

Christianity Clarified Volume 65

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[0 : 0 0] Christianity Clarified, Volume 65, Track 1, The Promise of the Kingdom Church, Part 6. A prominent faulty assumption continues to be made today by both Catholic and Protestant churches.

It's regarding the promise made by Jesus in Matthew 16 about the kingdom and the church He will establish. It remains currently assumed to have become a reality fulfilled in Acts 2 on the Jewish day of Pentecost.

Yet that was not at all believed to be correct by first, second, or even third century Christians after the ascension of Christ back to heaven. No one back then believed the kingdom of which Jesus spoke began at Pentecost.

Dr. Alva McLean, in his book titled The Greatness of the Kingdom, states on page 8, quote, under the heading of the Millennial Kingdom, Here the kingdom of God appears as a government of God to be established on earth at the second coming of Christ, who will reign with His risen and glorified saints over the nations in a literal kingdom for a thousand years.

That such was the almost universal belief of the early church is now generally conceded by scholars who are able to read history with a minimum of theological prejudice, end quote.

[1 : 2 9] And quoting A.T. Robertson, renowned Greek scholar, who stated, quote, As a matter of fact, Augustine himself shared this belief at first, but later changed his mind.

Eventually, they both dropped the idea of a literal kingdom yet to come and believed it to be instead a purely spiritual kingdom that began at Pentecost in Acts 2.

Thus, in their minds, the church Jesus said he would build and the keys he said he would give to Peter had actually begun. While it took but 250 years for Catholics in Rome to arrive at that, the Eastern Church at Constantinople did not embrace it until about 400 A.D.

But once both did so, it became entrenched in the official theology of both and remains a maximum regret to the present day.

With that faulty assumption in place, it would inevitably give birth to others, equally faulty that would arise from it, including its impact upon Protestantism to this day.

[2 : 5 5] Were those conclusions held by both born of good faith? Of course they were. Sadly, history is replete with faulty conclusions, once in place and embraced by the faithful.

They then become etched in stone. Even the possibility of their being untrue is rejected completely out of hand. Their view of church infallibility cannot entertain that for a moment.

And the plot continues to thicken. Christianity Clarified, Volume 65, Track 2, The Promise of the Kingdom Church, Part 7 Because Jesus assured the Twelve Apostles they would be given the kingdom and rule Israel, that Peter would be given the keys to the kingdom as well, the question that would then loom large would be, When?

When will that be? The answer would seem almost obvious. It was in Matthew 19 when Jesus made that promise, And within another two weeks he would arrive in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, and days later would be suspended upon a Roman cross.

Add three more days till his resurrection, plus another forty days he would spend with them after his resurrection, then another ten days until Pentecost in Acts 2 would arrive, and all told, it was about two months later.

[4 : 31] With the promise Jesus made, and the miraculous events of Pentecost, no one could deny that a new wind was definitely blowing in Israel.

More miracles were occurring almost daily with multiplied healings, with Peter leading the way accompanied by Stephen, Philip, and others. A supernatural generosity and unheard of euphoria had taken hold in this community of exclusively Jewish believers in Jesus.

The disciples were putting into practice what Jesus told the rich young ruler in Matthew 19 about selling his possessions, giving the money thereof to the poor, and following him.

Peter and the Twelve then told Jesus they had done that. They had left everything and followed him. What would they realize from all of that? Jesus told them when he came into his glory in the kingdom, they also would sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Plus, those who had forsaken all to follow him would receive a hundredfold in return and enjoy eternal life in the kingdom. Was that actually getting underway starting at Pentecost, and all the kingdom-oriented miracles that followed it?

[5 : 52] Could this new environment, just joined by the three thousand who now embrace Jesus, who already had ascended as Israel's Messiah, actually be the beginning of the kingdom he promised?

True, Israel could not have the kingdom without the king, who was then absent, having already returned to heaven in Acts 1. But, said Peter, to this new crowd of Jews in Acts 3, who gathered, that upon Israel's repentance, God would send Jesus back to Israel, and he would get the kingdom, the times of restitution, underway.

But, despite the ongoing demonstration of the miracles that no one denied, the Jewish leadership dug in their heels of opposition, arranged by deceit, and carried out the stoning of Stephen, beginning the intense campaign of Jews persecuting Jews.

And the most determined of them all was a Jew from Tarsus named Saul. Positively, it looked like the kingdom was getting underway among the early disciples.

Negatively, the deep state of Israel, centered in the Sanhedrin, turned up the heat. What might be described as the earliest foothills of the kingdom, would be aborted.

[7 : 19] The kingdom mountain to come would be aborted, and precisely so. Christianity Clarified, Volume 65, Track 3, The Promise of the Kingdom Church, Part 8.

An attempt is being made to show that the Jewish day of Pentecost, celebrated in Acts 2, was not at all the fulfillment of what Jesus promised about the kingdom of heaven beginning, and the keys of it being given to Peter, and the gates of Hades not prevailing against the church Jesus would build.

Acts 2 and Pentecost was definitely not that. It was a gross, faulty assumption to believe it was, on the parts of both Roman Catholics and Protestants.

Well, if Acts 2, Pentecost, was not the beginning of the kingdom, and the start of the church Jesus said He would build, what was it? It was precisely what Peter said it was, that which Joel the prophet spoke about.

Note carefully, Peter did not say Joel's prophecy was fulfilled, but only that the events occurring in Acts 2 were things Joel was talking about.

[8 : 34] Peter stopped short of saying Joel's prophecy was fulfilled, but only that these things were spoken about by Joel, not fulfilled, but spoken about.

