

Christianity Clarified Volume 63

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[0 : 00] Christianity Clarified, Volume 63, Track 1, Authority Remains the Issue that Divides, Part 1. No single item so divides religious entities as the authority which each recognize to be the basis for their beliefs.

Roman Catholics are separated from Protestants and from Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, and Atheists, and authority also separates all of those from each other.

Because each has their own written authority or accepted tradition they cite as being the basis for their doctrinal positions and teachings. Even the Atheist has his authority, which is, of course, his own mind.

And, as radically different as these are to each other, there is a belief among an increasing number of moderns that the differences, large as they are, as contradictory to each other as they are, really pose no problem and no hindrance to beliefs at all.

And here, say they, is why differences really don't matter. It's because they are all equally true and thus equally legitimate.

[1 : 26] But how can that be? How can they be equally true when they are clearly contradictory to each other? And the answer? Each person and each belief system creates their own reality and their own truth.

So, whatever each arrives at is their truth. And it doesn't matter that it may clearly be the opposite of other beliefs. For them, it is true.

It is their truth. So, you have your truth and I have my truth. And even though they are radically different or mutually contradictory, each is equally true to and for the holders of it, whatever it may be.

This is hailed by many today as a welcome antidote to the divisions in religious groups by simply declaring everyone is right in whatever they believe for them.

And nobody is declared wrong for whatever they believe. Voila! The basis for conflict and disagreement is gone, thanks to creating your own reality.

[2 : 37] Everyone is right in their created reality. No one is declared wrong, whatever it is. And it wonderfully comports also with political correctness. Isn't it wonderful that the basis for conflict and argument is over?

We can all just relax with a live and let live attitude. Yep! Create your own reality is just the ticket for our modern world.

And it provides maximum opportunity for tolerance. What could possibly be wrong with that? What's wrong with this disarming modern way of dealing with our differences?

What's wrong with it? Let me count the ways. And we shall. So, please don't bet the farm on creating your own reality.

You need to hear the other side of the story. And it's upcoming just ahead. Christianity Clarified, Volume 63, Track 2. Authority Remains the Issue that Divides, Part 2.

[3 : 47] So, what's the objection to everyone creating their own reality? It is a great opportunity for all to display tolerance for others and their feelings.

And it does eliminate the need for arguing about who is right and who is wrong because everyone has their own personal truth making everyone right, regardless of their contradictions with each other.

So, why don't we all just buy into the concept that truth, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder? Why can't all the world see this? Conflict would end.

Peace and tolerance would prevail. Please tell me. What's wrong with that? Well, for starters, everything. And the world knows it.

Despite the world at large being in disagreement among themselves about the issue of truth as opposed to untruth, still, the world at large in their heart of hearts knows better.

[4 : 47] The world knows that objective truth does indeed exist. And while they do not agree as to what it is, they know intuitively that it exists.

There is right and there is wrong. There is truth and there is untruth. And they cannot convince themselves otherwise, no matter how hard they try to create their own reality.

It just won't fly. Knowing that and trying to overcome it produces nothing but unrest, turmoil, and a total lack of real peace, which is precisely where the world is.

Truth is truth. Falsity is in another camp, and ne'er the twain shall meet. As someone has said, facts are stubborn things.

Facts and truth are allies in the same camp, and they just will not roll over and die no matter how sincere one is in efforts to create their own reality.

[5 : 54] Nope. You just can't have that. No one can. It's contrary to all perceived reality, contrary to logic, contrary to the common sense embraced by humanity for thousands of years.

And being a thoroughly modern Billy or Millie does not and cannot change that. It is what it is. They are what they are. Facts are stubborn things.

The only solution that is truly workable is rooted in that revelation which God the Creator has provided in His Word, the Bible. And in it, the recognized contrast between truth and error is established throughout.

And it all culminates in the Christ who is Himself revealed to be the way, the truth, and the life. It was He who declared in John chapter 8, You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

The entire life of Jesus Christ from His incarnation as a baby to His resurrection and ascension back to glory was and continues to be the ultimate manifestation of truth and reality.

[7 : 07] All that does not comport with Him and His Word is contrary to truth. He alone is the manifestation of and the core of reality.

Christianity Clarified, Volume 63, Track 3 Transition, Transition, Transition Previous sessions emphasized the critical nature of authority.

The principle is very simple. Everything everyone believes about anything is linked to whatever one recognizes as their ultimate authority. And from that, all beliefs, all religions, all philosophies are off and running.

And, sadly, it might be noted in different directions. Christianity Clarified, without apology, is persuaded that Scripture is the singular authority deserving recognition and acceptance.

Our concern presently is to clarify the larger part of that critical first century of history from the birth of Christ as recorded in the four Gospels to the closing of the book of Acts in the 28th chapter dated around 64 A.D., or about 30 years after the crucifixion of Jesus.

[8 : 25] What transpired during those 30 years and the various interpretations of those years found in the book of Acts has been the basis for more divisions among Christians than any other single issue.

Those differences divide Jews from Christians, both Catholics and Protestants, and among the Protestants, who are also divided by a host of different denominations, councils, synods, and the doctrinal splits and splinters of innumerable lesser groups.

They all claim their authority for the doctrinal positions taken is the Bible, and each equally holds their positions with good and sincere faith.

But, as noted previously and frequently, while good faith is a necessity, it is not a guarantee of right conclusions.

It will be clearly seen that the basis for both right and wrong conclusions stems from the right and wrong interpretations of the most critical first century revealed in the Gospels plus the book of Acts that spanned another 30 years.

[9 : 42] And they run from the ascension of Christ back to heaven in chapter 1, and then conclude with the Apostle Paul under house arrest by Roman authorities in chapter 28.

They are all descriptive of a critical concept so often overlooked that is the key, not only to the book of Acts, but even to the understanding of where we are today in the unfolding plan and program of God.

