

Christianity Clarified Volume 50

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[0 : 0 0] What is Christianity really all about? Here, in an ongoing effort to try and dispel some of the confusion, is Marv Wiseman, with another session of Christianity Clarified.

Historic Christian Treatment of Jews In a brief examination of history, it is easy to see why Jewish people reject and have a distrust of things Christian and issues involving Jesus of Nazareth.

For centuries, Jewish people have suffered untold persecution and brutality from the very hands of those claiming to be the followers of Jesus. And why did these people called Christians inflict all this pain and persecution upon Jews?

Because they, like the Jewish apostle Paul admitted about himself, they did it out of ignorance. Paul admitted that to his great sorrow in 1 Timothy chapter 1.

When he was Saul of Tarsus back before his conversion, he was a perfect fulfillment of a statement Jesus made the night he was betrayed just before his crucifixion. He then told his disciples the time would come when those who kill you will think they are doing God a service.

[1 : 2 0] Many utterly evil things have been done by people who believed in their mind they were doing the right thing. And as Jesus said, they will be doing it with the motivation of being pleasing to God.

The demands of professing Christians that Jews submit to Christian baptism and be enrolled in the church, all of course for their own good, is an historical reality hard for the Christian church to live down, and just as hard for Jews to give them a pass.

Understandably so. It is true, no doubt, that many of those so-called Christians were merely professors of Christianity rather than possessors. And the difference is that of night and day.

However, being a Christian, even a true born-again Christian, does not make one immune from gross ignorance. True Christians can be misled to do really stupid, even evil things under the distorted belief it is pleasing to God.

It is safe to say there were and are both kinds of Christians carrying it out, the true believer and the mere professor, both grossly ignorant.

[2 : 3 3] Regardless, to the Jew, on the receiving end of their harsh and brutal treatment, they are all Christians and all to be avoided at all costs, including their Jesus they think that we Jews should believe in.

Do you get this picture? This reality has gone on for hundreds of years, and in some quarters still goes on in varying degrees of treatment.

Is it any wonder, then, that the Jews flatly reject any and everything connected with Jesus and Christianity? But there is a current bright spot in all of this, especially of late, because evangelical Christians have established a rapport with many in the Jewish community built upon mutual trust and respect.

And there are differences in beliefs, while they remain intact and unchanging, yet the attitude and dispositions are wonderfully refreshing. It is Christian love as Jesus intended.

And for sure, more of it is needed. Jewish Response to Christians Noted earlier was the inexcusable and negative treatment, including severe persecution, that was inflicted upon Jewish people just for their being Jews.

[3 : 56] Multiple motives were given for that treatment, but it was all fueled by ignorance and arrogance on the part of the persecutors. Gross ignorance. Gross arrogance.

Then, what was the Jewish response to that kind of treatment? Well, what would you expect? They reacted to their persecutors the way any normal persecuted person would, with fear, distrust, loathing, bitterness, resentment, rejection of all things the persecutors tried to impose upon them or demand from them.

That would be my response. What would yours have been? Likely the same. After all, we are only human. How else would you expect any normal person to respond?

Mark it down. The greatest reason for the distrust of Jewish people is due to the unchristian-like treatment they have received from those calling themselves Christians.

It has been so down through the ages and continues to the present time in various degrees, from discrimination to brutal murders. And when Christians today try to apologize to the Jews with, well, it wasn't us.

[5 : 09] It was those stupid, cruel people back then. They understandably turn a deaf ear. Many Jews have learned the hard way over the centuries. Don't trust the Gentiles, the Christians.

There is no way of calculating how many times Jews over centuries have been lied to, betrayed, stabbed in the back, murdered, whatever, by those who had it in for them, whether secretly or openly.

Do Christians today then have the gall to request a thoughtful and considerate hearing of things Christian from the Jews? Or do you think that is an unreasonable expectation?

Yeah, there are probably mixed opinions on that. We Christians should be understanding of Jewish reluctance or even refusal to give us a thoughtful hearing in light of all they have been through at the hands of those professing Christ.

At the same time, we would caution the Jew not to respond with the same kind of misguided attitude that the Christians possessed in their negative treatment of Jews. This, of course, is tantamount to asking the Jews, Can you rise above the negativity and ignorance that motivated Christians in their ill-treatment of Jews?

[6 : 26] That is, indeed, a gargantuan challenge. And it's likely Jews will have mixed opinions on that. But can anyone, then, whether Jew or Christian, be able and willing to break the impasse separating Christians from Jews?

Well, thankfully, some already have. While their differences remain intact as to their beliefs, there has been at least some rapport established over the past few years that simply did not exist before between Christians and Jews.

It is a kind of healthy respect that has emerged whereby each has been willing to at least meet and talk civilly with no attempts of either to demand the conversion of the other.

This is born out of the fact that while we need not respect another's beliefs, we must always respect another's person. So important as this, we'll continue it upcoming.

Historic Forced Conversions Part 1 In a previous segment, reference was made regarding the level of respect Christians should have of other beliefs.

[7 : 34] A distinction needs to be made between our respect for other beliefs versus our respect of other persons, and the difference is huge. Christians have a biblical mandate to be respectful, kind, and courteous to all people, simply because they are a human being made in the image and likeness of God.

However, we are not to have respect toward what we perceive to be false beliefs or teaching, and confuse that with the need to respect the person who believes it.

About that, we need the courage and honesty to say we are not in agreement, and to do it kindly, with grace, but firmness.

A refusal to disagree with someone over a position taken is likely to give the impression of agreement. If the issue is a matter of serious doctrine or some biblical truth, would you want someone to think you were in agreement because you did not speak up?

Of course not. The key here is not only in the position we take, but the attitude or demeanor with which we hold it. Such is not only the way Christians should approach the Jew with the gospel, but it is the way we should approach everyone.

[8 : 50] History records examples of Christians, or at least professing Christians, making demands upon Jewish people to become Christians.

Some were forced under penalty of expulsion from the country for not converting to the Christian faith. King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella required as much from Jews living in Spain in 1492.

