

Christianity Clarified Volume 29

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 July 2020

Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[0 : 0 0] Christianity Clarified, Volume 29, Track 1, Tools for the Serious Bible Student Anyone who plies his trade as a workman will be quick to tell you how important his tools are for pursuing his occupation.

We just can't imagine an electrician without a voltage tester or wire stripper, a plumber without his pipe wrenches, a carpenter without his saw. Well, it's no different for one who would be a workman in the Bible.

Good tools are essential. One's study of the Bible can be greatly enhanced and far more rewarding through a minimal investment of critical tools.

Tools designed for the very purpose of exploring and understanding the Bible. And speaking of Bible, that's a good place to start when we are talking about aids to study.

We all tend to have our favorite version of it, but the serious student should invest in a minimum of two or three other translations vital for comparison purposes.

[1 : 0 5] Another necessity, in addition to the multiple translations, is a good concordance that alphabetically lists words found in the Bible.

Some Bibles come with a concordance for that particular version in the rear of the book. These are not exhaustive, of course, but only include words that are used more frequently in that particular translation.

But even an exhaustive concordance that includes all the words used in the Bible is still limited to the one version it covers. You may visit any Christian bookstore, and they can explain the features and options of each.

Likewise, regarding a Bible dictionary, possibilities are numerous, from a single volume to multi-volume sets. Most laypeople will find a single volume dictionary sufficient, and several excellent ones are available.

Also, consider adding a Bible handbook to your personal library. It can be a goldmine of quick and helpful assistance. And lastly, please don't think of these as expenses you cannot afford.

[2 : 2 1] Think of them as investments you cannot do without, that will repay you in greater dividends than any earthly investment. This, of course, is all assuming you are serious about understanding God's Word.

And may He give you wisdom as you pursue these things. Oh, don't allow yourself to become mired down in the often heated debates about Bible versions and translations.

It can paralyze one to the extent that serious study will be delayed, while agonizing over one translation as opposed to another.

Rather than wrangling over the differences in translations, we all need to be using the ones we have, while recognizing the only perfect Bible consisted of the original autographs written by those whom God inspired.

These are not available, but many faithful renderings from them are, and are more than adequate for any serious student of the Bible. Once you obtain these tools, you will find them so helpful you will wish you had obtained them earlier.

[3 : 30] Remember, they are not mere expenditures, but valuable investments. Christianity Clarified, Volume 29, Track 2 Miles Coverdale Revisited On the earlier Volume 27 of Christianity Clarified, we revealed what might be considered as the ultimate approach to the interpretation of Scripture.

There has been nothing else to even approach this in its importance and brevity as regards determining the meaning of Scripture. We are referring to the rules suggested by Miles Coverdale.

Along with providing the world with the first complete Bible in the English language in the year 1535, less than 500 years ago, he also gave these guidelines for understanding the Bible.

For many years, we have attempted to employ his advice, and having committed it to memory as we would Scripture, we have encouraged others to do so as well.

And here it is again, and you will hear it repeated periodically with great enthusiasm. Simply and briefly put, Miles Coverdale told us, For effect, the King James Elizabethan English has been retained, for its unparalleled charm.

[5 : 18] You may wish to modernize it by changing the these and the thous, but no matter. The essence of it and its importance are priceless, Elizabethan or no.

Would you consider committing it to memory? If you do, you are promised you will never regret it, and it will serve you well. Time and again, as you approach the Bible with this critical maxim in mind, you will be so grateful for it as I have been over the past 50 plus years.

Periodically and upcoming in our pursuit of hermeneutics, we will have occasion to employ the advice, good old Miles Coverdale, and you will see for yourself how very valuable it is.

I have made the statement in the past, and now reaffirm it with renewed confidence, that if only every preacher and teacher of God's Word were to insist on applying Miles Coverdale's rules when engaging the Bible, a huge percentage of the divisions caused by our different doctrinal conclusions would simply disappear overnight.

But let's not hold our breath while waiting for that to happen. For most people, today's preachers included, have scarcely heard of Miles Coverdale or of the advice he left behind.

[6 : 46] But their unfamiliarity will not prevent us from vigorously applying that advice. And we will rejoice in doing so.

You will see. Meanwhile, please give serious thought to memorizing it. I promise you, you will be blessed and never regret it.

Christianity Clarified, Volume 29, Track 3, Chapters and Verses Are Man-Made, Part 1. In our pursuit of hermeneutics, the art and science of interpreting the Bible, we need to keep something important in mind.

As difficult as it is to imagine, 800 years ago, the Bible was not divided by chapters. The entire text of Scripture content was all there, but nothing was marked off in any of the text.

The writing of the entire book, whichever one of the 66 it was, appeared as a whole entity, line after line. This is the way the original autograph appeared, just as Moses, Isaiah, John, or Peter had written it, as one continuous document, line after line, from its beginning to its end.

[8 : 01] It was not until the year approximately 1227 that Stephen Langton, the Archbishop of Canterbury, divided the Bible's books into the chapters as we still have them today.

And they number in all 1,089, the longest being Psalm 119, with its 176 verses, and the shortest of all, chapters Psalm 117, containing only two verses.

While these man-made divisions are helpful, even necessary for easy location of a text, there is nothing about them that is inspired of God.

It is only the actual text of Scripture that comprise the original autograph that is a product of divine inspiration. Likewise, the several footnotes and marginal notes containing cross-references are as well all man-made.

And most of these man-made editions are helpful and shed light on many passages, but they should not be regarded as being of divine authority, because such is limited to the text alone.

[9 : 09] The disadvantage, particularly of the chapter divisions, is that in reading and studying the Bible, many do so by its chapters. And some chapter divisions serve us well because they end a chapter at its logical place, which would be the termination of a subject or theme, and then they begin anew with the following chapter.

But as we shall soon see, many chapters are ended at a very illogical place, and completely disturbs the continuity or train of thought the writer was pursuing by ending the chapter where it is.

