

Christianity Clarified Volume 27

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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.

The kind of book the Bible is. As the claim is often made, and we have asserted frequently, the Bible is the divine book. It is the only literary document bearing the stamp of divinity.

It is the singular book constituting the entirety of God's written revelation to man. This, in itself, accounts for its authority, as well as for its exclusivity.

In the same sense that there is no other God, neither is there any other revelation written that is of God. Likewise, it accounts for the Bible's adequacy in all it discloses.

If God is the originator of the Bible, it cannot be found wanting in any respect. Divine authorship also accounts for the Bible's intelligibility, which simply means it is capable of being understood.

[1 : 0 9] It is a book of disclosure. And since God has provided the Bible to reveal truth about himself and his creation to man the creature, it is unthinkable that it not do this.

And it indeed does do this. It is a document of enlightenment. We are told, The entrance of thy words giveth light in Psalm 119.

It also explains the enduring nature of God's word when Christ stated, Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away, saith the Lord. Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21.

Likewise, Peter, in the first chapter of his first letter, exclaims, The word of God lives and abides forever. In addition then to his assertion that it is through the word of God that we are born again.

Apostle Paul echoes this sentiment when stating in Romans 10 and reminds us that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. The Bible is a book of progressive revelation in that God and history are on the move by way of more and more revelation in his dealings with man as you work your way through the Bible.

[2 : 2 3] Lastly, the Bible is the complete and final written revelation of God to be believed and embraced. There is no additional written revelation forthcoming.

We are reminded again by the psalmist in 119 that forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven. So, summing up, the Bible is the divine book bearing the authority of God himself.

It is an exclusive book claiming the singularity of revelation from God. The Bible is an adequate book in all it provides. The Bible is an intelligible book fully intended to be understood.

The Bible is the only word that results in the impartation of eternal life to those who heed its message. The Bible is eternal in its endurance, and the Bible progressively reveals the God who is behind it.

Lastly, the Bible is the completed and final revelation of the one true God. Such a book is the Bible we have. The divine book.

[3 : 29] It is exclusive, enlightening, adequate, enduring, life-giving, progressive, complete, and final. Such a book is the Bible we have. The Bible is not such a book man could write if he would, nor would write if he could.

The Necessity of Hermeneutics Unfortunately, hermeneutics, which is the art and science of interpreting the Bible, is a subject many Christians see as optional.

Worse still, some see it as simply unnecessary altogether. Their view is that one need only read the Bible, and by some mysterious process its meaning will miraculously come to light.

Such is naive and nonsensical. Our position is that the subject of hermeneutics is not optional, but critical, and for at least two very good reasons.

First, simply because the Bible is God's word, we should utilize every means possible to honor it by understanding it correctly. Anyone who is able to read can read the Bible and readily see what it says.

[4 : 43] But such is merely an elemental exercise. One must not stop with just reading the Bible. Yes, of course it is better to read it than not to read it.

But the real and intended benefit comes from not only reading the Bible, but from understanding what has been read. This transfers the words that are written into their intended meaning.

And it is only by correctly understanding what is written that we are able to follow through with action. Our doing must be preceded by our understanding.

For the serious-minded believer who is intent on honoring the Lord, we are to come to the Scriptures to ascertain their meaning, so we can respond with obedience to what we have read.

And this, in turn, will result in spiritual growth and development in the life of the believer. Secondly, our belief system, our personal doctrinal statement as to what we believe to be our faith and practice, will be determined by what we believe the Scriptures teach.

[5 : 48] And here is where hermeneutics becomes critical. One cannot get to the truth of what God's word is saying without traveling through the tunnel of hermeneutics.

In fact, it is safe to say that anyone reading the Bible and attempting to understand what is being read is already utilizing some aspect of hermeneutics, even though he may not realize it, and even though he may never have heard the term hermeneutics.

Asking ourselves the question as we read the Bible, like, Is this something I should be doing or believing, as the verse says? Or was this written for another people at another time?

How am I to know? Or is the writer speaking literally here and should be taken at face value? Or is this a usage of figurative language never intended to be taken literally?

These are all legitimate questions that are addressed by hermeneutics and its principles. Engaging this discipline, as we intend to do on upcoming sessions of Christianity Clarified, will prove profoundly rewarding and exciting beyond what you might even imagine.

[7 : 00] I can promise you I found it to be so for me 60 years ago, and it still is just as rewarding today.

You'll see what I mean as we go along. Hermeneutics is a critical discipline. There's nothing optional about it. The Cost of Ignoring Hermeneutics For many years we have lamented the disunity in the Christian Church.

There are so many denominational differences and positions that seriously divide and weaken what could be, and should be, a more united front to present before a watching world.

Do you realize that prior to about 500 years ago, not really very long at all in human history, almost none of what we know today as denominations even existed?

Where did all these come from, and why and how did they emerge? Good questions all. Think of it if you can. No Methodists, no Baptists, no Presbyterians, Nazarenes, churches of God, no Episcopal, Lutherans, Reformed, no Pentecostals, Moravians, Mennonites, or Quakers.

[8 : 12] This is because, prior to their existence, the only religious body labeled Christian was realized in the Roman Catholic Church. Of course, there were other groups of believers not a part of the Catholic Church, but they realized little recognition and were certainly not major players on the world scene of religion.

And when once the break from Rome occurred, as led by the Wycliffs, Tyndales, Luthers, Knox, and others, all of whom, by the way, were once ordained clergy of the Roman Catholic Church, it started a literal hemorrhage of dissidents who came to be known generally as Protesters, or Protestants, that we now pronounce as Protestant.

And as these who became Protestant began establishing their identity and developing their doctrinal positions, a great variety of emphases and distinctives arose. Some brought the doctrines they had embraced in their former existence of Catholics, such as infant baptism, sacraments, elements involving communion and such, along with them, and built them into their newly found bodies of Protestantism.