Well, now some will ask, what's the difference? Isn't that just splitting hairs? No. Not if you read the text in Acts 2.

Let's do that, beginning at verse 17. That was realized there at Pentecost.

But the rest of Joel's words were not, for Joel continued by saying in verse 19, Verses 17 and 18 did occur there at Pentecost, but verses 19 through 21 clearly did not.

And the great and notable day of the Lord did not come then at Pentecost, nor has it yet come. That is clearly tribulational content spoken of by Jesus in Matthew 24, quoting at verse 29, This is clearly second coming content that was not at all fulfilled at Pentecost, nor did Peter say it was fulfilled.

[10 : 40] He only said, this is what Joel was talking about. Partly fulfilled in verses 17 and 18, but not yet fulfilled in verses 19 through 21.

More details lie ahead. The plot continues to thicken, and we will continue to thin it out. The observation was made that Joel's prophecy, referred to by Peter on the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2, was not a fulfillment of his prophecy, but only a reference to it.

It was noted that a gap exists between verses 18 and 19. Verses 17 and 18 of Acts 2 were fulfilled on Pentecost, while verses 19 through 21 were not.

These latter verses clearly describe tribulational content spoken of by Jesus in Matthew 24, and have not yet occurred. There is a definite gap between these two.

Well then, who or what is in that gap? We are. It is this present church age, the dispensation of the grace of God, that puts Jew and Gentile together, as described in Ephesians 3.

[12 : 10] This new, previously unthinkable concept of Jew and Gentiles banded together in Christ was never prophesied anywhere in the Old Testament. This did not occur at Pentecost, for these were all Jews exclusively.

Gentiles, those who were not Jews, did not even get into the picture until several years later, perhaps ten years, after Acts 2 Pentecost.

That Jew and Gentile together will become the Christian church, but that of Jews alone at Pentecost is not that church. That is exclusively Jewish.

It is not wrong to call Acts 2 a church, that is, an ecclesia, a group called out for a common purpose, because it was a church, yet not the church that is the spiritual body of Christ with Him as the head, revealed in Ephesians 3 and Colossians 1.

Does this mean there is more than one church? Oh my, yes, definitely yes. And they must be rightly divided.

[13 : 22] All too many are willing to say, Oh, details, details, doesn't make any difference, church is church, let's not be splitting hairs. What a sloppy, lazy attitude.

You might as well say, Well, women are women, doesn't make any difference, just marry anyone you want, all women are alike, don't split hairs. Well, I think the ladies would have something to say about that, and so would any prospective groom.

Now, to see how critical it is to rightly divide the different churches, a whole session needs to be devoted to this eye-opening confusion resulting conflict.

And it all has to do with observing the principles established long ago on Christianity Clarified when we engage the concept of allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture.

And when we do, confusion and seeming contradiction melt away. It then fits, and perfectly so.

[14 : 31] don't miss this. It's critical. And it's upcoming. Christianity Clarified, Volume 65, Track 5, The Promise of the Kingdom Church, Part 10.

In the volume, Understanding the Gospels, author Charles Baker reminds us that in the Septuagint, that is, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, The word for church appears over 40 times.

It's the Greek word ekklesia, and in each case, it is in the near context that tells us what the ekklesia or church is. And they are definitely not all the same.

But let's just confine ourselves to our New Testament. In Acts chapter 7, St. Stephen is speaking, just before being executed by stoning.

And in recounting the history of Israel, he called the nation of Israel, whom God used Moses to bring out of Egypt, the church in the wilderness. That's right.

[15 : 41] The word translated church is ekklesia, and it means a called-out assembly for a common purpose. Well, who was the assembly? The entire nation of Israel.

Called out of what? They were called out of Egypt. For what common purpose? For their freedom from bondage. Ek in Greek relates to the English word for exit, and klesia is from kaleo, meaning to call.

Thus, ekklesia means to call out a group or assembly for a common purpose. That is a church. And it doesn't always mean something religious.

In fact, it frequently does not mean something religious. In Acts 19, a riot was breaking out in the pagan coliseum dedicated to the goddess Diana.

The apostle Paul was being charged for saying Diana was not a god or goddess at all. Mass confusion broke out in the huge crowd of pagan Gentiles, and we are told the assembly was confused.

[16 : 53] And what was the Greek word used for assembly? Ekklesia. The same word used for church, because this pagan crowd qualified to be called a church, an assembly of people called out or summoned for a common purpose.

Never mind what the purpose was. They were all in it together, and that made them a church, having nothing whatever to do with our usual definition of a church, except called out for a common purpose.

Well, according to that, you could even call a baseball team a church. That's right. It is an assembly called out or called together for a common purpose. Play ball!

What does that have to do with what is commonly called church? Absolutely nothing. But words mean things, and they have to be rightly divided or separately considered in the context in which they are used.

Ekklesia, or church, is used again here in this same 19th chapter of Acts when in verses 32 and again in verse 39, where it is referred to as an assembly or ekklesia, is actually a local governing body that is called out to govern people locally.

[18 : 14] All are referred to as, of all things, a church. Remember, words mean things. Christianity Clarified Volume 65, Track 6, The Promise of the Kingdom Church, Part 11.

Back to the base text of Acts 2 and Pentecost where Peter was preaching to the exclusively Jewish crowd in the temple area. As a result of the Spirit's descent and Peter's message, 3,000 Jews responded to his demand for repentance and baptism.

This whole event was simply electrifying and the King James Version ends the chapter saying, The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

This definitely was a church, a group, or assembly called out for a common purpose. Called out of what? Called out of the number much larger than 3,000.