This is, of course, unfortunate for one who is attempting to interpret precisely what the original writer was inspired to say. So, bear in mind, the chapter and verse divisions are helpful only for the purpose of locating a particular portion of Scripture is not to be relied upon or utilized for study and interpretational purposes.

So, why hasn't someone come up with a better, more logical ending and beginning of chapters? Well, imagine the chaos that would create.

It would render millions of copies of Bibles and multitudes of concordances, dictionaries, and commentaries over the past 800 years all worthless because nothing would correspond with the new improved chapter divisions and those already in print.

[10 : 41] So, we just have to live with it, but be mindful of it. Examples are upcoming. Christianity Clarified, Volume 29, Track 4, Chapters and Verses Are Man-Made, Part 2.

As was the case with the chapter divisions that appear in our Bibles, so it was with the verses that are assigned their numbers. Neither were a part of the writing originally inspired of God.

What is called the original autographs, that is, those actual physical original manuscripts personally penned by Moses, David, John, and Paul, plus the many others, were written down devoid of any chapter or verse designations.

These originals, regrettably, we do not have. They either remain secreted away in some unknown location, or they were decomposed by the ravages of time and exposure to the elements.

But, not to worry, the God who inspired those originals has preserved the integrity of them through the thousands of copies laboriously produced from those originals.

[11 : 53] Research has demonstrated repeatedly that, while variations in the handed down copies do appear, none are such that substantially change anything.

This enables us to say with confidence that we do possess the very word of God despite our not having those originals. Were this not the case, the entire purpose of God forever having produced the biblical revelation would have come to naught.

So, as the chapter divisions were man-made and even appeared to be part of the record, they were not. So it was also with the numbers we have assigned to the verses in our Bibles.

These were added and generally credited to the scholar Robert Stevens, who first placed verse numbers in his Greek testament, published in 1551, or about 300 years after the numbers assigned to the chapters by Stephen Langton.

The verse numbers and their divisions are not as problematic as the chapter divisions, since it is the chapter divisions that can easily disturb or interrupt the continuity and train of thought, whereas the numbering of the verses does not pose this problem.

[13 : 17] Hermeneutics will require the student of Scripture to use the chapter and verse divisions as an easy reference locator. We will then ignore those divisions as having anything to do with actually understanding what is written, the beginning or the ending of any subject or theme in the text itself.

We must allow the text itself to inform us when it concludes one thought or subject and begins another. A few brief examples revealing the importance of ignoring the chapter divisions is forthcoming during the next segment of Christianity Clarified.

You may have already read over them in the past without thinking much about it, but when you see them in the light we have shared about them, the disservice they do to our understanding of the text will become more and more apparent.

And we shall see. Christianity Clarified Volume 29 Track 5 Unfortunate Chapter Divisions Part 1 We have made the point that the chapter divisions found in our Bibles are not at all part of the inspiration that God provided the writers of the text originally.

We also warn that many chapter divisions, while helpful as locators of a text, do a disservice to those trying to interpret the text. As natural as it is, perhaps, to approach Bible study chapter by chapter, it can also lead us astray by reaching wrong conclusions, all because we afforded more value to the chapter divisions than simply locating a text.

[15 : 02] In fact, the very first poor chapter division we find in the Bible is at its very beginning, Genesis 1 and 2. In all our Bibles, no matter what translation you are using, Genesis 1 ends with verse 31, which says, God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.

And the evening and the morning were the sixth day. And with this, chapter 1 ends. But it shouldn't end here, because it breaks up the logical continuity of thought.

Chapter 2 then begins with the word thus. Thus is clearly a word denoting a conclusion, not a beginning, as it is here used to start chapter 2.

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them, with verses 2 through 4 speaking of the completed week. Logically, and to maintain the train of thought, chapter 1 should end with verses 1 through 4 of chapter 2.

And chapter 2 should then begin with the new thought as verse 5, which tells us what God began to bring out of the earth he had created, including man.

[16 : 24] This illogical break has produced great confusion, even causing some to view it as two different or competing accounts of creation. And it is nothing of the sort.

chapter 1, verse 1, through chapter 2, verse 4, is an introductory account of the whole creation week involving all seven days, whereas chapter 2, beginning with verse 5, introduces particular details of the creation week account.

Genesis does not record two different accounts of creation, but emphasizes the seven-day week of creation in chapter 1, with more details to follow stemming from that original week.

It is not contradictory, but complementary. Of course, the important issue is to have all the text, which we do get regardless of how it is divided in its chapters.

But when we are striving to get the clearest understanding we can, attention must be given to the flow and continuity of thought, so as to arrive at the meaning of what is communicated in the text.

[17 : 38] Because only by arriving at the meaning of a text can one provide an intelligent response to the message it conveys. The message may be evoking worship, praise, belief, but nothing can be intelligently rendered without determining meaning.

This is the essence of hermeneutics. Christianity Clarified, Volume 29, Track 6, Unfortunate Chapter Divisions, Part 2.

In noting unfortunate chapter divisions that break the train of thought, attention should be given to the break between John, chapters 2 and 3. Verses 24 and 25 of chapter 2 end with, Here, chapter 2 abruptly ends.

Chapter 3 then begins with, There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. Now this sounds like the introduction of an entirely new subject.

But it isn't a new subject at all. It's actually given as an illustration of the fact stated in chapter 2 and verse 25 that Jesus knew what was in man.

[19 : 09] The case in point is that Jesus knew what was in man is the account that opens chapter 3, There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus.

The example John is giving that illustrates that Jesus knew what was in man tends to be lost or at least interrupted by the unfortunate ending of the chapter where it is.

Its ending, where it does, actually short circuits the very point that John is making about the all-knowing Jesus. knowing even to the extent of man's thoughts as exemplified in Nicodemus.

