

Christianity Clarified Volume 34

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Date: 01 November 2020

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[0 : 0 0] What is Christianity really all about? The issue remains very confusing to a large segment of our society.

At times, it even extends to many who consider themselves Christian. Here, in an ongoing effort to try and dispel some of the confusion, is Marv Wiseman with another session of Christianity Clarify.

Sanctify and the Law of First Mention, Part 3. We've chosen the word sanctified to illustrate the importance of the Law of First Mention. The word is first used in Genesis chapter 2, and is in reference to the seventh day wherein God ceased from His creative acts.

The text says God sanctified the seventh day. It literally means He set it apart from all the previous days because it was different.

It was not a day of creation, but a day of cessation. It would provide the basis for the Jewish Sabbath on which no work was to be done because God Himself did not work on the Sabbath or the seventh day.

[1 : 0 8] He ceased from His work. To sanctify anything in the Bible means to set it apart from the ordinary and make it special. A synonym is the word dedicate, which essentially means the same thing.

When one is dedicated or sanctified to the ministry, as were the Levitical priests in the Bible, it means they comprised a special class of people, not to be the same as the others, but set apart from the others in a special category.

Likewise, the items of service in the temple, even pots and pans, flesh hooks, and all the accudments used by the priests in the sacrificial system were called sanctified vessels.

They could not be used in any other venue. They were sanctified, set apart for the exclusive and special service in the temple. In the New Testament, the word saint is often used to describe a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul especially refers to the communion of the saints or sanctified ones. When someone comes to faith in Christ, God sets that one apart from the mass of humanity and makes a special claim of ownership upon him.

[2 : 3 0] Saints are sanctified ones, if you will. It is as if God reaches down and plucks the believer up and out of the mass of humanity and sets him aside as special unto himself.

This one is not an ordinary person, but a sanctified person. All true believers in Christ are saints. Now, we are all aware that saints do not always behave in a saintly manner, but it is not their behavior that makes them saints.

It is their having been set apart from the world by God himself. It is one's official position before God in Christ that determines sainthood, and not one's deportment, which we all know to be sadly lacking on many occasions.

Saints, or sanctified ones, set apart by God, have an official status before God that is as splendid as that of Christ himself, because they are in Christ, and they possess the very righteousness of Christ that has been imputed to them.

They have been accepted in the Beloved, and they are set apart from the world unto God. They are special to God because they were purchased by the blood of his own dear Son.

[3 : 59] Prophet and the Law of First Mention Part 4 Pursuing the Law of First Mention, the word prophet is one term of many that is often misunderstood.

Most associate the word with foretelling future events, and that is one of its meanings. But, it is not its primary meaning, but a secondary meaning. The first usage of the word defines it best, and it is found in Genesis 20, verse 7.

God himself is addressing King Abimelech, the king of Gerar, in regards to Abraham. Abimelech was the one to whom Abraham, in a cowardly fashion, submitted his own wife Sarah to the harem of Abimelech.

And of Abraham God said, Now restore the man his wife, for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee. Applying the usual interpretation of the word prophet to mean the foretelling of future events, can you think of any instance recorded in the life of Abraham when he made predictions about the future?

There aren't any. It is true that many predictions, promises, or prophecies were given to Abraham by God himself, but there are none recorded where Abraham predicted anything in the future.

[5 : 16] He does call Abraham one who prays, but that is far removed from foretelling future events. So pursuing the word prophet a little further, with the help of our trusty exhaustive concordance, we arrive at its next usage in Exodus 4.16, where additional light is shed.

Here, in reference to Aaron, the brother of Moses, God says he, that is Aaron, shall be thy spokesman. Then again, in Exodus 7.1, God tells Moses that his brother Aaron will be his prophet.

Now recall, this was in response to Moses' earlier complaint about not being able to speak well, to which God said, Very well, Aaron your brother will be your prophet.

That is, your spokesman, your mouthpiece. Hence, the primary meaning of the word prophet is established. The prophet is first and foremost one who is a spokesman for another.

So, one man may be a prophet for another, that is, a spokesman or a mouthpiece for another. In almost all instances, excluding this one between Moses and Aaron, the prophet was a mouthpiece or spokesman for God.

[6 : 36] His task was to receive a message from God and then convey it to the people. Often, it had nothing to do with foretelling future events, but concerned the current message from God himself.

If one, as several did, delivered a message to the people that purportedly was from God, but in fact was not from God at all, he was described as a false prophet.

The scriptures record many such who claimed to speak for God, but clearly did not. The main task of the prophet was to proclaim the message or preach the word of God, often having nothing to do with foretelling future events, but everything to do with telling forth current events or the current message from God.

The prophet was a false prophet. The Law of Proportionate Mention, Part 1 The process of explaining and exploring the several laws of hermeneutics is ongoing.

It has been said that the science of hermeneutics employs fixed principles of logic and common sense in the pursuit of discovering the meaning of a given text of scripture.

[7 : 57] Thus far, we have briefly explored the laws of literal and figurative language, and the law of context, both near and remote.

Brief examples were made regarding the law of first mention, with the words sanctify and prophet. Now we turn our attention to the law of proportionate mention.

And as the word proportionate implies, this law has to do with the subject of ratio, that is, the amount of time and space given to a particular subject, as opposed to the time and space given in the Bible to other subjects.

So, the law of proportionate mention simply refers to the frequency or lack thereof the Bible gives to certain subjects.

Essentially, this means the Bible devotes much space and verbiage to the subjects God deems to be most critical. In other words, the Bible makes much of themes that are most important, and makes little of those less important.

