

Christianity Clarified Volume 05

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[0 : 00] What is Christianity really all about?

The issue remains very confusing to a large segment of our society. At times, it even extends to many who consider themselves Christian. Here, in an ongoing effort to try and dispel some of the confusion, is Marv Wiseman with another session of Christianity Clarified.

Christianity Clarified is an ongoing effort to accomplish what the name declares, to address the major issues of biblical Christianity that are often unknown or misunderstood by the general public, sometimes including those who profess Christianity.

If this goal is achieved, the result will not only be a greater understanding and appreciation for God's truth, but a greater and more intelligent obedience to it. We now are engaging the subject of theology.

Theology simply means the study of God. Who is he? What is he like? What does he provide for us? What does he require from us? Having already completed, at least in a brief way, the subject of the triune nature of God and the names assigned to the deity, including God or Elohim, Lord or Jehovah, Adonai, El Elyon, and El Shaddai, we now turn our attention to the character and nature of the Creator God himself.

[1 : 28] The term used to describe these aspects of God are referred to as God's attributes. In the main, but surely not exhaustively, these consist of God's essence, which is spirit, not physical, God's omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, his eternity, infiniteness, holiness, immutability, and faithfulness, his justice, mercy, and righteousness, long-suffering, and last but certainly not least, God's love and grace.

Have any aspects of God's character and nature been omitted? Most assuredly. And why so? Well, who can include all the aspects or attributes of the eternal infinite God?

It is pure folly to even entertain the possibility. After all, we are speaking of the infinite God, but all we can do is use finite language from a finite mind to other finite minds.

So it is a foregone conclusion and admission that, however inclusive or broad our study of theology may appear to be, it will fall far short of who and what God is and what he deserves from our feeble efforts.

Still, we believe it to be honorable and necessary to engage the study of God to the best of our ability. And although far from complete, it will surely increase our knowledge of him.

[2 : 54] To know God is not only an enormous privilege that gives an entirely new and elevated meaning to life, it is also our responsibility. The very existence of all we see around us cries out the questions.

Why is there something rather than nothing? Where and how did the something originate? Why? What is the purpose or driving force behind what is?

Is there a plan and therefore a planner? Is there an end game, objectives, goals, purposes? These provocative and naturally human questions are all wrapped up in the study of theology.

There is no greater nor more important subject matter that can be engaged. We prepare to enter the portals of sublimity by examining what the creator and sustainer of the universe has been pleased to reveal about himself, his plans and his purposes, in all he has done and intends to do.

In conversing with the Samaritan woman at the well in John chapter 4, our Lord Jesus Christ made an extremely enigmatic statement. Here is what he said.

[4 : 10] God is spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. God is spirit? What exactly does that mean?

The Bible makes it abundantly clear throughout that there are two modes of objective reality. One is physical, and one is non-physical. One is material, the other immaterial.

While the Bible affirms in both Testaments that the spiritual or non-material exists as definitely as does the physical, many today do not believe this to be true.

Those denying the very existence or objective reality of the spiritual are called physicalists, or naturalists, or materialists. Because the spiritual or non-material is not subject to laboratory examination, can't be weighed, measured, dissected, or analyzed under their microscopes, they deny the non-material even exists.

Not all in the scientific community take this position, and there are many reputable, well-credentialed scientists firmly committed to the objective existence of non-matter.

[5 : 22] Yet for a large part of today's scientists, their attitude is, if it isn't physical, it isn't. All atheists naturally hold this position, and they reason, if you cannot see it, feel it, hear it, weigh it, or measure it, it does not exist.

Applying this to man, their conclusion is, man is purely a physical being, and that's all he is. Composed of only a physical body, his death is the cessation of his being in its entirety.

No heaven, no hell, no afterlife of any kind anywhere. Applying this physicalist concept to God, they simply define him out of existence. Remember Yuri Gagarin, the first Soviet cosmonaut launched into space by the Russians?

His famous quote chided believers who had always said God was in heaven. Well, says Gagarin, I was there, in space, in the heavens, looked all over for God and didn't see him anywhere.

Ergo, there is no God, not in the heavens, and not anywhere else. End of argument. Not so fast, Mr. Gagarin.

[6 : 35] You made the flawed assumption that only the physical has objective reality. Christ made it clear two thousand years before you were born that God is such and one who cannot be seen.

God is spirit. So don't go into outer space peeking behind stars and planets expecting to bump into God. Because God is spirit, he does not occupy time nor space.

He created time and space, and the reason he did so was to accommodate the physical and material he had already created. God does not dwell in time nor space.

He is apart from these. Spirit does not occupy time and space because they are physical realities while spirit is not. Doesn't it sound terribly arrogant for those who admit they don't fully understand time or space, yet insist they know enough about the spiritual to deny it even exists?

God is spirit. Jesus Christ said so in John 4.34, and he ought to know. Still, it's an enigmatic thing to say, is it not?

[7 : 45] We've already defined spirit as non-physical or immaterial. And of course, we're in over our head. We don't even understand all about our physical being, much less our spiritual component.

But that doesn't mean we do not possess one. We do. We most definitely do. If you have any doubt about it now, it will be dissolved when you die.

Being a body and spirit duality, we are said to be in the image and likeness of God. We have a spirit because God is spirit, and in that we are, in some fashion, like him.

When Christ said, God is spirit in John 4, he is also asserting an amazing implication of this spirit being God. And it is simply this.

The spirit precedes and is superior in every way to the physical. All that is physical, including the stellar heavens, stars, earth, planets, universe, if you will, plus any and all physical entities, known or unknown, were all created by that which, of course, preceded them and was spirit, not possessing itself any physicality.