One thing they all had in common is that each insisted their position on the various doctrines were the right ones, and it was all the others who took different positions who were wrong. But on what did all of them base their doctrinal positions?

They based them all on what they believed the Bible to teach about those doctrines. And there is no question that they were sincere in their efforts. But how and why did they reach such different conclusions while reading from the same Bible?

[9 : 48] It was all in how the pertinent passages were interpreted by the shakers and movers in each of those fledgling denominations. And how one interprets a Bible and forms one's doctrinal conclusions and positions is inseparably linked to the issue of, you guessed it, hermeneutics.

That's right. We are saying the doctrinal divisions that separate the churches of Christendom are all a result of how they interpreted various passages of Scripture, which ultimately would determine their doctrinal statement of faith.

Thus, they effectively separated themselves from other Protestant groups that also interpreted the Scriptures differently, that caused them to formulate their positions.

And this is the origin of multiple denominations, all within the past 500 years. And today, as a consequence, we have enormous disunity among these churches, and the world is wondering why we have all of our differences when we read the same Bible.

Miles Coverdale's Rules One cannot even contemplate the difference that it would make if the simplicity and genius of Miles Coverdale would be employed by Christendom's preachers and teachers.

[11 : 15] Well, who was Miles Coverdale, and what was his contribution that could have such a profound impact? Coverdale was a devoted translator and compiler of the Bible, who made his greatest contribution when he produced the first completed Bible in the English language.

Of course, he remains well known for that. It was the year 1535, 176 years before the famous King James Bible of 1611 was produced.

But along with the completeness of the Bible in English, Miles Coverdale provided something else that, tragically, so many who study the Word of God have never heard of.

This was a very brief but exceedingly important statement regarding the interpretation of the Bible. Actually, Coverdale's expression is so simple, so logical, and so common-sense-like, it's almost embarrassing that we all haven't thought of it ourselves or implemented it without even thinking about it.

I remain persuaded of the conviction I held years ago when I first came in contact with this, that Coverdale had set forth guidelines for interpreting the Bible that were unparalleled.

[12 : 36] And that conviction is this. Coverdale's statement is so simple, yet powerful, that if pastors and Bible teachers would utilize these principles, Christianity would be impacted in a more major way than ever.

So, what is this expression of Coverdale we regard as so valuable? In 1535, along with that complete English Bible, he gave these words for its interpretation and understanding.

Here they are in their original Elizabethan English of 1535. It shall greatly help ye to understand Scripture, if thou mark not only what is written, but of whom, and to whom, with what words, at what time, to what intent, with what circumstances, considering what goeth before, and what followeth.

And there you have it. So simple, so logical, and oozing with common sense. Yet, it is often ignored by so many.

So many who have the responsibility of conveying the Word of God to others and explaining its meaning to them. Following this simple expression of advice by Bible expositors and students would result in more agreement as to the meaning of Bible passages than anything else we can even imagine.

[14 : 07] So many doctrinal and denominational differences that now produce a fragmented Christianity could result in a coming together with a genuinely cohesive force of unity.

The world would see Christianity in entirely new light, far different from the one now witnessed, and it could all begin with Miles Coverdale's advice from 1535.

Miles Coverdale's Rules, Part 2 At the very least, if one had nothing more than Miles Coverdale's rules for interpreting the Bible, and faithfully implemented them, it would in itself stand the interpreter in good stead.

In the nearly five hundred years they have been in existence, I have seen nothing else so compact, yet complete, that can improve upon those simple but strategic phrases.

Here they are again. Please hear them carefully, and if you heed them carefully, they will richly repay you. So saith Miles Coverdale in the year 1537, It shall greatly help ye to understand Scripture, if thou mark not only what is written, but of whom, and to whom, with what words, at what time, to what extent, with what circumstances, considering what went before, and what followeth.

[15 : 41] So brief, so simple, yet so reaping in benefits to all who apply those common sense suggestions. And, anyone who does apply them is actually engaging in the discipline of hermeneutics, even if they have never heard of hermeneutics, no matter.

If they take Miles Coverdale's advice, they will be utilizing hermeneutics, even if they can't spell it. And, by the way, it is spelled H-E-R-M-E-N-E-U-T-I-C-S.

And we have defined it as the art and science of interpreting the Bible. And it is both. It is a science in that it operates within the sphere of fixed rules that probe the laws of language and thinking.

As an art, hermeneutics implements a skill employed by the interpreter. The art form consists of the skill of the interpreter to employ the rules of the science.

And the science is rather fixed by the laws that have been in place for hundreds of years. You will readily recognize the legitimacy and value of these laws as we develop and share them with you on upcoming segments of Christianity Clarified.

[17 : 10] Thus, one's skill level will develop and increase more and more by applying these simple but essential rules for interpretation. And, by the way, these rules are not limited to interpreting the Bible, but are valid principles for approaching and interpreting all works of literature when the intent is to understand the meaning of the writer.

And pray tell me, what possible reason is there for reading any literature whatever apart from being able to understand what you are reading? There is no profit in simply reading words divorced from any meaning, but we read in order to receive the message that is conveyed by the words.

And this we call communication. The whole rationale behind God providing the Bible is that He communicates from Himself, the Creator, to the creatures He has brought forth.

That's everything the Bible is about, divine communication. Leave Bible Study to the Prose, Part 1 Before we pursue the subject of biblical hermeneutics further, we need to pause right here and mention something of great importance.

And this something is an item, in my opinion, of great tragedy. and even, what should be, embarrassment. But alas, those who advocate this something of which we speak are not at all embarrassed about it, but rather dogmatically assert that this is as it should be.

[18 : 48] Well, whatever is this something of which we speak? It is this. There are those in what are considered to be the Christian communities, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, who actually discourage their lay people from reading and studying the Scriptures for themselves.

With the authority they perceive themselves to possess, they tell the laity that their reading of the Bible and trying to understand it will only result in their being confused.

