

Christianity Clarified Volume 69

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[0 : 00] Christianity Clarified, Volume 69, Track 1, The Kingdom Definition Revisited, Part 1. Do you find it at all curious that the super-important subject of the Kingdom of Heaven, sometimes called the Kingdom of God, although used hundreds of times in the four Gospels, is never even once actually defined?

How is it possible that such a prominent topic as that was never clearly spelled out in its meaning so as to avoid misunderstanding? The answer to why not is really almost obvious.

Doing so would be tantamount to my explaining to you today what is meant by saying, It's raining outside. Well, everybody knows precisely what that means.

So to explain the meaning of the Kingdom of Heaven was simply superfluous. But while that was true of first-century Israel in the time of Jesus, it certainly is not true today.

There are all kinds of imaginable definitions assigned to the meaning of the Kingdom today, and no doubt some even unimaginable, such being the reality of human imagination.

[1 : 16] Answers are all the way from understatements to exaggerations. So, how can we today be sure of what such a key term really does mean?

Only by comparing Scripture with Scripture. We simply let the Bible itself tell us what terms mean by noting the several places they are found, the context that surrounds them, and the questions and answers of people involved.

Admittedly, this isn't rocket science, but it is time-consuming, especially for today's culture that demands a quick fix for every problem and a brief, very, very brief explanation of whatever the issue.

Sad to say, these folks have no idea of what they are missing, because time spent in the Scriptures pays off in more ways with more dividends than one can imagine.

And many of you in today's audience can readily identify with that payoff with words you find hard to express. Another explanatory reference to the Kingdom of Heaven is given by the Apostle Peter in Acts chapter 3.

[2 : 33] There, Peter speaks of the times of refreshing and the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient times.

It was Israel, the chosen people of God, who were destined to produce the Messiah, who would accomplish establishing that kingdom, and He would be a direct descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob through the line of Judah and David the king.

Now, fast forward another thousand years to arrive at Jesus of Nazareth, the Lamb of God and the Lion of the tribe of Judah. No need to tell the people of Israel about the promise of a Messiah, because from earliest of times, the Jews ate, drank, slept, and dreamt of the promised one to come, the Messiah of Israel.

And it was John, the baptizer, who introduced Jesus of Nazareth in effect and said, Here He is! Here is the King who will bring in that kingdom.

Christianity Clarified, Volume 69, Track 2, The Kingdom Definition Revisited, Part 2. Now hear this.

[3 : 57] Now hear this. The United States Navy has a way of getting the attention of its crewmen on board a ship. It's now hear this. And then the announcement of importance would follow with all ears attuned to what was coming.

And while we of Christianity Clarified are not at sea, yet experience has taught us that many are at sea regarding the subject of the kingdom of heaven, sometimes also known as the kingdom of God.

So, now hear this. This kingdom of heaven, or if you will, the kingdom of God, is not merely a big picture.

It is the big picture, this side of eternity. First off, let's emphasize a super important distinction.

While the kingdom of heaven is sometimes called the kingdom of God, the same is what we term the present big picture. Again, did you get that?

[5 : 05] It is not a big picture. It is the big picture. And the reason being, the kingdom of heaven is planet earth, restored to its original uncursed state before the disobedience of Adam and Eve brought it all crashing down around them.

As God the Creator warned them in advance, a new thing called death would be their experience and consequence should they disobey Him.

They did, and it was. And not only they, but all their progeny, including us today, are by birth necessary partakers of that death sentence as well.

So, what would it take to reverse that? Is there any way that original state of innocence can be regained, the curse that God warned of and righteously imposed?

Yes, there was a way. But it would require the personal intervention of the Creator Himself to do it.

[6 : 18] And that's who Jesus was and is, the personal Creator and Intervener. It was He who, as the Word, or the communication of God, was made flesh, born of a virgin, and dwelt among us as the potentate, or King of Heaven and Earth, disguised as a human being.

Truly, this is the greatest story ever told. And the prophets for centuries wrote about and longed for the ills of this ruined, fallen earth to be restored to its original state of blessedness for that lost paradise of the earth to be regained, for death to be abolished, and for God's blessing and richness to be lavished upon a regenerated earth and humanity.

That is what the Kingdom of Heaven come to earth will be. And Jesus of Nazareth had been assigned to that task.

That's why He came to earth. Christianity Clarified, Volume 69, Track 3, The Kingdom of Heaven Revisited, Part 3. The most familiar reference to the biblical concept of the Kingdom of Heaven is found in the oft-quoted Lord's Prayer of Matthew, Chapter 6.

Jesus gives a model-type prayer to His disciples, part of which includes the prayer for God's Kingdom to come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

[8 : 03] It was this coming of the Kingdom John the Baptist announced in Matthew, Chapter 3. And John said it was at hand, or right around the corner, very close.

How or why did John say that? It was because the King, who was to establish that Kingdom, was present and accounted for.

John baptized Jesus of Nazareth, His second cousin, and introduced Him to the nation of Israel as the Promised One, mentioned 4,000 years earlier in Genesis 3.15.

Jesus was the seed, or offspring, of the Virgin Mary, and He had come to fulfill that long-awaited Kingdom of Heaven. It was called that because it would consist of Heaven's peace and righteousness brought down from Heaven to Earth.

Hence, the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand, right around the corner, here on planet Earth. To validate His office of being the very one to do that, Jesus gave them miraculous evidences proving He was the one to do it, and He had come to Earth for that purpose.

[9 : 21] He told the Pharisees in Matthew 12, If I, by the Spirit of God, cast out demons, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you. Indeed, it had.

Everywhere He went, He brought kingdom conditions with Him. Israel had huge numbers of people who were blind, deaf, crippled, possessed of demons, and some He encountered were corpses being carried to their burial.