And not all of Peter's audience responded, only those 3,000 who were called out. And they were called out for the express purpose of becoming disciples of Jesus the Messiah in whose Messiahship they earlier did not believe.

[19 : 31] Now, it is critical to note the content of Peter's message. It was not what most Christians believe it was. It was not, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.

Christians are so eager to make Peter say what he did not say, and that becomes another of our faulty assumptions. Well, didn't Peter tell them that?

No, he did not. What he did was, he delivered a scathing indictment against the people of Israel gathered there for having rejected and crucifying their Messiah.

Peter read them out and their Jewish leaders. Even though they did that, then Peter goes on to say, God raised him from the dead.

Now, Peter said, you need to reverse yourself and your previous position of rejection by admitting you were wrong and submit to the baptism of repentance for the remission of your sins, just as John the Baptist preached earlier and Jesus in the Twelve preached as well.

[20 : 45] Three thousand of them did so, and their numbers will soon begin to grow when another two thousand are added in Acts 4. This is another example of Peter's prominence detailed earlier.

The message is the same as earlier preached by John and the Twelve. Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Is it? Is it still?

Or is the kingdom off the table because Israel had rejected the king and there can be no kingdom if there is no king? Now, right here is a critical factor of division among all of Christendom and it is always due to the same thing.

It is the non-observance of what is written. Who said the kingdom is off the table? Who in the scripture says that? No one. Why then is it believed?

Well, because they rejected the king and he is the only one who could bring in the kingdom, but since Israel rejected the king, the kingdom is no longer available and now what we have in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost is instead the birthday of the Christian church.

[21 : 57] except it isn't that at all. It is another huge, faulty assumption made by both Catholics and Protestants and it will become more obvious upcoming.

Christianity Clarified Volume 65 Track 7 The Promise of the Kingdom Church Part 12
There would have been no need for the Christian church even to exist had the nation Israel received Jesus of Nazareth as their Messiah, but they did not.

It was then their rejection of Jesus as Messiah that paved the way for God to raise up Saul of Tarsus of all people to be the apostle to the Gentiles of all people.

The church as the spiritual body of Christ with him as its head is never even hinted at in Old Testament prophecy. It would arise through the commission given to Paul because what was prophesied was Israel's rejection of the Messiah when he came to them.

It would be their rejection of Jesus that would lead to the open door for Gentiles combined with believing Jews resulting in the dynamic but unimagined and unprophesied body of Christ melding Jew and Gentile together.

[23 : 20] It is described in Ephesians 3 and Colossians 1 as well as generally referred to in all of Paul's letters as the apostle to the Gentiles and Romans 9 through 11 spell this out more clearly than any other reference.

Be advised, however, Israel did not reject Jesus because it was prophesied so they had no choice because the scripture needed to be fulfilled. Not at all.

Israel was completely culpable because their rejection was their volitional decision. Their rejection being predicted does not mean they had no choice.

It only means God knew full well what choice Israel would make and the decision would be and it was prophesied accordingly. To see the kingdom being a continued possibility for Israel even after their rejection, crucifixion, and resurrection of Christ, we must remember one of the seven utterances Jesus made while on the cross.

It was, Father, forgive them for they know not what they do. Forgive whom? Forgive any and all who had anything to do with the rejection of Jesus and his crucifixion.

[24 : 39] The question then is, did God his Father answer that prayer? We may be certain he did. It is inconceivable that the Father would not answer the prayer request of his Son.

Of course he did. Well, what then did that forgiveness entail? It meant the kingdom was still on the table.

Why? Because Israel, even though they had rejected the Messiah and were culpable in doing so, they were forgiven.

The slate is clean. The opportunity remains. It also means that the miracles Jesus and the twelve provided would continue to be manifested because the miracles were a vital part of authenticity for the kingdom as well as the Messiah who would establish it.

The kingdom and the miracles go hand in hand. The kingdom is still available for Israel and the miracles attesting to it will continue as well.

[25 : 55] Christianity Clarified Volume 65 Track 8 The Promise of the Kingdom Church Part 13 When Jesus began his ministry to Israel the single thing that most validated his claim to be Israel's Messiah was the undeniable miracles he performed in great abundance.

He was actually bringing kingdom conditions and realities with him everywhere he went leading him to even say the kingdom of heaven is among you meaning of course in his own person.

And the need for the kingdom to come was due to its ruin and fallenness that began in Genesis 3 when Adam and Eve forfeited the earth that God had described as very good to none other than Satan who deceived them turning the earth into a state of ruination.

And that is now described as fallen and abnormal. Every miracle Jesus performed was a restoration from what sin had imposed on humanity that made it abnormal.

and the miracle restored it to its original normal including his healing of all diseases the taming of the elements with the wind and the rain all of which were a result of that original fall.

[27 : 10] And of course the big one death itself over which Jesus exercised not only control over the demise of others like the son of the widow of Nain in Luke 7 daughter of Jairus in Luke 8 Lazarus in John 11 and soon thereafter even his own death.

Jesus overpowered the abnormality of death and brought back life which was the original normal. That is what the kingdom is all about.

That's why the prayer focus in Matthew chapter 7 is thy kingdom come so that thy will may be done on earth as it is in heaven.

That kingdom has still not arrived even though its coming is absolutely certain. As a result our fallen world continues to manifest the traits that belong to abnormal or fallenness including illness and conflict and disease and wars and death itself.