We, the ordained clergy, who are trained and schooled in things of religion, we will tell you all you need to know about the Bible and what it teaches.

You need not read the Bible, and in fact, it would be better if you don't. You will only be in over your head and find it frustrating and confusing. If you have questions about your spiritual life, you may come to me and I, as the appointed representative of the Church, will answer your questions.

Well, this attitude is held and in force in many Christian environments, as I said, both Catholic and Protestant. And frankly, it can meet with great appeal on at least two counts.

[20 : 07] One, why not leave it to the pros, the experts? We do this with everything else. We take our bodies to the pros called doctors.

Who among us would care to surgically remove his own appendix? We take our cars to the pros called train mechanics. Are any of us up to rebuilding the engine or replacing the transmission in our car?

How many among us are prepared to renovate our kitchen or bathroom with all of its carpentry, plumbing, and electrical demands? For the vast majority of us, undertaking a task like that, with a hammer in one hand and a do-it-yourself book in the other, would be an invitation to a nightmare.

Bite the bullet, take out a loan, and leave it to the professionals. Nine times out of ten, we will be glad we did. And one might throw in the cost of divorce while contemplating it, because statistics tell us few things contribute to disharmony in a marriage as much as a home torn up while undergoing an evolved structural modernization that seems to drag on far beyond the time expected for completion and at triple the cost originally planned.

Like I said, leave it to the pros. And we did say there are two tempting reasons why we should not attempt to study the scriptures on our own. And the second we intend to reveal may, to many of us, be even more appealing than the first.

[21 : 37] And we'll talk about that on the next segment of Christianity Clarified. Leave Bible Study to the Pros, Part 2 In our previous segment, we compared the idea of laypeople studying the Bible on their own to the tasks of operating on oneself or removing your appendix, or as a novice tackling the rebuilding of your car's engine, replacing its transmission, or extensively remodeling your home all by yourself.

Call in a professional. They are trained and they know what they're doing. It's good advice, nine times out of ten. But we said there are at least two reasons why we might think we should not study the Bible for ourselves, but instead leave it to the trained professionals like pastors, priests, or rabbis.

And this second reason is, in doing so, kind of delegating it to the pros. best fits our comfort zone. Because it is not in our comfort zone to venture into unfamiliar waters.

We fear we may be in over our heads. We tend to see ourselves as certainly less than proficient in an intimidating venue. And let's face it, the Bible is a big book.

Look at the size of that thing. So many pages and so many words, many of them I can't even pronounce. It is daunting, intimidating. And what if I don't do it right?

[23 : 14] Could I actually jeopardize my soul and its eternal destiny? No. I don't trust myself. I will leave it to the pros. And, let's be honest now, don't we all, at least to some degree, have a real lazy streak in our makeup?

You couple the lazy streak possessed by most of us along with the intimidation factor of not doing it right and not being up to the task, and you've got ready-made compelling reasons for just letting that Bible continue to collect dust right where it is.

After all, who do you think you are that you should take it upon yourself to engage this most formidable, profound document ever known to man? I'll leave it to the pros.

And by the way, even they, as studied and learned as they are, often disagree among themselves as to what much of the Bible means, how it is to be interpreted and applied, and if they, the experts themselves, have unresolved problems and questions about the Bible, well, like I said, just who do you think you are?

Pros are still a lot further along than you, even though they don't know it all, still they know a lot more than you, so leave it to them. Now let me ask you, are you persuaded to leave it to the experts, so-called?

[24 : 39] And I say, so-called, because in reality, the only true expert about anything is the one who knows everything. And my urgent prayer for you is that you will not content yourself to ignore the Bible or leave its message to others who will tell you what it means, and, if intellectual laziness is an impediment, you will be able to face that honestly and get beyond it.

And if you do, by laying aside the temptation to delegate it to others and by overcoming the lazy streak, you have no idea of the incredible riches that await you.

Don't Leave Bible Study to the Prose, Part 1 Don't Leave Bible Study to the Prose, and why not?

For at least two very good reasons. Number one, God gave to each of us a thing called volition, a will, an ability to do one thing as opposed to another.

We are endowed with an awesome responsibility to make choices, and it is in possessing this ability that constitutes the basis for our accountability, that is, accountability to the God who gave us this capacity.

[25 : 54] We are not free moral agents for nothing, but for something, that it might be the basis for God's evaluation of us and what we did or did not do with that volition.

We are not to delegate or farm out this personal volition to anyone else, including preachers, priests, or rabbis. The most precious thing we possess is ourselves, our personhood.

The Bible calls the soul. It's that thing that Christ said is more valuable to us than the entire world. What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world but loses or forfeits his own soul?

Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Jesus asked in Matthew 16. While it is certainly true that those who are in positions of spiritual authority over others, such as pastors, priests, and rabbis, will be held accountable, as James 3 says, for the teaching they do or do not impart to others, it is not they who bear the greatest responsibility for our souls, it is ourselves.

I am responsible for me, and I cannot outsource that responsibility. This is why our personal salvation is just that. It's personal, not institutional institutional or sacramental.

[27 : 09] We receive Christ as our personal Savior, not our institutional Savior. My volition and mine alone comes into play, and so does yours.

God wouldn't have it any other way, and neither should we. And, dear friend, we may be sure God has not made the Bible available to us in hundreds of languages and dialects with hundreds of millions of copies simply for a relative handful of clergy?

When William Tyndale revealed his ambition to translate the Bible so the average person could read it in his own language, a priest was heard to criticize him by saying, We are better to be without God's laws than the Pope's.

To which Tyndale replied, I defy the Pope and all his cardinals. If God spare my life ere many years, I will cause a boy that drives the plow shall know more of the Scriptures than thou dost.

Tyndale lived at a time in the 1500s when only clergymen were deemed qualified to read and accurately interpret the Word of God. The Bible was simply a forbidden book by church authorities in Western Europe.

