude of false religions that spiritually strangle humans of every age on every continent of the world, past and present.

[5 : 20] They include, but are surely not limited to, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, apostate Judaism, apostate Roman Catholicism, and apostate Protestantism.

All of these contain some truths, along with much error. And while many of these did not even exist in centuries past, their ancestors who propagated lies in opposition to the truth of God surely did exist, and they exacted a deadly toll on all they duped into following them.

In the Bible, they are variously identified by calling them idols and false gods, such as Dagon of the Philistines, Chemosh of the Moabites, Milcom or Molech of the Ammonites, Ashtoreth of the Sidonians, the Baal's so-called fertility deities, just to name a few.

And later, through Satan, humanity will fall prey to the nonsense of the multiple gods of both the ancient Greeks and Romans. And yes, there are Jews today, as well as many Gentiles, who say of the false gods of Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and the like, I certainly don't believe in those false gods, but it's just fine that others do.

How can they say that? They can say that only because they believe objective truth does not exist. Therefore, everyone decides for himself what is true for them, and no one can say anyone is wrong in believing whatever.

[6 : 56] There is your political and religious correctness in bold relief. And it was, at least in part, the very reasoning that caused God to hand over his own idolatrous Old Testament Jewish people for judgment to pagan and heathen Gentiles.

Still, it must be remembered none of these followers of false religions are the enemy. They are all captives of the enemy. Christianity Clarified, Volume 54, Track 3, Zechariah 9, and Palm Sunday.

What registers as one of the most dramatic and precise prophecies of Israel's Messiah is found in the prophecy of Zechariah. His writing is dated around 500 years B.C., or to the Jews, 500 B.C.E.

Zechariah foretells something that will aid Israel in identifying her Messiah when he appeared. And in chapter 9, we read thusly, Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!

Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you! He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey!

[8 : 11] Can a prophetic scene more specific than this be imagined? What can be said about this prophecy and the precision with which it appeared to be fulfilled? Three possibilities come to mind.

Number one, Jesus, like most Jews, was very aware of this prophecy and it's making it clear that it would be the Messiah who would fulfill it. Knowing that, Jesus simply arranged to be at the time and place when He could appear to fulfill it and cause all to believe He was the Messiah.

And that contains two possibilities. Number one, Jesus knew full well He was not the Messiah, but He wanted to deceive the people into thinking it was, which of course paints Him as a devious, deliberate liar.

Or number two, Jesus was not the Messiah, but honestly, actually thought He was. This means, of course, He was delusional and self-deceived.

And there is also the possibility that Zechariah's prophecy never was fulfilled. Jesus never did ride into Jerusalem on a donkey, even though all four accounts from Matthew 21, Mark 11, Luke 19, and John 12 record that He did.

[9 : 26] Either they were all mistaken in believing Jesus fulfilled Zechariah's prophecy, or they all deliberately lied when recording it, all the while knowing it was not true.

In neither case was the claim fulfillment true. But from a purely logical standpoint as to possibilities, yes, it is possible that one or more of the above deceptions are actually true.

And the end result is, Jesus was not the Messiah. Yes, yes, it's possible. It's also possible that unicorns and cyclops exist, but haven't yet been discovered.

It's possible. But is it probable? No. Likely? No. Logical? No. What the entire matter of prophecy and fulfillment does is to place the burden of decision and conclusion upon the reader.

So, what say you? Apart from the possibilities mentioned to many, even to millions of believing Christians, the probability of Jesus having fulfilled Zechariah's prophecy is not merely possible.

[10 : 36] very highly probable. Jesus did, very precisely, fulfill Zechariah's prophecy because he was and is Israel's Messiah.

Intellectual integrity, at the very least, demands serious thought be given it. Have you done that? Christianity Clarified, Volume 54, Track 4, Messiahship and Mathematics From the earliest days of Israel, no concept or desire so permeated the entire nation as that of their Messiah, the Anointed One from God.

And when that promised one should come, the idea of Israel rejecting him was simply unthinkable. But they did. And not only did Israel reject him, but multiple Jewish prophets predicted that very thing.

Listen to what the psalmist said in the 118th. The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This is the Lord's doing.

It is marvelous in our eyes. And it is the New Testament writer Luke chapter 20, which of course Jews do not accept. That states, Jesus spoke in obvious fulfillment as he addressed the chief priests, scribes, and elders, saying, The stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief cornerstone.

[12 : 09] One cannot miss the connection between prophecy and fulfillment. It was played out in the national rejection Jesus was soon to experience. He, of course, would be that stone Israel would reject.

Jewish scholars for many centuries have interpreted this and other passages yet to be considered as clearly speaking of their Messiah. About that, there was no dispute.

The dispute was in assigning the fulfillment of those passages to Jesus of Nazareth. That, of course, was out of the question. And those Jews who did believe Jesus fulfilled those prophecies were many, but still constituted a minority so far as the nation was concerned.

The ruling leadership, consisting of the chief priests, Sadducees, and elders, strongly opposed Jesus and believed those who did receive him had been duped into believing.

It would be the leaders who conspired with Judas for Jesus to be handed over. For the most part, the Jewish people from that time forward to this present day reject the claim of Jesus being their Messiah.

[13 : 19] Still, for all Jews who maintain intellectual integrity, despite the official national position of rejection held through the centuries, they must ask themselves a tough question.

What is the mathematical probability that any one person could fulfill the plethora of prophecies given by the Jewish prophets and in such precise detail?

The numbers actually calculated for such to occur is so large it's unpronounceable. What are the odds such a thing could be done by any one person and then for that one to not be the one spoken of by the Jewish prophets?