This is why the kingdom is the very theme of humanity itself. The Bible opens Paradise and the Garden of Eden then sinks into Paradise lost due to satanic deception and the disobedience of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3 and all the rest of the Bible through the book of Revelation is the story of redemption Paradise regained the buying back of what was forfeited and the buyback purchase the price cost the Son of God absolutely everything as he who knew no sin was made to be sin for us.

[28 : 42] That is God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. Jesus is God's redeemer the fix-it man of the planet.

It was this radical restoration that God was offering Israel through Jesus if only they would get on board. They didn't and they still haven't. Consequently Israel's rejection opened a whole new unexpected avenue to those who were not even Jewish but to Gentiles.

Wow! How important is this? Huh! We rest our case. This this is what everything is all about.

Did you get this? Everything! Christianity Clarified Volume 65 Track 9 The Promise of the Kingdom Church Part 14 Nothing could be clearer than that which the Apostle Peter stated in his message as a continuation of his Pentecostal sermon in Acts 2 when 3,000 responded.

Now his follow-up is in chapter 3 when he uses the miraculous healing of the man who had been lame from his mother's womb. As the huge crowd began collecting there in the temple Peter told his amazed audience that the Messiah Jesus whom their leaders rejected was to be credited for the healing of this man who had never walked a day in his life.

[30 : 19] Peter then continued saying the prophets predicted the Messiah would die when he came to Israel and he did but he was also raised out of death and has since gone back to heaven but now says Peter we are telling you if you if Israel will reverse itself God will send Jesus back again and the long awaited kingdom is still available.

Peter tells his audience there are only two things required for the kingdom to come to earth and undergo regeneration and renewal. The first is that the Messiah has to pay the purchase price for the fallen earth the price of redemption.

Jesus did that. He the Redeemer paid the ultimate price for the sins of all humanity as he the only sinless one and thus eligible to do it died on behalf of mankind.

So says Peter phase one is completed. The second requirement is for Israel the nation chosen by God to be the vehicle through whom the Redeemer would come to sign off on the deal.

What say you Israel? Of the two requirements God has done his part by providing his own son to ratify the new covenant in his own blood. Now Israel the ball is in your court.

[31 : 44] Will you sign on and ratify the new covenant? Jesus was the party of the first part. Israel is to be the party of the second part. God signed on through Jesus and the price of redemption.

If Israel will do likewise by embracing Jesus as their Messiah and Savior the new covenant prophesied by Jeremiah 31 will be ratified. It is the same one to which Jesus was referring when the night he was betrayed said, This cup is the new covenant in my blood.

Is anyone connecting any dots out there? Are we getting this? Is there any light breaking through? And to prove the kingdom remains as a true potential for Israel's receiving and God sending Jesus back again after his then being gone six weeks?

The miraculous deeds done by Jesus are going to continue through Peter and the twelve proving the offer of the kingdom remains open.

But if it closes due to Israel's final answer being no, then the accompanying miracles will cease. Israel's answer will remain no.

- [33 : 05] Jesus will remain in heaven and the miraculous will cease. They have ceased to this day. Anybody connecting any dots out there?

Christianity Clarified, Volume 65, Track 10, Kingdom Miracles Continue in Acts, Part 1.

When Jesus was ministering in Israel, he stated in Luke 11, quote, If I by the finger of God cast out demons, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.

Did you get that? Jesus was saying that the miracles he was doing constituted proof positive that the very kingdom of God was in operation right before their very eyes.

It was his way of validating his claim to be Israel's Messiah. He also gave to his apostles this same authority, beginning in Matthew 10, and they did likewise.

- [34 : 07] The authority Jesus gave them was no doubt somehow increased when he told them they would receive power not many days hence after he returned to heaven.

That occurred in Acts 2 at Pentecost when the Spirit of God manifested himself with power in an additional new way, and it began with the language barrier broken.

All heard Peter's message in their own language. This too signaled the kingdom was still on the table, waiting for Israel to sign on.

God would patiently keep that offer open by continuing to give Israel ongoing demonstrations of the miraculous, again, for the purpose of convincing Israel and validating the kingdom offer.

It was a blessed normality God was offering to the nation Israel that they were then to use to lead all the world back to normal, with the kingdom of heaven being established, so that the will of God would be getting done on earth as it was in heaven.

- [35 : 17] The apostles, with Peter at the head, will preside over numerous miraculous manifestations for one reason only, and it will be the very same reason Jesus had when he was among them prior to his ascension.

What we will witness is what I will call, for lack of a better term, the foothills of the mountain of the kingdom. It will not be a full-fledged arrival of the kingdom of heaven come to earth, but it will be an early yet definite expression of the power and reality thereof.

Why? Because the kingdom is miracle stuff. It is the miraculous that allows people to walk by sight. Seeing is believing, and they will see, but will still not believe.

And that is the sad, sad picture of the nation of Israel. Repeatedly, we read in the Old and New Testaments regarding Israel, hearing you shall hear and shall not understand, and seeing you shall see and not perceive.

For the heart of this people Israel is wax gross, slammed shut. That was Israel when Jesus was among them. Will that continue in Jesus' absence when Peter and the twelve apostles remain among them?

- [36 : 31] Alas, it did, and it is. But we must press on anyway to see it unfold and the new winds blowing. It will be the church, which is his body, but it won't be Peter leading it.

It will be Paul who will be the apostle of all things to the Gentiles. Wow! What a change! Christianity Clarified, Volume 65, Track 11.

Kingdom Miracles Continue in Acts Part 2. Please try to always keep these numbers in your mind when thinking of the volatile first century, particularly from about 33 to 100 A.D., that is the last two-thirds of the first century.