[28 : 18] At the young age of 42, Tyndale was strangled to death and his body burned all under the authority of the church. In honor of Tyndale and more importantly, in honor of the God who gave us His Word, don't leave your Bible study to the prose.

Assume responsibility for the volition God has given you and commit yourself to a serious investigation of the Word of God. Don't Leave Bible Study to the Prose, Part 2 In addition to our individual possession of a personal volition, which means we, and not someone else, is accountable for our decisions, there is another compelling reason to engage the study and interpretation of the Bible.

And here it is. You will find nothing so richly rewarding as discovering the truth of God's Word as a result of your own efforts.

Each small or large discovery will stimulate and motivate you to learn more. Learning, often looked upon by many as a tedious bore, becomes absolutely fascinating.

Discovery in general tends to convey its own reward, but when the discovery in particular is something God has revealed in His Word because He wants us to know it, it is learning unparalleled and oh so enjoyable.

[29 : 56] And a major reward and consequence of learning God's Word is that in doing so we are increasing and broadening our ability to, you guessed it, learn even more.

And all the while this learning is occurring, it is moving us more and more towards spiritual maturity. Little wonder the prophet in chapter 15 of Jeremiah said, Thy words were found and I did eat them, and thy words became for me a joy and a delight of my heart.

When the prophet said he ate the words of God, he means he took them unto himself and they became a part of him. In the same way, the literal food he ate also became a part of him.

So in a very real sense, we may say that the study of Scripture can even have a selfish motive behind it. But it's selfish in a good way.

In the same way that the eating of physical food is selfish in that we need it and crave it for the survival of the body, so it is with spiritual food that we need for our inner spiritual person.

[31 : 07] This appears to be what our Lord meant when he said that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. And what are those words that proceed from the mouth of God but these words in this book called the Bible?

So make no mistake about it, and this we can say with great confidence, you are the major beneficiary of the contemplation and study of the Scriptures. No one will benefit from that more than you, and others in your sphere of influence will likewise benefit, because your positive influence upon them will be a worthy collateral contribution to their lives as well.

No one can benefit from taking in the Word of God more than he who takes it in, because the natural consequence of taking in truth is the living out of that we have taken in.

This is enriching in every way for the student of Scripture. And I might add, this enrichment is not available from any other source. Thy words were found and I did eat them, and thy words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart.

Nothing works like the Word works, and it works for all who will work in it. Don't leave Bible study to the pros. Bible study will confirm the Bible.

[32 : 34] There is a consequence, we are confident, that will be realized by all who seriously engage the discipline of Bible study via the hermeneutics we will be following.

And that consequence, or predictable result, of our efforts will be an increased confirmation in the authority and integrity of the Bible itself.

It simply cannot be avoided. And it's something we don't want to avoid. It's something you will welcome more and more, and you'll find it spur you on to further investigation, resulting in an ever-increasing appreciation, gratitude for the Scriptures and the God who gave them to us.

What I am saying is that even though we may not study the Bible with the intent of becoming more persuaded about it, but merely studying it to see what it says and means, nonetheless, that confirmation is an inevitable or automatic result.

The material we will be engaging will be found to be so compelling, revealing, and interconnected, that its divine origin, its supernatural aspects, simply rise to the surface in an undeniable way, time after time.

[33 : 54] You will not need to try and make this happen. It will happen all on its own, again and again. As I said, it's simply the predictable result from seeing how intricately connected everything in the Bible is and how it all fits together with everything in the Bible.

The possibility of these connections just occurring as a coincidence will become laughable. Given the fact that God, the sole author of Scripture, was pleased to call and inspire 40-plus human writers, most of whom never knew each other, and then spreading it out in its composition over a span of 1,600 years, involving the geography of three different continents, is nothing short of supernatural.

But I guess I already said that. Anyway, you will be seeing this for yourself and will become persuaded in your own mind as I have in mine. And what will that effect be?

It will excite you to learn and appreciate it all the more. There is nothing like it. And I'm sorry to say, the vast majority of Christians will never experience this confirmation and confidence of which we speak.

And the reason is obvious. All too many Christians see the serious study of the Word of God as something limited to just preachers and teachers. They themselves feel they don't need it and don't have time for it.

[35 : 29] Little do they know what they could be enjoying from the richness God Himself has provided for them in His Word. And it is so much superior to anything on television.

Besides, this effort spent in the Word of God will contribute to your spiritual growth and maturity as a believer like nothing else can. It will enrich your life as a husband, a wife, a parent, a friend, a neighbor, because nothing works like the Word works.

You'll see. The Whole Bible Before Its Parts What do we mean by the whole Bible before its parts?

Just this. While we are en route to the application of hermeneutics, that is, the science and art of interpreting the Bible, we must first gain an appreciation of this book as a whole.

Only by doing this can we maximize the studies of interpretation that will follow. So beginning here and now, we will lay out for your consideration a bird's-eye view of the Bible as a whole, prior to following up with the specifics of hermeneutics, and for many of you who do not have an overall grasp of the Bible, you will find this content to be very enlightening.

[36 : 50] For you veterans of Bible study, you will find the content to be a reinforcement to what you already know. After all, repetition is the mother of learning.

So where shall we begin? How about beginning with the beginning? No, I'm not speaking of that far back in the beginning, but we do refer to the establishment of humanity, recorded in the Table of Nations found in Genesis 10 and 11.

This history began after Noah and his family, eight souls in all, survived the flood. Each of Noah's offspring, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, with their respective wives, began to reproduce.

And, of course, those whom they reproduced began to reproduce. And in a few hundred years, a remarkable number of people were dwelling on the earth, all of whom spoke one language.

None of humanity at this time were a part of what we would call a nation. There was no ethnicity that distinguished them from each other. They were simply one mass of humanity.