This important connection is lost or at least obscured by a bad chapter division. Likewise, in John, between chapters 7 and 8, chapter 7 ends with, And every man went unto his own house.

Period. Then, the break comes. Chapter 8 opens with, Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives. Clearly, this verse, verse 1 of chapter 8, should be the last verse of chapter 7.

[20 : 26] Such would clearly establish the contrast between every man who departed for his own house compared with Jesus who departed for the Mount of Olives.

A minor point, seemingly. Yet, when the inspired writer John establishes the contrast between the men and Jesus with their different destinations, what right do we have to ignore that?

Is it not an illustration of the fact that the foxes have holes and the birds of the air their nest but the Son of Man hath nowhere to lay his head? Do you not see it?

Every man went to his own house. Not Jesus. Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. Chapter 8 should then begin with verse 2.

And early in the morning he came again into the temple and all the people came unto him and he sat down and taught them. While it is true that many chapter divisions are largely a judgment call on one person's judgment which may be as valid as another, still, care should be taken lest we miss an important connection even as we have seen here.

[21 : 41] Christianity Clarified Volume 29 Track 7 Unfortunate Chapter Divisions Part 3 For those not seriously engaged in the study of the Bible the chapter divisions are of little concern to them.

But for those who are they realize that it is only in the understanding of the text that allows for an intelligent and appropriate response to the truth of that text.

And after all the noblest objective of the study of the Bible is for the right response to be forthcoming from the reader. We are not to study the Bible merely to learn what it says but that we may render obedience to whatever it requires of us.

God did not give us the revelation of Scripture to satisfy our curiosity. It is for our learning and understanding that it may evoke our obedience.

But to learn what it is to which we are to be obedient the task of hermeneutics the art and science of interpreting the Bible needs to be engaged.

[22 : 50] And that is precisely what we are doing at the present. And we have scarcely gotten underway. There is so much more you will find enlightening that is forthcoming.

Early on we have briefly noted the importance of maintaining the continuity of thought or subject matter needed to understand the passage. A few examples of unfortunate chapter divisions have been noted along with an appeal to disregard them as an aid to interpretation and regard them only for locating a text.

Although there are scores of bad chapter divisions we offer just a few that we hope will allow you to actually recognize others on your own now that you are alerted to the problem.

And for now we cannot resist sharing with you what may well be the most blatant and obvious bad division in all the Bible. Years after Stephen Langton made this division decision we feel embarrassed for him 800 years after.

It's the division between Acts 21 and 22. The last verse 40 of chapter 21 states And when he had given him permission Paul, standing on the stairs, motioned to the people with his hand.

[24 : 17] And when there was a great hush, he spoke to them in the Hebrew tongue saying. That's it. End of chapter. Saying.

Well, what did he say? You have to go to the next chapter to find out. Chapter 22 then opens with Brethren and fathers, here are my defense which I now offer you.

So if there is one redeeming feature about this chapter division, it surely must be due to its being so very obvious. But usually it is not that obvious but more subtle.

Subtle enough that the average reader doesn't catch it and is misled from reaching the truth the original writer intended the reader to get. And after all, getting it is what the reading and interpretation thereof is all about.

All else is pointless. It is not the mere reading that is our goal but the understanding thereof that is our objective. Hence, hermeneutics. Christianity Clarified Volume 29 Track 8 Why Understanding Is Everything Part 1 Previous examples of unfortunate chapter divisions illustrated how they may prevent gaining an understanding of what is written.

[25 : 39] An understanding is everything. It is the singular goal of hermeneutics. Because only when we understand what is written are we able to render the right response or even a wrong response such as a refusal to comply with what the text requires.

But even then, when one's response may be negative as in a choice not to comply, that negative response is done knowingly and intelligently because the text was understood even if not obeyed.

A powerful Old Testament example is given in Nehemiah chapter 8. Ezra the scribe is told to bring the book of the law of Moses and read it to the entire congregation of Israel as they assembled in mass.

We are told that all of the men and women who could hear with understanding were gathered together to hear Ezra read from the book of the law as he was elevated in a pulpit above the people.

Elevated, no doubt, so all could see and hear him. Verse 8 tells us, So they read in the book of the law of God distinctly and gave the sense and caused them to understand the reading.

[26 : 55] The response to their having an understanding was dramatic. Verse 9 says, The people wept as a result of hearing the words of the law. They wept because they understood the message.

Also, their weeping indicated their remorse, regret, and repentance over their personal and national behavior. Nehemiah and Ezra then informed them God was aware of their repentance and that the day is now holy unto the Lord.

So, do not weep and mourn any longer, but go your way and sorrow no longer. So the Levites stilled all the people saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy unto our Lord.

Neither be ye sorrow, for the joy of the Lord is your strength. And all the people went their way to eat and to drink and to send portions and to make great mirth because they had understood the words that were declared unto them.

And on the second day there were gathered together the chief of the fathers of all the people, the priests and the Levites unto Ezra the scribe even to understand the words of the law.

[28 : 13] The verses following further illustrate what issues forth as a result of the words having been understood. There is next to no benefit gained from reading without understanding.

There is no spiritual osmosis that oozes into our being merely from reading. Nothing mystical or magical here. We must understand the message.

Our intellect is activated to gain understanding and our will is activated to respond to what we understand. It was so for all of Israel and it remains so even today for all who expose themselves to the truth of the word of God.

Bring on the hermeneutics. Christianity Clarified Volume 29 Track 9 Why Understanding is Everything Part 2 As Nehemiah 8 constitutes a premier example of the value and necessity for understanding the word of God in the Old Testament so also does Acts chapter 8 constitute a like example in the New.

And we're speaking of the account regarding Stephen and the Ethiopian eunuch a stunning rendition of how one may respond once understanding is realized because you cannot respond to what you do not understand.

[29 : 30] this incident dramatically makes that case. We are told the man in question was an Ethiopian in the employ of Candace who at the time was Queen of Ethiopia.