His doing all of that was providing a taste, an experience, of what the Kingdom would be like when established on Earth, and it would begin right there in Israel.

But this Kingdom would not be imposed on Israel. It would be offered. It would require national acceptance by the leaders of the nation.

Tragically, it would result in the national jilting of the greatest lover any nation could ever have. In approaching Jerusalem for His last time, recorded in Luke 19, Jesus stopped overlooking the city with bitter tears of anguish and rejection, flowed down His face as He exclaimed, Israel, Israel, if you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace, but now they have been hidden from your eyes.

[10 : 52] For the days shall come upon you when your enemies will throw up a bank before you and surround you and hem you in on every side, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation.

And a scant forty years later in 70 A.D., the Romans would totally destroy Jerusalem, kill thousands and enslave thousands of others. Israel had spurned the king and the kingdom he had offered.

What then would become of the kingdom that would have been established by the king? The most wonderful thing imaginable happened, and it is up next. Christianity Clarified, volume 69, track four, The Unthinkable Happens, part one.

The previous session continued to explain the coming of the kingdom of heaven. It had been prophesied in the Old Testament, preached by John the Baptist in the New, and continued by Jesus and his apostles before his crucifixion and well into the book of Acts after his resurrection.

It was all about the plan to restore planet Earth to its original pristine state before its ruination caused by Adam and Eve's disobedience. It was Jesus, eternal Son of God, who had come to earth as the one his Father had selected to establish that kingdom.

[12 : 13] But he did not come to impose it upon Israel, but to offer it for their acceptance. They repeatedly rejected it because they would not accept the king.

You cannot have a kingdom if you will not have the king. King and kingdom were a package. So in their blindness, Israel did not realize their cruel rejection of the king meant the kingdom he had come to establish would not be possible.

Repeated opportunities for Israel to change their mind only met with more rejection, crucifixion, and continued national estrangement even after his resurrection.

In Acts 1, the apostles asked Jesus if he was then going to restore the kingdom. He replied that it was not for them to know the times or seasons which the father had in his own power, but they would be endued with power in a matter of days that would divinely enable them to carry on.

Shortly thereafter, following more rejection and persecution from the Jewish establishment, God did something utterly unimaginable. He selected the very least likely individual from the entire nation of Israel to be his point man for taking a new message to the least likely recipients.

- [13 : 36] It was as if God was saying to stubborn Israel, since you will not receive my son and the restoration of the earth and the kingdom, I'm going to bypass you, set you aside in your stubborn unbelief, and provide a message of unparalleled opportunity for those who are not even Jews.

They will be Gentiles, not Jews, and there will be no extensive list of commandments, regulations, or ritual by which they must abide.

Merely on the basis of their acknowledging their sin and placing their trust or faith in Jesus, the one whom you rejected, I will fully accept them, justify them, cleanse them from their sin, and individually elevate them to the status that Israel rejected.

And I am going to use one whom you considered to be your greatest ally to do that. He is named Saul of Tarsus.

No longer will he be your ally, but he will be mine. His good news will not be about the kingdom you have rejected, but about free grace extended solely on the basis of faith to every individual who receives it.

- [14 : 57] And my son, whom you rejected, will become the savior of Gentiles. And, oh yes, one more thing. I will put the Gentiles together with believing Jews and call them one body in Christ.

Now, if you wish, you may continue in your blind, stubborn unbelief. Christianity Clarify, Volume 69, Track 5, The Unthinkable Continues.

In a nutshell, the unthinkable had consisted of the inclusion of Gentiles into the scene that had been exclusively Jewish as far back as Abraham in Genesis 15.

He was the origin of what would be the Jewish race with his son Isaac, then Isaac's son Jacob, then Jacob's twelve sons, after whom the twelve tribes of Israel would be named.

From Genesis and Abraham, through Moses and Egypt, through the Exodus and Joshua, through the period of Judges, Samuel, and others, on into the establishment of the monarchy, beginning with King Saul, then David, then Solomon, then the division of the twelve tribes, there was one fixed reality that characterized them all, and they were Jewish, Jewish, Jewish.

- [16 : 33] Non-Jews, called Gentiles, were little more than minor players in this entire period of about 2,000 years. But then, the unthinkable would begin to unfold.

It would be due to the arrival on the scene of the one Jew who had been the focus and dreams of all Jews from Abraham, the first Jew, onward.

This Jew would be the one prophesied and designated Messiah, the anointed one, that specially selected and appointed one.

Selected and appointed by whom? By none other than God Himself. Yet, something that would make the unimaginable even more so would be Israel's rejection of that very long-awaited anointed one by God who was sent to them.

The Apostle John tells us in his Gospel, chapter 1, that Jesus came unto His own, and His own received Him not. While thousands of Jews did embrace Jesus as Israel's long-awaited Messiah, the official national leadership did not.

- [17 : 52] Their rejection led to the arrest and eventual execution of Jesus. But He wouldn't stay dead. Having been resurrected three days later, subsequently spending six weeks with His Apostles after His resurrection.

Still, the rejection mode by Jewish officialdom remained, and Jesus returned to Heaven before the very eyes of His Apostles just after giving them final orders in Acts, chapter 1.

A major part of this whole unthinkable situation was realized when, due to Israel's continued rejection, God would raise up another utterly unthinkable person, who also was a Jew, to bring a brand new, equally unthinkable message to an unthinkable people, the Gentiles.

And the one to take this new unthinkable message to the most unthinkable people was the unthinkable Saul of Tarsus, persecutor-in-chief of all those fellow Jews who believed and proclaimed Jesus of Nazareth to be the Messiah.

It was all unthinkable, but in addition, untold millions have found that unthinkable to be very, very true. Christianity Clarified, volume 69, track 6, The Confusion of Transition.

[19 : 24] The often overlooked element in the book of Acts is its transitional nature. The very word speaks of movement like we see in the words transport or transact.