[9 : 02] Yet, this spirit being called God brought into being all that was physical. We all know about physical people doing things, making things, etc.

But the staggering concept set forth by Scripture is that of spirit creating all that is physical. This is precisely what is required by God being before all things and thus bringing all things into existence.

The non-material God who has always been dwelt as that being in eternity before and without anything physical ever having been brought into existence.

Then, he created materiality, including space and time. neither of which existed before God created them because they were not needed. That which is pure spirit does not inhabit time or space.

Those are needed only by that which is physical. And God is not physical. Christ said so. God is spirit, remember? John 4.24. Of course, this is all really awesome to contemplate.

[10 : 09] Yet, what else can we expect in dealing with an awesome God? Consider now, before there was anything, no earth, no heavens, no angels, no beings of any kind, and no matter, neither time nor space had ever been.

Yet, there was God, the uncaused first cause, and he existed from eternity past in the form of spirit, immaterial, non-physical, in his spirit existence.

Then, when he is said to have in the beginning created the heavens and the earth, materiality came into being along with time and space to accommodate that material substance.

This requires the primacy and superiority of the spiritual over that which is physical. Spirit precedes matter, and spirit is responsible for it.

Theology is the study of God, his being and nature. Thus far, we have only considered something that Christ said about God.

[11 : 17] He related in John 4 that God is spirit. Among other things, this means God is not physical. It also means the non-physical God created all that is physical in accord with Genesis 1.1.

It is the spiritual, the non-material, that gave existence to matter, time, and space. It's all really stunning when you consider it.

Our being, the material and physical entities we are, we are fully familiar with the physical doing things, in fact, everything. We are, in our very being, so physical we can't contemplate getting anything done without utilizing our physical self.

from physically fixing and physically eating our breakfast to going to our physical place of employment or physically caring for our physical children.

No doubt about it, we can't get anything done without the employ of the physical. And while we, too, have a spiritual component to our being as well as our physical, we cannot use the spiritual to do our bidding without engaging the physical.

[12 : 27] Just try using your spiritual component to prepare dinner tonight for your hungry family. Wouldn't that be nice? Voila! And there is a scrumptious, well-laden table there before you.

We know our family would starve if we had to create a dinner via the use of our spirit. So we vigorously engage the dependable but laborious use of the physical. But just imagine if it were possible to create a table laden with delicacies using only your spirit, how would you possibly go about it?

You would do it the very way that God does it with His spirit. He wills it to be and it is. Physical effort is not utilized and not needed. God merely wills a thing to be and it is.

But when we will a thing to be, nothing happens. The table is bare and the family remains hungry. It is of course but one of many ways that God differs from us.

His non-physical spirit is able to exercise authority and dominance over the physical which is wholly subservient to Him. At least in part this explains God's power.

[13 : 37] In theology this is called omnipotence or omnipotence. When God is said to be omnipotent it means all power all potency resides in His very being.

It's an utterly overwhelming concept to consider. All power residing in this being called God. It means any and all who have the ability to do anything derives that power and ability from the one who possesses it all and He dispenses it at His pleasure.

There is no power no strength no resources in anyone anywhere at any time that has not or does not derive its ability from this one source of all power this omnipotent being.

This is the same being whom Jesus described as spirit in John 4. There is a natural tendency to think in terms of God's power and man's power but this is not accurate.

God's power is all the power that is or there is no power that is not derived from God. This is why God is omnipotent which means of course He possesses all power.

[14 : 58] So not only does power or authority reside in God all power and all authority resides in God. In speaking of power in the sense of energy or the ability to do work it all resides in and originates from God.

In speaking of power in the sense of authority this too resides in and originates from God. Humanity would not exist nor have the ability to exercise any power of any kind apart from the omnipotent God possessing all power.

Does this include man's power and ability to do evil? Of course it does. While God at the same time abhors evil and has nothing to do with the origin or support of evil He yet must provide the wherewithal for evildoers to do their will and their evil.

Why is this? Because God is omnipotent and no power exists anywhere for anyone under any circumstances except it reside in the omnipotent God.

A familiar verse that illustrates this is found in Daniel 4 when he indicated that Nebuchadnezzar would be mentally impaired until he came to know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men and gives it to whomsoever he will.

[16 : 19] God had nothing to do with the evil choices of Nebuchadnezzar but God did provide the power the energy for Nebuchadnezzar to carry out those evil choices while he God had nothing whatsoever to do with the choices of Nebuchadnezzar.

Likewise in John 19 when pompous Pontius Pilate told Christ I have power to crucify thee and have power to release thee Christ set him straight by replying Thou couldst have no power at all against me except it were given thee from above.

Does this mean God provided Pilate with the very power he would use to order and carry out the crucifixion of Christ? Precisely. Why would God do that?

God did that because no one would have the power to do anything good or evil if God did not provide it. This is what is meant by referring to God as omnipotent.

It isn't just a word. It's not even a mere theological word. It is of a truth. God really does possess all power and authority in heaven and earth.

[17 : 33] Anyone whether men or angels who attempt to do anything whether good or evil must obtain the power to do it from the only source who possesses all power that is the singularly omnipotent God.

The Father delegated power to the Son. This is why Christ said all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth in Matthew 28. Whether or not the world recognizes it, its very ability to function day by day is due solely to the all power residing in the omnipotent God.

Numerous instances throughout the Bible attest to the unlimited power of God.

The theological term is God's omnipotence, that is, the reality of God possessing not only unlimited power, but all power.