[37 : 58] They were all just one people, mostly identified only as descendants from Noah through one of his sons, Shem, Ham, or Japheth. And while all of this is recorded in Genesis, it would not be correct to say that these were living under the Old Testament Mosaic law.

That would not yet be for another six hundred or so years when Moses would be born and called of God to lead Israel out of Egypt and receive the law of God at Mount Sinai.

That event properly marks the beginning of the Old Testament or Old Covenant. Prior to giving his law to Moses, there was no Old Testament. While it is true all of Genesis, beginning with the creation account in 1.1, is thought of as belonging to the Old Testament, yet, to be accurate, the Old Testament did not commence until Exodus chapter 19 when it was communicated to Israel.

And bear in mind the law of God given to Moses, which actually consisted of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, was never intended for the Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Assyrians, or any other people, but for those designated as Israelites exclusively.

Such is borne out in Exodus 19 and 3. So here we may begin to think of the origins of Israel as a nation and all other peoples as non-Israelis or Gentiles.

[39 : 22] Before this time at Sinai, all were just people, devoid of designation of Jew and Gentile, but at Sinai, this distinction will arrive and continue to this very day.

Jew or Gentile? The Whole Bible Before Its Parts Number 2 In an attempt to be as enlightening as we can regarding the Bible and its interpretation, we are proceeding with examining the whole of the Bible before we consider its parts, which of course are several.

The whole is not several, but one. If we get a good grasp of the thing overall, then when its parts come up, we can see how they as parts fit into the whole.

But if we examine parts first, we cannot see how they fit into the whole. It is only by appreciating the whole first that the parts make sense.

Let me illustrate. Suppose we consider the automobile as a whole and by its parts. If you have never before seen an automobile, but someone showed you the steering wheel of an automobile, could you on that basis conclude what a whole automobile would look like?

[40 : 39] Of course not. The same with any other part, whether a tire or even the motor. With those parts or any other part, you could not conceive of what an automobile would look like.

You need to see it all together with all of its parts in place. Then, if shown a steering wheel, a tire, or a motor, you can see where it fits into the whole.

And so it is with the Bible. A grasp of the whole is essential for knowing where and how the parts of it fit together. This is why the study of the Bible is so much more profitable than merely reading it.

It appears this is what Paul wrote about to Timothy when in chapter 2 of his second and final letter to him, he stated that Timothy was to study or concentrate on handling accurately or to rightly divide the word of truth.

There are many things in the Bible that will not fit anywhere else other than where they appear. They simply belong where the Spirit of God put them in the sacred record, and they must be held apart from other places, times, and people.

[41 : 47] This is critical. Very critical. Failure to rightly divide the word of truth produces untold contradictions that surface all throughout Scripture. And this is precisely what leads deniers of the Bible to exclaim it is filled with contradictions, thus depreciating or even denying its divine origin.

And they are right. There are irresolvable contradictions in the Bible when we know nothing about rightly dividing it. But when you do, with the help of Miles Coverdale mentioned earlier and the critical laws of hermeneutics, we will explain and illustrate what appears to be irresolvable contradictions simply melt away before your very eyes.

Frankly, it's an exciting and confidence-increasing experience you will treasure for the rest of your life. We want to give you a good, solid grasp of the Bible as a whole, so when we engage the parts, you will enjoy a comprehension and appreciation of this grand old book you never thought was possible.

The ultimate objective of it all is so that we may learn, and in learning we may be responsive with intelligent obedience to what we have learned. Nothing else could ever or will ever honor God more than our obedience to Him, and nothing is so critical as to the one obeying.

The Whole Bible Before Its Parts Number 3 Is there one single overarching theme or subject of the Bible that characterizes it as a whole?

[43 : 27] Yes, there is. Is there one particular subject of the Bible to which all other subjects connect, either directly or indirectly? Yes, there is. Is there one particular thing that God Himself is moving toward which we might call the ultimate divine objective for planet Earth?

Yes, there is. What is that thing? It is the realization of that for which Christ instructed His disciples to pray in Matthew 6, and it is a part of what is commonly referred to as the Lord's Prayer.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. There you have it. That, in a nutshell, is God's ultimate intention for this world.

The recapturing of the planet Earth of that which was forfeited in the disobedience and sin of our first parents, Adam and Eve. The restoration of humanity and the entire planet is the divine objective, nothing less than the redemption of all creation.

And how will this be effected? It will be by way of the Redeemer, none other than the Son of God Himself sent to the earth by His Father to pay the price required for redemption.

[44 : 44] In doing so, by His substitutionary death on the cross, Christ succeeded in balancing the moral scales of God's justice by satisfying the demands of a holy God.

What justice demanded by the death of the sinner or the death of a stand-in substitute, Christ paid and paid in full, throwing open the way of access to God, providing the basis for restoring the earth to its original blessedness before man's rebellion ruined it.

This earth, when restoration is realized, becomes the fruition of Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

All of the Jewish world in the Old Testament understood the promise for the coming of the kingdom and they knew the Messiah who was to come would be the instrument of it.

This was and is where everything is headed. It was where everything was headed when Christ came in His first advent to Bethlehem. It is where everything is headed to this very day.

[45 : 52] It is that which will be the fulfillment of so much prophesied by Moses and the prophets throughout the Old Testament. Presently, this world remains under the dominion of Satan called the God of this age by Paul in 2 Corinthians 4.

Christ has already paid the price for wresting this world from the clutches of Satan, but he has not yet done so due to the ongoing rejection of the Messiah by the nation of Israel.

Peter appealed to Israel to repent and reverse themselves in Acts chapter 3, but his message fell on deaf ears. Israel will repent when on the brink of annihilation during the campaign of Armageddon and when they do so, Christ will appear the second time, defeat Satan's armies and establish his kingdom.

This is where everything is headed. The whole Bible before its parts number four.

It is commonly believed, especially by those of the Orthodox Jewish community, that the Bible predicts and promises that God will one day send his Messiah, that is, his Anointed One to the earth.