In Acts, doctrine is on the move, undergoing change. And leading the change was the transition from Judaism to Christianity, from animal sacrifice to the sacrifice of Christ, from the law of Moses to grace extended through Jesus Christ, from an emphasis on national Israel to that of the individual, from Sabbath emphasis to the first day of the week, from the kosher diet to declaring all foods acceptable, from physical circumcision to spiritual circumcision a la Colossians chapter 2.

Those were only the most obvious. To call the last two-thirds of the first century chaotic and confusing was an understatement. still, all of the above found Jews tenaciously upholding the law of Moses, while Gentiles, who never were under the Mosaic law, rejoiced in gratitude for the grace of God being justified solely by faith in the substitutionary death of Christ.

Compounding this all, the temple in Jerusalem underwent Roman destruction in 70 A.D., just as Jesus had prophesied right before His death.

Then further, the New Testament that would become so vital for direction had not even been completed by the end of the first century. As the Jews struggled to recover from the 70 A.D.

[21 : 08] destruction, a renegade, namely Bar Kokhba, declared himself to be Israel's Messiah. He recruited many Jews to revolt against Rome, only to be decimated again by the Roman army about 130 A.D., approximately 60 or 70 years after the first destruction.

The destabilization of Israel proved ripe for the spawning of cults and splinter groups of both Jews and Gentiles, all of which contained some truths but commingled with lots of error.

The multiple destruction of things sacred to the Jews easily gave rise to the conclusion that they were no longer God's people but were instead permanently cast off by God and replaced with this new group called Christians.

The prominent church father of Christians named St. Augustine declared as much in his influential book that he penned called The City of God. And the Emperor Constantine, shortly into the previous fourth century, gave the name Catholic, meaning universal, the title of the Church and Church and State, were conjoined much as Israel was previously with Church and State under Judaism.

Constantine then made Christianity the state religion of Rome. Many concluded this to be, the kingdom of heaven had surely come to earth.

[22 : 51] Except, it wasn't, as time will definitely prove. So the volatility of the area continued. Christianity Clarified, Volume 69, Track 7, The Cosmic Conflict Begins.

Please be advised now, right up front, here is the first of two segments of the cosmic conflict, and they are completely out of order from what we are presently considering.

These are especially inserted here to remind you of the scope of this entire study called Christianity Clarified. The need is to get these two units, this one and the next, to inform you of the overall picture.

So here is the first segment. It is generally unknown by the majority of earth's population today, but it is very real and present nonetheless. It is the cosmic conflict.

It is cosmic in reference to its scope, which as the word implies, the cosmos, or the entire created universe. And it is a conflict in reference to the principles involved, namely, God the Creator and Lucifer, also known as Satan, who was the chiefest of all beings created by God.

[24 : 11] In every sense, the conflict between Creator and creature rages on from the time of its beginning that precedes Genesis chapter 1 to the present day.

It will continue until Satan meets his final end in the last book of the Bible in Revelation chapter 20. Satan's origin is compared with actual earthly rulers who in many ways were reflective of him in the persons of the king of Babylon in Isaiah chapter 14 and the prince of Tyre in Ezekiel 28.

Satan succeeded in recruiting members of other angelic beings to join him in opposing the God who created them. Jude verse 6 seems to identify them as the angels or fallen angels who did not keep their original estate.

Later, they appeared to be identified as demonic beings, some of whom were dealt with by Christ during his earthly ministry. Not content with allies recruited from the angelic sphere, Satan utilized the form of a serpent to also enlist by deceptive means the first humans God created as related in Genesis 3.

The previous battleground prior to earth's creation now includes earth itself and the humans to inhabit it currently numbering in the billions after having multiplied for thousands of years.

[25 : 47] Unseen and unrealized by most, the conflict between God and Satan rages on with each securing combatants for their own side.

God's combatants consist of those aligned with him while Satan's are those aligned with him. Most who are aligned with Satan are completely unaware of it.

Early on, due to earth's flood, humans became reduced to the family of eight, led by Noah. Earth's population, with Noah and his family's exception, was destroyed by the flood.

A new beginning got underway in Genesis chapter 8, and out of Noah and his son Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the earth would be repopulated. It is from the line of Shem that a new strategy engineered by God would develop, and it would center on one man descended from the line of Shem, who would become the most strategic for millennia to come.

His name? Abraham. And his importance will become obvious all through the human history to follow, including our present generation. Christianity Clarified, Volume 69, Track 8.

[27 : 03] The Cosmic Conflict Continues. The most critical and key figure of eternity is introduced to Israel in all four of the Gospels of the New Testament as their long-awaited Messiah that had been prophesied in Genesis 3, 4,000 years earlier.

Jesus of Nazareth quickly established himself in Israel with his teaching and undeniable multiple miracles. Despite those credentials, Jesus was rejected by the governing Jewish officials who considered him a threat to their position and power.

They, in turn, maneuvered Pontius Pilate to do their bidding by insisting Rome viewed Jesus as a political threat. His crucifixion was ultimately ordered and carried out by numerous parties from varied motives.

Despite his death, his resurrection from the dead was just as real. Jesus then continued his earthly ministry for nearly six weeks with his chosen apostles before ascending back to heaven, as recorded in Acts chapter 1.

The apostles, under Peter's leadership, continued to insist Jesus had risen from the dead and ascended back to heaven. At the Jewish feast of Pentecost in Acts 2, their message was embraced by 3,000 fellow Jews who experienced miraculous communications occurring among those gathered that spoke multiple languages that would have been otherwise unintelligible.

[28 : 45] Peter's message about Jesus was vindicated, and the number of Jews that believed added thousands more to those 3,000 originally from Pentecost, all exclusively Jewish.

Many miracles confirmed their message while they continued to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom specifically to Israel for as many as ten years after the resurrection.