It's generally agreed that among all of God's demonstrations of power, none exceeds that of Genesis 1-1. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

[18 : 40] The raw and divine energy exercised in the creation undertaking cannot begin to be contemplated. And don't be misled in assigning limitations to the Almighty because He did it in the time frame of six days.

It was not because the job was so big He had to do it in stages. He who is omnipotent could have as well created all He did in six days in six nanoseconds had He chosen to do so.

The six days of creation with God resting on the seventh, He simply used as a pattern for establishing the seven-day week for the creatures of time and space that He also brought into existence.

Which seven-day week, by the way, remains in force the world over. There is an expression used after the six-day creative work of God that gives an erroneous idea about God's omnipotence, that is, His possession of all power, and that expression refers to God's resting on the seventh day.

We mere mortals assume God was rightly exhausted after a laborious spate of six days wherein He created everything. We mistakenly think God would certainly be entitled to a day off to rejuvenate and refresh Himself after such an arduous task of bringing everything into creation.

[20 : 00] Even God needs some downtime, some R&R; if you will. But no, He does not, and His omnipotence does not require it or allow for it.

When we mortals spend our energies on work of any kind, we need to rest and recuperate, and resupply ourselves with food to replenish our energy level.

But God knows none of this. The Hebrew word translated rested in many English Bibles more correctly conveys the idea that God ceased from His creative activity.

He ceased because He was finished. He did not cease or rest because He was weary after a hard six days of work. God does not become tired.

Omnipotence requires an undiminished possession of energy. The power that resides in this omnipotent God is not subject to decreasing or increasing.

[20 : 58] Any effort we mere mortals expend, whether scratching our nose or lifting a huge weight, requires an expenditure of energy. And when we expend energy, we then have less than we had before we spent it.

Our energy supply is sorely limited and needs continual resupply. But not so with the omnipotent God. By possessing all power, He never can have more or less power.

This is omnipotence. And it is one of the attributes that make God, God. Revelation 19 says, Hallelujah, for the Lord our God omnipotent reigneth.

With God all things are possible. Is this true? How can it not be true? Because it is in the Bible and Christ himself said it. It's in Matthew 19.

Yes, of course, it is true. But it also needs some clarification. And this is the purpose of Christianity clarified. All things are possible with God.

[22 : 08] But what is meant by things? A thing, as referred to by Christ, has to do with an objective reality. That is, the existence of an object or condition that is real in existence, or can be real in existence.

In other words, God's ability to do anything is limited to a real or potentially real object or situation. Skeptics foolishly think they have God cornered and suppose they have disproved God's ability to do anything.

Nonsensical questions like, can God make a rock so big he can't lift it? Because if he can't make a rock that big, then he clearly can't do everything.

Or if he can make that rock, but then is unable to lift it, he can't do everything. Gotcha. No, you don't gotcha.

Remember, God's ability to do anything is limited to real or potentially real objects or situations. God deals in reality, not fantasy.

[23 : 17] A rock so big it can't be lifted is not a real situation, but a non-existent illogical contradiction. Add to that the contradictory challenge, can God square a circle?

Well, if God can't make a circle square, then he can't do everything. But a square circle is not a reality, it is a non-reality, a contradiction.

Still, there are numerous other things God cannot do. God cannot lie, he cannot deceive, God cannot deny himself, God cannot cease to be who and what he is, he cannot fail, he cannot do anything inconsistent with his nature and character.

So, when Christians make the assertion that God can do anything, the anything needs to be qualified. Surely, Christ meant in Matthew 19 that God can do things men cannot.

Undeniably, the context indicates this by clearly saying, with men it is impossible, but with God all things are possible. While God is unlimited in his power and is thus omnipotent, yet his doing of anything must comport and comply with the demands of his other attributes, including his holiness and righteousness.

[24 : 43] These two are abilities and attributes of God, and his possession of them is not partial, but absolute. Every act of God, great or small, must comply with all that he is and all his attributes.

No attribute of God negates another, nor do any dominate another, and all that God is, he is all of the time. This concept refers to God's immutability, an attribute to be discussed at a future session of Christianity Clarified.

As God's omnipotence means there is no power or authority that exists anywhere, at any time, or any place, that is not resident in him and or derived from him.

So, too, the omniscience of God means precisely the same in connection with knowledge. There is nothing known or to be known by any or all entities in any or all locales that is not known by God in the fullest manner.

Omniscience is a compound word from Latin origins. Omni means all and science means to know. Thus, omniscience means all knowing.

[26 : 01] God, being infinite, knows all that is knowable, at any and all times, in any and all venues. The knowledge known and possessed by this omniscient God is intuitive.

That means he knows because he knows, not because he has learned. The omniscient God never learned anything, for to learn means to acquire knowledge not known before, clearly unthinkable for the omniscient deity.

Omniscience means there is no knowledge, no information of which he is not fully aware, at no time and in no place. Omniscience requires as much awareness of all that is future, as well as what is past or present.

Omniscience means God need not await an event to occur before he knows it altogether. Of late, a notion has circulated among Christians called open theism.

It postulates that God is dependent upon the future, unfolding before he can know it. Even God, say the open theist, is subject to being surprised.

[27 : 08] So if one embraces open theism, it is inescapable to reach any other conclusion than that of charging God with a finite kind of ignorance as to what the future will bring.

In this, the omniscient God must forfeit his credentials of being an all-knowing God. He simply would not be. If open theism is correct, God must then await the decisions of men and nations to know what is occurring, the same as us mere mortals.