[47 : 09] And when this Messiah arrives, he will bring in peace and righteousness for the entire world, as well as subdue all who oppose him. What is overlooked by this same Jewish community is that their Bible, which they limit to what Christians call the Old Testament, very clearly reveals that this Messiah will make not one, but two appearances on earth.

His first of the two already occurred two thousand years ago with the babe of Bethlehem, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of the Living God. This, of course, is rejected by the Jews who believe Jesus was not the Messiah, and they yet await what they believe will be the first appearance of their Messiah.

Christians, however, believe his first appearance was none other than that of Jesus of Bethlehem, and that the Jewish people nationally did not recognize him as such, and while they still look for the first appearance of the Messiah, Christians are looking for his second appearance.

It must also be borne in mind that the Old Testament clearly predicts and describes both comings, and that of the two comings, his second is mentioned even more, and in greater detail, than is his first coming.

Simply put, Christ's second coming will be the completion of what he began in his first coming. In that, he paid the necessary ransom price to redeem the earth from its fallenness, induced by our first parents in Eden.

[48 : 48] In his second coming, he will apply the price he paid to establish the redeemed earth, so that the kingdom of God or heaven will be realized on earth as it is in heaven.

This, as stated earlier, is where absolutely everything is headed, directly or indirectly. Unfortunately, the Jewish community has historically ignored the references regarding Christ's first coming that are recorded in 125 places throughout their scriptures, and the number of Old Testament scriptures that predict Christ's second coming exceeds that of his first coming with 129 references.

The point is that two comings of the Messiah are clearly mentioned so many times they cannot be coincidental and certainly not ignored as if they didn't exist.

These two separate comings of Christ to earth are critical keys to realizing God's ultimate intention for the earth. In his first coming, he accomplished what was needed to justify God's lifting of the curse that man's sin imposed upon humanity and all of creation.

In his second coming, he will complete the transaction begun with his first coming. Christ will do in his second coming what the Jews thought the Messiah would do in his first coming.

[50 : 13] They had no clue that he must first address the sin issue, which he did through his death on that cross. The Whole Bible Before Its Parts Number 5 Why is it exactly that we have said the realization of the kingdom of heaven coming to earth is precisely where everything is headed?

Why and how can we say that ultimately this is what everything is about and that this is that underlying reality toward which all, and I mean all, is headed?

It is because in this promise and realization of the arrival of the kingdom, God has vested everything insofar as man is concerned.

And why is he so determined to realize this as his ultimate objective? Simply because it fulfills the promise of it he gave as early as Genesis 3.15. You will recall that the promise of a Redeemer was given by God right after the need required it.

And when was that? It was in Genesis 3.15 to be exact that God promised he would send one who would be the seed of the woman or the offspring of the woman.

[51 : 29] The woman, of course, was Mother Eve. The offspring would be the coming Redeemer. The Redeemer would be opposed by the adversary, Satan himself. This adversary would succeed in striking the heel of the Redeemer, speaking of his death.

But the Redeemer would survive the heel strike via his resurrection from the dead. This would, in effect, deal a mortal blow and final blow to Satan the adversary.

He is a defeated foe. And all this would not come into play until 4,000 years after that promise in Genesis 3 was made. That promise of a coming Messiah-Redeemer made to Eve in Genesis 3 was later revealed to come through the line of Seth, one of the three sons of Noah.

Seth's direct descendants would include Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and generations later, David the shepherd lad who would become king of Israel. Then, fast forward another thousand years and we arrive at the birth of Jesus the Christ, born of Mary.

This was all fulfilled in order for God to make good on his word as promised as soon as a Redeemer was needed. Jesus, as the seed of the woman, was a Jew and a direct descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, born out of Judah, the fourth-born son of Jacob.

[52 : 52] And for thousands of years, the hopes and dreams of every Jew focused on the fulfillment of God's promise to provide a Messiah, one anointed by God, no less.

When this Messiah came, he would dispense righteousness and justice. He would right the wrongs of a world gone bad. When the Messiah appears, he would reestablish the throne of David long abandoned.

He would himself be installed in Jerusalem as the king of kings and rule and reign over the entire world. This would be the arrival of the long-awaited kingdom of heaven come to earth.

This is that of which Moses and all the prophets spoke. And it was of this event, this kingdom, and of this person, the Redeemer, of whom John the Baptist spoke when he announced to the crowds of Jews, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

And John introduced and baptized Jesus of Nazareth as the fulfillment of God's promise. This is that to which everything was moving, still is.

[54 : 01] The whole Bible before its parts, number six. There is a designation and distinction throughout the Bible that appears to be one of the greatest and most important.

It is the distinction made between believers and unbelievers, people of true faith versus people of false faith. For all people are people of faith, the distinction is in the object of one's faith, whether it is themselves, as it is for the atheist, or whether it is in a false god or false religion that abounds the world over, or whether one's faith is in the one and only true safe depository of the Lord Jesus Christ.

That is the greatest single distinction, not only in the Bible, but throughout the world today, as it ever has been. Another great distinction among humans is that differentiating Jews from Gentiles.

Simply put, two-tenths of one percent of the world's population is Jewish. By Jewish, we mean one who is a direct descendant of the fathers of the Jewish people.

These are identified as the patriarchs or the first fathers, namely Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. From Jacob, later called Israel, came his twelve sons who will be the progenitors of the twelve tribes of Israel.

[55 : 22] These people, the Jew, or the Israelites, as mentioned, number only two-tenths of one percent of all the world's population. All remaining, that is, ninety-nine and eight-tenths percent of the world are Gentiles.

The ratio is stunning. Equally stunning is the fact that God drew upon this tiny minority of people to give the Bible to the remaining ninety-nine plus percent of the world's population.

Every human writer of his sixty-six separate books, encompassing over fifteen hundred years, was Jewish. Some questions are entertained regarding Dr. Luke, who gave us the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts, laden with important history, but even if Luke was not born Jewish, he was at least a proselyte of Judaism, and certainly wrote with the knowledge and background of a Jew.