Most associate that year with Columbus having discovered America, but it was also the year that Jews were forced to convert to Roman Catholicism or leave Spain and their possessions behind them.

And of course the rationale for those making that demand upon the Jews was, it's for their own good. Threats, intimidation, coercion are all tools that are completely unacceptable to anyone seeking to win the loss to Christ.

When Jesus said we are to make disciples, he did not mean we are to make people or force people to become disciples. The only biblical approach is that we are to invite, implore, ask, persuade, beseech, all our terms that respect the freedom and conscience of people.

[10 : 02] Each person is endowed with a will and is responsible to God for how they use their will. If upon hearing the gospel they choose to reject it, that decision should be respected by the Christian.

We are saddened by it, but we must respect their decision to reject the message. And the fact is, most do reject the gospel, especially upon hearing it the first time. And equally unacceptable is coercion or bribery with any kind of benefit upon believing.

That also is unacceptable. People must be free to accept or reject the gospel. And it is true, there are consequences for rejecting. But those consequences must come from God, not from us as proclaimers of the gospel.

Historic Force Conversions Part 2 Few things are as objectionable as attempting to force someone against their will to embrace a religious belief.

Reference was made to Spain, one of Europe's major powers in the 1400s. King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella were determined to make all of Spain Roman Catholic.

[11 : 14] But there were numbers of Jews and Muslims living in Spain at the time. Forcing these to be baptized into the Catholic Church became standard fare.

And those refusing were banished from Spain. It's ironic that this same year, 1492, was when Spain also underwrote the cost of Columbus and his three ships to embark from Spain and eventually land in America.

This would become a nation that would separate the church from the state, utterly unlike the Spain from which they came. Forced conversions are not new, but neither are they limited to days gone by.

Muslim terrorists in different parts of the world are even today forcing those they dominate to recite the Shahada that effectively makes them Muslim, converting them from whatever they were previously.

In Muslim theology, merely uttering the words, there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet, makes you a bona fide Muslim. What is more, the Quran, their religious authority, encourages making Muslims of whomever you can, however you can, including the approval of putting to death those who refuse.

[12 : 29] This is as evil and as wrong as were the Roman Catholic Spaniards in forcing the Jews and Muslims to convert to Catholicism in the 1400s. And that, by the way, was followed by what came to be known as the Inquisition, no doubt the darkest period in all of Spain's history.

Much of this demand for involuntary forced conversions to whatever faith is being proclaimed has to be done from motives of ignorance and arrogance. And the ignorance is in believing one's beliefs or convictions can be changed merely by an outward declaration.

They fail to realize that nothing has really changed in the inner mind and heart of the supposed new convert. And their reciting a few words from a religious formula does not change anything. There's an old saying that goes like this, A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still.

Outward compliance and uttering a religious phrase may satisfy those who imposed and demanded it, but in reality it changed nothing. There is every likelihood the one forced to state the right words continues to believe what they believed before and after uttering the demanded words.

A genuine conversion to Jesus Christ provides an interchange of mind and heart in the one coming to faith. It does not come from reciting prescribed words or phrases.

[13 : 53] It is the actual will, the volition of the individual that freely commits the person believing to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. And the one committing is doing so not from coercion, fear, intimidation, or bribery, but from the personal desire to do so upon hearing and responding to the gospel with their own free will.

Historic Force Conversions Part 3 Because the good news about the substitutionary death of Christ for our sin is so vital, those who have embraced that truth are charged with telling it to others.

And we are to do so because we know the love of Christ that prompted Him to give His life for us and because we know the true plight of those for whom He died.

They are as we were before we placed our faith in Christ. In a word, lost. And lost means not found. Lost means separated from the only true source of safety, life, and peace.

Lost means to be under the sentence of eternal separation from God. The opposite of lost is found, rescued, delivered, saved.

[15 : 17] Everyone knows and rejoices over a lost child being found and brought to safety. Spiritually speaking, that is exactly what happens when anyone places their faith or confidence, trust, in the person of Jesus Christ who died for our sin.

Doing so results in God's forgiveness through the finished work of Christ in dying and paying for our sin. And this is why the meaning of this is all reduced to one word called gospel.

The term means good news and there never was any good news to equal this good news. It entails forgiveness for our sin, a changed life for the present, and a new destiny of heaven for our future.

can we not see how and why this is called good news? Can you imagine anyone who has experienced this not wanting and not being eager to share it with others?

Such is not only an occasion of great joy as well, but great responsibility. Imagine, if you will, someone who has discovered a bona fide cure for cancer, all kinds of cancer.

[16 : 30] And in your imagination, just suppose taking this prescribed dose of medicine will completely cure any kind of cancer one might have, even for those labeled terminal and under a sentence of death.

And you have that medicine. How could you not share that with every person you could find who is afflicted with cancer? Well, spiritually speaking, we all have cancer, and we are all terminal because of it, and our spiritual cancer is called sin.

Jesus Christ died to provide the antidote or the medicine of salvation and forgiveness for our spiritual disease, and his cure is the only one that works. We would joyfully share that cure with everyone, but would we have the right to force people to take the cure?

Of course not. While it would be extremely foolish for anyone with cancer to refuse the cure, yet we must allow people the freedom to deny the cure even though it would be for their own good to take it.

So where is this all going? What about forcing people to receive the gospel? Is there a verse that teaches that? Well, some thought so, and it provided rationale for forced conversions.

[17 : 52] Explanation is upcoming. Hold on to your hat. Historic Forced Conversions Part 4 In Luke's Gospel, chapter 14, Jesus gives a parable about a great supper being given by a certain man who invited many to attend.

He sent forth his servant with invitations to the banquet, and those invited came up with all kinds of lame excuses for why they were unable to attend. Disappointed, the host then sent his servant to invite everyone, even those we would call the down-and-out ones.

And having done that, the servant came back and said, I invited all those, but there is still room for more. Lots of empty seats remain. And then the host said, Well then go out into the far regions, to the highways and byways, everywhere and anywhere, and compel everyone to attend, that my banquet may be filled.