Stunning! Absolutely stunning! Is this not a matter deserving attention? A claim to be seriously reckoned with? Few ethnic groups have demonstrated an ability for analytical observation and calculation like the Jew and here would be a worthy challenge for honest, unbiased examination.

Whether that will happen is up to the individual whether Jew or Gentile. The question remains if what you now believe about this is not true would you want to know it?

[14 : 37] Christianity Clarified Volume 54 Track 5 Messiah Betrayal and Rejection In virtually all kinds of relationships there may be nothing to equal the exquisite pain as that of rejection.

It was one more agonizing experience that Israel's Messiah would undergo upon arriving in Jerusalem. Prophetically speaking David in the 41st Psalm stated Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted who ate my bread has lifted up his heel against me.

One thousand years later the Apostle John assigns the fulfillment of that prophecy to Jesus in chapter 13 when he is quoted saying But that the Scripture may be fulfilled he who eats my bread has lifted up his heel against me.

It was no coincidence this would be fulfilled by one of Jesus' apostles. Judas Iscariot. Added to his betrayal the reward for doing so stipulated the amount was also prophesied from Zechariah chapter 11.

It is foretold here of the Messiah Then I said to them if it is agreeable to you give me my wages and if not refrain. So they wait out for my wages thirty pieces of silver.

[16 : 01] What then is purported to be the fulfillment of that prophecy recorded by Matthew in his gospel chapter 26. The text reads Then one of the twelve named Judas Iscariot went to the chief priest and said What are you willing to give me if I deliver him to you?

And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver. So what can be said about the preciseness of both the prophecy of Zechariah and the fulfillment thereof by Matthew?

But, protests the Jews, Matthew is in the New Testament. Jews do not accept that or consider it inspired of God. This is true. That has been and remains the official answer of the Jewish people.

But should there not be some logical explanation for the four gospel writers claiming the fulfillment of the Jewish prophecies that they do? If they are all fabrications, what was their motive?

Were they desirous of merely hoodwinking their readers by recording so many claims about Jesus being the fulfillment of prophecies when they knew full well he wasn't?

[17 : 12] What did they possibly have to gain? And, why then were they willing to die for what they know would have been a lie? And how could these four writers, often chronologically and geographically separated, how could they have conspired with such detail about multiple claims of fulfillment?

Could they have pursued some perverse kind of pleasure out of attempting to deceive their own countrymen about the issue of their Messiah that all the Jews held in such reverential esteem?

These are not unusual questions, but rather critical and quite logical for anyone examining their validity or intent on proving them invalid or valid, whether one is Jew or Gentile.

Each owe it to themselves, because either way the finding goes, the consequences and implications are monumental.

Christianity Clarified, Volume 54, Track 6, Messiah and Prophesied Rejection An interesting, very important fact about Israel's Messiah is often unknown.

[18 : 32] Few realize that while Jesus of Nazareth was rejected as Israel's Messiah then and now, still, his very rejection was also prophesied by the Jewish prophets.

It isn't merely an issue of Jesus being turned away as Israel's Messiah, but his being turned away was also clearly predicted. Did you get that?

Are we saying not only is the Messiah clearly foretold, which all the Jewish people spelled out in detail, but so was his rejection by the very ones to whom he came?

Yes! That is precisely what we are saying, because that is what the numerous texts are saying. Listen to what Isaiah prophesied in chapter 8.

It is the Lord of hosts whom you should regard as holy, and he shall be your fear, and he shall be your dread, then he shall become a sanctuary. But to both the houses of Israel, a stone to strike, and a rock to stumble over, and a snare, and a trap for the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

[19 : 42] And many will stumble over them, then they will fall and be broken, they will even be snared and caught. And the same Isaiah adds to his prophecies regarding the Messiah in chapter 49, saying, Thus says the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, their Holy One, to him whom the nation despises, to him whom the nation abhors, to the servant of rulers.

Well, of whom could Isaiah possibly be speaking if not their Messiah, who would experience rejection when he comes? The text appears simply inapplicable, if not the Messiah.

And it is interpreted by Israel's scholars to be mysteriously true of the Messiah. Israel's prophets predict unmistakable detail, the entire span of the Messiah's ministry.

It includes Micah's prophecy in chapter 5 about the Messiah to be born in Bethlehem, but described by his goings forth are from long before, that is, having stepped out of eternity to come to earth to be born of a Jewish virgin, as Micah's fellow prophet Isaiah foretold in chapter 7.

The prophecies recounting the miracles Messiah would perform in Isaiah 35, his proclamation of the kingdom of heaven, his betrayal by a friend, handing him over for trial and execution, his dying on a cross between thieves, burial in a borrowed tomb, and raised the third day to prevent his body from undergoing decay.

[21 : 21] These are but a few of the many prophecies via the Hebrew prophets relating to none other than Israel's Messiah. Again, that they refer to Israel's Messiah is agreed with by Jewish scholars.

The burning, biting, contentious issue is whether Jesus of Nazareth was the fulfillment of those prophecies. No intelligent, honest answer can be given without at least examining the evidence, regardless of how we may be biased one way or the other.

We all owe it to ourselves. Christianity Clarified, Volume 54, Track 7, Messiah and a Jewish Dilemma.

Utterly brutal treatment was visited upon Jesus by the Roman execution squad before they nailed him to the cross. Again, we hear from the prophecy of Isaiah who prophesied of Messiah in chapter 50, saying, I gave my back to those who struck me and my cheek to those who plucked out my beard.

I did not hide my face from shame and spitting. Well, of whom could Isaiah be speaking if not the Messiah? And by the way, such is the conclusion of Jewish scholars that it is of Israel's Messiah that Isaiah speaks.