The subject in question was one we would call her Secretary of the Treasury a cabinet position if you will. He was also no doubt a proselyte to Judaism and had for that very reason come to Jerusalem for the express purpose of worshipping the true God of Israel.

While he was there he no doubt was subjected to the ever-present gift shops that lined every street during the various feasts and he purchased a portion of the Bible probably written on a papyrus scroll.

It included the text God inspired the prophet Isaiah to write and in particular the Ethiopian was reading and puzzling over a portion of Isaiah 53 written 700 years earlier by Isaiah who said he was led as a sheep to the slaughter and as a lamb before his shearers is silent so he does not open his mouth.

In humiliation his judgment was taken away and who shall declare his generation for his life is removed from the earth. Led by the Spirit of God the Apostle Philip came alongside the chariot carrying the eunuch perhaps parked at an oasis taking a break before continuing his journey.

[30 : 54] Drawing near Philip noted the biblical scroll from which the eunuch was reading and he casually asked him Do you understand what you were reading there? To which he replied How could I?

Unless someone guide me? And to his credit the Ethiopian admitted his inability to understand what or of whom he was reading but he apparently wanted to know so much so he is willing to ask for help and his puzzlement was over who is this passage talking about?

Is the writer Isaiah speaking of himself or somebody else? What follows is one of the most beautiful verses in all the Bible. Philip opened his mouth and began from the scriptures that is Isaiah Philip preached Jesus unto him.

This Acts 8 account tells us the eunuch responded to Philip's explanation of Isaiah 53 embracing Jesus of whom Isaiah was speaking and he followed his believing with the Jewish water baptism after the manner of John the Baptist.

The result of his understanding as provided by Philip was his trusting Jesus as his Messiah and Savior. An additional result was that he went on his way rejoicing.

[32 : 12] Well I guess and there is no greater cause for rejoicing all based upon an understanding of what was written. Remember there is no intelligent response possible apart from understanding.

Bring on the hermeneutics and we will rejoice together again and again. Christianity Clarified Volume 29 Track 10 Meaning is Derived from the Writer Part 1 That the meaning of any written text is determined by the intent of the writer has in the past been a foregone conclusion.

But according to some today not anymore. As strange and illogical as it is there are those in literary academia today who insist this is not true.

So long as literature has been around for its several thousands of years regardless of the language or dialect in which it is found the commonality of it all is realized with the one who originated the writing to have been the one who intended and established the meaning thereof.

But as is now said not anymore. Certain literary critics surfacing in the late 20th century and early 21st insist quite emphatically that the meaning of a given text any text is not determined by what was in the mind and intent of the writer when he wrote it but what is arrived at by way of meaning and understanding in the mind of the reader.

[33 : 56] In other words the reader not the writer is the one who properly interprets and understands the writing. The application of this thinking must surely provide interesting conversation among a dozen people comprising a discussion group while all of them are reading the same text.

Then each of them in his turn as they go around the circle reveals what he or she believes to be the meaning of the text. What the writer the original author of the text may have meant when he wrote it is completely irrelevant.

The interpretation is derived solely by the reader not the writer and what is more the interpretation or meaning of the text is as varied and several as are the individual readers.

All that matters is what is the text saying to you? Never mind what the writer may have intended to convey because what the text means to you is its real interpretation.

Of course a major attraction of this methodology allows each reader to be right in their interpretation of the text a kind of literary political correctness that the latest crop of literary intellectuals can appreciate and embrace.

[35 : 20] Please don't dismiss this for the study in absurdity it appears to be and in fact is because it is this very kind of thinking that many are using to justify their overthrowing the meaning of our very own United States Constitution.

These are they who see the meaning of the Constitution to be the purview not of the original writers thereof but of the current crop of readers today. This is a harebrained methodology that turns all of literature on its ear and virtually neutralizes the very meaning of words and message.

Needless to say while we will not be engaging this in our pursuit of hermeneutics you need to know it is out there. Christianity Clarified Volume 29 Track 11 Meaning is Derived from the Writer Part 2 The task of the reader of any item of literature is to ascertain the meaning and intent that was in the mind of the writer when the text was written.

If that has occurred so that the reader understands the words of the text to mean the same thing the writer of the text intended then communication has occurred.

The message that was intended to be sent was received and understood. It is a glorious God-given provision intended for the purpose of enabling people to establish connections.

[36 : 53] God even used it to establish connections between himself and humanity. It gives powerful meaning in referring to Jesus Christ as the Logos the Word of God who became flesh and dwelt among us.

It is all about message and meaning and message and meaning are conveyed from a sender to a receiver so that the receiver can respond.

But response to be intelligent must be based on understanding. Intelligent response is impossible if meaning is not established and meaning is what hermeneutics is all about.

Why does God want us to know and understand what he has written to us if not for the purpose of our understanding and being able to act upon what we understand?

What's the point of his providing the written word the Bible apart from this? There would be no point. In all too many circles within Christendom throughout the world the lament recorded in Hosea chapter 8 is all too prevalent.

[38 : 02] Using the prophet Hosea to speak to his wayward and sinful people of Ephraim a principal component of the separated northern ten tribes of Israel God said I have written to him the great things of my law but they were counted as a strange thing.

And these the chosen people of God whose words of God came across to them as a strange thing? What does strange mean?

It means unfamiliar foreign odd unknown One we have never met who comes from another area is called a stranger in town.

How could the very word of God ever be a strange thing to the very people of God? In the same way the very word of God is a strange thing to so many the very people of God today who comprise the Christian faith.

Sad though it is this need not be the case. A brief course on the subject of hermeneutics will address this so as to prevent the word of God from being counted as a strange thing.

[39 : 15] The strangeness if present will evaporate right before the eyes of those understanding this content during the upcoming sessions of Christianity Clarified.

Prepare yourself to know understand and enjoy the word of God in a fashion you never dreamed possible. And it is intended to be the norm not the exception for all God's people.