The word compel in Luke 14 verse 23 means to constrain or to necessitate. During periods of several hundred years there were those representing the Christian faith who saw in that verse justification to force people to accept Christianity via baptism and be admitted to the church whether they wanted to or not.

And this was one reason given for their forcing unbelievers into the faith. In what was but one more faulty assumption, they believed the meaning of compel them to come in to the banquet meant you physically force them to do so.

[19 : 32] After all, it would be for their own good. Such an erroneous interpretation denies the freedom of conscience and of choice to those invited.

It is a clear violation of one's God-granted given volitional power He is made available to us all. As Christians, the extent of compelling people to come to Christ simply means we are to present the gospel in a compelling manner.

That is, we are to set forth the case for the gospel and the need to accept it in a compelling and convincing way. We need to be able to present the gospel in a persuasive manner because we have the facts to back it up.

be assured, please, it has nothing whatever to do with coercing, brow-beating, threatening, or anything of the kind. The truth we present originates with a loving Heavenly Father and His gracious provision of His only begotten Son to pay the penalty for our sin.

It most assuredly must be presented only in a loving, caring manner. We invite, we implore, we entreat, all the while fully recognizing the recipient needs to respond out of willing compliance and personal desire.

[20 : 55] Their will needs to be voluntarily engaged, not forced against their will. Early professing Christians, especially those constituting the Roman Catholic Church of that day, saw themselves justified in forcing people to believe, thinking that such would be pleasing and even demanded by God.

Thus, they would only be doing it for the good of those they were forcing it upon. Scary, isn't it? And it all began with their making faulty assumption and then acting upon it.

Why Jews Suffer Persecution, Part 1 There are multiple reasons for the active ongoing persecution of the Jewish people. The greatest reason of all is unknown to most, including those who are doing the persecuting.

And what would that be? It is due to the instigating and masterminding of none other than God's principal adversary, Satan himself. It is, to say the least, simply amazing that those who are doing the persecuting and the Jews who are being persecuted have little or no appreciation of who is really behind it.

Both parties think it is merely people. And it is people. People inspired and energized by the master deceiver himself, the devil.

[22 : 23] He is so good at what he does, those whom he uses have no idea they are doing his bidding. But they are. The Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 9 addresses eating meat sacrificed to an idol.

The idol the pagans worship and offer sacrifice to is not a god at all, even though those making the sacrifice regard the idol as representing such.

But, says Paul, those they are directing their worship to are actually demons, but not understood to be such by the worshipers. And, said Paul, I do not want you to partake of anything at the table of demons.

And who is behind the activity of demons? None other than Satan, the undisputed lord of the demonic world. As regards the Jew and his being a target of severe persecution, Revelation chapter 12 sheds revealing light.

The woman in question is identified as the nation of Israel. Israel, the twelve stars in the account referring to the twelve tribes of Israel. She is said to bear a male child who is unmistakably Jesus, the Messiah of Israel, who will one day rule the world with a rod of iron.

[23 : 47] His followers, who will then be the nation of Israel, will be persecuted by Satan. Only divine intervention and provision will prevent Satan from utterly destroying this entire surviving remnant of world Jewry.

Please read Revelation chapter 12 and draw your own conclusions as to this end time event. So much for the Jews at the end.

Now, let's flash back to the past and the Jews in Genesis and Exodus and what have we. Jewish persecution from the Egyptians who enslaved them until God raised up Moses to secure their freedom.

And what will you find for the Jew between persecution at the beginning and persecution at their ending from Genesis to Revelation? More of the same. Persecution. And who is behind it all while remaining out of sight?

None other than the age-old adversary of God from the beginning to the end, Satan himself. And those who will not or cannot see this are also among the deceived, a position we should all flee.

[24 : 59] Why Jews Suffer Persecution Part 2 As already demonstrated on past segments of Christianity Clarified, literally everyone, and yes, we all, were responsible for the death of Christ on the cross.

By virtue of our humanity, the entire sins of our fallen world committed by us all required the sacrifice of Christ. But besides us mere mortals, we also noted that God the Father gave His Son, the Son was willing to be given, and laid down His life of His own will, plus He was offered through the Eternal Spirit.

So every human and all of the Trinity were involved in the death Christ died on the cross and the reason for it. Well, why then have the Jewish people been singled out as the murderers of Christ?

Two reasons come to mind. First, it was the Jewish religious establishment that began the process that led to Christ's crucifixion. They were the ones who conspired with Judas, an apostle of Christ, to betray His Lord.

But while the Jews were far from alone in being responsible for Christ's death, they are often treated as though that were the case. And why so? Here again, those faulty assumptions rear their ugly head.

[26 : 23] All that was required early on was for Gentiles, that is, non-Jewish people, mainly professing Christians, to begin focusing on the involvement of the Jews that led to the crucifixion of Christ and they soon saw Jews alone as responsible.

Well, who then but Jews should be punished for the death of Jesus? And they were. And in the minds of many today, they still are.

Can you not see how deeply embedded faulty assumptions can be? Two thousand years later, the faulty assumptions that branded the Jews alone for the death of Jesus remain live and well on planet Earth.

Faulty assumptions become accepted as fact, they take on a life of their own and proliferated generation after generation, providing a seemingly logical rationale for persecuting the Jews and make them pay.

It's fueled by ignorance and arrogance of the persecutors, but only partly, because another major agitator in ongoing Jewish persecution is God's chief adversary, Satan.

[27 : 32] To thwart the plan and program of God, Satan sets his sights on the Jewish people because he knows how God, by covenant promise, obligated himself to use the Jewish people corporately and Jesus the Messiah personally to establish the kingdom of God on Earth.

Hence, every opportunity to derail that commitment by getting at Israel or Israel's Messiah, Satan jumps at. His fingerprints are all over so many atrocities and persecutions of the Jews from the Egyptians in Exodus to 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 that refers to the Antichrist as the lawless one whose coming is according to the working of Satan with all power, signs, and lying wonders and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish.