That oh-so-critical concept is reduced to just one word, transition. What that means, the major issues and main players in the script will be identified, along with what we trust will be a profound new understanding and appreciation.

We will clarify those major players making up the cast in this first century drama, along with the principal issues that confronted them.

We can already envision those proverbial light bulbs of understanding in the minds of many being wonderfully illumined.

[10 : 53] You will see. Hopefully, as you have never seen before. Christianity Clarified, Volume 63, Track 4.

The Transition Begins, Part 1. When a long-established society faces dramatic changes thrust upon it, one can be certain that a climate of confusion always comes with it.

And such was surely the case in first-century Israel. Controversy had swirled around the person and claims of Jesus of Nazareth, all during His three years of public ministry.

After His death, if anyone thought the controversy would disappear, they were wrong. Not only did it not disappear, It intensified, because now His claims had been magnified by His resurrection from the dead.

Could anything have been more unbelievable? But it was not merely believed by His disciples. It became the very focal point of their preaching, And what about all those eyewitnesses that swore they had seen Jesus alive and well?

[12 : 11] And according to one account, there were five hundred or so that saw Him at one time? Despite the claims of reputable men who would have had no motive for lying, Still, the unbelief and persecution of Jews by Jews in the establishment continued.

Despite undeniable miracles were continued to be worked by the disciples of Jesus, and the many who benefited from those miracles, the leadership of Israel continued to increase their persecution of the followers of Christ.

It appeared to reach a crescendo with the stoning of Stephen in Acts chapter 7. It was no less than the Jewish council itself, the Sanhedrin, that would physically carry out the deed.

These were the most influential and highly placed men in all of Israel, led by none other than the high priest himself. Stephen's stoning would be witnessed by the most virulent anti-Jesus opponent of them all, a Pharisee by the name of Saul of Tarsus, a graduate student of the great Jewish rabbi Gamaliel.

As an observant fastidious Jew of Jews, Saul eagerly volunteered to care for the long, heavy outer garments of those who would be casting the stones, raining down, crushing boulders that took two hands to throw, so as to do in this man's Stephen.

[13 : 50] The stoning pit into which Stephen was thrown made it a public affair. It no doubt was intended to make Stephen's stoning an example of what could happen to other followers of Jesus.

The text in Acts chapter 8 tells us the persecutors then began a sweep of Jerusalem, looking for Jesus' followers, rounding up many and jailing them, while causing others to flee to safer territory.

And it was Saul of Tarsus who was persecutor in charge. No one, especially Saul, could ever imagine his role would change from persecutor in charge to proclaimer in charge of none other than Jesus of Nazareth.

Christianity Clarified, Volume 63, Track 5. The transition begins, Part 2. From what to what is the transition?

The very word speaks of movement. Our context in that first century is referencing a transition getting underway from things Jewish to things Jewish and Gentile.

[15 : 08] Clearly, an unthinkable concept, especially to any Orthodox Jew, which is what most Jews of the first century were. Orthodox, that is, having a strict respect and regard for the law of Moses and all it involved.

Three years before the death of Jesus, John the Baptist began preaching to his exclusively Jewish audience that the kingdom of heaven, spoken of by Moses and the prophets, was at hand.

That is, right around the corner. This would involve God's special servant, called the Messiah, who would appear on the scene in Israel for the purpose of righting all the wrongs in the world, beginning at Israel.

This Messiah would be God's Redeemer, God's fix-it man, if you will. Then John the Baptizer introduced Jesus of Nazareth as that man.

And after selecting eleven fellow Galileans, plus one from Iscariot, mostly fishermen, to join him, Jesus then bestowed miracle-working powers on those ordinary men, allowing them to duplicate the miracles he himself was performing.

[16 : 30] Understandably, it was electrifying, and huge crowds convened to hear the wisdom of this Galilean miracle worker.

But there remained an entrenched leadership element in Israel who viewed Jesus as an unwanted kind of competitor. They had already rejected John the Baptist who introduced Jesus, and having done that, they would need to be consistent in rejecting Jesus as well.

They did. A running conflict ensued between Jesus and the religious establishment of the scribes and Pharisees, which we might be calling them the Jewish Deep State, or the Swamp of Jerusalem in need of being drained.

Their perpetual rejection of Jesus as Messiah never waned. It intensified until they manipulated the Roman overlord by the name of Pontius Pilate to do away with Jesus.

Clearly, their rejection of him and the threat they believe he posed to their power would be at an end. Or so they thought. But horror of horrors!

[17 : 41] It was now boldly noised abroad three days later that Jesus was alive! His resurrection emboldened his apostles all the more, despite the warnings and floggings from the Jewish authorities intended to silence them.

Fifty days following the crucifixion of Jesus, the apostle Peter preaches an electrifying message in the temple on the day of Pentecost. He told his all-Jewish audience that the kingdom Jesus came to provide was still available, despite their rejection of him.

And three thousand believed the message and were baptized with John's baptism, which they had no doubt refused earlier. The drama is earth-shaking and will continue just ahead as the transition continues.

Christianity Clarified, Volume 63, Track 6. The Transition Begins, Part 3. And from what to what does the transition involve?

It involves God setting aside the nation of Israel due to their persistent unbelief and rejection of their Messiah to a new entity comprised of believing Jews and of all things, Gentiles.

[18 : 55] Yes, you heard right. Jews and non-Jews together? How will that fly? With ups and downs and never a dull moment.

But for now, in Acts 2, the transition away from established Judaism is only beginning. Actually, it began with the crucifixion of Jesus, whom they did not believe to be their Messiah.

Now, in Acts 2, on the day of Pentecost, Peter, the spokesman for the Twelve, addresses thousands of his countrymen and gains the positive response of 3,000 who demonstrate their belief by submitting to John's baptism.