The meaning is derived from the writer and we will come to greatly appreciate it. Christianity Clarified Volume 29 Track 12 Meaning is Derived from the Writer Part 3 That the meaning of any given text the Bible included is derived from the writer is the maxim upon which our entire course of hermeneutics will be constructed.

The meaning of any written text originates in the mind of the writer and was intended to be conveyed by what the writer wrote. This is so simple and so basic it ought not require any consideration.

Yet because of all the academic flakiness confronting today's culture not even the simplest of principles can be taken for granted. To repeat a written message that is intended to communicate begins with the message maker namely the writer.

[40 : 39] The writer alone establishes the meaning of what he has written because he is the point of origin and being the point of origin is the sole person of intention.

As such there are certain things the writer intends or means to write and he does so. This is the message he produced in the written text the words that one conveyed.

So in the case of the Bible as in all other items of literature the message and its meaning began with the writer. Apart from this concept there is no point in anything being written.

What is written is written because the writer has something to say a message to communicate to whomever he is writing. The recipient upon reading the words written begins automatically to extract the meaning of those words even as he reads them.

If he arrives at the meaning of the words that the writer intended for them communication has occurred. If on the other hand the reader is unable to do that he is left with the question I wonder what he meant by that.

[41 : 57] How many times have we read a text of scripture only to ask ourselves what did Paul mean by that or what is Moses getting at in what he says here in Deuteronomy?

Being able to answer questions like these that occur all through scripture is precisely what hermeneutics is all about. We are on the trail of meaning intention purpose when we read any text of scripture or for that matter any text from a magazine or the daily newspaper.

All literature despite its source is produced with the intent of it communicating to its recipients the readers. We will discover time and again the absolute thrill and yes thrill is the word when we achieve a breakthrough from a passage of scripture that yields to us for the first time what is actually being said and what it means.

Nothing can spur one on to further investigation than the sense of satisfaction and excitement derived from this kind of breakthrough. The word of God contains its own built in reward for all who approach it in this vein.

Actually, the word of God has always contained this throbbing kind of truth and meaning, but it is not discovered by so many who read it devoid of understanding. Our goal is for hermeneutics to correct that.

[43 : 25] Christianity Clarified volume 29 track 13 Instructions from a dying man part 1 Would you not agree that the words written by a man who knew his death was very near might weigh his parting words with deep seriousness of purpose?

And that seriousness of purpose on the part of the man coupled with the inspiration of the Spirit of God led the Apostle Paul to pen the words he did to his young protege Timothy on his second and last letter he wrote to him.

Understandably, this final letter is weighty throughout, but perhaps it will suffice if we select one of Paul's mandates to Timothy, focusing on the preeminence of the Word of God and Timothy's responsibility to it.

It is found in chapter 2, verse 15, in which Paul related, Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Why did Paul say this? Could it be because of what he just said in verse 14? So let's remember Miles Coverdale who spoke of considering what went before a verse and what follows after, known as the law of the immediate context.

[44 : 43] And after all, verse 15 in its content follows hard after verse 14, and it tells Timothy that he, Timothy, is to remind his audience of what Paul said in verses 11-13, consisting of, it is a faithful saying, for if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him.

If we suffer, we shall also reign with him. If we deny him, he also will deny us. If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful, he cannot deny himself.

of these things, Timothy, put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord, that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers.

This, Paul tells Timothy, to relate to his hearers. And then, following that, in verse 15, he tells him, study, that is, concentrate, use diligence, to focus on making himself approved unto God as a workman or laborer who will not be ashamed because he, Timothy, is rightly dividing the word of truth, namely, the word of God.

If Timothy does that, he will be providing the opposite of those in verse 14 who strive about words to no profit that accomplish only to the subverting or overturned.

[46 : 16] of the hearers. And Timothy would then show himself to be approved unto God. Also, Timothy, you are to shun or avoid profane and vain babblings because they only lead to the increase of ungodliness as stated in verse 17 and their vain babblings grow like a cancer.

It's all in the context. The verse is going before and following after. It's a case of contrast, comparing what those would do in verse 14 with what Paul says Timothy is to do in verse 15.

Let's continue this upcoming. Christianity Clarified, volume 29, track 14, instructions from a dying man, part 2.

Currently, we are focusing on the Apostle Paul's directive to Timothy, his spiritual son in the faith. And we are doing so since this second letter of Paul contains his final words.

And final words from a man soon to meet his death should command special attention. When one faces eternity, he does not want to engage in trivia.

[47 : 30] This is no time for small talk. Now is the time to major on the majors. And for Paul, what is that major? What is that most crucial, indispensable subject matter he must, as a dying man, impart to his young protege?

It is the handling and dispensing of the very word of God. Nothing transcends this. Truth, our most precious commodity, must be handled aright.

It must be properly assigned to the time and place and people for whom it is intended. And while the word of God is true in all it affirms, not all its truth is intended for all people of all times.

There is a proper and improper placement or division of truth. This goes here and that goes there. And if you put this where that belongs and that where this belongs, both are out of their proper place.

They don't fit there. And trying to make them fit where they do not belong, is to try putting the proverbial square peg into the round hole. They just do not fit.

[48 : 45] And no amount of finagling will make them fit, because they are out of their intended place. Recall, if you will, on early line, in Miles Coverdale's rules, it shall greatly help ye to understand scripture, if thou mark not only what is spoken or written, but of whom, and to whom, with what words?

We need go no further at the present. Words of whom, and to whom? And this leads us to our extremely important maxim we all need to firmly fix in mind.

And it is, while all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and thus all scripture is for us, not all scripture is to us. A pertinent obvious case in point is Old Testament Israel's sacrificial system.