[22 : 45] In fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, Matthew records in his gospel, chapter 26, Mark states the same in his account in chapter 15.

While receiving the scourging, the lashes, and the beatings plucking out of his beard and spitting in his face, Jesus made no effort to retaliate or even threaten his tormentors.

Peter, a key apostle, said that Jesus, while being reviled, he did not revile in return, and while suffering, he made no threats, but kept entrusting himself to him who judges righteously.

It's found in 1 Peter, chapter 2. Christians, as well as most Jews, interpret those prophecies of Isaiah, chapter 50, to be speaking of Israel's Messiah.

We also know that while there is agreement Isaiah speaks of the Messiah, the Jewish people do not believe Jesus of Nazareth was that Messiah spoken of by Isaiah.

[23 : 48] They can then only believe these things will befall their true Messiah when he comes for what will be his first arrival on earth. Will that then be the way future Israel will receive their future Messiah with beatings and scourging, pummeling, and plucking out of his beard?

If Jesus was not the real Messiah, will Israel then treat their real Messiah in this manner when he comes for what they believe will be his first time on earth?

Do you see the problems multiplying as to messianic identity? Jews are on the horns of a dilemma. On the one hand, they agree the prophets are speaking of the Messiah, yet they cannot agree the Messiah was Jesus, but neither can they conceive of their yet-to-come Messiah receiving this kind of treatment and rejection from the Jews.

They do have a real thorny problem, but it all goes away when one accepts what cries out as the most logical, reasonable solution. The Messiah was and is Jesus all along, hard as it is for many to accept.

This alone causes the insoluble problems to vanish. But, can Jewish people overcome centuries of their anti-Jesus rejection, plus centuries of persecution that has been heaped upon them by ignorant, arrogant Gentiles?

[25 : 17] Most cannot, but some have, and we have yet to meet or hear of one who has regretted it. So, if what you now believe about Jesus is not true, would you want to know it?

An honest question we all need to answer, honestly. Christianity Clarified, Volume 54, Track 8, Identifying the Suffering Servant, Part 1.

Once again, the prolific pen of Isaiah, whom God inspired, sets forth a passage that is compelling and revealing. It is his monumental 53rd chapter.

Over the centuries, many Jews, upon hearing the content of Isaiah 53, quickly assume it to be from the New Testament, which, of course, Jews do not believe to be the Word of God as Christians do.

But it isn't in the New Testament. It's found in the Jewish Tanakh, the Old Testament. That in itself they find to be surprising.

[26 : 21] The subject of Isaiah's 53rd chapter is commonly referred to as the Servant of Jehovah, sometimes called the Suffering Servant. As one reads the passage, the rationale for that title becomes obvious.

The subject is indeed that of a sufferer, and a sufferer to the degree with which none of us can identify. Please note, these 12 incomparable verses contain three major players.

First is God the Father, utilizing the singular pronoun, I, he, and my. Secondly, there is the Suffering Servant, referred to also with the masculine pronoun, he, him, and his, all denoting that same Suffering Servant.

Then there is the plural pronoun, we, our, and us. Upon learning Isaiah is not a passage from the New Testament, Jews must arrive at an alternative identity of the Suffering Servant.

If the servant is not the Messiah, as Christian interpreters believe, then of whom is Isaiah speaking? Their answer, at least that offered by most Jewish interpreters is, the Suffering Servant of whom Isaiah speaks is not a person, but a nation, the nation of Israel.

[27 : 44] Now there is a logical reason for their conclusion. It is due to the Jewish nation having suffered in unparalleled ways through the millennia. So yes, there is an application of the Suffering Servant to be the nation of Israel.

But as learned from our earlier studies of hermeneutics, remember, the art and science of interpretation, while application of a text may be multiple by way of similarities, yet the interpretation is one.

So, possible applications aside, the key question remains, what is the interpretation of the identity of this Suffering Servant?

A consistent hermeneutic is that this servant is not a nation, but an individual, and the only individual qualifying is Israel's Messiah. Such is demanded by the simple, widely held laws of grammar and sentence structure of both Hebrew and English.

If words mean anything, the Suffering Servant being the Messiah of Israel is by far the most logical and compelling interpretation, and the case will be made more fully just ahead.

[28 : 59] And by the way, if what you now believe about this is not true, would you want to know it? Are you open to knowing it?

Christianity Clarified, Volume 54, Track 9, Identifying the Suffering Servant, Part 2. For the sake of maintaining the thought and continuity of what the prophet Isaiah is revealing in his monumental 53rd chapter, we are required to begin with the last three verses of chapter 52.

Isaiah, in his original autographs of the text, did not separate his writing into chapters and verses. It was one continuous document. The chapters and verses, as they now appear in all translations, whether Jewish or Christian, were added during the 13th and 16th centuries.

Hence, the chapter and verse divisions we are accustomed to were not part of God's original inspiration He provided for all the Scripture writers in both the Old and New Testaments.

Many chapter divisions are unfortunate in that they tend to disrupt the continuity and flow of thought expressed by the writer, and such is the case with the chapter break between the 52nd and 53rd chapters of Isaiah.

[30 : 19] So, for purposes of our present study, we begin the content of Isaiah 53, not with verse 1, but we back up to verse 13 of the previous chapter 52.

And it is here that the key subject of this entire portion of Isaiah is understood to be the servant of Jehovah, whom Isaiah is describing, and what He says of him is coming from the mouth of Jehovah.

It is God the Father in 52.13 who is saying that His servant shall deal prudently. The Hebrew meaning expresses the idea of His dealing circumspectly or with wisdom, and such will be the forte of this servant of Jehovah.

In addition, this one will be exalted, extolled, and be very high. These are all positive acclamations, but then these positive accolades mysteriously disappear, replaced with a declaration that is a clear opposite.