From the time of Abraham onward, the Bible, in Old Testament and New, pointedly recognizes the differences between Jew and Gentile. Perhaps the greatest of these was realized in the Jewish faith embracing but one deity, oft referred to as Yahweh or Jehovah, Adonai or Elohim, various names but all belonging to the one true God, the Creator and Sustainer of all.

Yet even they, determined as they were to confine their worship to this one God, at times succumbed to the idolatry of their heathen neighbors. Their apostasy, at least regarding idolatry, appears to have been cured by the painful Babylonian captivity which they were forced to endure for seventy years.

[57 : 01] One dare not lose sight of the Jewish people or their prominence in past or future human affairs. They are the central strategic human element in the plan and program of God.

Sad though it is, few Gentiles understand this and have heaped untold persecution upon the Jew, persecution born out of ignorance or arrogance or both on the part of Gentiles.

This distinction, however, is important because God himself established it. The whole Bible before its parts number seven.

Of the three sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, it would be Shem who is the father and progenitor of the Semitic people. The word Semite or Semitic is an obvious derivative of Shem if you simply drop the H.

In the main, the Semitic people have consisted of the Jewish people and other offspring born of Esau, the brother of Jacob. Both of these were from Isaac, their father, and Abraham, their grandfather.

[58 : 11] It is this man, Abraham, who was designated by God to be the father of a specially chosen people called the Israelites. They derived their name from Abraham's grandson, Jacob.

God changed Jacob's name to Israel when he confronted him at Bethel in Genesis 35. From that time forward, Jacob's descendants would be known as Israelites.

The term Jew did not surface until the Babylonian captivity centuries later. It was the two tribes from the south, the divided kingdom of Israel, namely Judah and Benjamin, that would be carried into captivity by their enemy the Babylonians in 586 B.C.

Because the number of Israelites from the tribe of Judah was much larger than those from the tribe of Benjamin, they began to be referred to as Jews, that is, short for Judah.

Those who are directly descended from the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are still referred to as Jews worldwide. The number of Jews worldwide is a mere two-tenths of one percent.

[59 : 26] The Jewish people were and remain God's chosen people. They constitute the apple of God's eye, and they are far more strategic to the plan and program of God than most people realize, including the Jewish people themselves.

It was to the Jewish people alone that God gave his law through Moses at Mount Sinai. In addition, it would be through the Jewish people that the Messiah would eventually appear on earth as is revealed in the genealogies of Joseph and Matthew as the adopted father of Jesus and the genealogy of Mary his mother revealed in Luke's Gospel chapter 3.

Romans chapter 9 reveals additional privileges God bestowed upon the Jewish people exclusively. The persecution worldwide throughout history of the Jewish people is well documented, and the unspeakably horrific brutality of the Holocaust deliberately eliminated six million innocents among the dwindling numbers of Jews.

Yet, their greatest adversary was not Adolf Hitler, but Satan himself, the arch-enemy of God and man. This satanic dynamic is little acknowledged by the Jewish people or even known, yet the Bible makes it clear that this adversary has opposed God from the beginning and will do so until he meets his end described in the Revelation chapter 20.

It is the Jewish people, despite their unknowingness, who have and will provide the strategic dynamic for God fulfilling his promises and completing his plan.

[61 : 07] The Whole Bible Before Its Parts Number 8 The prophet Malachi, in the last book of the Old Testament, chapter 3, gave a stunning prediction of one who was to come that would be the forerunner of the promised Messiah.

But it would not be until 400 years later that the New Testament would open with the electrifying account of John the Baptist. John and Jesus were second cousins, as their respective mothers, Elizabeth and Mary, were first cousins.

The baptizer said in John 1 that the reason he came and was baptizing was in order to introduce Jesus to Israel as their Messiah. And initially, John refused to baptize Jesus because he demanded repentance of sin from all the Jews who came to him for baptism.

But John had already identified Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Clearly, Jesus had no sin for which to repent and was not a qualified person for John's baptism.

Yet, Jesus insisted that he came to fulfill the law, and as an observant Jew, he needed to be identified with his believing countrymen. John then relented, and upon baptizing Jesus, a dove descended and came upon him as the voice of the Father was heard from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

[62 : 31] This voice would be heard again, when Jesus would be transfigured before Peter, James, and John, in Matthew 17, Mark 9, and Luke 9. Christ in his virgin conception by Mary, baptism by John, temptation by Satan, transfiguration before Peter, James, and John, death on the cross before a multitude of witnesses, bodily resurrection on the third day, and his literal bodily ascension to heaven before the twelve apostles looking on, all these events, plus much more, assigned a uniqueness and credibility to the life and claims of Christ that remain unparalleled in all the annals of human history.

He is the sole figure in whom the mission of world redemption for the entire human race was vested. This substitutionary death he was sent to die became the first phase of the plan to be carried out.

Thus, phase one was completed in his first coming, phase two will be completed in his second. Second coming will utterly eliminate all opposition with the campaign of Armageddon as prophesied in Revelation chapters 19 and 20.

Then Christ will establish that long sought after, long for, kingdom of heaven when God's will will be done on earth as in heaven.

This will be the realization of the great promise God made to Eve in Genesis 3 about her seed ultimately being victorious in restoring the world ruined by sin and rebellion.

[64 : 10] Seeing this event as an overarching theme of the plan and program of God for all creation helps us understand the several parts we will be considering in the light of this principle we have called the whole Bible before its parts.

Through this all, keep in mind the strategic nature of the Jewish people and the Jewish Messiah, Jesus, they produce. Little wonder Jesus said, salvation is of the Jews.

The whole Bible before its parts, number nine. An essential element in understanding something about the whole of the Bible before understanding its parts relates to the progressive revelation of its contents.