God instituted that exclusively for the Jewish people, and for no other people. And while Paul stated in Romans 10 that whatsoever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope, he meant that we are to learn about God's provision for animal sacrifice, and the ultimate lessons to be derived from it, particularly in what had been revealed as Christ being the sacrificial Lamb of God.

But understanding the Jewish sacrificial program never was intended for us to go and do likewise. Do you see the necessary separation, the division here between what was required for the Jews, but not required for us today?

[50 : 28] Such distinction belongs to the right division of the word of truth. Christianity Clarified, Volume 29, Track 15, Instructions from a Dying Man, Part 3.

The Apostle Paul's last and dying words to young Timothy included the formula for Timothy being approved of God and to avoid being ashamed or embarrassed before God.

It is dependent upon Timothy's rightly dividing the word of truth. And in so doing, he will contrast the negative striving about words to no profit in the verse preceding, that is, verse 14 of chapter 2.

Further, in the context found in verse 18, those who strive about words to no profit have erred as regards the truth, as opposed to Timothy, who will be rightly dividing the word of truth.

The context will contrast between truth and error, and the results of each could not be clear. Or, more important, if the truth is not rightly divided, all that remains are words to no profit, profane and vain babblings that actually tend to an increase of ungodliness in verse 16 that grows like a malignant cancer in verse 17.

[51 : 52] Two examples of that are Hymenaeus and Philetus. This truly is an either-or proposition. Either one rightly divides the word of truth, or one does not.

The Greek word for rightly divided is orthotomunta. It's a compound word. Ortho, which means straight, as an orthodontist is a dentist who specializes in the straightening of teeth.

And tomonta comes from the root word temno and means to cut or hew. Together, they mean to cut or hew straight, as one would cut or saw in a straight line, not deviating to one side or another, but staying on a straight course.

This is how Timothy is to present the word of truth. Give it to them straight. Don't deviate from the straight and narrow path of doctrinal truth. This involves not hedging on the truth.

Don't shade it. Don't try to tone it down. Don't attempt to make it more palatable. Speak the truth in love. Don't try to sugarcoat it. When the truth is rightly divided, from what is it divided?

[53 : 12] It is divided or separated from error. The matter does become complicated because what was true at one time and place for one people may not be true at another time and place for another people.

Physical circumcision is practiced by the Jews since the time of Abraham as a case in point. Paul made it clear that circumcision was not to be required of Gentiles who came to faith.

This sorely displeased the believing Jews. Paul could have saved himself a lot of grief and persecution by caving in on this issue, but he boldly refused to do so, in Galatians 2 saying, he would not concede that point, not even for one hour, so that he might maintain the truth of the gospel.

Paul cut straight in truth. He gave them the straight scoop. His parting words to Timothy was to do likewise, and he would never be ashamed for having done so. Christianity clarified, volume 29, track 16, the cross changed everything.

The seriousness of purpose with which the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write in his final letter should be very carefully noted. And as we stated earlier, when a man realizes he is about to die, he tends to weigh his final words carefully.

[54 : 38] And so it was, as Paul writes Timothy, admonishing him to exercise great care and diligence in his proclamation of the Word of God. Paul tells Timothy he must cut the Word of God straight, if he is to avoid being ashamed as a workman would be ashamed for poor performance or shoddy workmanship.

To study or exercise careful diligence to do this, Timothy, should not this same care and discipline be the portion of every preacher and teacher for the Word of God?

Anything less is unthinkable, given what it is we are handling, the Word of Truth, and the one for whom we are handling it, none other than God Himself.

The words rightly dividing, as we have stated, literally means to cut straight. And what is it that is to be cut straight? We are told that also.

We are to cut or divide the Word of Truth straight. The Word of Truth is, of course, the very inspired Word of God to which Timothy had access in the scriptures available at that time.

[55 : 50] And this would have consisted largely of the Old Testament, and added to that, Timothy would include the updates the risen Christ had revealed to the Apostle Paul that enabled him to write the earlier letters he sent to the various churches he addressed.

In these, Paul revealed the stunning turn of events that sent the gospel of the grace of God to the Gentiles. The Gentiles?

Yes, the Gentiles. And equally stunning was the truth that Gentiles did not have to become as Jews in order to be accepted by God.

A concept most Jews at that time would consider unthinkable. Yet, this very fact was a part of the Word of Truth that Timothy was to proclaim.

Well now, how and why did this come about? It was all due to the cross. The cross of Jesus Christ and what he actually accomplished on that cross would and did change everything.

[56 : 58] And a large part of the everything that is changed is the fact that now, after the cross, God is making no distinction between Jews and Gentiles.

Earlier, there was a separation between them. Now, the separation is gone. Timothy must now make a separation or a distinction between the time when there was in the past, a separation between them as opposed to now when there is no separation.

Did you get it? Both times, before the cross and after the cross, both separations were the word of truth at the time they were in force.

But now, Timothy, a distinction must be made, a cutting, a separation between the two, because what used to be true no longer is. Christianity Clarified, Volume 29, Track 17, Wrongly Mixing Truth Divides Christendom.

We are pursuing the subject of hermeneutics, the art and science of interpreting the Bible. We have encouraged your memorizing the timeless truths found in Miles Coverdale's advice when approaching the Bible for understanding.

[58 : 15] Said he in 1535, It shall greatly help ye to understand Scripture, if thou mark not only what is spoken or written, but of whom, and to whom, with what words, at what time, where, to what intent, with what circumstances, considering what goeth before, and what followeth.

If only Christendom as a whole would follow this advice so very much that divides us, would dissolve overnight. This is because the major and minor denominations, and all the splits and splinters thereof, have arrived at their convictions and statements of faith based on their particular interpretation of Scripture.

And they, in good faith, see doctrinal issues differently. A good consistent dose of Miles Coverdale would dispense with so many of those differences.

But we won't hold our breath. Back to Paul and Timothy and the issue of rightly dividing, or accurately cutting, the word of truth.

Truth has to be cut? Divided? Separated? How is that? Why is that? Isn't something that's true always true?