It is easy to be misled by thinking that to be a wondrous success when actually it was more than likely that the 3,000 were but a minority of the number present.

Still, it was a positive response rather than the negative consistently received from the establishment. And then, in Acts 3, following a wonderfully dramatic healing is received by an alms beggar who was born lame from his mother's womb and had never walked in all of his 40-plus years.

[20 : 07] Now, this formerly lame beggar is not only standing, but walking and leaping. It took mere seconds for a crowd to gather and questions to be asked, and Peter had the answers.

He began telling his fellow Jews it was all the doing of Jesus whom you disowned. You opted for the release of Barabbas instead, remember?

But even so, if you will do your part now by repenting and changing your mind about Jesus, it is not too late.

The prophets revealed that the Messiah must suffer, and He did. God has done His part by sending the Prince of Life to suffer and die so that your sins may be forgiven.

Now is the time for Israel to do its part. And if you will, if you will return to God, then God will send Jesus back to establish the kingdom that He and John and all the apostles preached about.

[21 : 20] But before this new crowd could even respond, as did the 3,000 at Pentecost, We are told, The priests, captain of the temple guard, and the Sadducees came upon them, clearly upset because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

They laid hands on them and put them in jail. This would be one more opportunity for Israel to get on board with God's program. But, like their history had proven so many times in the past, they were not budging.

So, the transition moves from its early beginning to more of the same continuing, terribly sad and greatly consequential.

Christianity Clarified, Volume 63, Track 7. The Transition is Underway, Part 1. Ever keep the question before you, Transition?

What is it that is undergoing transition? Well, it is here in the first century as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. It is the transition from things Jewish under the Mosaic covenant that God gave Israel at Sinai to things Jewish and Gentile in one body, a concept clearly unimaginable by all Jews and most Gentiles.

[22 : 48] But with God, all things are possible, particularly when His Son Jesus is the one effecting the change. And clearly, ever so clearly, it was He.

But it will take a while to get there. And as now, this strategic transition is far from complete, but it is underway, in progress. It was the perpetual stubbornness of Israel and their turning their back on their God and the God of their fathers that resulted in divine discipline and the spiritual spankings in the past.

And now, here in the early book of Acts, it is apparent nothing has changed. True to form, Israel, through their repeated rejecting of God's Messiah, is setting themselves up for another fall.

But this one will be ever so prolonged that it continues to this present 21st century. And it is clearly spelled out in Romans chapters 9, 10, and 11.

But this is a scripture portion Israel rejects as not being the word of God because it is the New Testament. So while they could dramatically better themselves by reading and understanding it, they dig in their heels and refuse to be moved.

[24 : 09] Little wonder their revered prophet Isaiah, whose writings Jews do accept, tells it this way in chapter 6 of his prophecy, saying, Go to this people and say, You will keep on hearing, but will not understand.

And you will keep on seeing, but will not perceive. For the heart of this people has become dull, and with their ears they scarcely hear. And they have closed their eyes, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart and turn again.

And it is this very quote that the Apostle Paul relates to his exclusively Jewish audience that had come to his rented villa in Rome, where he was held under house arrest as recorded in Acts chapter 28.

The Lord Jesus used the same text to describe his Jewish audience in Matthew chapter 13. And here the transition continues. But when will it end?

At what point would Israel pass the point of no return? At what specific time would the kingdom no longer be a viable, available opportunity for Israel?

[25 : 23] Most would tell us that was when the crowd cried out to Pilate regarding Jesus, Crucify him! Crucify him! We have no king but Caesar! And one can surely see how that appeared to be Israel's final answer.

Many believed that then, and even more believe it now. But, as we shall see, that is merely one more faulty assumption.

And it continues to this day. Christianity Clarified, Volume 63, Track 8 The Transition is Underway, Part 2 The very thing being considered right now on Christianity Clarified is the critical area that is so divisive among Christians, and has been for 2,000 years.

It is the failure to make the critical distinction between things Jewish and things Christian in the book of Acts alone, that has contributed to more doctrinal differences among Christians than anything else.

That is a bold, far-reaching statement. But its truth is undeniable, as will become obvious. It is a grievous, faulty assumption made in regard to the Jewish Feast of Pentecost in Acts 2.

[26 : 38] Nearly all of Christendom, both Roman Catholics and Protestants, firmly regard the passage to be the beginning or the birthday of the Christian Church. And while it does have reference to a church, the difficulty is in determining just what church it is, for there are many different entities identified and called an ecclesia, or church, or called-out assembly in the Bible.

And the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 is but one of those many different assemblies. Please, do not underestimate the importance of the distinctives clearly made in the Scriptures upcoming.

Getting a clear fix on this issue will open the whole of the Scriptures, revealing the plan and program of God like nothing else. And if you are, as most Christians, who often confess to a failure to see how many things connect in the Bible, this will go a long way toward helping you make those connections like nothing else.

Such has surely been found to be the case for yours truly over the past six decades. For starters, and ever so briefly, consider this as one great faulty assumption on the part of so many Christians.

They assume the Old Testament is for Jews, while the New is for Christians. That means Christians can justifiably ignore the Old and simply focus on the New.

[28 : 08] That is an atrocious thing to think. But there are many Christians who do. And I speak of one who once took that very position, congratulating myself for knowing the difference.

It still embarrasses me after all these years that I ever thought that. No wonder I could not put the pieces of Scripture together. And being as wrong as I was about the Bible, that tended to lessen my interest in it.

I did not doubt it being the Word of God. I just thought it was too deep for my feeble brain to grasp it any better than I did. One wonders how many sincere Christians listening right now might feel the same way.

Probably more than we know. So if there is anyone listening now like that, don't despair. There is a ton of information coming your way that will be so enlightening and encouraging.

And even if you don't think you can, you can understand and appreciate this wonderful old book more than you can imagine. And Christianity Clarified is committed to helping you do just that.