It and its strategic events are so very critical for understanding the entire plan and program of God. So please be reminded the first century was about one-third spent when Jesus began his earthly ministry, lasting about three to three and a half years before returning to heaven.

Shortly before he left the apostles in Acts 1, he had commissioned the apostle Peter, telling him he was giving him the keys to the kingdom, and we looked at that earlier in Matthew 16.

- [37 : 54] The other eleven apostles had authority as well, but Peter was the indisputable head of the twelve. He will use the powers Christ gave him, beginning at Pentecost with his powerful message, persuading 3,000 Jews to get on board by changing their mind about Jesus from his not being the Messiah to believing that he was indeed the Messiah whom they crucified, but God raised him from the dead.

The twelve, led by Peter, will be performing miracles of all kinds as the offered kingdom continues to be accessible to Israel. If only Israel, beginning with its leaders, will do as the 3,000 did, God will send Jesus back to earth the second time, and the glorious kingdom we will be characterizing as the mountain of earth will be established and Jesus enthroned as the king of the entire planet, including all of the nations.

In addition, the twelve apostles will sit upon twelve thrones, judging the tribes of Israel. To provide ongoing persuasion to Israel that this will happen, conditioned upon their national acceptance of Jesus, the miracles that accompany Jesus will continue to be manifested through his earlier commissioned apostles.

It is imperative we understand that the miracles, both by Christ and later in Acts by the apostles, were the necessary companions to the kingdom.

Once the kingdom is no longer available to Israel, the miracles that attended its proclamation will no longer continue. They, that is the miracles, will return when the gospel of the kingdom that comes with miracles, resumes.

- [39 : 47] That will be following the rapture of the church and the conclusion of the present dispensation of grace. Then, the focus will be back on the miraculous as recorded frequently in the book of the Revelation.

And, miracles will then once again be the order of the day as the gospel of the kingdom is resurrected. You see, the miracles were intended and provided for Israel to be able to walk by sight on the basis of what they saw.

And, the miracles responded to that. We, on the other hand, in the body of Christ in the age of grace are not to walk by sight, but by faith. Therefore, the miracles are not part of our program as they were part of Israel's.

More of this is coming. Christianity Clarified, Volume 65, Track 12, Kingdom Miracles Continue in Acts, Part 3.

The prayer request voiced by Jesus as He was dying on the cross was that His Father would forgive those responsible for His suffering and death. We can safely assume that prayer was indeed answered because of the person requesting it and the person who would grant it.

- [41 : 07] So, if that were the case, and it appears that it was, where then does that put Israel in view of the kingdom and the king they had earlier rejected?

It provides forgiveness and a moratorium for Israel, keeping open and available the kingdom for their acceptance, although they had earlier rejected it and the king.

So, Israel is given a reprieve, a renewed opportunity to reverse themselves and their earlier negative rejection. The door for Israel was not yet closed, but remained open.

God, in His ongoing grace, will accompany His extended offer by a continued demonstration of the miraculous like that which Jesus provided earlier.

Only this will come through His apostles He commissioned to carry on His offer of the kingdom to Israel. They start with the miracle of Pentecost, persuading 3,000 respondents to reverse themselves from rejecting Jesus, whom they crucified, to now embracing Him.

[42 : 25] Peter was using the keys Jesus gave him, and he was unlocking, opening the door to the kingdom for these repentant Jews.

He will continue to do so in Acts 3, with the healing of the impotent man in the temple. And there, in his message, Peter makes it clear that upon Israel reversing themselves about their earlier rejection of Jesus and His Messiahship, God will send Jesus back to Israel and move forward with establishing the kingdom He had earlier paid for by His substitutionary death.

Read Acts 3 for yourself. How can anyone miss this? Chapter 4 then records the confrontation the apostles had with the leadership of Israel, the Jewish deep state, the shakers and movers, who had the religious clout, and they were the ones who could have turned the nation of Israel around if only they themselves would have led the way by repentance.

Instead, they continued in their steadfast hardness of heart. They threatened the apostles for their continued preaching of Jesus and the resurrection, and they would later physically beat and imprison Peter.

Then, Peter's miraculous release from prison was merely one more incentive for Israel to reverse its course, showing them God was behind it all.

[43 : 58] This was a God thing. Even the miraculous execution of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5 demonstrated kingdom justice was working in Israel, even if in its very earliest foothill stages.

And we are calling all this the foothills of the kingdom mountain. Whatever does that mean? Well, it's important, and we will tell you just ahead. Christianity Clarified, Volume 65, Track 13.

Kingdom Miracles Continue in Acts, Part 4. In an effort to illustrate the miracles performed by Jesus in the Gospels, followed by the apostles in the book of Acts, We are likening those miracles to the foothills of the kingdom.

Whatever does that mean? Please listen carefully. When the kingdom of heaven does come to earth, it will be global, covering all of the planet.

Yet, it clearly was limited during Christ's ministry and that of the apostles to tiny Israel. Israel was merely to be the point of origin, the earliest establishment of the kingdom that would be, when fully established, encompass the whole of earth.

[45 : 22] For that reason, miracles by Jesus and the apostles labored with the supernatural in Israel with what we are describing as the foothills of the mountain.

The mountain will include the entirety of earth, when fully established, while Israel constituted the earliest beginning, or the foothills of the mountain.

In the same way that an imposing mountain peak looms skyward in height and majesty, there are the surrounding hills of lower elevation leading up to it.

When Jesus said, If I, by the finger of God, cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come unto you. Jesus and the apostles after him were providing foothill evidences of the great global mountain of the kingdom to come.

And it was, at the time, limited to Israel and its immediate environs. Israel, as the chosen nation, was to be the vehicle for the establishment of the kingdom of heaven worldwide.