[59 : 41] No, of course not. It used to be true that a voyage across the ocean from the U.S. to London involves several weeks. Now it's possible to eat breakfast in the U.S. and enjoy lunch in London the same day.

Because what was once true, no longer is true. That's true of a lot of things. A distinction has to be made between the 18th century and the 21st century.

They must be separated, divided with certain accompanying characteristics that belong to one and those that belong to another. A distinction must be made between a single-masted sailing vessel and a supersonic jetliner.

There are differences there, you know. How foolish it would be to say, no, there are no differences. They are all vehicles of transportation and that's all that matters.

You can just lump them all together because they all do the same thing. They all carry people from here to there and that's all that matters. Yet, as illogical as that sounds, that's precisely how many well- intended believers approach the Bible.

[60 : 57] Their view is, it's all the Word of God and they are right. It is. And it's all true. Right again. It is. Therefore, just read it all, believe it all, do all in it that it says, and as for dividing it or cutting it or separating parts of it from other parts, I just don't get that.

I take the whole Bible and I live by the whole thing. And that certainly sounds commendable and we would not question anyone's sincerity for pursuing that. But troubling questions are in order.

Christianity Clarified, Volume 29, Track 18. Wrongly Mixing Truth Divides Christendom, Part 2. We are laboring with a critical issue of rightly dividing the word of truth.

Obviously, a great concern the Apostle Paul had when he instructed Timothy to be sure and do that. Because if you don't, you will be ashamed when you face your Lord for having been a careless workman.

It's all here in 2 Timothy 2.15 and sadly, it is often ignored by many responsible for teaching the word of truth. Truth needs to be separated from truth as to the time and place it was given and to whom it was given and by whom it was given.

[62 : 17] We used Miles Coverdale, God bless him, in an extremely critical word of advice he wrote to accompany the first complete English Bible he provided to the world in 1535, nearly 500 years ago.

Rightly dividing is the opposite of wrongly mixing, the results of which are confusing, contradictory, and misleading, to put it mildly. When the word of truth is rightly divided, aspects of that truth are put where they belong, kept to when they belonged, and to whom they belonged when God gave them.

This really is not all that profound. When you stop to think about it, it is eminently logical. So, if it is so logical, why doesn't everyone see it and do it?

There are a number of reasons why they don't, some of which yours truly can identify with when first coming to Christ as a 21-year-old back in 1956. To me, back then, regarding the Bible as the word of God, just as I do now, I had the mistaken notion that the Bible came from God in one great fell swoop, and thus was to be believed and obeyed cover to cover in its entirety.

And this idea, soon after my conversion, was confirmed by the little Sunday school ditty that assured me every promise in the book is mine, every word, every line. It never occurred to me that that wasn't true, because it sounded so good and just like God who gives everything to everybody.

- [63 : 55] My naivete was stunning. Plus, that naivete was reinforced by many older Christians who had been in the faith for a long time, and they knew all about this stuff, so if that's what they believed, it was good enough for me.

Another big mistake. Add to that the denominational bias that is inherent in all denominations, which bias tends to separate them from other denominations, and you have persuasive, compelling reasons to stay in line with what you were taught early on in your Christian life.

And then, perhaps even more powerful, is the emotional attachment to the people, the church, or denomination involved in your coming to faith. And understandably, there is a profound gratitude and sense of loyalty associated with those the Lord used to bring you to Himself.

And, of course, the love, loyalty, and connection with family ties is the most powerful of all. How can you not believe what your parents believed when you came to Christ at your mother's knee?

But, is this a guarantor of truth? If not, what is upcoming? Christianity Clarified, Volume 29, Track 19 What Was True Isn't Always In our previous segment, warning was given to the fallacy of accepting something as true because of who else accepted it.

- [65 : 28] It's not only a fallacy, it can even be a fatal fallacy. Just look at history's religious gurus who led their followers to disastrous ends, in some cases even to their death, simply because they placed their trust in one who was not worthy of it.

Please be advised, and never forget, that truth is not determined by who believes it. Truth is that which corresponds to reality.

Truth is true because of its inherent truthfulness. Truth is that which is true even if no one believes it. Because believing something doesn't make it true.

Truth is not determined by polls or public opinion surveys. Likewise, not believing something does not make it untrue. There were many people in Israel during the public life of Jesus who did not believe him to be the long-awaited Messiah.

But that doesn't mean he wasn't. So what then is truth, and how is it identified? Repeatedly, the Bible asserts, thy word is truth, and refers to God as the God who cannot lie.

- [66 : 46] Christ refers to himself as the way, the truth, and the life in John 14. And the Gospel of John repeatedly sets forth the veracity of Christ.

Read it and see for yourself. Ultimate truth is that which is set forth by the Spirit of God in the Word of God and will be found to be consistent with itself.

Everything in the Bible is related to everything in the Bible. When rightly divided is consistent with itself, everything is related.

When not rightly divided but wrongly mixed, what appears to be irreconcilable contradictions abound throughout. This is precisely what leads many unbelievers to say, there are contradictions in the Bible.

No, there are no real contradictions in the Bible, but there are a great many places where that appears to be the case when you do not put things where they belong, to whom they belong, and when they belong to them.

- [67 : 46] Just like Miles Coverdale recommended 500 years ago. Unfortunately, most unbelievers, eager to discredit the Bible, couldn't care less about rightly dividing it.

They haven't heard of that and have no interest in doing it, and would likely say Christians who appeal to the Bible's need for being rightly divided are just using that as a convenient cop-out.

Well, it's nothing of the kind. Rightly dividing is merely a necessary recognition that the Bible has come to us as a progressively unfolding revelation that occurred and developed over many centuries of time from its inception via Moses through its conclusion with the Apostle John in the Revelation.

Failure to recognize that will inevitably lead to apparent contradictions, but none that cannot be resolved by rightly dividing. The word of truth, as Paul reminded Timothy, he must do.