Gentiles were noticeably absent until a single Roman army officer named Cornelius was led to faith in Jesus by the apostle Peter.

Near the same time, the most anti-Jesus Jew, named Saul of Tarsus, became soundly converted by way of a personal message from Jesus himself while Saul was en route to arrest his Jewish countrymen who had fled from him for persecution.

Saul was sent with a new message of salvation based solely on the grace of God made available by the sacrificial death of Christ for the sins of the entire world.

[29 : 55] To the world all around the Mediterranean, this message would be carried, blending Jews and Gentiles into one body as described in Ephesians chapter 3.

Following multiple crises and conflicts, Rome would lessen her hold on the world. Eventually, under the Emperor Constantine in 325 A.D., the Christian Church would be united to the ruling political state under Emperor Constantine as the state's official religion.

Eventually, what would become the Roman Catholic Church would emerge and undergo multiple changes, losses and additions, eventually spawning what would become Protestantism 500 years later.

The remainder of Catholicism and Protestantism continue to this day. Christianity Clarified, Volume 69, Track 9, Yielding to a Great Compulsion, Part 1.

It can only be called a great compulsion. It is great because of the subject matter. It is a compulsion because it is deemed as a necessity laid upon Christianity Clarified to pursue it.

[31 : 23] It is in reference to this monumental subject, the Kingdom of Heaven, also known as the Kingdom of God. It has been pursued and will continue to be pursued here on Christianity Clarified for two reasons.

Number one has already been mentioned, its being of great importance, which in itself justifies our attention. And number two is because of the confusion even among Christians as to its misunderstanding.

Christianity Clarified by its very name requires a serious pursuit of the subject of the Kingdom. Few issues, if any, so opens the Bible to a comprehensive appreciation as does this oft-confused but enlightening subject of the Kingdom.

One might add even a third reason for undertaking the subject, and that is because what will be presented forthcoming is admittedly a minority position in all of Christendom.

Christendom includes the major bodies of Roman Catholic and Protestant. Historically, these two entities comprise the majority position of this subject of the Kingdom of Heaven we will continue exploring.

[32 : 37] Essentially, it is that theological position called amillennialism that finds no basis for a future 1,000-year reign of Christ on earth, as stipulated in Revelation chapter 20.

Christianity Clarified disputes that position by embracing a literal interpretation of Revelation 20 as well as many other issues relating to biblical prophecy.

In contrast to the amillennial position held by the majority of Christianity, Christianity Clarified adheres to premillennialism, which simply means that Christ returns for the second time and He will then establish the Kingdom of Heaven here on earth.

Apart from these two positions of amillennial and premillennial, there are yet others held by fewer followers, including postmillennials, meaning Christ will return after the millennium.

And not to be outdone and by way of a little levity and amusement, there are some who call themselves panmillennials.

[33 : 52] Who are they? Well, they are the folks taking the position that, whatever, it will all pan out in the end. Also, and on a serious note, it is most fortunate and truly a blessing to know that no one's salvation or eternal destiny is dependent upon their view of eschatology or of the doctrine of what and when things to come actually do come.

Our simple trust in the finished work of Christ as one's personal Savior is alone, the determining factor for one's eternal destiny. You can be wrong about nearly everything else but that.

Lastly, whichever position one embraces as a Christian regarding things to come, there is no excuse for a lack of charity one to another, to all and for all who are fellow brethren in Christ.

Next up, we'll provide some helpful resources that will be noted for further investigation and of serious interest, especially to pastors and teachers all about the Kingdom.

Christianity Clarified, Volume 69, Track 10, Yielding to a Great Compulsion, Part 2. The Great Compulsion is an attempt to clarify the meaning of a term that Christ Himself referenced repeatedly as well as His disciples after Him.

[35 : 14] It is called the Kingdom of Heaven, sometimes the Kingdom of God. It is the overarching theme of the entire Bible from Genesis to Revelation.

In brief, it is the redemption, restoration, or renewing of our ruined, broken planet Earth back to its original position before it all came crashing down due to the disobedience of our original parents, Adam and Eve.

For two or three hundred years after Jesus went back to Heaven, as recorded in Acts chapter 1, the nearly unanimous belief among Christians was that He would come again and personally set up that long-awaited Kingdom of Heaven here on Earth.

But after hundreds of years passed and He had not shown up, the whole concept of His literal return underwent a revision. Among the best and brightest was Origen in the 3rd century and Augustine in the 4th.

Their collective influence and teaching overturned the idea of Christ returning literally into Christ returning spiritually instead.

[36 : 30] In fact, Acts chapter 2 and the day of Pentecost was reinterpreted to mean Christ returned then, but only spiritually, not physically.

It was also seen as Christ having established the Kingdom, of which He repeatedly spoke, only not physically, but spiritually. So it all boiled down to the conclusion that even we today are living in the Kingdom of Heaven, only, you guessed it, not literally, but spiritually.

Hence, the will of God is currently being done on Earth as it is in Heaven. We are to believe by faith that such is the reality, and we are presently enjoying the Kingdom of Heaven that has come to Earth, now going on 2,000 years plus.

But when we try to square that interpretation with other passages of Scripture and with the reality in which we live, they do not mesh.

And with that, we quickly realize we do not have harmony, but disharmony. When the Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians chapter 4 that Satan is the god of this age, and he has blinded the minds of the lost so that they cannot see the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, We have a real problem making that fit with the idea that Christ is reigning on Earth spiritually or in any other way.

- [38 : 03] That Christ will so reign is certain, but that He is now doing so, reigning on Earth, contradicts everything the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth is supposed to be.

What is wrong with this picture? Well, it's all out of focus. That's what's wrong with it. This is not the Kingdom. This present world is a mess, riddled with conflict, corruption, disease, war, and death.