[46 : 40] It was necessary that it be so due to the multiple covenants God established with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David so many years earlier. And such makes Israel and the Jewish people more than merely being important.

It makes them indispensable to the plan and program of God. Now, while we humans tend to recoil at the thought of anyone or anything being indispensable to God's program, because after all, God is God.

He can do anything He wants, and He is not dependent upon any person or nation. Oh, yes, He is. God is dependent upon anyone to whom by promise He made commitments.

And God has committed Himself to Abraham and his descendants. In fact, the Old Testament from Genesis 12 through Malachi is one of divine commitment after another, made to Abraham and his descendants for the first 4,000 years of human existence.

And then, 2,000 years ago, God continued to make good on that commitment by way of a lowly but royally born man by the name of Jesus.

[48 : 03] Is anyone connecting any dots? Christianity Clarified, Volume 65, Track 14, Kingdom Miracles Continue in the Book of Acts, Part 5.

The Book of Acts reminds us how critical miracles were both in the earthly life of Christ and that of the apostles. They were the most wonderful and effective attention-getters imaginable.

Nothing so characterized the very concept of the Kingdom of God being presented as did the miracles. They not only served as the calling card of the Messiah and His apostles, but proved that, indeed, the Kingdom of God was being manifested before their very eyes.

Jesus Himself had said, If I by the finger of God cast out demons, then the Kingdom of God has come among you. He was telling them they were witnessing the first evidences or the unfolding of the long-awaited Kingdom in the presence and power of God through Jesus and His apostles.

We are likening their continuation in Acts as constituting proof that the Kingdom presented by Jesus and authenticated by His miracles continued to be available to Israel despite the fact they had been complicit in His crucifixion.

[49 : 34] The prayer of Jesus while on the cross that God would forgive those responsible for His death had been answered. The Kingdom door yet remained open for Israel.

It was but another demonstration of the amazing long-suffering and love that God had for His wayward people, the Jews, and the Gentiles, who also contributed to His death.

At Pentecost in Acts 2, 3,000 Jews got the message, and another 2,000 were added in Acts 4. These all constituted a church or ecclesia, but it was strictly a Jewish church or assembly because non-Jews or Gentiles were not even in the picture, nor would they be, for several years to follow.

This means that another church or ecclesia would be a different church, yet a different church because it would be made up not merely of Jews, but of Jews and Gentiles together.

Totally foreign concept at the time. This new Jew and Gentile church combined would be the original church or ecclesia, known eventually as the Christian church, and it is best defined in Ephesians 3, penned by another totally unlikely man, none other than the former Saul of Tarsus, now known as Paul the Apostle.

[51 : 07] Talk about a new wind blowing. It didn't get any newer than that. But now, what about the Kingdom? What is its status? Are we suggesting the Kingdom program and the Church program are both being set forth?

That is precisely the case, and it is a principal reason for so much confusion and differences arrived at by Christians to this day. Transition, transition, transition.

Miss this concept, and arriving at a doctrinal understanding of the book of Acts is impossible. But more light lies ahead. Let it shine.

Christianity Clarified, Volume 65, Track 15. Kingdom Miracles continue in the book of Acts, Part 6. Nothing so powerfully illustrates what the Kingdom of Heaven coming to Earth is all about as does the supernatural presence of the miraculous.

We do not, at the present time, live in the same world as described in Genesis 3, when God finished creation in six days and then pronounced it very good.

[52 : 18] It's found in the last verse of the very first chapter of Genesis. And the very good creation of Genesis 1 came under a curse from the very one who created it in Genesis 3.

Since that time, it is a fallen world in which we live. And as such, it is riddled with the consequences of the curse, that is, the opposites of the blessings God created with the original.

Instigated by Satan himself, this original creation underwent a transition from very good or a state of blessedness to a state of fallenness, matching the fallenness of its new landlord.

The original was Adam, to whom God gave dominion, that is, the responsibility to dominate all of creation. But the new dominator is Satan the adversary, meaning the one who opposes.

New dynamics came with a new landlord, or earth lord, if you will. And they include deception, lies, murders, theft, evil of every imaginable description.

[53 : 32] Everything that is contrary to the nature and character of God, the original Creator, is now in place and has been since that fateful day that corrupted the very good beginning of creation.

Lastly, the host of evils is capped off with the biggest one of all, and it's called death. And without fail, it takes its toll on all of us humans at the rate of one per person.

Death is an equal opportunity employer. So then, how does the theme we have labored to explain called the kingdom figure into all of this?

It is the antidote to the fallen world. The kingdom is God's gracious panacea. It is the reversal of all that is fallen, the restorer of the ruined, the fixer of all that is broken.

Poet John Milton's Paradise Regained that is rested from Paradise Lost.

[54 : 44] Who could possibly do that? His name is Yeshua HaMashiach, better known as Jesus the Messiah.

And to prove himself to be that one, he gave samples of his handiwork all over Israel, everything from feeding thousands from nothing, changing water into wine, giving sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf, and cleansing of the leper's flesh, casting out demons from those possessed, and raising from the dead those who had been buried for four days.

His magnum opus was the bringing back to life his own human body from the dead after being buried three days. With this resume, with these seeing-is-believing credentials, how could Israel crucify him?

How could they not? How could they not gladly accept him as their long-awaited Messiah? This is next and very key.

Christianity Clarified, Volume 65, Track 16. A Necessary Slight Digression, Part 1. A digression from our principal ongoing content must be inserted here due to its critical and key nature.