Well, really now, we always thought there were decided advantages to being the deity. One of the most pronounced is the ability to call things that are not as though they are, plus knowing the end from the beginning and vice versa.

Are all things naked and open before him with whom we have to do? Or are they hidden from God and cannot be known by him until they occur? In order for the deity to be infinite, there must not be information or knowledge that escapes him.

An ignorant deity, even a partially ignorant deity, is not worthy of our worship. The psalmist understood the reality of God's omniscience in the 139th.

[28 : 22] O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me. Thou dost know when I sit down and when I rise up. Thou dost understand my thought from afar. Thou dost scrutinize my path and my lying down, and art intimately acquainted with all my ways.

Even before there is a word on my tongue, behold, O Lord, thou dost know it all. The psalmist expressed it as for what it meant. God is indeed omniscient.

The all-knowing nature of God is referred to as omniscience. As stunning as the concept is, omniscience must be possessed by the deity for him to be sovereign and rule as he sees fit over all his creation.

To suggest there are areas of ignorance in the knowledge of God is to refer to someone other than the Lord God manifested throughout the Bible. Innumerable occasions are recorded making it obvious God knows the innermost thoughts of all.

In addition, there are hundreds of prophecies recorded in the Old Testament and fulfilled in startling detail in the New that cannot possibly be explained short of God's omniscience and his knowledge of those events altogether.

[29 : 44] Of course, to us, it is inconceivable how anyone, God included, could know everything. The most brilliant and knowledgeable among us must admit to a profound ignorance and unawareness of so very much, while the deity has complete knowledge of every item of information.

But this is precisely what's required of one who is infinite. To be infinite means to have no limitations in any area of power, wisdom, or presence.

And such is so utterly unlike man. And such is precisely what God is about, so unlike man. This reality of God prompted the inspired Apostle Paul to speak of it in Romans 11, wherein he said, Oh, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!

How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out! Bear in mind also that it is this omniscience, this wisdom and knowledge of the infinite God, that will one day provide the basis for his perfect judgment at that great day of reckoning.

He who searches the hearts of all men knows precisely what is there. He knows not only deeds, but fully knows motivations behind those deeds.

[31 : 16] The writer of Hebrews 4 stated it thusly, Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight, but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

And just how many creatures are there? Innumerable to be sure. And God knows them all? Well, it certainly seems that way, impossible as it appears.

But when you are the infinite eternal God who possesses omniscience, it is merely part of your job description. And God, the omniscient God, is ever on the job.

Lastly, in addition to God's omniscience being the basis for present and future righteous judgments, it ought to afford us great comfort to know that God knows all, including our pain, our sorrow, and grief, as well as our needs and dreams, and in his omniscient wisdom, he will perfect that which concerns us.

This provides a solace for the human soul the world can never give. Thus far, we have only briefly considered two of the three omnis in reference to God.

[32 : 36] The first, omnipotence, dealt with God possessing all power. That's all power. Not much power, not most power, but all power. Additionally, God possesses omniscience.

This means he has all knowledge. He is not merely knowledgeable, nor knows a lot more than we do, but he knows all. Nothing escapes his complete awareness of all there is to know.

And as the word suggests, it means there is no place devoid of the presence of God. And understandably, this aspect of the attributes of God, his omnipresence, is just as mind-boggling as the other omnis.

How can God be present in every place at all times? Being a fellow finite human like you, I certainly don't have the foggiest idea how God can be that and do that.

But he does. And however impossible it seems to us, it presents no problem to him. This, too, is a sign to the reality of God being infinite, that is, without limitations.

[33 : 38] We mere mortals are saddled with one kind of limitation after another. It's what makes us human. But God has no such limitations. It's what makes him God.

Another of several areas of which he is not limited is his presence. This is a mighty big universe God has created. We know of multiple galaxies that are separated by light years.

So how is it possible that even God could be everywhere present with all he has created? Well, for starters, keep in mind that God is spirit. Remember John 4.24?

Spirit is not material but immaterial and spirit does not require space and time to dwell in. All that is material does.

Matter has to have a place to be. Spirit is greater and beyond physical matter. God being spirit is not material but pre-exist matter.

[34 : 39] Spirit, in fact, created matter when as yet there was no material substance, no space and no time. Yet, there was this non-material spirit being called God, the uncaused first cause.

And when God created matter, a la Genesis 1.1, he yet remained separate and distinct from what he created. But he has chosen to have his presence everywhere with it.

The familiar 139th Psalm tells the tale. Where can I go from thy spirit? Or where can I flee from thy presence? If I ascend to heaven, thou art there.

If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the dawn, if I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, even there thy hand will lead me, and thy right hand will lay hold of me.

If I say, surely the darkness will overwhelm me, and the light around me will be night, even the darkness is not dark to thee, and the night is as bright as the day.

[35 : 46] Darkness and light are alike to thee. The psalmist said such knowledge was too high for him. It's too high for us, too. But it is what it is.

God is omnipresent. You can mark it down, and there are no exceptions. It's an age-old philosophical and scientific maxim.

Without fear of contradiction or equivocation, it stands as an irrefutable principle of time and eternity, and it's both simple and profound. Here it is.

Everything that had a beginning must have a cause. There is nothing that exists that did not have an efficient cause which produced it. But one might say, well, what's the big deal about that?

Everybody knows that nothing can just happen without something or someone causing it to happen. Well, one would think so, but this is not the case. There are those whom many would regard as brilliant, some even in the scientific area, who believe the universe came into existence on its own.

[36 : 55] Stephen Hawking, dubbed by many as the world's greatest physicist, recently declared, because of the existence of gravity, the universe was capable of creating itself, from a state of non-existence to existence, all because of the reality of gravity.