We need a new concept, but would you believe the new concept is actually the old concept in need of a rebirth?

And the explanation is upcoming. Christianity Clarified, Volume 69, Track 11. Yielding to a Great Compulsion, Part 3.

The previous session concluded by saying, The majority of Christendom, consisting of Catholic and Protestant, has embraced the spiritualizing of the Kingdom of Heaven since the 3rd and 4th century.

- [39 : 08] But prior to that, the nearly unanimous opinion of Christ's return among Christians, and the Kingdom that He would establish on Earth, would have been very literal and physical.

Important, highly respected teachers, among whom were Origen and Augustine, could not account for Christ not having returned like He said He would after hundreds of years of His absence.

So, they thus concluded He actually had returned on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, and has been ruling on Earth spiritually rather than literally ever since.

Eventually, that took hold, and by the 4th and 5th century A.D., the literal expectation of Christ's return had shifted from the literal to the figurative or spiritual return.

And this remains the dominant view of the majority of Christendom, Catholic and Protestant to the present time. Newer winds blowing, old truths, would not show up until the 1700s.

- [40 : 14] They contradict that majority position with a new position that was really not new at all, but in fact was the old position of the literal return of Christ held for the first 3 or 4 centuries after He left.

It is, again, the premillennial held by what is still the minority as opposed to the continuing position of amillennial, which means, of course, no physical, literal return at all.

Both positions are held by their proponents in good faith. Yet, as pointed out numerous times on Christianity Clarified, believing something even in good faith does not make it true.

Regarding the old position of premillennialism held in the first 3 or 4 centuries after Christ to the then newer position of amillennialism, we are now seeing a reversal of the reversed, or a return to the original position held by centuries after Christ's return to heaven.

As premills gave way to amills, now amills are being pressed by premills to seriously rethink their position. It does appear the original premillennial position that gave way to the amillennial position has been gaining in popularity and acceptance.

- [41 : 37] A prime mover in its revival was John Nelson Darby in the 1800s and attached to the Plymouth Brethren denomination. D.L. Moody, the prominent evangelist of the late 1800s, and in addition to Moody, C.I. Schofield of the Schofield Reference Bible and R.A. Torrey both added greatly.

Large attendance was common at the annual Niagara Bible conferences in 1875 and for many years following, all of whom were then embracing the resurgence of premillennialism as opposed to the amillennial position.

That amill still dominates the older denominations today. So, really important current authors will be identified upcoming and should be consulted by pastors, teachers, and serious students of the Bible.

Folks, this is really important stuff. Christianity Clarified, Volume 69, Track 12, Serious Help for Serious Students There is an abundance of outstanding scholarship available that sets forth the various millennial positions.

Those recommended here subscribe to the premill position but also treat fairly those opposing views with whom they disagree. The most significant and comprehensive of them all is the Theocratic Kingdom authored by G.N.H. Peters, a Lutheran clergyman who was, as a premillennialist, decidedly out of step with his fellow Lutherans, all of whom held to the amillennial view, and still do, by the way.

[43 : 23] Peter's massive three-volume treatment of the kingdom remains the flagship reference of the premill position. Peter's lived and pastored Lutheran churches in and around Springfield, Ohio, in the late 19th century.

His breadth of scholarship and voluminous reference sources he cited are simply astounding. Peter's may well have cited the most extensive bibliography of any theological undertaking previous to him and perhaps even to the present time.

That does indeed sound like an exaggeration, but anyone thinking so must pour over his three volumes totaling several hundred pages and see if they don't agree with that assessment.

Yours truly has spent hours engrossed in the theocratic kingdom, deriving great benefit therefrom, and do not hesitate to recommend it to all serious students of the Bible.

More recent publications treating the kingdom concept have proved helpful as well, but to varying degrees. The volume titled Things to Come by the late Dwight Pentecost, who taught at Dallas Theological Seminary for decades, has been his flagship volume of the several titles that he authored during his tenure at Dallas, all of which render valuable insights to eschatology.

[44 : 48] Another stellar publication that is a must for anyone seriously engaging eschatological themes is that of Dr. Alva J. McLean, entitled The Greatness of the Kingdom.

Dr. McLean served for years as president of Grace Theological Seminary in Indiana, and a more compact but more recently published volume by Reynolds Showers is entitled There Really Is a Difference.

It is a scholarly comparison of covenant and dispensational theology, or in other words, comparing the pre-, post-, and amillennial positions, plus excellent content dealing with the relationship of the Christian to law and grace.

And while there are many others of great benefit, those just mentioned are regarded as some of my best friends found on my bookshelves. All will comprise an outstanding investment for any pastor or serious teacher or student of the Bible.

And of them all, perhaps for the average layperson, that of Reynolds Showers would be recommended as the most easily grasped by layfolk who do not have a formal theological background.

[46 : 05] All of the above are obtainable online from Amazon or Christian book distributors. Any or all of them will serve their readers not only with good content, but delivered with an equally good spirit.

Christianity Clarified, Volume 69, Track 13, A Recap of the Kingdom Earlier Volumes 64 and 65 of Christianity Clarified described the prominence assigned to Peter and the key role he was to have with the other apostles when Christ establishes His kingdom on earth.

The kingdom was instead postponed, and it yet awaits its establishment. The postponement of the kingdom is the secret or its mystery outlined in Matthew 13.

That the kingdom will be established is an absolute certainty, but that it has not yet been established is also an absolute certainty.

The major faulty assumption of both Catholic and Protestants is that it was established, but only in a spiritual or immaterial sense, not in a literal way.

[47 : 24] Thus, the faulty assumption of both essentially took hold under the influence of Origen in the 3rd century and Augustine in the 4th. They continue to function under that assumption to the present.