Satan is, has been, and will be alive and well on planet Earth. Still, his doom is sealed. God will fulfill all he has promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Why Jews Suffer Persecution, Part 3 Following the resurrection and ascension of Christ, many Jews had come to believe Jesus really was the Son of God and the Messiah who had been promised to Israel, largely due to Christ's miracles and the preaching efforts of the Twelve Apostles.

But these would soon receive great opposition from their fellow Jewish countrymen, those who remained convinced Jesus was not the Messiah. And can you not see the good faith and good intentions on the part of both?

[29 : 08] As early as Acts chapter 4, the ruling Jewish establishment began a policy of persecution toward their own fellow countrymen who embraced and proclaimed Jesus and His resurrection.

The Twelve Apostles of Jesus would bear the brunt of it. And while there were thousands of Jews who did commit to Jesus and His Messiahship, as referenced at Pentecost in Acts chapter 2, they still constituted but a tiny percentage of the Jews in Israel.

Hitting up the persecution efforts of those fellow Israelites was Saul, a Pharisee who hailed from the city of Tarsus. Saul, as well as the ruling establishment, saw Jews who preached Jesus and His resurrection to be nothing more than a dangerous cancer growing on Judaism that needed to be stamped out.

And so zealous was he of his conviction, Saul obtained official authorization from the chief priest in Jerusalem to journey over a hundred miles to the north where fellow Jews had fled persecution from Jerusalem and had taken refuge.

While en route, the famous Damascus Road event would take place. Saul, up to that time, had been persecutor in chief of his fellow Jews, but soon he would become proclaimer in chief.

[30 : 35] And while all this conflict and controversy continued, it was confined to Jews alone with no recorded involvement of Gentiles at all. It's critical to understand that for eight to ten years after Christ's resurrection, those who came to faith in Him were Jewish exclusively.

This means up until the tenth chapter of the book of Acts, everything was Jewish. In fact, the term Christian had not yet even surfaced.

Christians since, however, in good faith and in their zeal for Christ, have still attempted to Christianize everything beginning from the day of Pentecost, but they do so at the expense of historical accuracy.

While the 28 chapters of Acts occupies 30 years in real time, the first ten or so of those 30 years were Jewish, Jewish, Jewish.

Ignoring the progressive development of doctrine in the book of Acts alone has led to major differences and doctrinal confusion in the Christian church for both Roman Catholic and Protestant adherents as well.

[31 : 47] Their rush to Christianize everything and remove it from its Jewish roots prematurely has produced great confusion, and it's a subject to be dealt with more fully in later releases of Christianity Clarified, most enlightening.

An Ancient Dilemma of the Jews There is a dramatic historic event with which all Jews, familiar with their own Bible, know very well.

It centers on the prophet Elijah and his encounter with the false prophets of Baal, the pagan deity the Jews were worshiping in Elijah's day. It's in 1 Kings 18, and by all accounts, a spectacular showdown was in the making.

It all centered upon the issue of who the true God of Israel really was. Was it he who led Moses and the Israelites out of Egypt, cared for them in the wilderness, and brought them into the land of Canaan?

Or was it Baal, whom the people worshipped when Elijah confronted them? Elijah's famous challenge to the people of Israel was as clear as could be, and so were the stakes.

[32 : 59] He addressed the mass of Israelites gathered together by saying, How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him. But if Baal, follow him.

And what was the response of the people to Elijah's question? The text says the people answered him not a word. Why do you suppose they gave him no answer?

It appears they had no answer to give. They were indecisive. They gave no answer because they were unsure as to what the truth really was, and their silence seemed to confirm that.

It was clear they needed convincing evidence establishing beyond any doubt that Elijah's God was the true God of Israel, and Elijah was going to give it to them.

After hours of the priests of Baal calling upon their non-existent God Baal, it then became time for the God of Israel to show himself in answer to the call of Elijah.

[34 : 02] The fire God sent from heaven completely burned up the sacrifice drenched with water, as well as all the water that filled the trench around the sacrifice. No longer could the people be indecisive and halt between two opinions.

The God of Elijah and of Israel won the day hands down. Upon the incontrovertible evidence, the crowd, indecisive before, now let it be known they had made up their minds.

No longer could they halt between two opinions. Now they could only exclaim, The Lord, He is God. The Lord, He is God. Israel's God and His servant Elijah were vindicated.

The evidence was undeniable. They believed because they really had no choice. The proof was incontrovertible. And their response of the people, The Lord, He is God.

The Lord, He is God, proved it. So, what was the determining issue? Well, it was all about the evidence. And there simply was no denying the evidence and miraculous demonstrations seen in the power of God right before their very eyes.

[35 : 18] But, is there such a thing as embracing a conclusion resulting from a matter not seen with one's own eyes? Must all claims be verified only by seeing for oneself?

Or, is there another item of evidence leading to a firm conclusion? There is, and it is just ahead. An Ancient Dilemma of Jews, Part 2 When establishing the validity of an issue in question, there is perhaps no more compelling evidence than that offered by an eyewitness.

Such is even more so the case when there are multiple eyewitnesses attesting to the same matter. That contest between Elijah and the prophets of Baal in the preceding session enjoyed a host of eyewitnesses.

The question now being posed is whether actual eyewitness is the only way a thing can be established as fact? And we must answer, certainly not.

How many of us currently accept as fact an event that occurred years ago that we did not personally witness? Yet, we believe it still. Because we did not personally witness a matter does not mean no one witnessed it.

[36 : 36] Many may have. And the question then becomes, were those who claim to have witnessed an event credible witnesses? How many were there? Do their accounts agree, or are they contradictory?

Did they have motives for lying? Do those making the claim of being eyewitnesses have a reputation for being untruthful? We can easily see how all these issues come into play when a courtroom scene is convened and the testimony of witnesses becomes crucial.

The same consideration is applied to all historical accounts of many past events that no one today saw as personal eyewitnesses. The claim that Jesus Christ rose from the dead three days after being crucified and buried is perhaps the most historical controversial issue of all time.