By that, we simply mean that the Bible was recorded by its inspired writers as the events about which they wrote occurred. The record was not always written about immediately following their occurrence, but generally still in the order of their occurrence.

This is because God gradually revealed more and more about himself to humanity as the Bible unfolds. Remember, there are approximately sixteen hundred years separating the earliest writings of the Bible in the Old Testament to the completion of the writings of the New Testament.

- [65 : 39] Beginning with creation in Genesis 1, God reveals in a progressive and unfolding way more and more about himself and his dealings with mankind in general, and with the Jewish people in particular.

For instance, moving from Moses and the first five books he wrote, we arrive at the books of Joshua and Judges. They constitute an update from what God revealed through Moses.

But as you arrive at 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, there is another update revealed about God and the monarchy. Established then that began with Saul, then David, and his son Solomon, followed by more history unfolding on the part of multiple kings.

Also included is the dividing of the kingdom of Israel into the factions of the northern and southern kingdoms. This is all new content that transpired, and God inspired certain ones to write about it.

The defeat of both of these kingdoms by pagan neighbors, and their subsequent enslavement to them, was also brand new material, constituting a further update.

- [66 : 53] As history continued to unfold, the return of the southern kingdom of Judah back home to Israel, and the struggle for rebuilding the nation was led by Nehemiah, Ezra, and Zerubbabel, all of which revealed more new material or updates.

About the only portions not represented as progressively revealed material is referred to as the poetical books. The Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job, and so on, did not record unfolding history as did the previous books.

The poetical books are regarded as rather timeless in their content rather than history unfolding. Only an understanding that the revelation of God to man was a gradual thing can we begin to grasp the nature and makeup of the whole Bible.

Clearly, it is doctrine on the move, developing and unfolding in an undeniably progressive way. Accordingly, we should not read a later revelation of God that he has made known back into an earlier revelation which the recipients at that earlier time did not have.

People who lived in Bible days did not have or understand all the Bible had to say, but only that which had been revealed up to that time. The importance of this will surface repeatedly.

- [68 : 16] You will see. The whole of the Bible before its parts. Number 10. One of the most common errors people tend to make when approaching the Bible is to assume the people in the Bible and of whom the Bible speaks and describes knew everything in the Bible.

But that clearly is not the case. Each generation of people described in the Bible knew only what God had been pleased to reveal up to their time and generation.

They knew what had been recorded in the past as history and what they were living during their lifetime, which was their present time, but that was the extent of their understanding.

No doubt there are many people today who wrongly assume that the people who lived during Bible times knew everything or about everything in the Bible. After all, they actually lived it.

Of course they knew it. No, they did not. They only knew what had been earlier recorded as history, plus what they were experiencing during their own lifetime.

[69 : 27] All else that was to be revealed in the Bible later, after they passed off the scene, was completely unknown to them. It's the same way with us today.

All we know about the past is what has been recorded and experienced from history, and to date we know only what we are now experiencing. We really don't know anything about the 22nd century or whether there will even be one.

In the New Testament, as truth was being progressively revealed, the people who lived during the events in the book of Acts knew and understood what had occurred and was handed down about the earthly life of Christ recorded in the four Gospels.

But the people living during the time of the four Gospels did not at all understand what would occur and be recorded in the book of Acts that would come later.

That was all still future as far as the people living during the four Gospels were concerned. You can give folks in the present an understanding of the past. That's history.

[70 : 38] But you cannot give folks of the present an understanding of the future. It hasn't happened yet, and they know nothing of it. Yes, of course, there is the element of prophecy, which is a revelation of what is to come.

Yet no one can say that those reading the prophecies have actually experienced those events. So it is not correct to say we know them because we live them.

No, we have not lived them. Perhaps we never will, for we may die before those prophesied events ever occur. To sum up, don't think the people who actually live during Bible times knew or knew about everything in the Bible, because they clearly did not.

Lots of people lived during the 1600 years the Bible was in the making as God raised up and inspired different ones to write the Bible. But it all happened gradually.

Or, as we say, the Bible is a progressively revealed record of what the Spirit of God inspired people to write.

[71 : 48] The Bible is doctrine that is developing and on the move. You've just heard another session of Christianity Clarified with Marv Wiseman. Preview of Volume 28 Upcoming For reasons that should be obvious to the serious student of the Bible, the segments we recently concluded on Christianity Clarified are very much key to what will be upcoming as we engage the interpretation of the Bible in its parts.

And for lack of a more descriptive terminology, we have simply called these segments the whole Bible before its parts. We explain that to mean there are certain general or overall aspects of the Bible that must be in place in one's mind before we tackle the numerous parts or portions for interpretation.

And if they are, you will much more readily see how everything comes together. You may recall we use the illustration of an automobile to make our point.

We ask you to make believe you have never before seen an automobile or had any idea what an automobile looked like. That being the case, you are then shown a steering wheel from an auto and are asked, Now that you have seen the steering wheel of an automobile, don't you have an accurate idea of what the entire automobile looks like?

Well, of course not. Neither would you know what a car looked like if all you saw was a tire or an axle or even a motor.

[73 : 42] But if you begin by being shown an entire automobile all put together and operational, then if you are shown a tire or a motor, you can easily identify where the single object fits into the whole.

This is what we are trying to accomplish by presenting these segments we call The Whole Bible Before the Parts. The Bible really does all fit together in a way that demonstrates its claim to be the work of the Creator, God of the universe.

Gaining with us the thrust of the whole Bible from several angles will make the parts we shall engage simply throb with the very life of God He breathed into it.

You will see this more and more as we engage the application of hermeneutics. In closing, be reminded that listeners are free to duplicate these materials of Christianity Clarified so long as they are copied in their entirety, not edited or sold for commercial profit.

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[75 : 09] This is Pastor Marv Wiseman thanking you for joining with us. Christianity Clarified is made possible through the Barbara Wiseman Memorial Fund.