Be reminded, it was due almost exclusively to their abandoning the customary literal interpretation of Scripture for that of the spiritual or allegorical. In addition, it was considered that Christ's promise to return had not occurred after hundreds of years was completely unacceptable, so it must mean that he actually already had returned at Pentecost in Acts 2, but it just wasn't understood as such.

So by the 3rd or 4th century, it dawned on them that such had to have been the case. Thus, the non-literal or spiritualizing of Scripture was off and running and would dominate the entire subject of prophecy as it still does today in the majority of Christendom.

Christianity Clarified embraces the literal interpretation of Matthew 16 that describes Christ building His church that would withstand the gates of Hades, install Peter and the Twelve to judge Israel during the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth.

All of this, we are told, by the majority view, is occurring today, but only spiritually, not literally. Realistically, that position is not supportable literally, spiritually, or in any other way.

[48 : 55] The world continues in a mode of chaos in all perceivable aspects. Be reminded, 2 Corinthians 4 tells us that Satan is the god of this age and he will continue his rampage until he is confined by Christ at His second coming in Revelation 19 and then the kingdom promised by Christ in Matthew 16 will be established.

It ought to be obvious to all, this is not it, not even close. As referenced earlier, there are but two prerequisites that must be in place for Christ to return and establish that long-awaited kingdom and the first is the payment Christ must make to redeem the fallen earth and its human inhabitants.

This He did at Calvary and He confirmed it when He cried out, Tethelastai! It is finished! The second requirement is for Israel to embrace their once-rejected crucified Messiah as their very own.

This Israel has not done, but Israel shall do when their remnant of survivors who escapes the persecution of the Antichrist cry out, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Then, Jesus will show up for His second coming recorded in Revelation 19. Christianity Clarified Volume 69, Track 14, Recap of Kingdom Postponement The content of Matthew 12 made it obvious that the rejection of Jesus as Israel's Messiah was their final answer.

[50 : 37] Chapter 13, then, records Jesus responding to their rejection with a series of descriptive parables. They constitute what will be occurring in the world while the rejected king and kingdom are postponed.

They are called the mystery or the secret of the kingdom. It is the postponement thereof that is the secret. When that will be is prophesied by Jesus as He approached the holy city knowing it would soon mean His crucifixion.

He lamented their unbelief as Matthew 23 closes by saying, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings and ye would not?

Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, you shall not see me henceforth till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

Because of Israel's persistent rejection of Jesus as their Messiah, God has set them aside in their unbelief and the postponement of what would have been the kingdom of heaven will get underway.

[51 : 58] The postponement, be reminded, is precisely the mystery aspect of the kingdom. That is the mystery or the secret thereof. During this period, couched in the parables Jesus gave in Matthew 13, the unprophesied, unexpected, new dynamic that will be identified by the apostle Paul as described in Ephesians chapter 3 will contain the most startling, stunning aspect of believing Jews and believing Gentiles being melded together into one body of which Christ is the head.

In it, there will be no distinction separating Jew and Gentile as before. Such a concept was clearly unthinkable to both Jews and Gentiles, and especially to Jews who had always emphasized their distinction and separation from the Gentiles.

It would be the sacrificial death of Israel's Messiah that would be the human and divine bonding agent uniting the two together in one body.

It is as though God trumped the rejection of their Messiah by extending the redemption accomplished by their Messiah to the entire world. Nowhere is this set forth more clearly than in Ephesians 3.

For over 2,000 years, isolated Israel has undergone separation and persecution that will climax in the Great Tribulation and threat of their extinction.

[53 : 36] The surviving remnant will be huddled in Petra, located in southern Jordan, and God will miraculously protect and provide for them while they engage in their own Scripture leading to their national repentance as a remnant of Israel.

In brokenness, they will cry out to God for their Messiah to return and rescue them. He will do just that as they cry out, Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.

Christianity Clarified Volume 69 Track 15 Recap the Kingdom Definition On the very first segment of this Volume 69, a very important question was posed for all who are reading or listening to Christianity Clarified.

In fact, it is so important that it deserves repeating. So, here is that question. For all the times the Kingdom of Heaven, sometimes called the Kingdom of God, is mentioned, not once is the term ever actually defined.

Not in the Old Testament nor in the New, one never hears anyone saying, Now, what is meant by Kingdom of Heaven is thus and so and thus and so.

[55 : 00] Yet, the term is used so frequently, one would almost think the Kingdom of Heaven was what everything was about. Well, for your information, that is very close to being spot on.

In reality, what absolutely everything is about can be summed up in just three components and here they are in their respective order and I'm talking about what everything is all about.

Creator, number one, creation, number two, and creatures, number three. There isn't anything that is not contained in that triad of creator, creation, and creatures and right in the very midst of those three, unable to be separated from them, is the Kingdom of Heaven, also known as the Kingdom of God.

So, the question is, do you not think it's strange it is never really clearly defined in so many words as to what it actually is? Why isn't it? Especially in light of the importance and frequency with which the Bible mentions it, particularly in the New Testament.

Earlier, we answered that question with a question. Here it is. How much explanation would I need to give you if I told you, I just looked out the window and I saw it was raining?

[56 : 25] Would I have to define for you what is meant by seeing, what is meant by looking, what is meant by window, and what is meant by rain? Well, if you're normal, you're thinking, well, that's ridiculous.

Everybody knows what that means, so no formal definition is necessary. That is precisely the point. Everybody knew. When John the Baptist began preaching the message that Jewish years had been longing to hear from Genesis chapter 3 on to the time they heard John proclaim, Repent!

The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Well, the spiritual and emotional electricity created by that message must have been stunning.

All Jews on that day made the immediate connection that God's long-awaited remedy to fix this broken, ruined world marred by sin and disease and poverty and death was about to undergo the most radical reclamation one could imagine, whereby the will of God that was being done in heaven would also come to earth and the will of God would be done here.