[56 : 03] And the issue of which we speak is this. How could Israel have possibly missed Jesus as being their Messiah in view of all the indisputable miracles he performed?

Well, it was not a case of mistaken identity. It was a case of mistaken mission. What do we mean? Please pick up on this because it's so very, very key.

The Old Testament prophets, practically all of them, prophesied the coming of Israel's Messiah beginning as far back as Genesis 3 where he is likened to the seed of the woman who would crush the head of the serpent.

The seed of the woman, of course, means the offspring or the descendant of Eve, the first woman. But the prophets also foretold two distinct pictures of the promised Messiah.

One was as a sacrificial lamb who would bear the sins of humans. The other was as a conquering lion who would devastate the evil opponents of God.

[57 : 10] The latter would be a glorious conqueror who would crush the adversary Satan with a mortal blow. While the former was the substitutionary suffering servant of Isaiah 53, about as far from being a glorious deliverer as you could get.

Read Isaiah 53 to get the picture. It's one of weakness, suffering, shame, ignominy. Who wants to own a savior, a deliverer, that fits that description?

Where's the power? Where's the glory? Where's the honor? There isn't any. This one would be an embarrassment to Israel, not a deliverer.

And none had any idea whatsoever that this lamb would deliver not from the Romans or from any other enemy of Israel, but this one, this lamb, would deliver Israel from their sin.

What? Israel? The chosen people of God from their sin? Israel. On Palm Sunday, Jesus rode into Jerusalem and shouts of, Hosanna!

[58 : 29] Hosanna in the highest rang out. In Hebrew, the word means, save now, deliver now, rescue now. Well, save from what?

From whom? From the Romans. There was zero idea of Jesus coming to Jerusalem to die for the sins of Israel and the rest of the world.

No, no, no, no. Israel's problem from which they needed salvation was Rome. That occupied the Holy Land. But that was never Jesus' intent.

He came to redeem and address the real problem, and it was the same as your problem and mine. It was our sin for which he came to die. He did what he came for.

Mission accomplished as far as God was concerned, but not as far as Israel was concerned, and they did not look for nor want a Messiah such as Jesus was. So they rejected him.

[59 : 32] Did you get it? His miracles alone did not qualify him in their sight. How about you? Christianity Clarified, Volume 65, Track 17, A Necessary Slight Digression, Part 2.

As noted in the previous segment, two distinct arrivals of Israel's Messiah are depicted ever so clearly throughout the Jewish Bible, which to Christians is identical to our Old Testament.

The first is as the suffering servant, graphically depicted in Isaiah 53, Psalm 22, and others. The second coming of the Messiah is as the conquering king, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, depicted in Psalm 96, Ezekiel 20, Joel 3, Malachi 3, and others.

The two comings, that are now 2,000 years apart and counting, could not be more different. As the suffering servant, the Messiah would pay for the sins of the entire world in general and for Israel's sins in particular.

That will be the singular purpose for the first coming of Jesus to Bethlehem and being placed in that manger. Before His crucifixion, Jesus prayed in John chapter 12, saying, What shall I say?

[60 : 53] Father, save me from this hour? But for this hour came I into the world. It was in His first coming as a sacrifice for sin that Jesus was the prophesied suffering servant of Isaiah 53.

In that, He made the payment for the reclamation of the fallen earth and all humans born upon it. And when He comes again, it will be to collect on what He paid for in His first coming.

The first coming, as the suffering Messiah, is easily overlooked by Israel, who insisted only upon a conquering Messiah, not one that would suffer humiliation and death on a Roman cross.

So, in His first coming, despite the numerous miracles He performed in His messianic but sacrificial role, Jesus simply did not make the moves of triumph and victory in the deliverance of Israel that the Jews were expecting when their Messiah came.

To the leadership of Israel, the death of Christ was then proof positive that He was not Israel's Messiah because God could never allow His Messiah to come to such an end as dying on a Roman cross.

[62 : 14] Understandably, the Jews were so fixated on a Messiah to conquer Israel's foes and establish Himself on the empty throne of David and rule the world from Israel.

So much so, they completely overlooked the price the Messiah must pay to enable Him to do that. Ignoring His prophesied first coming, they insisted on the Messiah fulfilling only the role depicted in His second coming.

But the prophets had made it clear. There would be no crown without the cross to proceed it. This is why Jesus told Peter in Matthew 16 that Peter was blessed by God who revealed it to him that He, Jesus, was indeed the Messiah even though He did not meet the demands of the Jewish leadership who foresaw a conquering Messiah rather than a sacrificial one.

This is why Jesus faulted those on the Emmaus road after His resurrection for not believing all that the prophets had written. Ought not the Messiah to have suffered these things and then enter into His glory.

Christianity Clarified, Volume 65, Track 18. Why the Difficulty in Transition, Part 1. Saying the first century from about 30 to 100 A.D.

[63 : 47] was a time of confusion and transition is an understatement. Dwight Pentecost, in his book titled Thy Kingdom Come, has captured the turmoil of that time on page 266 wherein Dr. Pentecost states, and I quote, As we understand this progression of events, then we can see that the book of Acts is a book of transition, and that the entire period from the death of Christ to the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in A.D. 70 is a transitional period.

Positionally, the old order was done away at the death of Christ as signified by the tearing of the veil of the temple in Matthew 27, 51. Positionally, the new order began with the coming of the Holy Spirit to indwell the body of believers as recorded in Acts 2.

Positionally, the entire transition took place within the span of those few days experientially, however. The transition covered nearly four decades.

The transition was extensive. Ethnically, there was a transition from dealing primarily with Jews to dealing with both Jew and Gentile without distinction.