[29 : 19] Now, where were we? Oh, yes. The transition continues. And it does continue. More ahead. Christianity Clarified, Volume 63, Track 9.

The transition is underway. Part 3. Will we ever run out of content for the continuation of the transitional period during the first century? Probably not.

Besides dealing with the faulty assumptions made by both Jews and Gentiles in that first century, there are others I'm sure we do not even know about. But those we do know about provide plenty of material for the present.

So, let's dig in. For the immediate, there are two faulty assumptions made by Jews and Gentiles, Catholics and Protestants, that are so very important.

They are important because these assumptions were totally wrong, even though sincerely believed. And out of these two faulty assumptions, others would be born.

[30 : 25] Faulty assumption number one was that the kingdom of heaven preached by John the Baptist and by Jesus and the twelve apostles ceased to be offered and available to Israel after they became complicit in the crucifixion of their Messiah.

Upon their rejection of their Messiah and the kingdom that he preached, it is falsely assumed that God then withdrew the kingdom offer from Israel. Further, it was assumed that instead of Israel entering a literal kingdom of God on earth, the offer passed from Israel to the Christian church, and instead of it being a literal physical kingdom such as Israel would have had, it instead is non-literal and spiritual offered to and accepted by the Christian church.

And for those wondering, does anyone believe that? Absolutely. In fact, as we have repeatedly told you, most Christians today believe that, and have for the past 2,000 years, both Roman Catholics and Protestants.

And, of course, they believe it and accept it in good faith as it is preached from their leaders. In fact, there are those listening right now whose church they attend that takes that position, and many in the pews don't even know it or understand it.

And many of them would also say, what difference does it make? Well, apart from perpetuating the false assumption of it, it makes an enormous difference that will become more and more clear.

[32 : 04] The point being stressed right now is the fact that God's offer to Israel regarding the availability of the kingdom of God or of heaven coming to earth was not withdrawn from Israel, even though they rejected the very one who would be king of their kingdom, and even though they agreed to his crucifixion.

In fact, this was precisely the core of Peter's message on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, followed by his message of reinforcement of the same in Acts 3.

Shortly after, the proof of this is found in that the message of the kingdom continued to be preached by Peter and the twelve apostles well into the book of Acts, and the kind of miracles performed by Jesus continued to be wrought by his apostles after his ascension back to heaven.

And never forget, the supernatural events by both Jesus and the twelve were standard affair and part of the kingdom message. They were, in fact, the validating evidence of their claims and the message they preached about the kingdom.

Christianity Clarified, Volume 63, Track 10. The Transition is Underway, Part 4. When the crowd of Jews attending the Feast of Pentecost in Acts 2 wondered what was the meaning of it all, the noise accompanying the coming of the Holy Spirit, the people speaking in languages they did not know, Peter rose to inform them.

[33 : 36] Now, please note, Peter did not say, Well, this is the church and its birth. This is Christianity. Nothing of the kind.

What Peter did say was, This that you see and hear is what the prophet Joel was talking about. Then Peter quoted from Joel chapter 2.

And you may be sure it was familiar to the Jews present there at Pentecost. If Peter did not say the Pentecostal event was the beginning of the Christian church, Why have so many after him assumed that he did?

Why did they make that faulty assumption? Perhaps the principal reason is the way verse 47 is rendered in the King James Version. It says, Well, those early exclusively Jewish believers did constitute a church, as the original Greek renders the word *ekklesia*, or assembly.

But it is an unjustified stretch to equate that assembly of strictly Jewish believers on Pentecost with the Christian church. Those Jews were a church, that is, an assembly or an *ekklesia* of Jews who had come from unbelief in Jesus, as Israel's Messiah, to belief in him, as such.

[35 : 01] They repented as Peter demanded. That simply means they changed their minds from being unbelieving Jews in Jesus to becoming believing Jews in Jesus.

And they did so as a result of information that Peter provided in his message. Then they followed their belief with the only logical required thing to do, which was to be water baptized with John's baptism, just as other Jews before them had done.

Remember the huge numbers of Jews that responded to John the Baptist's preaching, as well as Jesus and the Twelve Apostles? And there was nothing Christian about their baptism.

It was holy Jewish, and in keeping with the multiple ceremonial cleansings and washings by the Jews, as commanded in the Law of Moses. It was literal water for ceremonial purification in keeping with everything else about the kingdom program, which had been listed as literal, including the multitude of physical miracles that were performed.

The literal of everything kingdom-oriented under the ministry of the twelve will eventually give way to the spiritual under the gospel of the grace of God, as preached by Paul the Apostle.

[36 : 23] The baptisms Paul speaks of in Romans 6 and 1 Corinthians 12 are spirit baptisms, not literal with water. But didn't Paul himself baptize with water?

And was baptized with water? Yes, he did. And he did, because he was right in the middle of that transition period of which we speak. Now, if this is confusing, don't despair.

More light is ahead, and it all fits just like it should. Christianity Clarified, Volume 63, Track 11.

Transition is underway, Part 5. Under what will be brief but hopefully adequate, we are dealing with the key passage of Acts chapter 2 and the Jewish day of Pentecost.

We noted earlier, the Apostle Peter revealed the real meaning of the rushing, violent wind, the appearance of fire-like tongues resting on those present, and their ability to speak in languages they did not know.

[37 : 25] Jews were present from all over the Mediterranean basin, attending the feast mandated by the law of Moses. But while they had religion in common because they were all Jews, a language barrier existed among them due to their having lived in a host of different countries all over the Mediterranean.

Many were there in Jerusalem as pilgrims far from their homes. And while they were all stunned and tried to figure out what was happening and what it all meant, the Apostle Peter arose with a ready answer.

What this all is, said Peter, is precisely what the prophet Joel was talking about when he prophesied over 400 years ago. And Peter actually told them, This is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel.