Heaven on earth and all its features was soon to come upon us. No wonder the excitement was fever-pitched among all who heard and anticipated that coming kingdom.

[57 : 58] Christianity Clarified Volume 69 Track 16 Recap of Kingdom Postponement For the first few hundred years after the ascension of Jesus back to heaven, nearly all Christians anticipated his return to earth to establish his kingdom.

But when hundreds of years passed and Jesus still hadn't arrived, they then erroneously concluded that he really did show up, but they didn't recognize it.

They concluded Jesus had returned as the Spirit on the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2. They were also convinced they were wrong to expect a literal Jesus returning to establish a literal physical kingdom, but instead it would be the spiritual Jesus who would establish his spiritual kingdom and we all are presently living in it.

Presumably, the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth began then at Pentecost 2,000 years ago and continues to this present time. Now, supposedly, we are all working to build his spiritual kingdom here on earth and despite the fact that the kingdom was to last 1,000 years and we are already well past that with another 1,000 added, does not cause any concern at all for these because the 1,000 years are not literal either, only spiritual, of which the number 1,000 years is merely symbolic.

To repeat, this continues to be the majority position of Christians, both Roman Catholics and Protestants. For Catholics, they see the current Pope as the personal stand-in for Christ here on earth, while most Protestants who also believe we are in that spiritual reign or kingdom of Christ prefer to think of Jesus himself to be spiritually reigning from heaven as opposed to the Pope reigning on earth.

[60 : 04] But to embrace either of the two by trying to convince yourself this present existence is the kingdom of heaven on earth requires an imagination infused with massive doses of denial.

that, plus the Bible so clearly tells us the kingdom of heaven prophesied as at hand by John the Baptist, by Jesus and the apostles, but has never yet been established.

Something happened. Instead, it has been placed on hold and has been for 2,000 years. Consequently, we are not now nor have we ever been living in the kingdom of which Jesus spoke and promised.

Rather, this is its postponement thereof that is spoken of as the mystery or the secret of the kingdom.

Now, understand, please, it is its postponement that is its secret. It didn't come. It didn't happen. That it will come is as certain as God is God.

[61 : 14] And that this present earth is not it is equally certain. The postponement of the kingdom, which has gone on now for 2,000 years, is described as the mystery or the secret of the kingdom of heaven in Matthew 13 as related by Jesus upon his knowledge that Israel would not accept him as their Messiah.

Their rejection required the postponement in which we now continue to live. Christianity Clarified Volume 69 Track 17 Why the Kingdom Emphasis Part 1 After his resurrection, Jesus spent 40 days with his apostles before physically returning to heaven right before their eyes as recorded in Acts chapter 1.

The topic of conversation had been concerning the kingdom of God. While we are not told precisely what Jesus said about the kingdom, we are told what the apostles asked him in regard to what Jesus said about it.

They asked him, Lord, is it at this time that you are going to restore the kingdom to Israel? Was their focus limited to Israel?

And if so, why? Why Israel and its restoration of the monarchy that had been non-existent since King Zedekiah was defeated by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.?

[62 : 39] Why was that on their minds? Why was it Israel alone that appears to be the focal point of the kingdom? And why did Jesus tell the twelve apostles in Matthew 10 to confine their preaching of the kingdom to the lost sheep of the house of Israel?

Here is a key principle you are asked to please take to heart and never forget. John chapter 1 declares that Jesus came unto his own and his own received him not.

His own was Israel. But didn't Jesus love the whole world a la John 3.16? Indeed he did and does.

But you must know and remember this, Jesus came to his own or Israel exclusively but he came for the entire world.

Some Old Testament connection may help to explain this as found in Deuteronomy 28. Moses is explaining to the people of Israel the benefits of their being an obedient nation as opposed to disobedient.

[63 : 55] He tells them that obedience will mean Israel's headship of the nations by telling them in verse 13 that God will make Israel the head and not the tail.

But if you persist in disobedience that will be reversed and God will make you the tail not the head. Blessings or cursings will be the result of either your obedience or your disobedience.

Israel history tells us chose the latter and remains the tail among nations today in number isolation and rejection as a people.

Its more familiar name is called anti-Semitism understood by most to simply mean anti-Jewish. In essence the apostles were asking Jesus in Acts chapter 1 are you going to restore our nation's monarchy again so we can stop being the tail and resume our rightful place as the head of the nations?

We've been the tail to the Philistines to the Babylonians to the Persians to the Greeks and now we're the tail to the Romans. Are you going to restore the kingdom the throne and the monarchy to Israel and yourself as the king?

[65 : 15] Well given Israel's history plus the Lord Jesus and his accomplishments it was a logical question and so was the answer Jesus gave them but most of Christendom still doesn't get it even today.

Explanation is ahead. Christianity Clarified Volume 69 Track 18 Why the Kingdom Emphasis Part 2 What appeared to be nothing less than a very positive and blessed situation for humanity was tragically misunderstood.

In the case of Israel 2,000 years ago it was not merely misunderstood but grossly so even to the extent of forfeiting for themselves and the entire world what could have been the best possible world.

We are speaking in reference to the heaven sent kingdom of heaven come to earth. Very few even today realize that the kingdom of which John the Baptist preached and Jesus and the twelve after him was nothing less than a marvelous gift from God available for bestowment upon the nation of Israel and a sin sick weary world.

Think of it if you will. Planet earth had been engulfed in sin resulting in chaos, confusion, conflict, corruption and violence from the time Cain murdered his brother Abel early in Genesis.

[66 : 45] Following that centuries later humanity had sunk to a depth of wickedness to the extent that God said enough Noah get busy on the ark I'm going to bring the curtain down on the whole creation and use you and your family to begin all over again.

So Noah built his ark and God brought down his curtain. The old was done away and the new beginning got underway. But give these new ones a few hundred years and a repeat of the old order again rears its ugly head and what were the results?