The very next verse 14 relates, As many as were astonished or amazed at thee. And why? Because these pronounced positives have radically changed into, His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men.

[31 : 46] And we cry out, Isaiah, what are you saying about this servant of Jehovah? You declare him as one whose wise and circumspect dealings elevate him to a position of exaltation, and then you speak of him as having a visage, an appearance that is so marred and disfigured that it excels any like appearance of any other human who ever lived.

What is going on here? Why this abrupt change of description? Can you not see what Isaiah is portraying? These extreme realities are both true of one and the same servant of Jehovah.

And without the chapter break, we will see how this is played out. It is amazing. Just ahead. Oh, yes, and again, we still must ask, if what you now believe about this issue is not true, would you want to know it?

Just asking. Christianity Clarified, Volume 54, Track 10, Identifying the Suffering Servant, Part 3. Now under consideration is the remarkable prophecy of Isaiah in Chapter 53.

He began his prophecy with a rhetorical question, the question demanding an answer from the reader. And the question is, Who has believed our report?

[33 : 11] It means, Who has received or believed the account that is given? And the idea is, a finding or verdict is anticipated in regard to the question being asked, which is, Who has believed what we are revealing?

And the answer is, No one. The prophet is saying, The message given has fallen on deaf ears. Nobody is listening, accepting, or believing what is being said.

Our question then automatically is, Why not? What is it about this message, this prophecy of Isaiah's, that is so largely unreceived?

And then he proceeds to answer. The verses that remain in Isaiah 53 explain why it is that this suffering servant described herein has such little or no appeal to the hearers.

In plain words, Isaiah is saying, The subject of whom I am speaking appears to have absolutely nothing going for him. And he proceeds to tell us why that is, by recounting the features of this one that make him so unattractive and unappealing.

[34 : 25] But then, after all the negative reasons why no one accepts him or wants him, he then, in verse 4, proceeds to reveal the enormous mistake on the part of all who reject him.

For the balance of the chapter, Isaiah reveals multiple reasons why this suffering servant is, in fact, the most needed, the most desirable, and the most worthy of acceptance on the part of all than anyone else who ever lived.

What a huge turnaround! All the supposed rationale that appears to justify the rejection, even the repulsiveness that people will have turned away from this suffering one, is utterly wiped away.

It is replaced with multiple reasons why all should hasten to accept, revere, and be profoundly grateful for this seemingly unattractive one.

To be sure, Isaiah is building a case to support the premise that things and people are not always as they appear. We might say that all who hear this report of Isaiah and soundly reject the servant of whom he speaks are making serious, faulty assumptions.

[35 : 41] And there are times when we humans can be completely wrong regarding what we are so sure is true or is not true. This is systemic to the human condition.

Being wrong based upon faulty assumptions is something we all have to deal with. It is only human arrogance that will allow us to say it can't happen to us.

But has not history proved all of us to be wrong about many things over our lifetime? Absolutely. Could it be the meaning of Isaiah 53 just might be one of them?

Honest consideration of that possibility is all that is being asked and we owe it to ourselves to do that, don't you think? The thickening plot thickens more. Just ahead. Christianity Clarified Volume 54 Track 11 Identifying the Suffering Servant Part 4 The contrast portrayed by Isaiah about the servant of Jehovah in Isaiah 53 are unparalleled.

No one person in history or in prophecy can equal the extremes to be experienced as this servant of Jehovah in Isaiah 53. From adulation and honor bestowed upon him to the revulsion caused by his physical appearance is a contrast to behold.

[37 : 02] Of him the question is begged once again who could this person possibly be this mysterious servant of Jehovah? The Christian interpretation of Isaiah's description is that it clearly speaks of none other than Jesus of Nazareth.

But the Jewish interpretation finds that unacceptable. Though there are multiple Jewish interpretations of this passage, their most common is to assign this role of the servant of Jehovah to actually be the nation of Israel.

Thus, while Christians see this one to be an individual, namely Jesus of Nazareth, the Jews see the same one to be national Israel. And truth be told, one can see how both can be a valid application of the text.

Because, as was stated earlier, a given text may yield several applications, but an application is a far cry from the interpretation. So, applications aside, the burning issue is, what is the interpretation?

Now, on the basis of logic, both the common Christian interpretation of it being Jesus and the common Jewish interpretation of it being Israel, the nation, logically speaking, they may both be wrong.

[38 : 19] But they cannot both be right, since one is clearly contradictory to the other. And when it is said both the Christian and the Jews could be wrong in their interpretation, what is meant by that is, there could yet be a third possible interpretation, or even a fourth in connection with today's postmodern way of thinking.

And that fourth will be explained right after this third possibility, which is, both Jews and Christians are wrong. This would be today's atheistic response to the whole matter of interpreting Isaiah 53, or any other passage in the Bible.

The whole book, says the atheist, is just so much stuff and nonsense. The Bible is okay for the sake of literature, but nothing more. Yes, it is the all-time bestseller, and yes, it has been translated into more languages than any other book, but it still remains among the most prominent collection of fiction, because that is precisely what the Bible is, fiction.

How can it be called fiction? Simply because, if there is no such being as God, if God does not exist, and atheists believe that, then there is no way the Bible can be the Word of God.

So the Christian position of the suffering servant being Jesus of Nazareth, and the Jewish position of it being the nation of Israel, they're both wrong, and neither interpretation means anything. It's all fictitious, gibberish, not to be taken seriously by those who are Jews or Christians.

[39 : 52] Both are wrong in what they insist to be the right interpretation. And like we said, there is yet not only a third interpretation, there is a fourth, and it's coming up next.