And it shall be in the last days, God says, that I will pour forth of my Spirit upon all mankind, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy.

And your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams, even upon my bond slaves, both men and women. I will in those days pour forth of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.

[38 : 43] And I will grant wonders in the sky above, and signs on the earth beneath, blood and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the great and glorious day of the Lord shall come.

And it shall be that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. Then, concluding his message, Peter boldly proclaimed in verse 36, Wow! What a theological thunderbolt!

What would be their response to that indictment? The text says they were pierced to the heart. That means the message really penetrated.

They got it. At least 3,000 of them got it. But even though they got it, there was no way they could undo their approval or complicity of Jesus' crucifixion.

They responded to Peter and the rest of the disciples, saying, Brethren, what shall we do? And Peter told them, Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

[40 : 12] Verse 41 then tells us, Those who had received His word were baptized, and there were added that day about 3,000 souls. All that was accompanied with many wonders and signs taking place through the apostles.

The significance of that is critical and telling, as we shall see upcoming. Christianity Clarified, Volume 63, Track 12.

Transition is underway, Part 6. More signs and wonders coming. And the first recorded miracle performed by Jesus of Nazareth was at the very outset of His earthly ministry that would comprise only three years plus.

It was at that wedding held in Cana, a northern town located in Galilee where Jesus was reared. It would be the first of many such events whereby the power vested in Jesus superseded the powers of nature in every area.

There was nothing that so enamored the people about the person of Jesus as the miracles He performed and in such great abundance. They actually constituted His calling card.

[41 : 22] They authenticated His claim to be the Messiah sent from God. Recall, if you will, the admission that was stated by the Pharisee Nicodemus who came to Jesus at night, recorded in John 3 when he said, Rabbi, we know you are a man come from God for no one can do the miracles you do unless God is with you.

Noted New Testament scholar Dr. A.T. Robertson correctly lists the 35 recorded miracles Jesus performed in His valuable volume called A Harmony of the Gospels.

Additional miracles, more general in nature, number some 12 throughout the four Gospels. Can you think of anything that would draw a large crowd more quickly than a manifestation of the miraculous?

Something each could see and verify before their very eyes. In little or in no time, the name Jesus of Nazareth became a household word, especially in His home region of the Galilee up north.

And the miracles of Jesus were multiplied for we read in Matthew's Gospel chapter 10 that Jesus gave His 12 apostles that He called authority over unclean spirits and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness, telling them, Preach, saying the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

[42 : 48] Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. The record goes on to tell us they did just that. The 12 consisted of six teams of two men each.

In Luke 10, the number increased dramatically to 35 teams of two men, 70 more. They reported back to Jesus, scarcely able to believe the successes they had.

Most today, even among Christians, fail to understand what was really behind all those miracles. And by the way, there is no indication the miracles were ever denied or even challenged as to their reality and effectiveness.

The response to them everywhere was the same. Total, unabashed amazement. While it is true Jesus was an enormously compassionate person who eagerly sought to relieve human pain and suffering, such was not the main motivation of His healing miracles.

His primary purpose was to authenticate His message. And His message, it was the very same message John the Baptist preached and that Jesus told His disciples to preach.

[43 : 57] Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. His miracles simply backed up the claims made about Him as coming from God His Father to the nation of Israel in fulfillment of the promises made to the fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

This is key, a very big key. Make sure you get in on this upcoming. Christianity Clarified, Volume 63, Track 13.

Transition is underway, Part 7. In an effort to shed light on the expression of the prophet Joel as quoted by the Apostle Peter in Acts 2, we have provided an explanation of the key term used called last days.

We concluded the meaning to refer to the person of Christ, that is, His entrance into and exit from the earth. All that happened in the world prior to the first advent of Christ belongs to the former days, while all that has and will transpire after Christ's exit back to heaven consists of the last or the latter days.

Peter tells his Pentecost audience in Acts 2 that what they were experiencing was precisely what the Jewish prophet Joel spoke of 400 years earlier.

[45 : 18] There is absolutely no basis for seeing the Acts 2 day of Pentecost being the beginnings of the Christian church, which is the position firmly held by officialdom of both Catholics and Protestants.

While that view is to be rejected as one more faulty assumption, it is easy to see how and why they made it. As admitted previously, had we been in their time and place, we of Christianity Clarified might very well have made the same faulty assumption as they.

And if so, we would have both been wrong. Now is the time to inject another problematic issue. It is from that same Acts 2 passage Peter quotes from Joel 2 when he says in verse 19, And I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath, blood and fire and vapor of smoke.

The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before that great and notable day of the Lord comes. Now the question is, when did that ever occur?

It never did. This is why Peter did not say Joel's prophecy was the fulfillment of it, because it was not fulfilled.

[46 : 36] For it to have been fulfilled, the whole of it would need to have occurred. But it did not. It was only partially fulfilled. Acts 2, 17 and 18 appear to have occurred at Pentecost, but verses 19 and 20 were certainly not fulfilled and have still not come to pass.

Look at these verses carefully. They tie in with tribulation content as related by Jesus in his Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24 and 25. There, we find the same kind of language in Matthew 24 that Peter referred to in Acts 2.

When Matthew said, sun will be darkened, moon will not give its light. Was that fulfilled as Peter quoted it? Not at all. Why not? Because there is to be a great interruption take place in Peter's quote from Joel, leaving only the beginning of that prophecy fulfilled, while the latter part of Peter's quote from Joel yet awaits fulfillment.

So, what is it that occurs between the first part of Joel's prophecy and the latter part? That is where we are currently, right now.

We, the church, we are not in the first part or in the last part. We are in the middle, not prophesied at all.

[48 : 02] More is coming. Christianity Clarified, Volume 63, Track 14.

Transition is underway. Part 8. The kingdom of heaven coming to earth had earlier been the theme of John the Baptist's messages and was continued by Jesus and his apostles.