While the vast majority of Jewish people do not accept the resurrection of Christ as actually having occurred, its claim as such has been attested to by multiple eyewitnesses.

And it is no small matter that the very first ones to deny Jesus had risen from the dead were his own chosen apostles. And it was only after seeing and actually physically touching him would they then be persuaded.

[38 : 00] In fact, it was only due to this utterly undeniable experience with their own eyes and hands that would actually motivate his disciples to die rather than deny that truth that Christ, their Messiah, had indeed risen from the dead.

To silence them, all the opposition needed to do was present the dead body of Jesus of Nazareth and the cause of Christ and Christianity would have stopped in its tracks.

But that dead body was not available. He had risen. He appeared first to the women who came to the tomb to complete the job of preparing the dead body of Jesus with their spices and customary perfumery.

But the body did not stay dead. And as the angel asked, Why seek ye the dead among the living? He is not here, for he is risen. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

It is this reality coupled with his death on the cross that remained a seminal event of the universe. And more is just ahead. A Modern Dilemma of Jews, Part 1 There is only one question that looms very large involving the resurrection account given of Jesus of Nazareth, and you have likely guessed it.

[39 : 25] Was it true or not? Was it tied to the most far-reaching, important event ever to occur in the annals of human history, namely, the substitutionary death of Christ on the cross?

Or, was it simply a well-conceived giant hoax? Those who accepted the truth of it because they saw the risen Christ with their own eyes and handled him with their own hands, were convinced beyond any possible doubt.

In fact, so convinced were they, they were willing to lay down their lives for this risen Christ. Why? Because they knew what they knew to be true.

There have been many who were willing to die for a cause they believed in, whether an issue of religious or political significance. But do we know of anyone who was willing to die for what they knew to be a lie?

Those denying and opposing the claim of Christ's resurrection were on the horns of a dilemma. They either had to admit its truthfulness or prove it false.

[40 : 35] Refusing to do the former and unable to do the latter, their only recourse was to contrive an explanation for that empty tomb. The Apostle Matthew tells us in chapter 28 how the chief priests and elders bribed the soldiers assigned to guard the tomb and the explanation the guards were to give was that the disciples of Jesus came and stole his body away while they slept.

But one can only wonder if such were the case, how would the soldiers know that if they were sleeping through the whole thing? It is a study in futility to try and make a lie to be more believable than the truth.

Many attempted about many things but eventually the truth will out. Matthew tells us the soldiers took the money and did as they were told and this saying, that is, this explanation is commonly reported among the Jews to this day.

And by the term this day, Matthew obviously meant as of the time he was writing the account. Yet it still holds true in this 21st century. The claim that the disciples stole away the body of Jesus while the soldiers slept remains the most satisfying explanation among Jews to this day.

But the question still looms large. Is it true? Among many Jews who believed the official explanation about the disappearance of the body of Jesus and the claim about the disciples stealing it was one Jew in particular who was undoubtedly convinced of that official explanation.

[42 : 15] His name was Saul, Saul of Tarsus and perhaps no one was so thoroughly persuaded as he and no one was so thoroughly wrong as he and no one would experience such a radical reversal as he.

All, as always, based upon his actual encounter with the risen Christ who spoke to Saul from heaven while he was en route to Damascus. It's in Acts chapter 9.

A Dilemma of Modern Jews Part 2 No one familiar with even a superficial knowledge of history can deny the utter uniqueness of the Jewish people, both ancient and modern.

No people like them and no nation like Israel has ever existed. And perhaps this uniqueness in itself has spawned some resentment and jealousy on the part of some.

How can it possibly be explained that while comprising less than two-tenths of one percent of the world's human population, the Jew has realized a disproportionate influence and impact upon the world at large?

[43 : 26] And couple that with the reality that numerous enemies have sought to eliminate them as a people and a nation and this opposition continues to the present. Still, Israel continues to thrive as a sovereign nation despite multiple hostilities directed against them.

But in reality, what else could be expected in view of the promises and status given to Israel by God Himself? While many, especially those who are anti-Semitic, find the very idea of the Jew being God's chosen people an abhorrent thought, obviously the Bible disagrees.

But that they are precisely that the Scriptures assert time and again. Such references, beginning in Genesis 12, extending into the New Testament, which the Jews, by the way, do not even accept, the strategic position of Israel is undeniable.

Ironically, this divine chosenness made so clear in the Scriptures has become increasingly hard for even the Jews themselves to accept because, for centuries, Jewish people have been puzzled as to how they could be so subjected to persecution while at the same time they are supposedly under the care of a watchful and all-powerful God.

Many of the Jews find that to be inexplicable. In fact, considerable numbers of Jewish people have gone so far as to embrace atheism, being unable to correlate God's supposed care with the treatment they've actually received.

[44 : 59] In fact, it was the Holocaust of World War II that led many Jews to conclude there could be no all-powerful God who could possibly allow those atrocities for God's supposedly chosen people to occur.

And not only Jews, but numbers of Gentiles also concluded that the Holocaust was in their minds confirming evidence that the Jews no longer enjoyed the divine position of chosenness.

However, those whose only source for an explanation of the Bible do not find it at all inexplicable. Bible students, in fact, find it quite in keeping with what the Bible teaches from both the Old and New Testaments as noted in previous segments of Christianity Clarified.

The Holocaust reality helped fuel the fires of replacement theology, that is, the idea that God has permanently replaced the Jews with Christians who are now the new chosen people.

And even though this is not true, it does still occupy the majority position throughout most of Christendom, including both Roman Catholic and Protestant.

[46 : 12] A Dilemma of Modern Jews, Part 3. A dilemma is dictionary described as having to make a choice between two options that one does not want to make.

It is an either-or situation that involves discomfort no matter which of the two choices is made. Such is the dilemma.

And such is the dilemma of the modern Jew. As mentioned on a previous segment of Christianity of Christianity Clarified, many Jews have opted for atheism over theism.

Now, that could not have been easily done. For, to a Jew, to turn one's back on centuries, even millennia, of your own history and forefathers, with all the rich heritage that entails, had to be a very painful proposition.