[9 : 11] The Holy Spirit of God, who inspired the human writers to write the content of the Bible, gives greater time and space to those items most important, while it devotes little or no space to the subjects of little consequence.

In short, the Bible makes much of what is truly important, and little or nothing of what isn't. This is the law of proportionate mention.

Time and again, as we journey through the Scriptures, we find certain subjects surfacing and resurfacing again. It is nothing more than the Bible majoring on major issues, and minoring on minor issues.

We must understand God did not provide the Bible in order to satisfy our curiosities, but to provide us with the information most important about Himself and about those things most needful for us to know.

And to make sure we get the point, those most important matters are found again and again throughout the book, so much so, one cannot miss them.

[10 : 25] And that's the very purpose of their frequency. Their frequency and the space given to them should speak volumes to us. They are crying out to us, pay attention to these things, give these things most often mentioned top priority.

God did so by merely emphasizing them and inserting them into the record time and again. So let's spend a greater amount of time focusing on what the Bible says the most about, and in doing so, we are in concert with the Spirit of God who inspired the book.

More examples are forthcoming. The Law of Proportionate Mention, Part 2 If it is true, and we believe it is, the thing God most desires from people more than anything else is to be believed, to be trusted.

So, what has He set forth in the Bible to convince us we can believe Him? The answer is, something of convincing evidence on nearly every page, Old and New Testament alike.

God's faithful provision and dealings with the likes of Noah, Job, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Joseph, the nation of Israel, Moses and David, Elijah and Samuel, and on and on and on.

[11 : 48] Enter the New Testament and the record is replete again and again of instances where God demonstrated He is a covenant-keeping deity, a God of integrity. He has shown Himself to be faithful.

You can believe in this God and you can believe God. In fact, God has provided so much incontrovertible evidence through the years about His trustworthiness, the writer of Hebrews says, without faith it is impossible to please God.

For he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. Hebrews 11. Clearly, that God is faithful is a theme proclaimed and lavishly illustrated through God's dealings with humans all throughout history.

And should this not be a premier example of the law of proportionate mention? And it is mentioned a lot. Seriously, we can see how critical is this item of trusting God because He has seen fit to permeate all of Scripture with one example of it after another.

These all cry out, one after another, recounting their experiences of how God proved Himself to them over and over, often in gracious response to one human failure after another.

- [13 : 06] Man's unfaithfulness never prompted God to go and do likewise. This God is one magnificent, unfailing, always-making-good-on-His-word kind of deity.

And by the way, just examine the ancient false gods of Egypt, Isis, Horus, the Babylonians, Baal, Chemosh, Dagon, Allah, the Romans, the Greeks.

How do you find those deities faring? They are all portrayed as feeble, capricious, unpredictable, moody. Why is this? Because the false gods conjured up by the minds of men are made to be little more than human.

Essentially, an extension of flawed men. What else then can you expect their contrived gods to be? How utterly unlike the true God of heaven, whom we may label as the otherness.

And this otherness has a reputation to maintain. He perpetually reinforces that reputation by showing Himself to be faithful and making good on all He has promised.

- [14 : 21] The emphasis upon the abiding faithfulness of God well illustrates the law of proportionate mention. Numerous other items God insists on emphasizing further illustrate this logical law of proportionate mention upcoming.

The Law of Proportionate Mention, Part 3 Simple logic should compel us all to easily identify and agree with the law of proportionate mention.

Stated plainly, the law says that what the Bible reveals as most important is that which it mentions most often. In other words, the Bible, by divine design, majors on the issues God considers most important, and it minors on issues that by comparison are less important.

This is what is meant by the law of proportionate mention. Issues such as the character and nature of God, as well as the character and nature of man, are generously represented all throughout the Bible.

Themes like sacrifice, redemption, obedience, faithfulness, salvation, eternal life, as well as the grace and mercy of God, are abundantly represented in Scripture, so much so that it appears God wanted to make sure we don't miss them.

- [15 : 46] So, he included them here, there, and everywhere in the Bible. Among issues mentioned so many times in so many circumstances is God's love and long-suffering toward his chosen people Israel.

The pages of Scripture are drenched with this theme. Likewise, the two words, In Christ, In Christ, In Christ, In Christ, In the letters the Apostle Paul wrote to seven different congregations.

Seventy times? How could anyone miss the obvious importance accompanying those words? In Christ. In detail, the Apostle explains what it means to be in Christ, how we got there, and the attendant blessings belonging to all who are in Christ.

Every serious Bible student can count on it. As one makes his way through the Scriptures, those issues most important to God and man surface time and again.

And really, what else should we expect? Do not we as parents engage the same law of proportionate mention to our children as they make their way through those early developing years?

- [17 : 04] What we most want them to know, we have no problem emphasizing again and again. Why do we do this? Because we love them, and seek to prepare them to face the issues of life in the best possible way.

Well, it's no different with God, who treats us as His children that desperately need to know about the most important issues of life. Accordingly, when we encounter different themes in the Bible that are mentioned in one way or another for the umpteenth time, we will immediately recognize them as being priority issues that garner our attention.

Whatever the Bible emphasizes, they are the issues that should be at the forefront of our hearts and minds. As we've said, the Bible was never given to satisfy man's curiosities, but to inform us as to what is truly important.

And it does this, repeatedly, and that recurrence makes it important. This is the hermeneutical law of proportionate mention.

The Law of Proportionate Mention, Part 4 Having duly noted the faithfulness of God and the frequency of its being illustrated throughout the Bible, other issues demand attention as well.