His conclusion was that there was therefore simply no need for God. Gravity itself was quite up to the task of generating from nothing what we know as the universe.

With all due respect to the acknowledged human brilliance of Dr. Hawking, he did not mention what or who was responsible for the existence of gravity.

Where did gravity come from? How did gravity get here? Our basic premise at the outset remains steadfast. Everything that had a beginning must have a cause.

And for any who try to apply this to the deity, their question then would be, well, what caused God? The biblical answer is, God wasn't caused.

[37 : 57] He is the uncaused first cause, and the only one who is. Philosophically and logically, there has to be a something or a someone that preexisted all else.

One has a choice between a non-intelligent agent or an intelligent agent. And what do any of us know about a non-intelligent agent doing anything?

What example can anyone cite regarding something that has no organic life, self-generating organic life? Such an idea defies logic, science, and philosophy.

The maxim stands, unthreatened by all the sciences. Everything that had a beginning must have a cause. Every object and every person must have a precedent that caused it.

God had no beginning, having existed as the uncaused first cause. Either somebody or something had to have always been.

[39 : 02] The choice is between someone having always been and was an intelligent source from which all else proceeded, or something which was unintelligent and the source from which all else proceeded.

Those are your choices. A third option is not available. The world's greatest living physicist made his choice in selecting unintelligent gravity.

The Bible clearly opts for the other choice. An intelligent, uncaused first cause started it all. Your choice? Choose wisely. In our ongoing consideration of the attributes of God, we noted that God is the uncaused first cause.

Either someone or something was prior to everything. And if we say it was something, we begin everything and everyone from an origin of non-intelligence.

And that's a very big pill to swallow. Logically, philosophically, scientifically, and biblically, that pill won't go down at all. Biblically, the position of Genesis 1-1 is in place.

[40 : 13] God, the intelligent person behind it all, was responsible for having created the universe, consisting of intelligent biological life and non-intelligent matter in its various forms.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The subsequent verses in Genesis 1 detail how and when God created the remainder of our world. All of this pre-existence of our Creator refers to Him as the uncaused first cause.

And this very designation presupposes certain other things about the deity. His self-existence is clearly in view, which is reflected in His very name of L-O-R-D, Lord, in the Hebrew, Yahweh, or Jehovah.

And this is the meaning of the I Am that God famously explained to Moses in Exodus 3. It is the Hebrew grammatical form of the verb to be, and it reflects God's constant being.

He is not the I was or the I will be, but the ever constant eternal I Am. And it also conveys the notion that God is because of Himself, that is, the self-existent One.

[41 : 23] Nobody we know, and certainly no thing, exists because of itself. But God does, and He is the only one who does. And because God is, because He is, He must also be self-sufficient to Himself.

Self-existence and self-sufficiency are related. His self-sufficiency means God is able to meet all the needs He has from within Himself. There is nothing outside of Himself that He is in any wise dependent upon.

And this is, of course, so utterly unlike us. We are all profoundly dependent upon everything outside ourselves. For starters, think of oxygen.

We are all radically dependent upon an outside source for every single breath we take. All our food and water sources are not from within us, but from outside us.

Minute by minute, we constantly sustain our life by utilizing sources outside ourselves. It is not so with the deity. God is both self-existent and self-sufficient.

[42 : 29] He who always was and always will be remains the independent one who has no needs he cannot and does not meet from within his own person. Then, why did God create anything?

Revelation 4 reveals that. God created simply because he was pleased to do so. He did not need angels or humans, but chose of his own free will to bring them and all else into creation, along with time and space in which they would exist.

No necessity compelled him. God's self-existence and his self-sufficiency are simply two more very profound attributes separating God from man. The sovereignty of God is perhaps one of the most frequently contested attributes of God.

And who would the contestants be? Those whom God has created, namely man and angels. Both constitute classes of beings who are not always willing to let God be God.

They would, were they able, dethrone the deity and sit in his place themselves. So let's define what is meant by sovereignty. To say that God is sovereign means he has the power to exercise full authority and supremacy over all he has created, and he also possesses the moral right to do so.

[43 : 50] Many have been the numbers of men and angels to challenge God's sovereignty. Surely, as history has borne out, all attempts to dethrone the deity have met with abject failure.

But this doesn't prevent men and angels from their tireless and futile efforts to do so. The biblical position is unmistakably clear. God created and thus is entitled to exercise dominion over what he himself brought into existence.

That which would have no being is rightfully subservient to that which gave it its being. The principle is stated in Romans 9 when the illustration of the clay pot and the potter who made it is invoked.

Can the pot rightfully say to the potter, why have you made me this way? Does not the potter have absolute dominion over the clay to fashion it as he will into what he will?

Does the pot have rights? Must the potter bend his will or wishes to accommodate the pot? And were the potter made to do so, who would then be the true sovereign?

[44 : 58] And be advised, more than one sovereign is a contradiction in terms. Multiple sovereigns is an oxymoron. Sovereignty requires singularity for its very meaning and existence.

Because God is the sovereign with the full authority to order all things after the counsel of his will, he may or may not acquiesce to the needs or wishes to those he created.

It's his call. It's always his call. This, in part, is what sovereignty is all about. God possesses both the power and the authority to do his own will.

Power, in the Greek, relates to energy, strength, or force. The word in Greek is *dunamis*. It's the word from which our words dynamite, dynamo, dynamic comes.

The Greek word for authority is *exousia*, from which we get the English word execute, or executive. Executive. An executive has power, too, but it's a different kind of power than *dunamis*.

