

Christianity Clarified Volume 06

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[0 : 00] What is Christianity really all about? Here, in an ongoing effort to try and dispel some of the confusion, is Marv Wiseman, with another session of Christianity Clarified.

Christ's utter uniqueness. It is only fitting that the following series devoted to the personhood of Jesus Christ be commenced with an understanding of His uniqueness. Virtually everything about Christ, who He was and is, what He did and will do, is thoroughly unique.

The word unique conveys the one-of-a-kind meaning that must surely apply to Christ. So many things that are true of Him are not true of any other being. He stands utterly alone.

Christ is unique in His constitution and position in the triune Godhead, unique in His subordination to His Father, in His pre-Bethlehem existence.

He is unique in His commission from God the Father, in His incarnation, and in His mission and ministry to Israel. He alone is unique in His impeccability, in His mission to the world, and unique in His subsequent rejection by the nation of Israel, extending to the present rejection by the world at large.

[1 : 17] In all the annals of human history, has anyone other than this one ever had assignments like these to fulfill, and fulfilled them so thoroughly? The list goes on.

Christ and Christ alone was unique in the authentication of His person and identity, in the miracles He performed, all of which pointed to the reality of a coming kingdom He had come to provide in His very own death, which also was truly unique.

Never man lived like this man. Never man died like this man. His uniqueness in His death reached to the unparalleled value of that life surrendered, a life so unique and so incomparably valuable, it became the coin of eternity, responsible for the redemption of all humanity.

And His uniqueness extended beyond His death, to His equally unique resurrection. Does anyone else come to mind that you may compare to that? His post-resurrection ministry extended to 40 days, wherein He was seen of above 500 witnesses at once.

Is not this uniqueness magnified? His promise to return was given to His apostles immediately before rising, bodily before their very eyes, as they watched Him ascend into the heavens.

[2 : 39] And that promise so raised their morale and their confidence, they were willing to die rather than surrender the truth He had given them. How unique is that?

But there is more. Christ never ceased to be unique, simply because He was no longer on earth. His uniqueness extended to the formation of the church, which is His spiritual body, following the national rejection by Israel of their Messiah.

This church was formed based on the abundance of revelations given to Paul the apostle, and the subsequent letters he was inspired to write to the several churches in the New Testament.

There's more. The uniqueness of this one has no limits. He will be unique in His second coming, in His dispatching of the enemies of a newly believing Israel, in His assuming the reign and kingship over all the earth, unique in His judgeship over all, in His installation over all of creation, and in the provision for all the redeemed in the following eternal state.

Never man spake like this man. Unique. Utterly unique in every way. Christ in the Trinity We have briefly identified numerous areas in which the person of Jesus Christ stands in an utterly unique category to any and all others who have ever existed or ever will.

[4 : 05] This one, this Jesus of Nazareth, proclaimed to be the Son of God with power, evidenced by His resurrection from the dead, has no peers. With whom would you compare Him?

Each of those briefly aforementioned areas deserves honorable mention of its own. So we begin with the unique position of Christ and His constitution and position in the Trinity.

The whole concept of the Trinity is off the charts of all mere mortals. But however unlikely the concept is to us, make no mistake about it, it is a profound front and center revelation throughout the pages of Scripture.

There is but one God, not three, yet this one God subsists in three persons. We know this because Scripture attests to it. The issue of one God is set forth unmistakably and repeatedly.

So also is the reality of the Father being God, the Son being God, and the Holy Spirit being God. These three distinct persons constitute the one God.

[5 : 07] How can this be? I surely don't know. Then why do we believe it? Because God who cannot lie has disclosed it by revelation.

Does it sound otherworldly? Well, I guess. And shouldn't it sound otherworldly? It is. And one of the features of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ is that He occupies a position of equality and eternity in this also unique makeup of deity and its multiple personages.

Philippians 2 reminds us that Jesus Christ existed in the form of God from eternity past, and that He did not consider that equality with God to be something He insisted on clinging to, but He willingly relinquished that rightful position in the Godhead to take upon Himself human flesh, to be made as one of us in the form of a servant.

He served man and God as a servant, even to the extent of yielding up His life in order to purchase ours. Nothing could be clearer, and nothing more sublime.

He who knew no sin was made to be sin for us, that we, despite our unworthiness, might become the righteousness of God in Him. Does this not have uniqueness written all over it?

[6 : 32] There is absolutely no one, no situation, no circumstance in all of history that approaches the scope, the magnitude of this, and there is nothing that can be compared with its resulting consequences.