- [18 : 34] Remember, the Law of First Mention simply means that God makes the most of what He regards as most important. And, as we mentioned earlier, we do the same, do we not, in the rearing of our children.

At a very early age, we begin instilling in them, and with great repetition, items that assure their safety. Always look both ways when crossing the street.

Be polite and show respect to everyone. Always tell the truth. Stay indoors when lightning is in the sky. Be kind to animals, and on and on.

And do we tell them these things but once? Of course not. We tell them every chance we get. Because they are for their safety and well-being.

God is no different, but is even more intent on revealing and illustrating the things about Himself, ourselves, and the world we live in, as well as the world to come and the preparation for it.

- [19 : 35] These are the big ticket items. They matter most. These are to be prioritized, and so, God makes the most of them throughout the Bible.

Perhaps no major theme in all the Scriptures deserves and receives as much attention as that of redemption. It is, after all, the scarlet thread that runs throughout both Testaments.

The Old Testament tells of a promised Redeemer, and the New delivers that Redeemer. Anyone who even gives a casual reading of the Bible cannot miss this ever-present theme.

It is the drama of all the ages, this thing called redemption, that requires a Redeemer. The poet John Milton labeled the entire affair as paradise, paradise lost, paradise regained, in type, in symbol, in literal language, in figurative language, in predicted prophecy, in fulfilled prophecy, it surfaces again and again.

This is a fallen world in desperate need of repair. It's a lost world, a world gone wrong, not merely wounded, but dead in trespasses and sins.

- [20 : 59] Where lies the remedy? John the Baptizer said, it all rests upon the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. Hereafter, when you read and study the Bible, be sure you note the amount of space given and the frequency of certain themes and subjects found therein.

The law of proportionate mention will reveal to you the things God most wants you to know. And this, you may be sure, will be the very things that will most edify your spirit and enrich your soul.

Whatever it is that God makes the most of in His Word, we should make the most of in our priorities for understanding. Thus says the law of proportionate mention.

The law of correspondence It is within the sphere of hermeneutics as a science that we note the application of numerous laws that will guide the interpreter.

After all, the realm of science in any discipline involves a number of laws governed by logic that pertain to all areas of science.

- [22 : 19] For instance, one studying the science of aeronautical engineering had better pay close attention to the law of gravity. And so it is with the scientific aspect of literature and its interpretation.

Another of its several laws to be heeded is called the law of correspondence. And this simply means attention must be given to how things correspond to one another in a given statement.

For example, in 1 Corinthians 15, the great chapter on the resurrection, verse 22 reads, For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

The law of correspondence insists that the usage of the word all in reference to all dying in Adam must correspond to the word all in reference to those being made alive in Christ.

It will not do to say the first all means all while the second all means some. Such defeats and detracts from the very argument Paul is making in stating his case.

- [23 : 39] It is clear the apostle is deliberately connecting the two alls, making them to correspond to each other. Hence, the law of correspondence.

Paul is not saying all will be saved eventually, as is taught in universalism. What he is saying is that in the same totality of all dying in Adam, it is in this same totality that all will be made alive because of Christ.

The larger context of the entire chapter deals with the subject of the resurrection of the body. These present bodies made subject to death because of Adam will, even so, correspondingly, be resurrected from the dead because of Christ.

While it is true, some will be resurrected to eternal life, and some to eternal condemnation, yet both are incorporated in the usage of the word all, whether the all in Adam or the all in Christ.

The words all and even so are not to be trifled with. To do so involves violating the logical law of correspondence.

- [25 : 08] And so it is with the words as and so that insist on a correspondence. Heed must be given to each of these laws as they apply to the subject of literature.

More will be coming. The Law of Consequence Part 1 There is an old adage that has floated around wherever and whenever Bible conferences are held, and it is a good one.

All who apply its truth will be well served by it. And here it is. Whenever you hear the words therefore or wherefore in the Bible, you should always stop to see what it is there for.

Amen and amen. Invariably, it is there in order to emphasize or highlight a conclusion or consequence arrived at because of the immediate preceding statement.

This is why it is called the Law of Consequence. An example among many is found in Luke 1.35, and the preceding statement given is, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee.

- [26 : 24] That was the statement. And what then is the consequence? Therefore, also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

Therefore, or wherefore, could also be translated, This, or that, is why. And it is a consequence. The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee.

Therefore, or this is why, that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. It's the law of consequence, or the law of conclusion, as some might call it.

The writer is merely telling us why he is saying or concluding what he is. Hebrews 4.4 reminds the reader that it was not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin.

So, what is the consequence of bulls and goats unable to take away sin? Wherefore, or this is why, when he cometh into the world, he saith, A body hast thou prepared me.

[27 : 35] It's all about the rationale for the incarnation, the enfleshment of the Son of God. Why the incarnation? Why the Son of God came in a human divine body?

Because it was not possible for bulls and goats to do what needed to be done. Wherefore, or this is why, a human body was prepared for him.

The law of consequence provides the logical explanation, the conclusion, or rationale, answering the previous statement. Galatians 4.5 insists that those in Christ are not under law, but under grace.

We are, as Isaac was, children of promise. We are not children of the bondwoman Hagar, but of the free woman. So what? What then is the consequence, the conclusion?

It is, stand fast therefore. This is why I say, stand fast, stand your ground, stand therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and do not become entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

[28 : 44] The therefore is a beautiful and logical example of the law of consequence. By the way, it's a terrible place to divide chapters 4 and 5.