[46 : 03] God is sovereign, which means he possesses in full measure *dunamis* and *exousia*, power and authority. God's *exousia* gives him the executive power to decree or make decisions, and his *dunamis* power gives him the strength or energy to enforce or bring to pass whatever is required to fulfill the demands of his own decrees.

And in the midst of all this decreeing and executing, he also possesses the full moral authority for doing so. This is our sovereign God who works all things after the counsel of his own will.

Our first segment on the sovereignty of God revealed God's sovereignty to be that attribute most often challenged by men and angels.

It was so when Lucifer declared he would exalt himself to the very throne of God. It was repeated continually by men from Adam onward, who by their attitude and acts would superimpose their will and way upon the will and way of the sovereign God.

Man with all his rebel tendencies has always wanted to be in charge and in his brazenness defy the almighty and is clearly set for standards.

[47 : 22] There always have been the Lucifers, the Canes, the Nimrods, the Neros, the Hitlers and Stalins, Pol Potts and Idi Amiens, on and on and on.

All would be sovereign. But we may be sure the deity never felt threatened or feared for his job as sovereign of the universe. Few if any passages spell this out as clearly as 1 Chronicles 29, which states, Thine, O Lord, is the greatness and the power, and the glory and the victory and the majesty.

For all that is in the heaven and in the earth is Thine. Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and Thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come of Thee, and Thou reignest over all.

And in Thy hand is power and might, and in Thy hand it is to make great and to give strength unto all. And Matthew 6 expresses it with the very familiar, For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.

Amen. For any mere mortal to deny the sovereign God his due is surely the height of supreme ignorance. And for any mere mortal to fantasize about displacing the deity is the height of supreme arrogance.

[48 : 39] Sadly, the world has never lacked for candidates in either category of ignorance or arrogance. But God just goes on about his business of being the absolute sovereign deity that he is.

Lewis Perry Chafer in his massive work of systematic theology spoke thusly of God's sovereignty. Quote, He is creator and his dominion is perfect and final.

He is free to dispose of his creation as he will. But his will is wholly guided by the true and benevolent features of his person. All majesty and glory belong to God.

All material things are his by the most absolute ownership. Men hold property by rights which are only temporary and permitted by God. Chafer then quotes from Psalm 50, For every beast of the forest is mine and the cattle upon a thousand hills.

End quote. All throughout scripture, the theme of the absolute sovereignty of God peels forth. God is on his throne. God and God alone is in charge and happy is the man who acknowledges it and joyfully submits his will to God and his sovereignty.

[49 : 54] Many have been the challenges to the sovereignty of God, but none were ever successful and none ever can be. God's absolute sovereignty is a key factor in providing humans with the assurance and stability needed for joyful and confident living.

Relax. God is sovereign. Rejoice. God is in charge. It becomes obvious as we pursue an explanation of the attributes of God that there is a lot of interrelatedness between them.

The spillover of one attribute into another becomes inevitable. Hence, some repetition is also inevitable. Yet each attribute in and of itself has peculiarities of its own worthy of elaboration.

An attribute of God is that being of God, that feature of God that makes him God. And now, under brief consideration on Christianity Clarified, is the subject of God's eternal being.

The spillover from this topic to several other of his attributes is, as stated earlier, inevitable. Our use of the word eternal and the meaning usually given to it is simply not accurate.

[51 : 08] We most often think of eternity as time stacked upon time, so that thousands or even millions of years constitute eternity. But this is a misunderstanding, even though it is believed by most.

A correct concept of eternity is that which is utterly devoid of time. All time. Eternity is timeless. It is a state of being where time is unknown and unneeded.

It is the very absence of time that makes eternity eternity. Yet, one can easily see why we think of eternity as time going on forever, because in our finite creatureliness, we are confined and constrained by time.

Days, months, and years are everything to us when it comes to our very existence. And that's because, of course, we live, move, move, and have our being regulated by the clock and the calendar.

Is there anything more germane to our humanness than time and space? We very fully dwell in both. Eternity is another of God's attributes.

[52 : 26] Isaiah expressed this in chapter 57 when he said, For thus saith the high and lofty one that inhabits eternity, whose name is holy.

Eternal conveys no notion of time, but is timeless. In fact, it is the very absence of time of any kind that makes eternity eternal.

So, while it is understandable in a concept we often invoke as eternity being a long, long time, that is nonetheless incorrect.

Rather, think of eternity as being a state of being, rather than a time of being. Here on earth, it is time that ages us and everything all about us.

But there is no aging factor in eternity. What age will we be in eternity? That's a question we all ponder, particularly those now beset with a groaning and weakening body.

[53 : 30] Suffice it to say, upon entering eternity, the believer will find himself to be precisely what and how God deems it to be. And how can you improve on that?

Our eternal God is the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity. This is where God dwells, and all believers will one day inhabit this eternity with him.

Change is the order of the day for all creatures, regardless of one's station in life. Life itself is often described as an ongoing series of changes and adjustments, and they unfailingly occur on every level and in every venue.

The lowliest of peons to the most elevated of royalty cannot fight off change. And while this is all true of all of humanity, God knows nothing of change.

And theology calls this God's immutability, not subject to change. We understand mutations, how certain biological life forms, such as lowly bacteria, can mutate itself into a more resistant strain to stave off extinction.

[54 : 39] God's immutability ought to be a great source of comfort to all beings who are not immutable. It's wonderful to know that despite change occurring all around us and even within us, there is one being not subject to change.

God alone is the great constant. And his immutability is coupled with his other attributes that even require his immutability. How could God be omniscient and not be immutable?