It remained the compelling issue that will be preached after the death and resurrection of Christ. And it is the issue addressed by Peter in Acts chapter 2 when he goes so far as to say, the supernatural events the Jews were experiencing on that day of Pentecost were actually an early beginning of what the kingdom of heaven was to realize when fully come.

But it was not fully come, only in its earliest stages. We noted the first part of Peter's quote from Joel 2 was not fulfilled, but only began.

The answer Jesus gave the rich young ruler, for instance, in Matthew chapter 2 about selling his possessions and giving the proceeds to the poor, that was all in compliance with kingdom conditions.

[49 : 19] The rich young ruler refused to meet those requirements, but the twelve who were listening had already met them in preparation for the coming kingdom. That's why Peter, in his reply to what Jesus told the rich young ruler, said, We already did that.

We left everything and have followed you. What are we going to receive from that? And Jesus replied, What their reward would be in the coming kingdom. They, the twelve, will be rewarded by sitting upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel when the Son of Man comes into his kingdom.

Also, the disciples, all Jewish, likewise began meeting the kingdom qualifications in the early Acts right after Pentecost as described in Acts 3. We are told, They had all things common.

They began selling their property and possessions and were sharing as all had need. They even began liquidating real estate holdings and brought the proceeds thereof to the apostles who were then distributing those proceeds to the people who had need.

These were all efforts of compliance with kingdom conditions in its earliest stages. And in keeping as well with the kingdom message and activities, miracles such as Jesus and the twelve performed prior to his death continued to be the order of the day.

[50 : 44] Peter, the apostle, especially was involved with John and the healing of the lame man in Acts 3, along with Peter's follow-up message that continued to set forth Jesus as the Messiah and his resurrection as well in that same chapter 3.

And instead of the Jewish high priest and his cohorts being simply amazed and convinced by the miracles, they rejected them even though they knew they were real and they began their campaign of persecution against the disciples.

Peter would again lead in the miracle of the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts chapter 5 followed by more miracles and powerful preaching that the Jewish authorities could not refute.

In desperation to end the opposition of the disciples, Stephen is framed by paid so-called witnesses and he was then executed by none other than the leadership council of Israel itself.

All of these extraordinary events were proof positive that God's offer of the kingdom to Israel remained intact. Israel's stubborn refusal remained intact as well as we shall see.

[52 : 00] Christianity Clarified Volume 63 Track 15 Necessity for Some Review It has been said that repetition is the mother of learning and when the content being imparted is of great value repetition becomes more necessary and even more profitable.

So firstly you will be getting some repetition without apology. Reason number one was already explained as it's being the mother of learning. Reason two is our realization that this content of Christianity Clarified is produced daily as a brief radio program aired on many stations.

New listeners may be tuning in for the first time who have no background for the content already delivered which they never heard. So they are at a disadvantage compared to listeners who have been with us for months or even years.

So some repetition is a courtesy to them even though it may be repetitious to regular listeners. Then two even regular listeners are unable to listen every day so they too may benefit from some repetition as well.

The challenge is in knowing how much repetition to provide and when enough is enough and demands newer content. So taking all of this into consideration we try to prayerfully decide when and what to review and when to move on into new territory.

[53 : 23] As previous volumes we have concluded the book of Acts that left the Apostle Paul in the Roman Mamertine prison awaiting execution. Already we have dealt with later first century issues and even got just briefly into the first century issues of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

and the fallout of that. There we concluded that the case for replacement theology gathered steam in the minds of many due to their faulty assumption that God permanently had written off the Jewish people and subsequently transferred all the promises he made to Israel from Israel to the newly begun Christian church.

And we describe that as a terribly unfortunate erroneous conclusion that not only produced replacement theology but kindled the horrific fires of anti-Semitism that continue to this day.

Additionally, we are again by review rekindling the issue of the transition now under consideration because the grasp of it is so very critical to understanding the entire plan and program of God.

Not merely by recounting the history involved but also in order to gain an understanding of future things that are in store for Israel as well as the rest of planet Earth.

[54 : 57] Then, we still must undertake the faulty assumption of Roman Catholicism in the same way we earlier considered the faulty assumptions of the Jews and then, to follow that, will be the faulty assumptions of Protestants.

So, never fear, we won't run out of faulty assumptions. So, that's where we are and I hope you are with us. The material that will be forthcoming is extremely strategic, enlightening, and will enable many of you who are listening regularly to connect a lot of dots that right now may be just dangling in a loose fashion.

Christianity Clarified Volume 63 Track 16 Reviewing The Critical Transition Part 9 The first century A.D.

was so jam-packed with stunning changes and literal upheavals that created lots of confusion. A major institution was being set aside while another major institution was being birthed from that.

It was Judaism being set aside while its unlikely child was being born of it in ways no one really grasped at the time.

[56 : 19] And that new unlikely child would be the Christian Church. Its first appearance was so radical it met with great opposition from its parent Judaism.

That was because it wedded Gentiles to Jews in an unthinkable union where there was no difference between them. How radical was that?

Very. So radical that Jews of today 2,000 years later still do not accept it. That volatile century found Jews continuing in their practice of Judaism and all its requirements while non-Jews called Gentiles were embracing an entirely new concept of being made acceptable to God on the basis of simple faith in the crucified resurrected Messiah Jesus of Nazareth.

The same one that the Jewish nation had already soundly rejected. Chaos confusion much chaos much confusion and this is precisely why and how the 30 year span of the book of Acts created so much misunderstanding that allowed all kinds of faulty assumptions to surface.

Still, the faulty assumptions on the part of Jews and Gentiles could have been avoided if the Jewish establishment had paid attention to what their own prophets had revealed in their Tanakh which Christians call the Old Testament.