It breaks up the continuity and train of thought. Did you catch that? The Law of Consequence Part 2 A stunning example of the law of consequence is found in the oft-quoted and revealing account of the condescension of the Son of God, who came to earth as Emmanuel, God with us, or the God-man.

The Apostle Paul uses this as the ultimate illustration of true humility. No one ever left such an exalted state to stoop to such an ignominious state as did Jesus the Messiah.

His rightful place, stated Paul, was to enjoy the very form of God expressed in Philippians 2. Even though that was his true office and entitlement, he did not insist on maintaining it, but willingly laid it aside.

Compared to what and who he was with the Father, Jesus stooped to make himself of no reputation by taking to himself the form of a servant, made in the likeness of men.

[30 : 09] Then, as a man, he further descended by self-humiliation to the point of an obedient death. And, said Paul, not merely a death, but the death of the cross, the kind of execution reserved only for the lowest of the low.

And because of all that, because of the depth of Christ's voluntary humiliation, wherefore, this is why, God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The consequence of Christ's exaltation is inseparably linked to his humiliation. No one has ever been exalted to the degree that Christ was, because no one ever sank to the depths that Christ did, and that he did willingly.

The wherefore, or logical consequence of his exaltation is realized from his condescension. What a humiliation, and what an exaltation!

And recall, if you will, the context. It all began by the Apostle Paul imploring the Philippians to follow this self-effacement example of their Lord.

[31 : 46] says Paul, let this example of Christ be your model. Let this mind, this attitude characterize you as it characterized Jesus our Lord.

If he, being who he was, was willing to do what he did for the benefit of others, how can we possibly elevate or promote ourselves so as to be served by others rather than serving others?

Mark 10 reminds us, the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Again, the law of consequence is self-revealing and a beautiful thing indeed. the law of exhortation.

The law of exhortation is closely akin to the law of consequence. They differ only in the sense that the law of consequence presents a logical rationale for a conclusion reached and often employs therefore or wherefore.

[33 : 00] The law of exhortation urges one to action based on a previous stated truth. The key word that exhorts very often utilizes the term let us, which literally conveys the idea of this is what we ought to do.

In Romans 13, the truth stated is seeing the night is far spent and the day is at hand. What then is the exhortation?

It is let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. The same portion exhorts, encourages, or challenges us to walk honestly by clothing ourselves with the character of Christ so we are transparent and without hidden motives or secret agendas.

doing so will allow others to see Christ in us rather than just us. The exhortation then? Let us walk honestly.

The following chapter 14, another let us by way of exhortation is found in let us follow after peace. It means to be on the trail that leads to peace rather than the rancor and bitterness that some insist on following.

[34 : 22] And to say, let us certainly implies that such is within our ability and not beyond us. We are not being urged to do the impossible, but the reasonable, the logical, even our reasonable service.

Today we might say, come on brethren, let's get with it, let's do this, what do you say? Let us not be weary in well-doing in Galatians 6, or let us not sleep in 1 Thessalonians 5, and let us watch and be sober, and let us who are of the day be sober.

All of these exhortations are designed to motivate, stimulate, incite, and energize the reader. The Apostle Paul was a cheerleader for the body of Christ and for every congregation he addressed.

He's saying, come on folks, let's get behind this great cause and take our cues from the master himself. You can do this. You will be blessed and Christ will be honored and God will be pleased.

We are reminded it is a serious business to be a member of the body of Christ. Let us be sober-minded, not frivolous or trivial dabblers in things that don't amount to anything.

[35 : 43] Let us get our priority straight. Let us major on majors and minor on minors. Thus saith the no-nonsense law of exhortation.

And we all need a generous dose of biblical exhortation from this important and logical law. Let us be on the lookout for it so we can all profit from it.

The Law of Progressive Revelation Part 1 An insightful and helpful volume on the subject of hermeneutics was authored by Dr. Bernard Ram.

In it, he made a critical observation regarding the progression of biblical revelation. Dr. Ram defined it thusly. By progressive revelation, we mean that the Bible sets forth a movement of God with the initiative coming from God and not man, in which God brings man up through the theological infancy of the Old Testament to the maturity of the New Testament.

This does not mean that there are no advanced elements in the Old Testament, nor any simple matters in the New, but that this is the general pattern of revelation.

[37 : 11] Failure to recognize the principle Dr. Ram has set forth can only result in hopeless contradiction and confusion. Clearly, the Bible is a book of progress and development in what it sets forth from its beginning in Genesis to its conclusion in the Revelation.

We might say, in the Bible, there is a clear setting forth of doctrine on the move. As you wend your way through Scripture, are you not struck by the fact that the plan and program of God is one that is unfolding?

Surely we must concede that Moses, who lived four hundred years after Abraham, knew more than Abraham did about God's plan and purposes, because by then God had revealed more to Moses than he had to Abraham.

It is all about history and its development. And can we not then assert that King David, who lived another seven hundred years or so later, knew still more?

And why was that? simply because by then God had been pleased to reveal more about himself and his plan he had not revealed earlier.

[38 : 29] Jump ahead another thousand years to the time of Jesus on earth, and we find yet more had been revealed as history unfolded. In fact, the arrival of Jesus on the scene and the new vistas of truth he revealed constituted a kind of quantum leap in information not known earlier.

It is the same with the startling new information given by the risen Christ to the apostle Paul, in which he declared that Jew and Gentile were now to be as one body in the person of Christ with Christ himself as the head.

To say that this was an update is an understatement. It was a doctrinal thunderbolt never revealed or even mentioned earlier.

And when you go further, you will find that the book of the Revelation that concludes the New Testament constitutes yet a further update than that which had been revealed to the apostle Paul.