Essentially, this person of Jesus Christ enjoyed the very supremest of relationships in eternal fellowship on a plane of equality with His fellows in the thrice-holy union of Father and Spirit.

Indeed, it was His being who He was and where He was that made what He did so incomparably significant. Jesus Christ being unique is an understatement of tremendous proportions, but for us mortals, it will have to do for now.

Christ in His Pre-Existence For many people worldwide who are not aware of what the Bible says, Jesus Christ came into existence when He was born of Mary in Bethlehem.

Well, it's certainly true that His humanity began there, just as the familiar Christmas story reveals it. But His beginning in Bethlehem must be limited to His humanity.

[7 : 49] While that was His historical human point of entry, it was most assuredly not His beginning as a person, for in His personhood, He had no beginning. He was, as He was, from eternity past, the Son of God in His deity that took upon Himself human flesh and became as one of us.

Listen to what the relatively obscure prophet Micah said in chapter 5 about the arrival and birthplace of the Son of God. And He prophesied 500 years before the Bethlehem birth was to occur.

It was an enigma to the Jews of old who read it, and it remains an enigma to the Jews today who do not see Jesus Christ as their long-awaited Messiah. Here is what Micah said, But as for you, Bethlehem, Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah.

From you one will go forth for me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity. Did you hear that?

God the Father was speaking, but of whom was He speaking? All the rest of the Old Testament and the New as well provide with crystal clarity that the description fits Jesus Christ, born in His humanity in Bethlehem, or it speaks of no one.

[9 : 12] Hardly an option if one expects Scripture to make any sense at all. And this is but one of dozens of similar passages with similar necessary conclusions.

Only spiritual blindness and a hardened heart can dismiss the formidable and numerous claims like this. Such passages trumpet forth the uniqueness of Jesus Christ in unmistakable fashion.

This concept of Christ's existence with the Father and the Holy Spirit from eternity past was precisely what He referred to when He said, I am the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.

It's in Revelation, the last book of the Bible in chapter 22. How utterly fitting to His utter uniqueness. The Apostle John, whom God inspired to write the Revelation, also gave us the beloved gospel that bears His name.

In John 1, Christ is described as the Word, the Logos. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

[10 : 21] He was in the beginning with God. Then John drops the bomb in verse 14 when he declares, The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father.

Does this not provide an exceeding clarification and declaration of the preexistence of Jesus the Christ? Well before Bethlehem, reaching back into eternity past.

Unique? Well, I guess. Utterly so. Utterly unique. Christ, His commission from His Father. How can Jesus Christ, the Son of God, be said to be equal to the Father?

Isn't the Father superior to the Son, at least as progenitor and in existence? In human terms, yes, but in terms of deity, no.

While we think of rank and authority by merely listing the Father first, as in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, it is a mistake to regard them as Father, more important, Son, of next importance, and Holy Spirit, of lesser importance still.

[11 : 32] We are not dealing in human terms here. While there is no rank or superiority in the Trinity, there is nonetheless respective positions or functions to fulfill.

For one member of the Godhead to fulfill a function different from the other is not to suggest inferiority to the others. It merely signifies function and an agreed-upon role that expresses orderliness.

We must view the Trinity and its function by the revelation given of it and avoid the comparison of it to our human standards. In several passages of Scripture in the Old Testament prophetically and in the New Testament generally, the roles of the Son and the Father, as well as the Holy Spirit, are described with great clarity.

Of all the references, none appears so clearly as those used by John in his Gospel. Repeatedly, as in chapter 5, Christ the Son refers to His Father who sent Him.

And again, in chapter 8, when Jesus said, And He who sent Me is with Me. He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.

[12 : 43] Christ is here telling us there is function and role fulfillment in the Godhead. Yes, the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.

And yes, the Son was willing to be sent. There were not orders given from the superior to an inferior. There were assignments to fulfill, and order was required to carry them out.

All was harmonious agreement. The Father gave the Son. The Son was willing to be given, and the offering was also conducted by the Holy Spirit.

All were operative and in harmonious agreement. In John 17, Christ said in reference to Himself and His apostles, The words which thou gavest Me I have given to them.

And they received them, and truly understood that I came forth from thee, and they believe that thou didst send Me. Well, did the Father send the Son, or didn't He?

[13 : 45] Was Jesus truthful or mistaken? Or worse yet, was He lying? But does not His whole character and being testify to His integrity? Yes, in the role He played, the Son was assuredly subordinate to the Father.

It was a subordination of loving willingness and obedience, not of necessity nor inferiority, but of eager compliance that was needed to get the job done.