- [57 : 55] The prophet Jeremiah in chapter 31 clearly prophesied that the old covenant God made with Israel through Moses was going to be superseded with the new covenant clearly replacing the old.

This and others of their own prophets they also ignored led to their multiple faulty assumptions and as has been pointed out the great danger of making faulty assumptions is that people tend to act on them often with disastrous consequences as was the case of Israel repeatedly.

Jews worldwide continue to this day suffering the effects of the faulty consequences of their forebears but only a handful see that and admit it.

Lastly confusion could also have been avoided if only all had realized that Israel's rejection of Jesus as their Messiah that led to his crucifixion did not mean the promised kingdom was withdrawn from Israel by God but rather that it continued to be available to Israel after Christ's resurrection and ascension to heaven.

Such is so clearly spelled out in Peter's Pentecostal sermon in Acts 2 the essence of which he repeated in Acts chapter 3. Read them for yourself. Christianity Clarified volume 63 track 17 reviewing the critical transition part 10.

- [59 : 31] So well into the first century A.D. or roughly the years from the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem to the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

what was happening in the land of Israel? Well it all depended on who you were talking to because the answers and opinions you would get were staggering and confusing.

As even one Jew was heard to say, whenever you get three Jews together discussing anything, you will get at least four opinions. Well that first century was no exception.

Most Jews throughout the world in the first century rejected the idea of Jesus of Nazareth being the long awaited Messiah with only a small percentage of Jews accepting him as such.

Nothing has changed among the Jews for the past 2,000 years. It is the book of Acts alone that describes the critical nature and goings-on in that volatile first century of transition.

- [60 : 36] Be reminded by transition it is meant the developing from matters exclusively Jewish to an amalgamation with Gentiles who had come to faith in Jesus as the Jewish Messiah right alongside the Jews who had earlier reached the same conclusion.

These two utterly diverse entities, Jews and Gentiles, were meshed into one spiritual organism that's not organization but organism that would soon be designated as the spiritual body of Christ.

It is largely what the letters to the Galatians, Ephesians, and Colossians are all about. And it was through the most unlikely source these inspired letters would come into existence, none other than through that of the former Pharisee Saul of Tarsus.

His new name and title would be Paul the Apostle. Add him to that first century mix with the brand new message God gave him of justification by faith alone and confusion would abound along with a very generous supply of fireworks.

Paul the Apostle with this dynamic new message was said to have caused either a riot or a revival everywhere he went. Intrepid as he was and committed as he was to proclaim this new message that would include Gentiles as well as Jews, he would pay a deep, steep price for doing it.

[62 : 14] His life of martyrdom would end in Rome where he would be executed in the year 65 A.D., give or take a couple of years. Still, the churches Paul established would continue to grow and God would raise up new evangelists from those churches to proclaim the message of grace that Paul had committed to them.

Meanwhile, what were Jews doing who still refused to see Jesus, his death and resurrection for all intents and purposes? What were they doing? Well, they continued right on with their practice of a now defunct Judaism as the first century plot continues to thicken.

Christianity Clarified, Volume 63, Track 18, Reviewing the Critical Transition, Part 11. As a result of the twelve apostles whom Jesus chose to proclaim repentance to Israel in view of the kingdom of heaven being near at hand, many of their countrymen accepted their message and joined the effort.

This resulted in thousands of fellow Jews coming to see Jesus, his death and resurrection, as all being of God. It was evidenced by the three thousand who responded to Peter's Pentecostal message in Acts chapter 2.

Later, many more Jews came to faith and were added to their number. Acts chapter 4 records the great impact of the three thousand on Pentecost, resulting in another two thousand coming to faith that now brought the number of men to five thousand, and these were all Jews exclusively.

[63 : 59] The growing number of Jews who believed also included many priests. Acts 6 records that the word of God kept on spreading and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great number of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.

This all caused alarm bells to ring in the ears of the Jewish establishment, the leadership of Israel, namely, the council, also called the Sanhedrin, that was led by Israel's high priest.

They saw the impact of the message of Jesus and his resurrection as getting out of hand. This thing needed to be squashed, put down, quickly and forcefully.

So the threats, intimidation, and persecution got underway as early as Acts chapter four. And who would then surface to lead the charge of official Judaism to stamp out this renegade of misguided Jewish brethren?

Enter Saul of Tarsus. He would lead an official band of fellow Jews to round up those Jews viewed as misguided renegades, bring them to the established authorities for punishment, for imprisonment, and in some cases, such as Stephen in Acts chapter seven and eight, to their death.

[65 : 31] Most are aware of how that turned out. While en route to Damascus in neighboring Syria, Saul of Tarsus was dramatically confronted by the risen Jesus Christ calling him from heaven above.

Acts nine recounts the story. That encounter would change the life of Saul of Tarsus forever. It would also change the world.

He who had been chief persecutor would develop into the chief proclaimer of the faith he once sought to destroy. The fallout of all this was and is incalculable.

Through this encounter with the risen Christ addressing him from heaven, Saul, who would become Paul the apostle, is designated by Jesus to be the apostle to the Gentiles.

Gentiles? what are they doing in the picture? Isn't this supposed to be an all-Jewish thing? Not anymore. Now, it's Jew and Gentile together.

[66 : 38] Wow. Talk about confusion. Christianity Clarified, Volume 63, Track 19, Resuming the Critical Transition, Part 12.

An attempt is ongoing to explain the enormous confusion that existed in Israel following the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. The Jews remained divided over his identity and claimed to be Israel's Messiah.

While thousands embraced him as such, a far greater number of Jews did not, and such was the position of the hierarchy that governed Judaism, the ruling class.

It was to their fellow Jews that the original twelve apostles, led by Peter, continued to preach, and their preaching was accompanied with uncontested miracles.

Galatians chapter 2 states so clearly about the agreement entered into by the original twelve apostles in connection with the message the singular apostle Paul would be proclaiming to Gentiles.