This is what is meant by the progress of Revelation. The Law of Progressive Revelation Part 2 Perhaps nothing so vividly illustrates the progress of doctrine in the Bible as that which sets forth what God required by way of worship and obedience earlier in humanity as opposed to later.

[40 : 07] This is in reference to the requirement God laid down to the earlier members of humanity namely regarding the sacrifice of animals. The earlier testament is filled with this divine directive.

In fact, it became the very core of Judaism. It was a principle requiring the death of an innocent animal as a substitute for a guilty human.

Add to that the demand for the circumcision of the male Jewish baby when but eight days old as well as the dietary restrictions and the details for the proper observance of the weekly Sabbath, a day on which no work was to be done.

None of these were optional but were all to be implemented and strictly enforced for every Jew in covenant relation to the God of Israel.

These plus a host of other requirements as well. So, whatever became of these requirements? They were set aside due to the progress of doctrine.

[41 : 17] The Mosaic Law and all it prescribed served its purpose for its time but its time had come to an end. And, are we aware the Mosaic Law was given by God exclusively for the nation Israel?

Non-Jews, that is, Gentiles, were never at any time placed under the Law of Moses. It was peculiar only to Israel, God's chosen people.

The Law of Moses was from the outset intended by God to eventually become passé because of the progressive revelation principle that would eventually replace it.

The Jews of today who still observe the Law of Moses are called Orthodox or Observant Jews. Because they do not accept our New Testament as valid, they still see themselves as obligated to the Law God gave through Moses.

To them, it has not been set aside. But according to the New Testament, the Law of Moses has given way to progressive revelation. Paul the Apostle, himself a Jew, contended strongly against the demand for circumcision, Sabbath-keeping, dietary restrictions, and other demands of the Law.

[42 : 42] How? Why did he do that as a Jew? And did he not pay dearly for doing so? Indeed he did. Yet he knew that a new day and a new order had arrived.

Doctrine was progressing and God was using him to relate the latest information God had given. Consider Galatians 2 and Ephesians 3 for a taste of this.

Being unaware or unwilling to adapt to this doctrinally progressed information will surely result in major confusion not only for Jews but for Christians as well.

The Law of Right Division Part 1 Following hard on the heels of the Law of Progressive Revelation is the Law of Right Division.

We may regard these as intricately linked together yet with some dissimilarities. An earlier reference to the Right Division of Scripture was made in Christianity Clarified Volume 29 but an elaboration is called for.

[43 : 51] We revisit it because it this Law of Right Division when violated or ignored as it often is may well be more responsible for the divisions that exist among Christians than any other hermeneutical aberration.

The case for this will be built as we go along. Recall if you will from Volume 29 that the Apostle Paul made reference to rightly dividing the word of truth in his final letter to young Timothy in chapter 2 verse 15.

Now, if 2 Timothy was not Paul's last letter it was certainly near his last. He was confined to the Mamertine prison in Rome awaiting his sentence of execution by the Roman sword.

True, Paul was writing under inspiration of the Spirit of God yet this does not negate his stating his own personal concerns for young Timothy who was to put on the mantle of leadership upon Paul's death.

Many have observed that the words of a man facing death do not lend themselves to trivia. The mind tends to be focused on things that matter most and really matter most.

[45 : 08] Against that backdrop of impending death what were the words the great apostle penned? Among them were these. Timothy, study, that is, concentrate on, focus on, gaining God's approval as to the kind of worker you will be.

Timothy, you do not want to be ashamed or embarrassed regarding your labors as a minister. This is why you must rightly divide the word of truth.

The actual word used in the original Greek is orthotomounta. It's a compound word consisting of ortho which means straight or true.

Actually, our English word orthodontist comes from this and we know the orthodontist to be the dentist who straightens teeth. And the second part of the word comes from temno which means to cut or divide.

Hence, to divide rightly or to cut as a cut should be made. Whenever we cut something we do so to divide it. Whether it is meat as a butcher would cut or divide material as would a dressmaker.

[46 : 25] It's always about cutting something so as to separate or make a division. Hence, the term right division of the word of truth. But, do we not think of the Bible, the word of truth to be something that is whole and a total truth in itself?

It is. Why then is Paul instructing Timothy to be sure he rightly divides the word of truth? Good question and good answers are upcoming.

The Law of Right Division Part 2 Because the Bible does constitute the entirety of revelation God wants us to have, we do tend to think of it in its wholeness.

And if the Bible is this in its wholeness, what is this business of which we speak regarding rightly dividing it? There are those who even object to the term the right division of the word of truth.

They may object by saying, the Bible doesn't need to be divided, nor should it be divided. I believe, say they, in taking the whole Bible as true, not dividing it in parts.

[47 : 40] Well, so should we all. Accepting part of the Bible instead of the whole Bible is not at all the issue, nor is that what was meant by the Apostle Paul when he first used the term in 2 Timothy 2.15, rightly dividing the word of truth.

In fact, it is nothing short of irritating to hear someone who rejects a concept of right division of Scripture to say something like this, you may believe the Bible to be taken in or by its parts, whatever you mean by rightly dividing, but I take the whole Bible, not just some of its parts.

It is irritating to say the least. Yet at the same time, it is with great sadness. Sadness because their statement reveals a complete misunderstanding of the entire concept of the right division of Scripture.

Actually, the mere fact that the Apostle Paul, under inspiration of the Spirit of God, used the term, and did so to strongly encourage Timothy to make sure he rightly divides the word of truth because only in doing so can he distinguish himself as a competent workman or laborer that will gain God's approval while avoiding shame or embarrassment.