Or omnipotent or omnipresent and not be immutable? In God, there is no capriciousness. The psalmist related his pleasure in serving an immutable God in Psalm 102, when he stated, Of old hast thou laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thy hands.

They shall perish, but thou shalt endure. Yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment. As a vesture thou shalt change them, and they shall be changed. But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end.

Malachi adds his sentiment in chapter 3, when God speaks through him, saying, I am the Lord, I change not. Therefore, you sons of Jacob are not consumed.

[55 : 55] God is saying the only reason Israel continues to exist is because the covenant-keeping God is not fickle and does not change. If God were changeable, Israel would have been history, because God would have not put up with them.

But being the immutable God he is, Israel is safe as the recipient of God's promises, promises he will honor, because he is immutable.

Beautiful passage extolling the immutability of God. In James chapter 1, it says, Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

God's great unchanging nature is one of the attributes required of deity. With man, change is so much a constant, it has been said that the more things change, the more they stay the same.

With us, change is sameness. But with the immutable God, the opposite is true. No variation, no shadow that is caused by God's turning, because God doesn't turn.

[57 : 03] An immutable God is the very basis of the believer's security and stability. Immutability is one more of God's attributes that should cause us to rejoice.

For Christianity Clarified, this is Marv Wiseman in Springfield, Ohio. Thomas Chisholm did the Christian community an enormous service when he penned the words taken from the lamentations of Jeremiah in chapter 3.

It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning. Great is thy faithfulness.

And, of course, from those lines he wrote that majestic and uplifting anthem, Great is thy faithfulness. It reminds us of the immutability of God stated in Malachi 3, where the Lord said, I am the Lord, I change not, therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.

And both passages from Malachi and Jeremiah imply the same truth, that it was not Israel's good behavior that caused God to stay his hand from raining deserved judgment down upon them.

[58 : 16] It was only the immutability and the faithfulness of God that spared them. God is always faithful to whatever he has promised or committed himself to do or be.

He cannot deny himself or the word that he has sent forth. Extolling God's faithfulness in the New Testament, the Apostle Paul wrote in chapter 10, that there is no temptation taken you, but such is his common demand.

But God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you were able to bear, but will with the temptation provide the way of escape so that you may be able to bear it.

And John echoes God's faithfulness with the all-important forgiveness issue in chapter 1 of 1 John. If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Faithful, dependable, reliable, always making good on whatever he has promised. And perhaps the most remarkable and comforting feature of God's faithfulness is that it is not conditioned upon our faithfulness.

[59 : 25] 2 Timothy 2 makes it very clear with the statement, If we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself.

That is tremendously comforting. Even if we are unfaithful to God in our obligations to him, he does not retaliate by being unfaithful to us.

God will not allow us and our disobedience to him to make him respond in kind by being unfaithful. And this is priceless.

God can be counted on to fulfill all he has promised, no matter how much we fail him. Somebody has to be constant. Somebody has to be strong and utterly dependable.

And that somebody is the ever immutable, dependable, faithful God. And well should man write hymns of praise extolling this purely God attribute of faithfulness.

[60 : 27] Significantly, the Bible closes by describing Jesus Christ in chapter 19 of the Revelation as seated upon a white horse, and he is called faithful and true.

And in righteousness he judges and makes war. From Genesis to Revelation, as the drama of redemption is played out, God is ever identified consistently as the God who is faithful.

Whatever it is that is true of God, it may be well said that he is rich in it, because God has no meager supply of anything that makes him what he is.

And this includes God's mercy, one of the wonderfully benevolent attributes of God. Without the divine granting of mercy, no one would ever be able to approach the otherwise unapproachable God.

And what is it that engenders the release of God's mercy and the bestowment of it upon the guilty person? There must be the request for it from the suppliant, because God grants no mercy to the one not seeking it.

- [61 : 34] And seeking mercy constitutes a tacit acknowledgement of personal guilt and culpability. Mercy is the withholding of punishment that is due and deserved.

And multitudes are denied mercy from God, not because God does not want to extend it. He does. But before God can grant mercy, there must be the acknowledgement of its need on the part of the one who will receive it.

For those refusing to admit their guilt, there is no mercy, only justice. For those admitting their guilt, God is said to be rich in mercy.

We've heard the expression in our present-day legal settings where the defendant, having been found guilty, throws himself upon the mercy of the court. Well, suppose the guilty one should ask for mercy while at the same time maintaining his innocence.

Such would be a clear contradiction. Mercy is never needed, nor is it available to one protesting their innocence. Mercy is available only to those acknowledging their guilt.

- [62 : 37] And toward these, God is rich in mercy, as Paul expressed it in Ephesians 2. Mercy aplenty. Mercy inexhaustible.

And for those who have done so by admitting their guilt and have become a recipient of God's mercy, Paul reminds them that God is the Father of mercies in 2 Corinthians 1.

In writing to another protege, Paul told Titus that, It is not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He has saved us.

God's mercy is never in short supply, but is lavished upon all who are recipients of it. Mercy simply means God does not give you what you deserve, what pure justice would demand, but He withholds what we do deserve.

This is the wonderful attribute of mercy resident in God and ready to be poured forth in abundance upon all who qualify for it. And how do we qualify? By admitting our guilt before a holy God and appealing to Him for the mercy He has to give, a mercy made possible and available through God's Son, Jesus Christ.

- [63 : 55] Peter, in his first letter, exclaims, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

This mercy, in great abundance, comes from God who has it to give through Jesus Christ, God's Son, whose death makes it all possible. This is Marv Wiseman for Christianity Clarified.