Yet, many Jews have done just that in response to what God allowed His supposedly chosen people to undergo, particularly with the Holocaust of World War II.

[47 : 24] To those Jews who have embraced atheism, and those who continue to do so day by day, both in and outside the land of Israel, they felt that simple logic demanded they do so.

To them, believing that a loving, all-powerful God who supposedly chose the Jew, giving them special information, privileges, and blessing, and then not protect them from the horrors of the Holocaust, was simply beyond credulity.

That just could not be. Therefore, this God could not be. Atheism, to some, became the only sane, logical conclusion.

a Jew could reach. And by the way, you can add to that the rationale many non-Jews or Gentiles have used to justify replacement theology.

That's the belief that the Jew was originally God's chosen people, but now God is through with them. The Jewish people have been replaced by Christians who have become the new chosen people of God, and the Jew is out permanently.

[48 : 42] They base that false idea partly on the historical persecution of the Jew culminating in the Holocaust, and to them, the Holocaust is proof positive that God has abandoned the Jewish people, while to many Jews it is proof positive there is no God.

So a previously asked question several sessions ago needs to be asked again to both Jews and Gentiles, and here it is. If what you now believe about these issues is not true, would you want to know it?

This is a test of one's intellectual integrity, and our intellectual integrity must often compete with our emotional biases and the way things appear to be versus the way things really are.

And further pursuit of this lies just ahead. Sincerely Open for Truth Part 1 Continuing with the provocative question asked in the previous session, we plow ahead with its implications, and the question was, and is, if what you now believe is not true, would you want to know it?

If your answer is, yes, of course I would, then your intellectual integrity is in place. Good for you. You are saying, at least at this point, that you are willing to follow the evidence wherever it leads.

[50 : 13] But if you answer, no, if what you now believe is not true, you would not want to know it, then one of two things is true about you. First, you are saying the whole question is nonsense because there is no possible way you could be wrong about what you now believe.

Or second, you are saying, even if what you now believe is wrong, you do not want to know it because you are comfortable with what you now believe, even if it is wrong, so you have no desire to rock the boat.

Just leave me alone and don't be confusing me about evidence and facts because if I am wrong in what I now believe, I can live with it, okay? Well, if that is the choice one wishes to make, there is the freedom to do that, foolish as it sounds.

It is an attitude quite opposite of that recorded in John chapter 5 about the man physically paralyzed for 38 years because when Jesus asked him if he wished to be made whole, can you imagine that man saying, well, no, really, I have lived this way as a paralytic for 38 years and I have gotten used to it, so thanks just the same, Jesus, for your willingness to make me well, but I am comfortable with my paralysis, so thanks but no thanks.

Of course, he didn't say that. He was profoundly grateful for the healing Christ would provide. Still, for those few who are so dug in, they won't consider even the possibility of being wrong.

[51 : 48] The Apostle Paul addressed them in 1 Corinthians 14 by saying, he who would be ignorant, let him be ignorant still. Well, not much can be done with minds that are not merely closed but bolted shut, and even so, God's offer to reveal truth to those who change their mind and honestly become available for truth He will see to it that they get it.

How wonderful is that! Just the knowledge that God will not bypass sincere seekers of truth is indeed comforting. The challenge is to all who are now listening.

Are we willing to prayerfully say we really want the truth of God on these matters, whether it agrees with our current position or not? That's a big item!

and just as important as it is big. So whether as a Gentile or a Jew, can you pray telling God you want to know the truth about these great issues, and you are willing for Him to reveal it to you?

However could you possibly go wrong with a prayer like that? Why? That's worth praying daily! Sincerely Open for Truth Part 2 The key, quite obviously, in our prayer for truth is in the word, sincerely.

[53 : 20] God knows our heart, and He is fully aware whether such a prayer for truth is genuine. We humans can fool each other and sometimes even fool ourselves, but we can't fool God.

He knows us and the thoughts of our hearts like an open book. And this means God also knows our motivation behind a prayer for truth. If the prayer is genuine, our quest for God to reveal His truth to us about anything must be because we intend to act upon the truth He reveals.

But if not, don't bother asking God to disclose truth to you. Because the Almighty is not interested in revealing truth so we can decide whether we want to be obedient to it.

God does not impart His truth about anything to satisfy our curiosity, but to elicit our obedience. And this is precisely why many people do not have truth regarding a host of issues.

It's because God knows they have no intention of accepting and acting on it positively anyway. So for God to reveal His truth to people like that, whether they are Jews or Gentiles, would be for Him to cast His proverbial pearls before swine.

[54 : 33] And God isn't interested in doing that. In John chapter 7, the Jewish countrymen of Jesus were questioning whether what He taught was from God or whether He simply contrived it on His own.

To which Jesus replied, My teaching is not mine, but His who sent me. If any man is willing to do God's will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from myself.

And in the audience, there were doubtless both kinds, those willing and eager to know and do God's will, and those not. But, said Jesus, those willing to do His will will know, because God will reveal it to them.

The key word in this encounter is willing. If any man is willing to do God's will, he shall know of the teaching and its true source.

Well, how shall he know? God will reveal it to him, says Jesus. And how will God do that? Well, He doesn't tell us that. He just tells us God will reveal it to him.

[55 : 43] He does have His ways, you know. God's creativity and how He wants to do anything is simply inexhaustible. And we need not concern ourselves about how He will get His truth to us and enable us to recognize it as such, only that He will.

But we do need to concern ourselves whether our will to receive it and do it is serious and from the heart. Because if not, as said earlier, don't bother.

Those willing to do God's will are they who have placed themselves in the best possible position to receive the truth of God. They are in a win-win situation because God is not only honored, but the seeker stands to benefit immeasurably.

And we all need to take inventory and see where we are with this issue because so very much hinges upon it. Sincerely Open for Truth, Part 3 There is something that is much harder to do than learn new truth.

It is to unlearn the old. And notice, it was not said to unlearn the old truth, but merely to unlearn. This is because unlearning is not concerned with discarding truth.