So, how was Timothy to do this, and how can we do it, if we don't even know what it means to rightly divide the word of truth? Well, let's start with what it does not mean.

[49 : 10] It does not mean we divide the Bible so as to obey or pay attention to parts of it while we ignore other parts of it. It does not mean we focus on our favorite parts of the Bible while we discount the remainder.

Yet, this, at least to some, appears to be all they can conclude by the term rightly dividing the word of truth. And that is so sad.

And by that misunderstanding, they will of necessity actually deprive themselves from gaining an understanding of the Bible that is nothing less than absolutely thrilling.

And that is no exaggeration. In fact, the very failure to rightly divide the word creates nothing but irresolvable contradictions and conflict within the body of Scripture.

And I say the word of God given by divine inspiration by a gracious God certainly deserves better than that. You will see what is meant as we warm to this critical and no-nonsense concept of the right division of the word of truth, upcoming and ongoing.

[50 : 34] The Law of Right Division Part 3 For there to be a law or principle of right division, it appears obvious that there must be the possibility of wrong division.

And according to the context of 2 Timothy 2.15, it is the word of truth, that is, the content of the Bible that is to be divided. Be reminded, the term of division requires a separation of items.

The actual word that is used is to cut, to divide by cutting, to separate one thing from another. As when a surgeon cuts a malignant tumor of cancer away from healthy tissue, he separates it, he causes a division of the mass.

What is it, then, that regards the word of truth, the Bible, that needs to undergo cutting or dividing? This is the very crux of the matter.

It, that is, the right division of the Bible, requires that, for the purpose of understanding some things in the Bible, they must be kept separate from other things in the Bible.

[51 : 44] If a separation is not maintained, the only alternative remaining is to combine them, and to do so, results in mixing things rather than dividing things.

Now the question becomes, what are the things that must be divided from other things, and why? There are three distinct categories or classes of people referred to in the Bible, and these three comprise all of humanity.

They are found listed together in one place, although two of the three of them are found all throughout Scripture. And here, they are conveniently identified by the Apostle Paul in a rather obscure but important reference.

We refer to 1 Corinthians 10, verses 31 and 32, where all three are revealed in an almost passing manner.

Said Paul in verse 31, whether therefore you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give none offense, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God.

[52 : 56] Unmistakably, the Apostle Paul incorporates the entirety of the human race into these three segments, Jews, Gentiles, and the Church of God. Yes, of course, they are all the same, in that all three categories are human beings, and therein lies their commonality.

But beyond that, what stands out most between these Jews, Gentiles, and the Church of God? What? Their differences. And they are in so many ways as different as night and day.

And were they aware of these differences? Oh my, were they ever. In fact, they were so aware of their differences, they built walls literally and figuratively that separated them from one another.

As regards Jews, Gentiles, and the Church of God in so many ways, what was true of one group certainly was not true of the others. We are just now beginning to open a vista that will give you an appreciation and understanding of the word of truth like nothing else.

It is upcoming and ongoing. The Law of Right Division, Part 4 The Apostle Paul has revealed the three categories of humanity here in 1 Corinthians 10.

[54 : 19] Absolutely every person on planet Earth belongs to one of these three, and many actually belong to two of them. The three are the Jews, the Gentiles, and the Church of God.

Before going further, let's look at a little history. Actually, a lot of history, starting with Genesis. What was humanity early on before the flood of Noah?

Just humanity. There were no Jews, no Gentiles, and certainly no Church of God. They were just people. And according to the Genesis record given in chapter 6, not very nice people.

They were people, humanity as it then existed, that overly taxed the long suffering of God, and he decided to bring it all to an end. They were not Jews, nor Gentiles, nor the Church of God that perished in the Noahic flood.

They were just people. Evil people, but still just people with no distinguishing characteristics beyond that of their common humanity.

[55 : 27] It would not be until after the flood and the survivors of it that the origins of two of the three categories would emerge, and those two will eventually become known as Jews and Gentiles.

The third category, the Church of God, will not even exist until it is identified as having come into being by way of a combining of Jew and Gentile into the third category described in Ephesians chapter 3.

A category, by the way, the existence of which had never been so much as even thought of earlier. Of the original two, the Jew and the Gentile, it would be the Jew that would first emerge as a distinct category.

The Jewish people, all direct descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, would number only 70 people when they went down to Egypt, while their brother Joseph was highly positioned there.

After about 400 years, the 70 originals had multiplied to a number approaching 2 million. It was here, in connection with their bondage and deliverance under Moses, that the fledgling descendants became a nation, the Hebrew or Jewish nation.

[56 : 53] Everyone else in Egypt and all the rest of the world automatically became Gentiles when the Jews became the Jewish nation. And from that time until the first century, only two categories existed, Jew and Gentile.

True, there were nations, Egypt, Syria, Babylonia, etc., but they were all Gentiles. There were the Jews and there were the Gentiles.

And everyone, without exception, that was not one, was automatically the other. The church of God mentioned by Paul in 1 Corinthians simply did not exist and would not for nearly another 3,000 years from Abraham's time.

A case of understanding is building here that will prove invaluable upcoming. The Law of Right Division, Part 5 The three categories of humanity have been identified in 1 Corinthians 10.

Here the inspired apostle divides all living persons into three separate groups. And there is no one who does not belong to one of the three, and some belong to two of the three. They are Jews, Gentiles, and the church of God.

[58 : 06] Please understand that, as regards the Jew, the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, they comprise a tiny minority of not even 1% of the world's population.