Repeatedly, Christ declared His own supremacy over all while simultaneously extolling the role of His Father in devising salvation's plan and the Son's role in carrying it out.

Christ, His Incarnation. Nothing known to man in all his past, present, or future will have had such an enormous impact in its accomplishment or in its ramifications as this singular event.

We speak of that monumental act when God became man. Theologians call it the Incarnation. Incarnation is related to the word carnivorous having to do with meat or flesh.

[15 : 00] Flesh-eating animals like lions are called carnivorous as opposed to herbivore vegetarians like elephants. We eat chili con carne, which means beans with meat.

And when we attribute human flesh to deity, we call it the Incarnation. It is the enfleshment of God, His becoming one of us. John 1 refers to Jesus Christ also as the divine Logos or the Word.

A Word is the essence of communication, however it is conveyed. Words are always used and words mean things. To call Christ the Word or the Logos means He is the essence of communication from the Creator to the creatures.

The Logos is also the source of our English word logic. It is not a stretch to say that Jesus Christ is not only the essence of communication from God to man, Christ is also the logic of God.

When the task of redeeming fallen humanity came up on the divine agenda of the Trinity, it was the divine logic of it all that would be applied. That logic, the Logos, the Word, John tells us, became flesh and dwelt among us.

[16 : 17] This whole concept is utterly staggering to contemplate. God, the deity, the maker and sustainer of heaven and earth became as one of us?

How can that be? The transition is breathtaking to consider. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. How?

By being born of a virgin, He became as we are, yet without sin. Why? God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Can this possibly be true? If it is, would it not be the best news the world could ever hear? Indeed it is. It's given the very name Gospel, which means good news.

Well then, why haven't more people appropriated this truth if it's such good news? The reason is, the good news is so often complicated, cluttered, obfuscated, and misrepresented by so many who are supposed to announce it loudly and clearly, the message often goes misunderstood and confused.

[17 : 29] Men encumber the Gospel with churchianity, philosophy, human effort, do-goodism, and religiosity so that the purity and simplicity of the Gospel is hard to see.

This is why Christianity Clarified exists. And with great clarity and simplicity, Paul the Apostle states the message that cost him his life, which he gladly gave for it.

For I delivered unto you that first of all which I received, how that Christ died for our sins. Christ to Israel for the world in the Old Testament scriptures, so revered by Jews in the nation of Israel, repeated prophecies are given regarding the coming of their Messiah as promised by God.

The miraculous nature of his birth, the very place of his birth, the lineage and royal line of his birth are all foretold with unmistakable clarity. The very reason for his coming, that of accomplishing human redemption, and the means of death through which he would do it, accompanied by the prophecy of his resurrection from the dead.

It's all there. Even though the Christ would come to address and affect the entirety of humanity, yet it was specifically through the tiny nation of Israel that he would accomplish this.

[18 : 51] John tells us in chapter 1 that Christ came into his own, and his own received him not. He would later tell his own apostles in Matthew 10 not to go to the Gentiles, the non-Jews, but they were then to confine their ministry to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

He would later verify this by telling the Syrophoenician woman, I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. So what did all this portend? It was merely that while Christ had come for the needs of the entire world, not only Israel, yet it was through Israel as a chosen vessel that the Messiah would work.

Israel was the divinely delegated spearhead nation through which the entire world would be addressed. This is the principal reason they were selected and labeled the chosen people, beginning all the way back to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the patriarchs of the nation Israel.

Throughout the length of Christ's earthly ministry of about three years, the burning question in all the land of Israel centered on the identity of Jesus of Nazareth. Was he in fact the promised one who should come or was he not?

He could not be from God and also not be from God. The Jewish people lined up on both sides of the controversy. His apostles, other disciples, and many of the common people believed Jesus to be the one foretold by the prophets.

[20 : 18] They were persuaded that no one could perform the miracles Jesus did unless he was indeed the one promised by God. However, the religious establishment did not agree.

They repudiated Jesus as the Messiah, labeling him as an imposter, eventually conspiring to arrest him and having him appear before the occupying Roman authority of Pontius Pilate.

And we know what the outcome of that would be. Even after Christ's death, burial, resurrection, and ascension, the controversy continued on among the Jewish people.

Many more Jews would become convinced by Peter's message on the Jewish feast of Pentecost recorded in Acts 2 and more still in following chapters in the book of Acts. Mankind in general, and Israel in particular, had waited 4,000 years for God to fulfill His promise to Israel by sending the Messiah.

And when He came unto His own, His own received Him not. But as many, Jews and non-Jews, as received Him, to them gave He the authority to become the children of God.