Christianity Clarified Volume 54, Track 12, Identifying the Suffering Servant, Part 5. Our present generation, say perhaps from the 1980s to the current 2020s, is commonly referred to as postmodern, and defined in different ways.

There are multiple facets to postmodernism, but there are two features in particular that have had the greatest impact, a very negative impact. The first is the rejection of objective truth.

The second is inseparable from the first, and is best described as moral relativism. As regards the subject of truth, objectivity is replaced with subjectivity.

This means truth, like beauty, is said to be in the eye of the beholder. It makes the interpretation of nearly everything, including what is written, to be decided by what the reader understands it to mean, not what the writer intended it to mean.

[41 : 11] Whatever a given text of literature says to you, that's what it means, to you. And that then becomes your personal interpretation, and that is the right interpretation for you.

Did you get that? The key is for you. Another reader of the same can have an entirely different interpretation of it, and it becomes the right interpretation for him.

Thus, neither is wrong in their understanding or interpretation of the text. Both are right, no matter that the two may be completely opposite in their disagreement. Still, both are right, and no one has the right to say anyone else is wrong, no matter how they interpret something, because whatever the interpretation, whatever they derive from the passage under question, is the right meaning for them.

This throws the interpretation of anything written into the lap of the reader, not the writer. Whatever the writer said or meant to say doesn't matter.

All that matters, the right interpretation, is personalized, and is therefore the right meaning for them. And this, by the way, meets the demands of political correctness.

[42 : 26] Nobody has to be wrong about anything because you have your truth and I have mine. And what either of us believes it to mean, that's what it means. Now, apply that interpretation to Isaiah 53 and the identity of the suffering servant.

Christians believe the servant to be the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. Jews believe the servant to be the nation of Israel. Which is it? It's both. So there's no point for disagreement because one is just as right as the other, even though they have complete opposite positions.

This complete nonsense is pervasive even in academia that ought to know better. It's all about no one needing to be declared wrong about anything because one person's truth is every bit as valid as another person's truth.

This has allowed for a societal reversal of issues like homosexuality, same-sex marriage, religious pluralism, on and on it goes. And it has taken a terrible toll on our culture with devastating consequences socially and morally in so many ways.

Just look around you and see for yourself. It has literally upended logic and common sense, and in so many ways and places it rules the day.

[43 : 45] Christianity Clarified, Volume 54, Track 13, Identifying the Suffering Servant, Part 6. The two extremes to be realized by the suffering servant in Isaiah 52 and 53 have already been noted.

And one extreme revealed his exaltation in 52, 13, saying he will be exalted and be very high. The opposite extreme reveals his physical person to be so marred and disfigured he was repulsive to the sight.

It caused people to look away from him. Well, which is it? It is both. Such was to be the fate of this suffering servant. Such will have the effect of stunning the nations as rendered by the Revised Standard Version that reads, said in verse 15, that kings shall shut their mouths at him.

Why so? It is apparently because they are so shocked. Isaiah says their shock is because that which had not been told them they shall see, and that which they had not heard they shall consider.

The meaning appears to be that the revelation of this suffering servant will take them by complete surprise. They will register absolute shock at their discovery, so dramatic will it be.

[45 : 07] Then, ignoring the chapter break as we spoke of earlier, Isaiah poses the question as chapter 53 opens, and his question is this, as regards all that was just revealed in the preceding verses regarding this suffering servant when it is spoken of, who has believed what we have said?

Who has believed our report? The rhetorical question sadly provides the only answer to be given. No one. Very few. Tiny minority, if you will.

How could one and the same person be the subject of these extreme experiences? But such is precisely the reality of this suffering servant.

In rejecting the New Testament, our Jewish friends are unaware of what Philippians 2 says, as it speaks of Jesus, whom Christians believe to be the very one of whom Isaiah prophesied in chapter 53.

And in Philippians 2, it is said of the Messiah, even though he had been the same essence as God his Father, yet he did not regard that status as something to be selfishly clinging to.

[46 : 17] But he relinquished that by making himself of no reputation, willing to take upon himself the form of a servant being made in the likeness of man.

And even in that sphere, he humbled himself further by becoming obedient to his Father, which resulted in his death. And not merely death, but the extreme kind of death by crucifixion.

Because of that, says the text, No one has ever been brought so low in his humiliation. God his Father has highly exalted Christ and given him a name above every name, so that at his name, all creatures everywhere will be obligated to bow before him in obedience.

There are the two extremes prophesied by Isaiah which Christians believe to have been literally fulfilled in Jesus. The first extreme, a degradation of untold depths of pain, suffering, and rejection.

And the last extreme, an ultimate glorification and recognition by all with exaltation by his Father. Christianity Clarified, Volume 54, Track 14, Identifying the Suffering Servant, Part 7.

[47 : 34] Continuing and completing his prophecy of the suffering servant in Isaiah 53, Isaiah has already described him in the preceding chapter 52 as having had his physical features so badly marred and disfigured, he hardly looked like a man.

Now he adds to this by calling him despised, rejected, a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. He was marred physically to such an extreme people could not bear to look upon him.

Recall, if you will, the primary Jewish interpretation of all this is thought to have been fulfilled not by a person, but by the nation Israel. But if that were the case, it requires the disfigured one to be Israel, and those who could not bear to look upon him as Israel also.

Then it would read thusly, Surely Israel has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, yet we did the stream Israel stricken, smitten of God and afflicted.

Well, only a severe ignoring of grammatical structure could allow for such a rendering. The identical problem exists with each verse of Isaiah 53 when one is intent on ignoring the obvious plain meaning that cannot be overlooked.

[48 : 54] Isaiah renders verse 8 as, He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who shall declare his generation? For he was cut off out of the land of the living.