In fact, their number is only two-tenths of one percent. Everyone else is Gentile. Everyone. It has nothing to do with race, skin color, language, or geography.

99.8-tenths percent of the world's population is Gentile. If a Gentile comes to faith in Jesus Christ, he also, as a believing Gentile, enters the category of the church of God.

He belongs to both, as a Gentile and a Christian. Likewise for the Jew. A Jew who embraces Christ as one's personal Savior enters the category of the church of God.

He does not become un-Jewish. He is still a Jew, but he has become a believing Jew, and a member of the church of God. Most Jews who come to faith in Jesus as their Messiah consider themselves completed Jews rather than converted Jews.

[59 : 10] A Jew then becomes a Jewish or Hebrew Christian. Christian simply because he is now a believer and a follower of Christ. But he cannot lose his identity as a Jew because it was established by birth.

He may convert to whatever he will, but he never loses his original identity as a Jew. Same is true of Gentiles. A Gentile may even convert to Judaism and is legally considered a member of Judaism, but his original identity as a Gentile remains because he was born a Gentile.

If that Gentile receives Christ as his Savior, he becomes a believing Gentile, now labeled as Christian. I myself am a Gentile Christian. This all becomes very important when one comes to the Bible and expects to understand it.

Originally, before the flood of Noah in Genesis, earth's inhabitants were merely people. Designations of Jew and Gentile and church of God did not even exist.

In Genesis 12, well after the flood, the man Abraham was called to a special purpose, and when he followed God's directions, he left Ur of the Chaldees, crossed the Euphrates River, and ended up in the land of Canaan.

[60 : 22] To all the people, Canaanites, who already lived there, Abraham was referred to as the Hebiru, meaning the one who crossed over.

That is, the one who crossed over the big river Euphrates. Abraham the Hebiru became Hebrew as his official designation. He, Abraham, was a direct descendant of Shem, one of the sons of Noah, and Shem is the one from whose name Semite or Semitic comes.

Abraham was a Shemite or a Semite, and those who oppose them are called anti-Semitic. So, who then are the Jews, spelled J-E-W, Jew, upcoming, and again important, giving none offense to the Jew, the Gentile, or the church of God.

The Law of Right Division, Part 6 We continue the principal background key to understanding the Bible via the law of rightly dividing the word of truth.

This was the principle of division given under inspiration by the Apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 2.15. We saw a related reference to the principle of right dividing in 1 Corinthians 10.32, when Paul mentioned almost as in passing the statement, giving no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God.

[61 : 54] Actually, the received text uses Gentiles in place of Greeks, because Greek was often the general expression for the mass of humanity speaking the Greek language throughout the Mediterranean basin, and it was the lingua franca of the first century.

So, Greek did not mean only natives of Greece, but Greek speakers throughout the entire world at the time, and was virtually synonymous with the word Gentile, which was, of course, the generic term given to everyone who was not Jewish.

And that included almost everyone, because, remember, Jews comprised only two-tenths of one percent of the world's population. And speaking of Jews, the question was asked, who are the Jews?

And how did they come to be called Jews or Jewish? Well, the Jews and the Hebrews are one and the same. Hebrew was the name given to Abram by the Canaanites in the land Abram came to that would eventually be called the land of Israel.

Abram had crossed over the Euphrates River en route to Canaan from his original home in Ur of the Chaldees. Our best information is that Abram derived the name Heberu, meaning the one who crossed over, or we might call him the man who came from across the river.

[63 : 07] In time, it appeared the name Heberu morphed into the word Hebrew. Abram's son was named Isaac. He married Rebekah, and they produced twin boys, Esau and Jacob.

Jacob, not Esau, was the child of promise who would perpetuate the bloodline through which the Messiah would eventually come. His name would be changed by God to Israel in Genesis 32.

And one of Jacob's or Israel's 12 sons would be Judah, the fourth born. Judah would be the head of the tribe named after him. And when the nation Israel broke up in 931 BC, the northern 10 tribes seceding from the Union kept the name Israel, no doubt because they contained 10 of the 12 tribes of Israel, excluding only Benjamin and Judah, the two southern tribes.

And when the two southern tribes were carried into Babylonian captivity by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BC, the Babylonians referred to the tribes of Benjamin and Judah that they had captured as Judas, or eventually just Jews for short.

Those Hebrews from the tribe of Judah were many more in number than those of Benjamin, which was the smallest in number of all of the tribes.

[64 : 26] So in essence, the Hebrews came to be called Jews, short for those of Judah, and the name stuck to the present day.

So even Hebrews, not from the tribe of Judah, but from one of the other tribes, are still referred to as Jews, short for Judah.

The Law of Right Division, Part 7 Having arrived at the basic differences between these categories of humanity that make up everyone, Jew, Gentile, and Church of God, we have only the latter to identify, that is, the Church or the Assembly of God.

Who are these? Where do they come from? They are those who came from the other two groups, the Jews and the Gentiles. This new group, the Church of God, to whom Paul referred in 1 Corinthians 10.32, did not even come into existence until God, through Christ, called some of each group, Jew and Gentile, together, and made from them, with their disparate backgrounds, one new group of the two, and named it the Church, the spiritual body of Christ, of which Christ himself is the head.

This was an entirely new thing, so different in its composition no one would have ever thought of putting them together. So diverse were they. What dynamic could possibly bring these two groups of people, from backgrounds as different as night and day, now together in one entity, one body?