[57 : 05] It is concerned with what we earlier considered to be truth, but discovered it wasn't. It was error. And once we are convinced we believe something untrue, we ought to speedily rid ourselves of it.

This principle applies to all areas of life, not merely to spiritual or doctrinal. No one with intellectual integrity can justify continuing to embrace what is discovered to be error.

Truth, on the other hand, contains its own built-in demand for acceptance and commitment. Error certainly does not. Proverbs 23.23 says, Buy the truth and sell it not.

That means we should be willing to pay the price for obtaining truth, but should also be unwilling to give it up at any price. That's how priceless truth is.

It appears very much related to the renewing of the mind concept stated in Romans chapter 12. And by it, we are told we avoid being conformed to this world by the renewing of our mind.

[58 : 16] And how is our mind renewed? It's by replacing old error with new truth. Actually, the truth is not new at all, but it is new to the one hearing it and using it to replace what they earlier thought to be true, but wasn't.

All believers engage this process, and it began at the point of our salvation. When you first heard the gospel, it probably collided with what you were already believing. This new truth of salvation by grace contradicted what you believed about yourself, about God, about Christ, and about his substitutionary death on your behalf.

And if you were like most of us, you were thinking about salvation in terms of your performance and your good intentions hopefully being acceptable to God. And the truth of the gospel of God's grace extended to you as a gift was a completely new truth to you and probably created tension in your mind.

You discovered that what you previously believed was not true at all, even though you thought it was. Now what? Now you ask yourself, how can I continue to hold to something the Bible and the gospel of Christ reveals to be untrue?

I need to change my mind. I need to release what I thought to be true, discard it for the error it is, and embrace what the gospel of salvation says is really true about me, God, Christ, and his death for me.

[59 : 49] This the Bible calls repentance. It is a changing of the mind. Let's all get used to it, because we never outgrow our need for repentance, even as Christians.

The need for renewing the mind with new truth that displaces old air is ongoing. It is a vital part of spiritual growth.

The meaning of repentance. Ordinarily, repentance is thought of in connection with salvation.

And it has been said that no one is saved by merely repenting, but no one can be saved without it. Well, whatever does that mean? This is an important concept Christianity Clarified seeks to explain.

The word repent from the original Greek of the New Testament is a compound word metanoia. Meta, the first part of the word, simply means through.

[60 : 52] Meta is part of the word metastasize. In reference to a cancerous tumor, a physician may say the cancer has or has not metastasized, meaning it has or has not gone through and spread to other areas.

It's also used in the words like metabolic and metaphor. And in all cases, meta means through. The second part of the word metanoia is noia.

This is the Greek word for mind. And put together, metanoia literally means through the mind. That is, when we repent, we do something mentally.

We process information. We evaluate the data. We mentally weigh the new information against the old we already have lodged in our mind.

And we reach a conclusion. Which is true. One contradicts the other. This new content containing the gospel is contrary to what you've always believed.

[62 : 07] But they can't both be true because they are contradictory. So if you choose to dismiss your previously held position to embrace the new content, you have changed your mind.

That is repentance. If you do not change your mind because you cling to the old position and reject the new information, then you are unrepentant.

You have not changed your mind. So please understand, even though the word repent is generally used in a religious setting, it is not at all confined to that.

Repentance is a word that refers to the changing of the mind about anything. It involves the reversal about a position previously held regarding anything.

And the reason for the reversal is the discovery that you were wrong about the position you previously held. And you now reverse yourself by rejecting that position and embracing the new information.

[63 : 13] That is repentance. Before hearing the gospel of Christ, you believe something else, whatever it was. But now upon hearing the gospel, you reject that in favor of this new position called salvation by the grace of God through Christ alone.

That is repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. But how then can repenting still not result in salvation?

And that's next. Please bring your best brain to the next session. It's important that we understand this. Repenting precedes believing.

A very telling passage that incorporates both repentance and faith is expressed by the Apostle Paul in his farewell address to the Ephesian elders.

It's in Acts chapter 20, where he includes the pair of essentials he preached everywhere he went and reminded the elders by saying that he testified to Jews and also to Greeks repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

[64 : 24] The preceding session defined the word repent as literally meaning change the mind. No one can come to Christ without doing this because they were previously outside of Christ and his salvation prior to hearing and believing the gospel.

At that time, they already possessed erroneous ideas about themselves, God, Christ, and salvation. And they were all wrong, as is the case of all unbelievers.

Then, upon hearing the gospel of the grace of God and the salvation available through the finished work of Christ, they became aware the things they previously believed were wrong.

Hence, they need to change their mind. They needed to dismiss from their mind the erroneous ideas they had prior to hearing the gospel.

That is repentance. It always involves hearing information that tells us what we thought was true, believed to be true, was not true at all.

[65 : 32] So, about that issue, we need to change our mind. This is why it is said, no one can be saved without repenting, because everyone has some wrong idea or no idea at all about salvation prior to hearing the truth of the gospel.

And then, upon hearing it and realizing they were wrong about what they had believed, they reject that belief and believe the truth contained in the gospel.

Also, repentance is not confined to the truth of salvation, but applies to any situation where one discovers they were wrong about something, and upon hearing information that corrects them, they reverse themselves, discarding their previous beliefs for the new belief.

That's repentance. And it pertains to anything previously believed to be true, but discovered to be untrue due to new information received.

Realize, then, if you will, the preaching of the gospel is literally imparting information to people that gives them a reason and a necessity for changing their minds.

[66 : 42] That's evangelism. And the changing of the mind is the first of two volitional acts to be undertaken in order for one to receive forgiveness and salvation from God. The Apostle Paul put them together because they belong together.

One, repentance toward God, and two, faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. But what if one repents, that is, changes their mind about what constitutes salvation, but does not exercise faith toward Christ?

Have they received salvation? No, they have not. This is why we say no one can be saved without repenting. But repenting alone does not save.