For the transgression of my people was he stricken. The clarity of the text is simply obvious and obviously simple. It's a straightforward declaration one must labor to overlook.

But if one insists on making the nation of Israel to be the suffering servant, it requires grammatical gymnastics unheard of in any language, especially since precise detail about this suffering servant fits perfectly into the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy as revealed numerous times in the New Testament.

But here, once again, we are reminded our Jewish friends reject the entire New Testament, not believing it to be the Word of God, as is their Tanakh, the Old Testament.

The unavoidable evidence will mount, and each listener, Jew or Gentile, will have to decide on their own. Again, however, let us put to rest the utter nonsense of the Jewish and the Christian interpretation as both being true.

[50 : 09] That is a concession that cannot be made to the fanatically, politically correct. We debunk the foolishness of creating one's own reality, remember? That's the nonsense that says, if you believe the suffering servant to be Jesus, then for you, he is.

But if you believe him to be Israel, the nation, then for you, it is. And while we are all entitled to our own opinions and our own preferences, we are not entitled to our own facts.

Political correctness for the sake of not hurting someone's feelings by saying or even implying someone is wrong is utter nonsense that simply does not compute in the real world.

Any thinking that one can create his own reality is dealing in fantasy. Hear the evidence and then bring in your verdict and we'll do that.

Christianity Clarified, Volume 54, Track 15, Identifying the Suffering Servant, Part 8 Under current examination is our consideration of only one of scores of prophecies God inspired the prophet Isaiah to write 700 years before Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

[51 : 25] Christians believe those prophecies, labeled Messianic, that is, pertaining to the Messiah, spoke clearly of Jesus of Nazareth, so much so, his fulfillment of them cannot be coincidental.

Faced with the Christian interpretation and unwilling to accept it, our Jewish friends must find what they believe to be an alternate interpretation that allows them to dismiss Jesus of Nazareth as Isaiah's fulfillment.

Thus, most Jewish scholars believe Isaiah's reference to the suffering servant in Isaiah 53 refers to the nation of Israel as being the subject of his writing and the true identity of the servant who suffers so much as Isaiah describes.

Several verses in chapter 53 have previously been rendered using the Jewish interpretation. We will now do the same with verse 9 to see how it must read.

But before that, please listen to how Isaiah actually states it in his text, which reads as follows, It is a stretch beyond reason to read that as, And Israel made his grave with the wicked and with the rich in Israel's death, because Israel had done no violence, neither was any deceit in Israel's mouth.

[52 : 59] We are asked to believe those multiple masculine pronouns make sense in referring them to Israel the nation rather than to Israel's Messiah. That concession simply cannot be made.

Nor can it with the portion of verse 12 that from Isaiah's original rendering stated, Israel has poured out his soul unto death. He, Israel, was numbered with the transgressors, and Israel bare the sins of many and made intercession for the transgressors.

Well, it truly approaches folly to insist the masculine pronoun used throughout has reference to Israel the nation rather than to Israel's Messiah the person.

To finalize this study of prophecy, some points of clarification and implications must be treated. First, it is asserted, as previously noted, the most common interpretation by Jewish scholars is to understand the suffering servant of Isaiah not to be an individual, most definitely not Jesus of Nazareth as a Messiah, but instead, Isaiah is prophesying of the nation Israel being the suffering servant.

While the Christian interpretation of the same passage believes the servant to be Jesus and his Messiahship as the Savior of the world, and while we soundly reject their insistence that it refers to Israel the nation, yet their seeing it that way nevertheless evokes sympathy on our part.

[54 : 30] Why is that? How can we see with understanding and sympathy their interpretation even though we find it unacceptable? It is important and it is just ahead.

Christianity Clarified Volume 54, Track 16. Identifying the Suffering Servant, Part 9. In our ongoing study of the monumental 53rd chapter of Isaiah, we have interpreted the suffering servant to be Jesus of Nazareth, yet to be born 700 years future to the time Isaiah was writing.

For 2,000 years, the Jewish interpretation of Isaiah 53 has made Israel the nation to be the one Isaiah describes as the suffering servant.

Jews reject the Christian interpretation and Christians reject the Jewish interpretation. But honesty and history itself tells us we can understand how the Jews arrived at their viewing Israel as the suffering servant.

Part of their rationale no doubt lies in their disdain of it referring to Jesus, which is a concept they vigorously reject. And while we see them being in error for that conclusion, it is not as though they have no reasons at all for believing the servant to be Israel.

[55 : 58] After all, there are numerous references where Israel the nation is clearly described as the servant of God. In addition, the Isaiah 53 text throughout describes extraordinary suffering inflicted upon the servant of God throughout the chapter.

And is there anyone who can deny the same kind of treatment has been visited upon Jewish people worldwide, from the days of enslavement by the Egyptians to this present time?

In fact, all the world is aware of this, except for the Holocaust deniers, whose abject hatred of the Jews is allowed to override their common sense.

There is no question about it. Israel the nation and Israel's Messiah were both assigned to undergo great pain, suffering, and rejection.

The outstanding difference between the two, of course, is that while Israel the nation suffered greatly because of God's chastening hand upon them that brought heathen nations against them for their idolatry and sin, plus later, and even to this day, they continue to undergo persecutions due to the ignorance, arrogance, and irrational hatred of others called anti-Semites.

[57 : 27] The Jews have been and continue to be persecuted on different levels throughout the world. So even though we can't agree with their claim as the nation to be the suffering servant of Isaiah 53, we certainly have no problem in understanding why they see it that way.

And in that regard, the Jewish people have our profound sympathy, and they also have our admiration for their being incredibly resilient as a people and their significant contribution to humanity throughout the past and the present.