Of all the attributes of God enumerated in Scripture, and there are several, none so clearly reveals the vast difference between God and man as that which we now engage, the holiness of God.

If ever there were an attribute of God that so soundly dooms the unrepentant sinner, it is this. Holiness, as applied to the deity, speaks of His utter apartness, His separation from any and all defilement, because God is holiness absolute, holiness personified.

It is precisely God's holiness and man's lack thereof that places us in such deep, deep jeopardy. Those who do not despair when confronted with God's abject holiness compared to man's abject deficit of holiness simply do not understand either.

- [65 : 22] Isaiah chapter 6 records the exclamation of the seraphic creatures in saying, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of His glory.

And likewise, the four living creatures of Revelation 4 are said not to rest day nor night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was and is and is to come.

There is nothing so troubling to man, nor gets him in such great trouble before God, as God's holiness. That holiness coupled with our unholiness makes man's state as absolutely desperate as it can be.

Then contemplate this in addition. This holy God compounds human desperation by insisting, Without holiness no man shall see the Lord, referenced in Hebrews 12.

And you shall be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy. Leviticus 19. Our great predicament is far more serious than most mere mortals know, because God is holy and we are not.

[66 : 34] Yet, we are obligated to be holy, for God is holy. And without holiness no man shall see the Lord. This is a desperate need of holiness.

Yet, our crippling unholy nature falls far short. If acceptable holiness cannot be generated by man, no matter the sincerity or intensity involved, yet without it we are righteously doomed, what possible solution or salvation can there be?

The answer lies in an imputed righteousness or holiness. Christ's own holiness is infused into the believing unholy person upon their embrace of Jesus Christ as their substitute and Savior.

This was God's whole purpose of the cross. It was to provide a righteousness and holiness for man who could not provide it for himself.

And this is why it's called Good News. It is God's holiness imparted and imputed to sinful man, thus making him acceptable to a holy God.

[67 : 47] The death, burial, and resurrection is God's only provision for man's lost condition. God's holiness can be a frightening thing.

But in Christ, imputing it to us, it is exhilarating. From early in the Old Testament, where God says in Deuteronomy 7 that his love was upon Israel, to the close of the Bible in Revelation 1, when John says that Jesus Christ loved us and washed us from our sins, the magnificent theme of God's love for his creation throbs throughout.

John epitomizes the subject when he stated in chapter 4 that God is love. In no other religion, large or small, is the subject of love so extolled as it is in Christianity.

And we know of no other supposed God claimed by anyone in any belief system, whether past or present, that dwells on love as does biblical Christianity.

Besides the host of scripture texts, the songs written and the poems composed that focus on the subject of love in general, and God's love in particular is simply staggering.

[69 : 04] To love and be loved by another human is the second greatest thing in the world. And that's because the first greatest thing in the world is to love and be loved by the God who created all, sustains all, and gave all on behalf of his fallen creation.

Love on all levels and in all venues is so euphoric, those who describe it best complain of their inability to do it better.

Only in the truths of Christianity do we encounter the incomprehensible love God shed abroad when he and his son teamed up with the Holy Spirit to effect the greatest demonstration of love that will ever be known.

So many know the verse, For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

One cannot contemplate a truth more sublime than that, or a truth possessed of such eternal consequences as that. And God's love is not an issue that is quantified, but qualified.

[70 : 14] God's love was not dispensed as an amount of love, but a quality of love. God's love was of such a kind, such a sort, such a quality is the meaning the Greek gives it.

No mortal anywhere can fully describe the indescribable. We can only make feeble attempts. And isn't that truly the way it should be? Must be.

Who indeed could describe the indescribable love of the indescribable God? A breathless passage is found in Romans 5, wherein the inspired apostle reminds us that God commended or demonstrated his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

The only ones not greatly moved by that statement are those who simply do not understand it. To understand it is to be utterly in awe and in gratitude of it. This great love with which he loved us can only be appreciated when one grasps the truth of sacrifice and substitution.

Miss that, and you miss all the Bible and Christianity is about. Miss that, and you miss everything that's worth anything. Miss that, and it makes no difference what you didn't miss.

[71 : 28] The love of God is one of his several attributes par excellence. All his attributes are par excellence. You've just heard another session of Christianity Clarified with Marv Wiseman.

The next disc is disc number six of Christianity Clarified to be released shortly. It contains a fast-moving treatment of what the Bible relates regarding several aspects of the life of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He is, of course, the most unique of any human being ever to have lived. Beginning with his Trinitarian role and his pre-existence prior to Bethlehem, scriptural referencing focuses upon his commission from his Father, incarnation, baptism and temptation, and the ever-controversial issue of the exclusivity of human salvation vested in Jesus Christ.

The extent and efficacy of the death of Christ needs understanding and appreciation of all who call themselves Christian. The necessity of our Lord's physical resurrection from the dead, his subsequent ascension and post-ascension ministry.

Explanation is undertaken to define the church as his spiritual body of Christ and how that involves believers. His return and removal of the church prior to his second coming, when every eye shall see him.

[73 : 01] Following the second advent of Christ, his ultimate judgment, reign, and establishment in the eternal state will conclude the series of 20 three-minute sessions on this single compact disc, number six.

Computer users may log on to gracebiblespringfield.com. That's all one word, gracebiblespringfield.com and download whatever you wish free of charge or burn your own CD if you have that capability.

Christianity Clarified provides critical biblical content encompassing a systematic theology, all presented in painless snatches of approximately three minutes each on one compact disc.

Maker and omega and mana and more