Only half the transaction is in place. Missing is part two, which needs clarifying, and it will be upcoming. Believing Follows Repenting The Apostle Paul expressed the essence of his preaching when addressing the Ephesian elders in Acts chapter 20.

He stated he had always proclaimed to Jews and Greeks repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. He appeared intent on including both, repentance and faith.

[67 : 55] So, as regards repentance, which means to change your mind because new information you have received compelled you to do so, then is it possible to become convinced your good deeds or intention will not save you and that Christ alone in his death on your behalf is the only thing that will save you?

Does coming to an agreement on that, that is, changing your mind to now believe that, has that saved you? No, not at all.

It is the first step of two. Remember, repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Step two is missing.

But Paul didn't leave it out. The reason he didn't is because it is critical. There are many people who have heard the gospel of the grace of God and agree with it.

They agree they cannot save themselves and only Christ can save them and will save them if they place their faith and trust in him. But this they refuse to do.

[69 : 09] They have repented. They have changed their mind. And they are in agreement with the gospel of God's grace. But they have not put their faith in Christ because they refuse to do so.

Oh, they know they can and they know they should. They just haven't done it. They do not have a lack of knowledge. They have a lack of will.

Paul opens and closes the letter to the Romans speaking about the obedience of faith and how it was the very core of his calling to bring Gentiles to the obedience of faith through the preaching of the gospel.

Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ means far more than merely believing there was and is such a person as Christ. To believe on Christ is not the same as merely believing in his existence, though the terms are often used interchangeably.

But to believe on Christ to the salvation of one's soul involves an entrustment, a commitment, an act of the will, a deliberate decision one makes willfully and intentionally.

[70 : 17] This is the second part of repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Hence, one may repent, which is absolutely necessary, but it must be followed with faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

And many times, both of these are nearly simultaneous and appear almost inseparable. Often, both acts, repentance and faith, are nearly inseparable, as is often evidenced at an evangelistic service where the gospel is preached, people repent and follow with an immediate personal decision of commitment.

Such is repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. the most dynamic spiritual duo ever, and it comes with eternal significance.

You've just heard another session of Christianity Clarified with Marv Wiseman. Preview of upcoming volume 51.

That intensely provocative and sometimes downright troubling question that was asked on the previous volume of Christianity Clarified will surface again in the 51st volume upcoming.

[71 : 43] And what was that question? Here it is. If what you now believe about God and His Son, Jesus Christ, is not true, would you want to know it?

And coupled with that is the also troubling question, if what you now believe about the Jew, the nation of Israel, and the claim of some that the Old Testament promises God gave to Israel have been withdrawn from them and are now to be fulfilled in the Christian church instead, if that is untrue, would you want to know that?

The first troubling question pertains to any Jewish people who may be hearing Christianity Clarified. And the second troubling question pertains to any embracing the concept of replacement theology, or supersessionism, as it is sometimes called.

This is the idea that Israel, as God's original chosen people, have been permanently dismissed by God and superseded by the Christian church.

The first issue about God and His Son, Jesus Christ, is particularly relevant to those who are Jewish. It's hard to know whether there are any Jewish people even hearing this content.

[73 : 08] Many, probably most Jews, would understandably have little or no interest in what is said here, simply because of the title, Christianity Clarified.

Also, should any Jews be willing to give us a hearing, they will discover content and positions taken that are a far cry from what is generally called Christianity.

In fact, Christianity Clarified is persuaded that biblical Christianity is and has been so poorly defined and explained, leading to gross misunderstandings through the centuries.

We just are attempting to do our small part to address that misunderstanding. So, Christianity Clarified was undertaken, and we've just completed the 1,000th brief segment since its inception.

Upcoming on Volume 51, the Faulty Assumption theme will be resumed where we will focus on Judaism and where the Jewish people made faulty assumptions about their own scriptures, the Old Testament, which they call the Tanakh, which consists of the law, the writings, and the prophets.

[74 : 29] And then to follow will be the faulty assumptions made by the Roman Catholic Church and how they, in good faith, led to their positions held by Rome that also paved the way for anti-Semitism.

And lastly, and not to be overlooked, are the faulty assumptions also embraced by Protestants that have led to anti-Semitism and the plethora of denominations, synods, conferences, to say nothing of the myriad of cults, isms, splits, and splinters, embracing very unusual doctrinal conclusions.

And just how did all these utterly divergent groups arrive at such disparate convictions? It's all because of faulty assumptions made in good faith.

And this is precisely why several volumes of Christianity Clarified were earlier devoted in considerable detail to the numerous principles of hermeneutics.

Had each of the aforementioned groups had the advantage of those hermeneutical principles explained and illustrated, so very much of the things that now divide us could have been avoided.

[75 : 53] And at the same time, honesty compels us to admit that had we today been in their position when and where they were, we likely would have fared no better than they.

Even with their faulty assumptions that led them to wrong conclusions, that led them to different doctrinal positions, we yet remain deeply indebted to many of them for the good conclusions they did reach regarding many issues.

And today, as opposed to what they had to do without, we are blessed with a completed canon of Scripture, and early believers did not have the advantage of that.

Plus, we have the massive amounts of literature by way of commentaries and theological contributions by some of the most astute and godly individuals who ever lived.

So, by sheer virtue of time and content, we certainly ought to fare better than they in the conclusions we reach, because they, in large part, were stepping stones for us.

[77 : 04] Hence, we today, here at Christianity Clarified, we have nothing whereby we can boast, but we certainly do have reason for great gratitude to God and to so many of His choice servants of yesteryear.

So, this is where we are going if you care to come along. Count on it being stimulating, somewhat controversial, and we trust exceedingly enlightening.

Love to have you join us. This is Pastor Marv Wiseman on behalf of the good folks at Grace Bible Church in Springfield, Ohio, who make these broadcasts possible, and where it has been my privilege to serve as their pastor for nearly 50 years and counting.

Our webpage is at gracebiblespringfield.com. If you wish to see what's available there, you're welcome to join us.

So, thanks so much for being one of our ongoing explorers of God's Word together. May the Lord richly bless you. God bless you.