There was also a transition in the people with whom God was dealing, from Israel to the church. Likewise, there was a transition in the principle on which God was dealing with men, from law to grace.

[65 : 22] There was a transition from the offer to Israel of an earthly Davidic kingdom to the offer to all men of salvation based on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

There was a transition from the prospect of Messiah's coming to the historical fact that the promised one had come. There was a transition from the promise that the Spirit would be given to the historical fact that the Spirit had come.

Again, all these transitions were made positionally in the brief period of time from the death of Christ to the day of Pentecost. Yet, experientially, these truths were understood and entered into only over a span of some four decades.

The book of Acts records the positional transition as well as the experiential transition in the development of the theocratic kingdom program.

End quote. So, as Dr. Pentecost remarked, a vast difference existed between the positional aspect of the transition verses and that of the experiential.

[66 : 38] The latter was far more problematic simply because it required a lengthy period for the changes to become apparent.

These were not quickly nor easily made, as will become apparent upcoming. And this concept about the transitional nature of the book of Acts, ignoring it leads to confusion frustration and frustration in trying to get the picture that is developing within the book.

You've got to keep this transition in mind. And it is the only book in the New Testament that is so accorded. Christianity Clarified, Volume 65, Track 19, The Difficulty Inherent in Transition, Part 1.

Grasping the fluid nature of the book of Acts is absolutely critical to its interpretation. And what is meant by its fluid nature?

It means that doctrine is on the move in Acts. Its fluidity means it doesn't hold still so that final conclusions can be made about what it says.

[67 : 57] This is due partly to its covering a period of nearly four decades during which time monumental things were happening. Some very important new doctrines were coming into reality and some held earlier were gradually passing off the scene.

Never in the history of humanity, perhaps since the original fall in Genesis, had there been such an upheaval of events and the consequences thereof as that volatile first century.

So, what was the *modus operandi* during that first century? Was it the law and its demands? Or was it grace and its provisions?

In that first century, it would have depended on who you asked. For example, consider what Paul the Apostle said to his audience on his very first missionary journey accompanied by Barnabas.

There were visitors in the synagogue located at Antioch in Pisidia. Concluding his remarks, Paul made a statement that struck the audience like a thunderclap, saying, quote, Therefore, let it be known unto you, brethren, that through this man Jesus is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.

[69 : 27] The silence that followed must have been deafening. What? What did he say? They had never heard that before. What did he base that on?

He based it on the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ on the cross. Paul was there to tell this audience of Jews that everything had changed as a result of Christ and what he did on the cross.

Change, development, movement from one thing to another, progression, that is what transition is all about. Officially and doctrinally, huge changes were taking place during these 40 years covered in the book of Acts.

Yet, there were areas where those changes were not known, not believed, or embraced due to the unwillingness of people to move forward. A perfect example is found in Acts 21, about seven or eight years after Paul's message in Antioch.

Returning to Jerusalem, Paul is confronted by fellow Jews who are also described as believers, and these were described as thousands of Jews who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law.

[70 : 45] What? Zealous for the law? But was not the law superseded by Christ and his death, satisfying the demands of the law so that they were no longer under law but under grace?

Well, which was it? Law or grace? What's going on? What was going on was transition. It was the movement, the development, the progression of doctrine.

That's what was going on, and the confusion was rampant. Was it this or that? Next thing you'll be telling us is that both were being preached at the same time during this volatile period.

Precisely so. And it's up next. Christianity Clarified, Volume 65, Track 20, The Difficulty Inherent in Transition, Part 2.

Perhaps the clearest evidence for two different Gospels being preached simultaneously is found in the revealing passage of Galatians, Chapter 2. While the person of Christ is central to both messages, their target audiences were different.

[71 : 49] There was the gospel or the good news of the kingdom for the Jews exclusively that portrayed Jesus as the Messiah of Israel who came as the sacrificial Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world, and there was the gospel or the good news of the grace of God for those Gentiles who were not Jews and had little or no understanding of the gospel of the kingdom preached by Peter and the twelve apostles before and after Jesus went back to heaven.

Are we saying then that both were being preached by two different segments, one by Peter and the twelve to the Jews, and one by Paul the apostle to the Gentiles?

Precisely. Not only that, but that was specifically understood and agreed to in Galatians 2. Listen to the findings that was arrived at there.

Quote, But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed unto me, as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter, for he who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles.

And when James, Peter, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given unto me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised.

[73 : 23] End quote. It could not be clearer. Two different gospels or messages of good news to two different people groups. Prior to the cross of Christ, only the gospel of the kingdom was available and exclusively for the Jews.

It was that which John the Baptist preached, as did Jesus and his disciples. But after the cross, a new message became available that focused not only on the kingdom to come, but on the person of Christ who had died and rose again for the sins of the world.

This was a new message, not available before the death of Christ made it available. And it was not a message with requirements of the law of Moses that God gave to Israel.

It was a message of pure grace, that Gentiles, apart from the law given to Jews, could be in a right standing with God solely on the basis of putting their faith in the crucified, risen Christ.

Two different good news messages, one to the Jews exclusively and the gospel of the kingdom, and one to Gentiles, but also included Jews as well called the gospel of the grace of God.

[74 : 43] This is why Paul could write to the Romans in chapter 6 saying, For you are not under law, but under grace. But the time of transition, at least for a period of time, unlike any before or after, included both messages proclaimed simultaneously.

One was displacing the other, but during the transition, both were operative. Transition, transition, transition. Those who ignore it are in for a hopeless confusion.

And more is coming just ahead.