Yet, all that notwithstanding, we have no right to embrace their interpretation of Isaiah 53 passage because of our sympathy and admiration for them as a people.

Grammatical principles applicable in both the English and Hebrew languages simply will not allow for that. Before leaving this inexhaustible 53rd chapter of Isaiah, there are two very important concepts left untouched that must be addressed.

The first is the substitutional aspect true of the one called the suffering servant. Anyone with even a cursory reading of the chapter must agree it jumps off the page at them.

[58 : 58] What else can anyone see but sacrifice and substitution in phrases like He has borne our griefs, He has carried our sorrows, He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, the Lord laid on Him, the iniquity of us all.

Note, if you will, each expression denoting that in none of those did the suffering servant undergo any for himself or because of anything he had done that would cause all the pain to befall him.

All his suffering was identified as substitutional. In no case did this suffering servant experience what he did because of his own misdeeds.

He had none. He bore our griefs, not His. He carried our sorrows, not His. He was wounded for our transgressions, not His.

He was bruised for our iniquities, not His. And the chastisement of our peace was upon Him. All he suffered and endured was on behalf of others, namely, the nation Israel.

[60 : 12] The whole concept of substitution will certainly come as no surprise to any Jew. After all, it was they who best knew about all the sacrifices God had established for Israel, even before Egypt.

The concept of the innocent dying in the stead of the guilty is very familiar to Israelites, animal sacrifices being the very core of Judaism.

In fact, it predated Judaism, Abraham, and even Noah. The first occasion for it was when God Himself slew the animal to provide a covering for the nakedness of Adam and Eve in Genesis chapter 3.

The rationale was always the same. It was the innocent dying in the place of the guilty. Such would be played out in Israel's ritual of worship from the time of Moses and Sinai.

But one may ask, why should innocent animals die for the sins of guilty humans? Where is the justice in that? There does not appear to be any justice in that.

[61 : 20] Justice requires the guilty pay the penalty for their own sin, not find an innocent stand-in to die in the stead of the guilty. There is no apparent justice in that. And that's why it's called grace.

That's why it involved mercy. But then, how is justice served? Or doesn't that matter? Ah, it matters.

It matters a great deal, as will be explained upcoming. Oh yes, justice matters. Christianity Clarified, Volume 54, Track 18, Isaiah 55, and God's Otherness.

The previous segment mentioned there were two concepts not yet dealt with in the 53rd of Isaiah. The first was revealed in that last segment, and focused on the substitution of an innocent animal sacrificed on behalf of a guilty human.

Now we are relating the second, and it is probably the most difficult of all to grasp for both Jews and Gentiles. In large part, it seems such because everything about it appears contrary to the way we humans think.

[62 : 36] And here is where the problem begins. We mortals use the powers of logic and reason that are available to us and assume that God's logic will automatically coincide with ours.

That is indeed a faulty assumption to make, but there are many who make it. Based on the only thing we can call human arrogance, many mortals are quite prepared to inform God what and how He can be and what and how He can do.

But for some reason, God has never gotten that message. Men are prepared to tell Him He can't have a son. After all, His being God necessarily prevents that.

Another message He didn't get, obviously, because the Father makes much of His Son in both the Old and New Testaments. We all, Jews and Gentiles, should heed the Almighty's clarification about Himself and His ways He has expressed through our familiar Old Testament friend Isaiah in the 55th chapter.

And thus saith the Lord, For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. And if we wonder just how different are God's ways from man's ways, let's allow Him to tell us Himself.

[64 : 02] For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. That is a considerable difference. Wouldn't you agree? Because humans are finite and God is infinite, who are the finites to conclude what the infinite can be or what He can and cannot do?

Who are we to say, You can't have a Son because you're God and God can't have a Son? And what is more, you are not permitted to be one God yet subsist in three persons comprising a Trinity.

That does not compute in our human mind, so it cannot be true of you. Even though the Bible insists there is but one true God and speaks of the Father as God, the Son as God, the Holy Spirit as God, yet there are not three gods but one God, that cannot be because our minds find that to be an impossible concept.

Besides, it's mathematically impossible also. And such are some of the ramblings of our finite minds. Refusing to allow God to be who and what He is along with His ability to do what He does, how He does it and when He does it is at the core of our problem and of our refusal to believe and appropriate the second concept spoken about at the outset of this session.

And it is both the grandest of all ever, yet it is the greatest hindrance to faith as well and we shall pursue it, so bring your best brain and join us upcoming.

[65 : 40] Christianity Clarified Volume 54, Track 19, Isaiah 53, and 2 Corinthians 5. Continuing onward from the previous segment, you were told this second concept, omitted until now, is the grandest of all God's revealed concepts as regards humans.

At the same time, it also constitutes the greatest obstacle to faith for both Jews and Gentiles. Yet, it is the very theme of the entire Bible, being its pulse, its core, its all-consuming subject.

It is the great theme of redemption. And as such, it involves the sacrifice of the innocent for the sins of the guilty and requires that for the theme of redemption, there must be a Redeemer.

For the Redeemer to be up to the task, he must be qualified as sinless, spotless. He must be human so as to relate to and represent humans, but he must be deity so as to relate to and represent deity.

He must, in reality, be a God-man, not half-God, but holy God, and not half-man, but holy man, a one-of-a-kind, totally different one as a theanthropic being.

[67 : 02] He must be equal with God his Father, yet subservient to the Father, so as to be committed to pleasing the Father. He must be equal to God the Holy Spirit, through whom he will be offered as a sacrifice to meet the demands of a holy God, offended by human sin.

He must be qualified to provide efficacy for the redemption of the entire human race, as says 2 Corinthians 5, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself.