[66 : 08] What dynamic could actually do that? His name was Jesus, and yes, he could and did actually do that. It was in Christ that an entirely new organism was birthed, and it consisted of Jews, with their background in the Mosaic law and monotheism, combined with Gentiles, with their background of paganism and idolatry.

Those from both groups, who had come to see the person of Jesus the Messiah to be the Son of God and Savior of the world, had placed their trust in this Jesus as their personal substitute, who had died in their place for their sin.

These, Jews and Gentiles, having become believers in Christ, were baptized by the Spirit of God into this new body called the body of Christ, Christ himself being the spiritual head of that body.

And this baptism, not to be confused with water baptism, was the spiritual baptism that actually regenerated the individual. Now, in this brand new entity, the old designations of Jew, Gentile, slave, free, male, female, no longer mattered, because all had become children of God through faith in God's Son, Yeshua HaMashiach.

Here was a brand new category of people that before never even existed. It is the Church of God, the assembly of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[67 : 34] Your background and earlier designation pales in comparison to this brand new one. You now have a spanking brand new identity, whereby you are actually placed into union with Jesus Christ, and you are a new creation in Him.

This is what this third designation is all about, of the Jew, the Gentile, and now the Church of God.

Actually, it is the Church of God that is derived from both Jew and Gentile. The two become one in this one new union body.

Our understanding is only beginning. More coming. The Law of Right Division, Part 8.

Now, having identified the three groups of humans in existence, as Paul refers to them, by Jew, Gentile, and the Church of God, each of these is a recipient or an addressee in the Bible.

[68 : 48] Think, if you will, of each of these three, Jew, Gentile, and the Church of God, possessing a mailbox. A mailbox to which information intended for each recipient will be sent.

There is information in the Bible that pertains to the Jew, information designated for the Gentile, and information designated for the Church of God.

Uh-oh. Do you not already see a problem surfacing here? You guessed it. People get into someone else's mailbox and start reading things not addressed to them.

Then what happens? Confusion on top of confusion. Confusion on top of confusion. Confusion on top of confusion. Confusion on top of confusion. Confusion on top of confusion. Just what might be expected. Of course, some informational items apply to all three groups.

But much of the male is addressed to a specific group and does not apply to the others not in that group. So what happens if, in sincerity, they try to apply it anyway?

[69 : 55] It doesn't work. It isn't supposed to work for them. It works only for those to whom it was addressed. And do you not see how a whole new mailbox was created for this special new group that didn't even exist before?

However, the Church of God will have mail, information if you will, addressed and applicable to them alone, with no application to either the one who is still a Jew or a Gentile, outside the body of believers called the Church of God.

There was, years ago, a little Sunday school ditty, sang by children and no doubt by adults as well, and they were completely innocent in doing so and probably sweet too.

But it began conditioning people into thinking they could get into anyone else's mailbox and obtain a guaranteed blessing. After all, the whole Bible is for us, isn't it?

Yes, indeed. The whole Bible is for us, and we cannot do without one single line of Scripture the Holy Spirit inspired the writers to pen. The whole Bible is for us, but not the whole Bible is to us.

[71 : 09] That little song we mentioned goes something like this, Every promise in the book is mine, every word, every line. No, it isn't.

There are wonderful promises in the Bible that are yours, and some of them belong to other folks. They won't work for you, because they were never intended for you, nor addressed to you.

Let's think of it this way, and it will help a lot. All of the Bible is for you, but not all of the Bible is to you. There is a huge difference between information intended for our knowledge and understanding, and information that means go and do thou likewise.

Notable examples are upcoming. Let the light shine in. You've just heard another session of Christianity Clarified with Marv Wiseman. Preview of upcoming Volume 35.

In this present Volume 34 of Christianity Clarified, we have begun to enter areas of great practicality, and benefit to you who are serious about seeing how the Bible, being far from contradictory as some claim, to actually enjoying its complementation.

[72 : 39] Actually, it, that is, this complementation, not contradiction, is precisely what we should expect, if it truly is a revelation from God Himself.

For if the Bible is, as some claim today, nothing more than a musty, dusty collection of ancient writings, given by a bunch of men who describe things as they saw and understood them, then really, no one should be surprised at its containing contradictions.

In fact, we should even expect them. And, if that's the way it is, then we have a Bible that is far less authoritative and less dependable than what Christians claim.

In fact, there is no authority, and you can forget about any dependability. But, and if, it is indeed the very God-breathed word and wisdom of God Himself, as we believe it is, then, what are we going to say about what does indeed appear to be contradictory statements and concepts in the Scriptures?

And, have you ever asked yourself, if the Bible is truly from God, why didn't He inspire men to write it in such a way that nothing that even looked like a contradiction would appear?

[74 : 08] Why didn't God have the Bible written so that everything in it would be crystal clear, obvious, certain, devoid of any possible misunderstanding, and so simple, so as to not even cause a question?

Why didn't God give us that kind of a Bible? If He even gave us one at all? We will pursue that, at least somewhat, in Volume 35 Upcoming.

Now, if you received this CD automatically, then you will automatically receive Volume 35 Upcoming, and need not request it.

But, if you didn't and you want it, you'll have to let us know. Our address, email, and telephone are listed on the CD. Please contact us and let us know what you want.

No strings attached and free of charge. Financial underwriting has been provided by the Barbara Wiseman Memorial Fund, established and funded by the generous people of Grace Bible Church, in honor of Barbara Wiseman, my first wife of nearly 50 years, who entered the Lord's presence in 2006.

[75 : 26] So, this is Pastor Marv Wiseman saying, thanks so much for being part of our Learning Together on Christianity Clarified. Thank you.

Thank you.