Rightly dividing. Examples are forthcoming. Christianity Clarified, Volume 29, Track 20, Christ and Seeming Contradictions, Part 1.

[68 : 58] There are numerous, very valuable laws provided by the study of hermeneutics, and we are anxious to engage them due to the light they will shed on the Bible. But there is light to be shed here as well, as we illustrate what appear to be irreconcilable differences in the Bible.

For the present, we will put those laws on the back burner and bring them forth after considering the confusion caused by not rightly dividing the word of truth.

The first we bring to your attention is found in the familiar passage of Matthew chapter 10 and the account of Jesus calling and commissioning his original twelve apostles.

verses 1 through 4 names the apostles, and beginning in verses 5 and 6, he instructs them as to the scope of their ministry.

And Jesus is very specific regarding those to whom the twelve were to preach. He said, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans, enter ye not.

[70 : 06] But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Here in the clearest possible language, Christ not only tells them to whom they are to go, but to whom they are not to go as well.

In this very same gospel of Matthew, the verse man has labeled as the Great Commission in 28, 19, and 20, Jesus, immediately before ascending to heaven, tells the twelve to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

Essentially, the same directive is given by Mark in 16, Luke in 24, as well as Acts chapter 1. Does the command by the same Jesus given to the same apostles in these passages contradict what he earlier gave them in Matthew 10?

Of course it does. It's just as opposite and contradictory as it can be. If and when this contradiction is pointed out to believers, many are embarrassed about it and have no real answer, and usually the best they can do is say, Well, I don't know what's going on here, but Jesus knew what he was doing, and someday when we get to heaven we will hear what this was all about.

Now, this is not at all satisfying to any serious Bible student. And it may well leave the unbelieving critic smug with an, I told you the Bible contains contradictions.

[71 : 40] Well, let's admit it. Jesus does contradict what he said at the outset of his three-year ministry as opposed to what he is telling the twelve at the end of his ministry. Hmm. Do you suppose something occurred during this three-year period that required Christ to change and update that earlier commission?

Could each have been given to address the conditions that prevailed at that specific time? Remember Miles Coverdale? With what words? At what time? Where? To what intent?

With what circumstances? The time, the intent, and the circumstances had all radically changed during those three years. And one has to cut or rightly divide between the two commissions.

Kind of cut and paste this one. Over here and that one over there. And when you do, the contradiction is fully justified and even resolved.

Christianity Clarified, Volume 29, Track 21, Preview of Upcoming, Volume 30. We continue to engage a topic that clearly reveals the basis for so very much disagreement among Christendom throughout the world.

[72 : 50] It is all related to the various interpretations of Scripture that characterize the numerous denominations differing one from another. And please be reminded that prior to the 1500s, the denominations that dominate the Christian landscape today did not even exist then.

Presently, we are all familiar with the Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Lutherans, Episcopalians, Church of God, Nazarene, Pentecostal, Brethren, and, of course, that which was the virtual parent of all those just mentioned in the Roman Catholic Church.

And about the only thing these all have in common is the headship of Christ. But from that truth onward, the differences have multiplied through the centuries.

Why is this? How is it that those who espouse a common Lord in the person of Jesus Christ have managed to develop so many doctrinal differences?

And, oh yes, there is at least one commonality to which each adheres. And it is the conviction, the sincere conviction, that their particular denomination is the right one with the right doctrine, and all those other fellows are wrong.

[74 : 10] So, again, how did all these very sincere but very different persuasions develop? They developed in the largest degree to the differences arrived at regarding the interpretation of Scripture.

Each denomination, without exception, is quite capable of providing chapter and verse for the authority of their doctrinal positions. And while it may be true that some splits and splinters may have been based on personality issues among leaders that caused some to take their followers and form a new group, most of the divisions were over sincere convictions about how Scripture is to be interpreted.

It was the different interpretations and their different emphases that gave rise to these denominations, large and small, that exist today. And it truly does appear uncanny that nearly all of these were using the same Bible, or very nearly the same, and yet each honestly and with great conviction arrived at different interpretations.

And their particular interpretation was to them of such importance that it justified their separating from those other folks to start a new group that would become another denomination.

So, for about the past 500 years, or from approximately 1500 onward, this is how Christendom has gotten to where we are today. During the 20th century, attempts were made to bring those various denominations together through what was dubbed the ecumenical movement, and there was a great deal of hubbub and publicity about it.

[75 : 50] And some were agreeable to it, and engaged in some uniting and merging to a point, but far from anything of significance. And in large part, this was due to the unwillingness of each to surrender their denominational autonomy, as well as their key doctrinal positions based on their interpretation of Scripture, to which all appealed as their authority.

So, in trying to analyze all this historically, it may well be that these differences arising were simply inevitable, given the nature of humanity itself.

And by that I mean, the moral and spiritual fallenness of all of us must surely be a part of the mix. In all of this, the Roman Catholics have their Pope, the Lutherans have Martin Luther, the Episcopalians, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Presbyterians their John Knox, the Methodist John Wesley, all of whom, good godly men, demonstrated through the ages.

Lesser and later appearing denominations have all had their founding fathers as well. And our conviction here at Christianity Clarified is that all of us, including all of the aforementioned, would be served so much better if we walked in lockstep with Miles Coverdale, to whom we have made frequent reference.

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

[77 : 33] This, we assure you, we will labor to do on the upcoming volumes of Christianity Clarified. The critical issue of rightly dividing the word of truth and the stunning breakthrough it affords in the understanding of Scripture will speak for themselves.

Added to that, the numerous laws for the interpretation of Scripture that we believe you will find to be logical and compelling will be forthcoming on Volume 30 of Christianity Clarified.

This is Pastor Marv Wiseman thanking you so much for being part of our audience. We appreciate your encouragement and your studying the Scriptures with us. God bless you.