There it is. There he is. He is Yeshua HaMashiach, Jesus the Messiah, Son of Man, Son of God, whom God the Father sent into the world to redeem a lost and fallen humanity.

And why? Because God so loved the world, he gave his only Son, and the Son Jesus so loved the world, he was willing to be given. In dying the death Jesus died for the world of sinners, he balanced God's moral scales of the universe as the innocent, sinless Son became the sacrifice for a guilty world.

There you have it. The innocent, dying in the place of the guilty. The whole world. It is the grandest theme and event in the history of the universe since the day of creation in Genesis 1-1.

[68 : 25] Here is how Isaiah put it 700 years before Jesus was born in Bethlehem. It's found in that priceless prophetic 53rd chapter stating, It pleased the Lord to bruise him.

It means, It pleased God the Father to bruise his only begotten Son. He the Father has put him the Son to grief, when thou the Father shalt make him the Son an offering for sin.

In Isaiah 11, it states, My righteous servant shall justify many, for he, the Son, shall bear their iniquities. Such constitutes the most significant transaction of the entire universe.

From the entrance of sin into the world in Genesis 3, the balance of the entire Bible relates this singular theme of redemption via Messiah the Redeemer on behalf of mankind the redeemed.

Hallelujah. Christianity Clarified Volume 54, Track 20, John chapters 10 and 14.

[69 : 36] The preceding segment identified the sacrificial death of Israel's Messiah to being God's answer for the sins of the world, both Jews and Gentiles. Without hesitation, it is described as the most important singular event since creation.

It is all about redemption as provided by the only eligible Redeemer who is also willing to pay the price. And why should He? Only because of the incredible character and quality of Messiah's love for a lost and broken world.

When Messiah died on that cross and declared the transaction finished, God His Father, who had forsaken His Son between the hours of noon and 3 p.m.

on that fateful day when the Passover lambs were being slain throughout the land, God's Passover lamb and the person of His own dear Son was being slain also. And the timing was not coincidental.

So the question now is, what is humanity's response to this transaction to end all transactions? It is extremely varied from profound gratitude to profound rejection and ridicule.

[70 : 49] Many, upon hearing this truth the Bible calls the gospel, eagerly embrace Jesus as Savior. They are profoundly grateful He was willing to pay a debt He did not owe for those who owed a debt they could not pay.

Jesus died our death for us, in our place. People, whether Jews or Gentiles, who are honestly aware of their sin and separation from a holy God, are elated God has made a way whereby we can connect with Him.

It's because His Son Jesus was willing to be the conduit, the vessel through whom we could come. In John's Gospel, chapter 10, Jesus states of Himself this stunning truth, I am the door.

By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture. He speaks in the context of the sheep and the shepherds, a motif with which his audience was very familiar.

And later, in chapter 14, he claims that He is the way, the truth, and the life, and that no man comes to the Father but by Him. How could He make such a statement of sheer exclusivism as that?

[72 : 08] He could say it and mean it because who else besides Himself paid the awful penalty of death to redeem a fallen sinful world?

Do you know of another who is qualified to wear the title Savior or Redeemer? Millions past and millions today gladly owned Jesus as their substitute and Savior.

They admitted their sin and realized there was nothing they could do to effect their own salvation. In gratitude to God and Jesus for doing for them what He did, they eagerly appealed to Messiah for His salvation and forgiveness which He was willing to provide.

Tis the grandest theme ever. Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so, and He proved His love for me by dying in my place.

We could only wish such would be the response of all. But, there were and are others with a different response we will examine just ahead.

[73 : 13] Christianity Clarified Volume 54 Track 21 A Preview of Upcoming Volume 55 This concluding Volume 54 of Christianity Clarified has been devoted to the multitude of predictions given by numerous Jewish prophets followed by their fulfillment in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

A sobering question has been asked of all our listeners for their consideration and we ask it again. Do you recall that question? Here it is. If what you now believe about these things is not true, would you want to know it?

It's a very important legitimate question that all of us should be asking ourselves continually. Only with a positive response to that question can we hope to learn something, especially things that enable us to arrive at the truth.

Because truth can be elusive, but error floats all around and all about us. Upcoming, a rapidly moving history of Israel, the appreciation of which is absolutely essential, will be covered.

And then we will consider Israel's crisis over Jesus of Nazareth and their first century final answer to Him. Rapidly engaging the acts of the apostles and the span of 30 years it took for that to transpire.

[74 : 45] We will arrive at the monumental destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and the subsequent scattering of the Jews throughout the Mediterranean world.

The increasing number of Gentiles who come to faith in Jesus the Jew will be met by the decreasing number of Jews. And with the 70 A.D.

event of Jerusalem being destroyed and the power of Rome being brutally put in place, a great transition will be underway and it is extremely significant.

We will see again the birth of a new persecution of the Jew. But this time it will not be Jews persecuting Jews as in the book of Acts.

It will be Gentiles persecuting Jews fueled by the customary ignorance and arrogance on the part of the persecutors.

[75 : 44] Into the subsequent second and third centuries the dominance of Rome will escalate with Constantine the Emperor and his edict of 325 A.D.

being enacted. The world will then undergo a major change. And it too will result in more persecution of the Jews while it officially legitimizes Christianity.

We are appalled at the ignorance of all these only because we today have the great advantage of hindsight. No doubt generations on down the road will be able to say the same things about us and our actions today.

It is truly fascinating material upcoming and you will see what we mean if you are able to come along with us. This is Pastor Marv Wiseman and the good folks at Grace Bible Church here in Springfield, Ohio that make Christianity Clarified available to you.

Thanks so much for being with us and enjoying the scriptures together. May our Lord richly bless you.