Conflict, chaos, war, disease, death. Is there anything here that sounds familiar to the old original earth? This second go around finds all of the above not only repeated but exacerbated simply because there are so many more people to create all of the moral and spiritual ugliness.

Please realize that all this mayhem was never in man's best interest but completely contrary to it. Yet, in the midst of all of that misery and human degradation, God so graciously, so wonderfully sent the most personal representative he had to resolve all that waywardness, only to find the wayward unreceptive, even hostile to the one who came to reestablish Israel's long-lost monarchy.

And with it would be the peace, prosperity, a fullness of life and enjoyment that only a kingdom from heaven come to earth could bring. It was only up to Israel, smallest nation, to open their arms and welcome that king.

[68 : 41] And then he, leading Israel, would blanket planet earth with the beauty, peace, and prosperity only dreamt of. But this would not be forced upon them, only offered to them.

The offer was refused and the one offering it was put to death. Still, rather than God permanently rejecting the rejecter, in more matchless grace God has merely put his rejected offer on hold to be presented again at a later time.

It was and is a postponement of that kingdom of heaven and we today continue to live in this broken world while the postponement runs its course. If you didn't know that, you do now.

Christianity Clarified, Volume 69, Track 19, It's a Postponed Kingdom. The previous segment of Christianity Clarified concluded that due to Israel's rejection of Jesus as Messiah, the kingdom he would have established was rejected as well.

But because Israel had been and remains a special covenant people of God going back as far as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, God is not in a position to permanently reject Israel.

[70 : 03] He cannot because his integrity is at stake should he behave as his wayward people have behaved. God is locked in to fulfilling his covenantal promises to Israel despite their undeservedness and their rejection of God's Son.

Put it down. God, because of his unfailing faithfulness and integrity, has locked himself in to fulfilling all he has promised.

So, rather than permanently writing off Israel as many believe God has, he has merely postponed the time when he, as Israel's bridegroom, will make another proposal to his bride, the nation of Israel.

This time, she will accept his proposal. But for now, this present time, the postponement lingers on. Bride and bridegroom are estranged.

Rather than their getting married and living happily ever after in the kingdom of heaven on earth, their engagement has been broken off. Well, not exactly broken off, but at least postponed.

[71 : 17] Completely unaware of all this, most of the world goes on with its perpetual conflict day by day, with national and international tensions brewing and exploding all over the place, year by year, day by day.

But at least most folks really sense that this old world is far removed from what it ought to be and needs to be. And for those attentive to what the Bible spells out, it's obvious this present world is not a planet of peace, prosperity, and plenty.

And we see those who think it is as being in denial, big time. True, we are still a minority who believe it, but we are persuaded this is surely not the kingdom of heaven come to earth.

Because isn't that supposed to be a world as good as God can make it? You know, heaven on earth? Well, do you really think this is it? There are lots of folks who do.

Well, you say, who would they be? Well, brace yourself now. They are the majority of what would be called church people. People consisting of Roman Catholics and most Protestants.

[72 : 36] And as for the rest of the world, they don't even have a clue that they don't have a clue. That's because they have little or no knowledge or interest in the Bible, which is the very sole source responsible for what the majority and minority of those called Christians follow and take seriously.

Both those who believe the kingdom is postponed, and we who are living in the period of postponement, which is the minority position of Christianity Clarified, and those of the majority who believe we are now living in and building the kingdom of heaven right now.

but spiritually, not literally, but spiritually. Their view is next. Christianity Clarified, Volume 69, Track 20.

It's a spiritual kingdom. The previous segment revealed the unawareness that exists on the part of the great majority of people regarding the issue of the kingdom of heaven come to earth.

The subject is only found in the Bible, and for too many, the old book is nothing more than an item of decor on the coffee table, seldom referenced, even though respected, from a distance.

[73 : 50] And yet, for those categorized loosely as the Christian constituency, that includes Roman Catholics and Protestants worldwide. In reference to the theme of the kingdom, there are two principal factions under consideration.

Loosely, we may call them the literalists and the spiritualists. Literalists, such as Christianity Clarified, believe the kingdom of heaven Jesus came to offer and establish through Israel is literal, physical, and expected to be such by Old Testament prophets who predicted it.

But because Israel rejected Jesus the king, it also meant the forfeiture of that kingdom. that he would have established. That decision placed the kingdom into a postponement phase in which it remains to this very day.

Conversely, the majority view, which is, as we mentioned, Roman Catholic and most Protestants, do not believe the kingdom is in postponement, but has been established on earth at the present time and began in Acts chapter 2 at the day of Pentecost.

But, the presence of this kingdom is not literal or physical, only spiritual. Catholics believe the Pope is the designated administrator of this spiritual kingdom of which he is the authority of Christ himself on earth as his vicar.

[75 : 24] The current Catholic bishops are the direct successors of the original twelve apostles as the Pope is the recipient of the position and authority of the apostle Peter to whom Christ said he would give the keys of the kingdom.

This is called apostolic succession. The Catholic Church sees itself as God's replacement for Israel, who formerly was the chosen of God.

But, since Israel rejected Christ as their head and Savior, Christ has permanently replaced Israel with the Catholic Church. Protestants reject the idea of the Pope ruling in the place of Christ and therefore view Christ as ruling the earth from his throne in heaven.

But, both Catholic and Protestants view the kingdom as a spiritual reign rather than a physical or material reign. The difference in interpretation of the literalist and the spiritualist depends entirely upon how Scripture is approached and interpreted.

All positions are held in good faith, and no one's salvation or eternal destiny is decided based on which view they adopt. One can be wrong about many things, but if you are right about Jesus Christ dying for your sin and your faith and trust is placed in him and his finished work for your salvation, then that and that alone is the item of critical concern for personal salvation, whether one is Roman Catholic or Protestant.

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