[67 : 44] It was he, the former Saul of Tarsus, that God called to become the apostle to the Gentiles. Now that in itself was stunning because previously the Gentiles had no one designated as an apostle to them.

The Jews had, as it were, the corner on apostles called by Christ, but not anymore. Now, Gentiles also have access to God through another one God raised up who would have all the rest of the world as his charge.

But Paul would not be preaching Judaism to Gentiles, nor even attempt to make Jews of them. Paul would be preaching the message of Gentiles coming into a right relationship to God simply by admitting their sin and putting their trust in Jesus who died for their sin.

The twelve continued to preach the kingdom message to fellow Jews while Paul preached a grace message to Gentiles. Listen to the text from Galatians chapter 2.

It's a thunderclap. And here it is. Paul is writing and he says, Seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the Gentiles, just as Peter with the gospel to the Jews, James, Peter, and John gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship that we might go to the Gentiles and they to the Jews.

[69 : 15] Well, you can read the more complete text for yourself in Galatians chapter 2. Now, does this mean the good news of the kingdom was being preached by the twelve to the Jews, while at the same time the good news of the grace of God was being preached to the Gentiles by the apostle Paul?

It most certainly does. Both audiences, Jews and Gentiles, were given different messages even though the person of Jesus Christ was at the core of each of them.

This is what is meant by confusion in the transition. The message of God's grace and salvation apart from Judaism and the law would eventually completely replace the emphasis of the law with the exclusive emphasis on the grace of God.

But for a period, during a transition, both messages were proclaimed side by side. The kingdom good news to the Jews and the grace good news to Gentiles.

Do you see how this transition is so key? More important implications are upcoming. Hope you can join us and get in on this. Christianity Clarified, Volume 63, Track 20.

[70 : 31] When does the transition end? That's a good question. When does the transition end? What was being transitioned was movement from the law of Moses the Jews had been observing from its being given at Mount Sinai to the gospel or good news of salvation by grace without the works and demands of the law of Moses.

It was a dramatic transitioning from emphasizing law to emphasizing grace. The difference was incalculable. God was the provider of both, and He began with Israel being given the law at Mount Sinai in Exodus.

But with the substitutionary death of Christ for the sins of all humanity, the law was now being displaced by grace. The message was no longer do, do, and thou shalt live, as required by the law, but it is now live, and thou shalt do, as provided by grace.

All the difference was solely because of what Christ accomplished on the cross that was completed when He cried out, Tetelestai! It is finished.

And He hung His head and died. What was finished? The great transaction was finished. It was because He who knew no sin had then been made to be sin as humanity's representative.

[72 : 04] Jesus took the judgment of God for sin upon Himself as our substitute. Jesus was the human Lamb of God that took away the sin of the world.

Now, with Judaism passé, Jesus has become the new and living way to God, and exclusively so, because it was He alone who bore the penalty of the world's sin.

Hallelujah! What a Savior! Savior! This is it, folks. This was and is absolutely everything. This, this pivotal point of the universe has become God's remedy, God's only remedy for sin.

Do you know someone else who can rightly claim the title Savior? Listen to how Paul the Apostle put it when on his very first missionary journey, speaking in the Jewish synagogue in Pisces and Antioch in Acts chapter 13, after declaring the death and resurrection of Jesus, Paul concluded with this thunderbolt.

Therefore, let it be known to you, brethren, that through Jesus, forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and through Him, everyone who believes is freed from all things from which you could not be freed through the law of Moses.

[73 : 26] Wow! Isn't that something? Well, no, it is not something. It is everything! As your teacher on Christianity clarified, I first heard that message and appropriated it in 1956, and I still haven't gotten over it, nor do I expect to.

It radically changed my life, and I assure you it was a life that needed changing. No one can have an encounter with Jesus Christ and never be the same. Not Saul of Tarsus, not Marv Wiseman, nor anyone else.

Now, where was I? Oh, yes. We are approaching the transition having been completed, but not yet. Only close to it. And the explanation is next.

Christianity Clarified, Volume 63, Track 21. A preview of upcoming Volume 64. The first century movement was a transition from Judaism and the covenant God gave through Moses to the foundation for the new covenant prophesied by the Jewish prophet Jeremiah in chapter 31.

It is underway in the latter part of the first century A.D. For years after the death and resurrection of Jesus, the only ones believing in him were Jews, and Jews exclusively for perhaps an entire decade after Christ's ascension back to heaven.

[74 : 57] Peter was used of God, even though he was very reluctant to be used, because God was sending him to give the gospel of Christ to, of all people, a Gentile.

And not only a Gentile, but a Gentile who was an officer named Cornelius in the Roman army. It's all there in Acts chapter 10, and what a story it is.

Transition things are brewing, and the movement is underway. With Israel's official answer to Jesus as their Messiah continuing in a negative vein, God is calling out a new people while setting Israel aside until a later date as described in Romans chapter 11.

And Israel remains set aside to this day. But you may be assured, their brightest days lie ahead, even though they will be enjoyed by only a surviving remnant of Jews.

You can and should read it for yourself in Romans chapters 9, 10, and 11. It's fascinating content. In upcoming volume 64, we will see the transition from Judaism to Christianity over and done with.

[76 : 15] A whole new entity surfaces called the Christian Church, comprised of both believing Jews and Gentiles. Please, if you would, read the vivid account in Ephesians chapter 3.

Eventually, after much confusion and many years passing, what will become known as, and still is known as, the Catholic Church, and later, the Roman Catholic Church, will come to the fore.

And, like everyone else, they will have their share of faulty assumptions also. Because no group has ever escaped these faulty assumptions simply because all are comprised of fallen humans.

So we shall see upcoming in bold relief. And it will get underway on Christianity Clarified, volume 64. Once again, you are encouraged to bring your best brain and engage the content with us.