[21 : 28] Is this not uniqueness? Uniqueness with a capital U. This is Marv Wiseman for Christianity Clarified. Christ, His Baptism, and Temptation Why was Jesus Christ baptized by John the Baptist?

Well, John the Baptist preached to his audience of Jews that they were to repent of their sin and undergo ceremonial water baptism to have their sins remitted. Little wonder, then, that John refused to baptize Jesus when he arrived on the scene.

Christ simply didn't qualify for John's baptism, since He was holiness personified and devoid of sin. Nevertheless, Christ insisted, because, as an obedient Jew, he wished to identify with the godly remnant of Israel, saying, Allow it now to be so, for thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness.

So, John acquiesced and baptized Jesus. He then stated that his purpose for doing so was to formally introduce Jesus as the Messiah to the nation of Israel.

Clearly, Christ was not baptized for the same reason others were, for He was separate and apart from sin. It would have been unthinkable that Christ not submit Himself to all the requirements of the law of Moses.

[22 : 50] He made it very clear that He had not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it. This required His submission to John's baptism, because John, too, was clearly sent from God to perform His ministry.

Shortly following His baptism, He was led into the wilderness for the ordeal of the temptation from Satan himself. And what was that all about? Some well-meaning but erroneous souls believed the temptation was to see whether or not Christ would weaken to the point of surrendering to the temptation.

They actually believed the outcome was in doubt. Would He or would He not be able to endure the temptations of the very One who personified evil itself?

That's nonsense. The One who personified holiness and righteousness was more than a match for Satan. Christ was not tempted 40 days by Satan while hungering in order to determine whether or not He would sin.

Such is abhorrent. The temptation whereby Satan threw everything he had at the Christ was in order to prove he could not sin. This is called the impeccability of Christ.

[24 : 02] His sinlessness was not only verified but it served to demonstrate that this person Jesus of Nazareth was morally fit to be the long-awaited Messiah of Israel.

It was not coincidental that this temptation took place at the very onset of the public ministry of Christ. The baptism by John introduced him to Israel as their Messiah and Christ's victorious triumph over the ultimate temptations of the ultimate evil one set forth his qualifications as morally fit for the task of Messiahship.

He was indeed the Lamb of God without spot or blemish. Christ's impeccability was and is an essential theological and moral necessity.

Were he even capable of sin then or now the possibility of his succumbing to it would remain an open question a very dangerous and precipitous idea.

In no way could one who himself weakened to sin ever be qualified to redeem other sinners. Rejoice! We sinners were rescued by the only one qualified to do so.

[25 : 17] Christ, the necessity of his death. In Romans 3 the Apostle Paul speaks of the death of Christ as revealing the righteousness of God. How is that?

How could Jesus dying on a Roman cross possibly have anything to do with God being righteous? It did serve to prove that man was unrighteous by carrying out the cruel crucifixion of the one utterly undeserving of such an end.

But how did Jesus Christ on the cross demonstrate the righteousness of God? Herein lies one of the most critical yet least understood aspects of biblical Christianity.

It's all about sin, justice, and the death that justice demands because of sin. it's a very ugly and distasteful business.

And for the most part its very rationale is completely lost on most of humanity. Even here in the western world people just don't get it. But God is an absolutely just, holy, and righteous being.

[26 : 19] But wait, isn't he also loving and forgiving? Indeed he is. That's why Christ was on that cross where he did not deserve to be. He was there because he of all humanity was the only one qualified to be there.

Only he who knew no sin was eligible to make the payment in full for those who were sinners. That is, for the sins of the whole world, every last person in it, all of whom were unlike Christ in that in Adam all sinned and all died.

It was the death, the substitution of this utterly worthy holy one that balanced the scales of God's justice. Christ dying for man's sin is the very thing that enables God to forgive man's sin because more than adequate payment was made by the crucified Christ.

This is the reason Paul could say that in the death of Christ, therein, was the righteousness of God revealed. Christ was on the cross because God is righteous and Christ was on the cross because Christ was righteous.

The main reason man just does not comprehend the necessity of the sin debt of humanity being paid is because he has a flawed sense of justice. He expects his fellow man to give and receive justice, but somehow God should overlook the need for the same.

[27 : 48] Man is unaware or ignores the fact that it is God himself who is the very originator of the concept of justice, and he surely will not then be one who abrogates the very principle of justice he has himself instituted.

No! Justice is served and God's character and righteousness remain unsullied because his own son, Jesus Christ, met all the demands God's righteousness required.

This is why it is such good news in called the Gospel. Christ died for sin. God is satisfied with the righteous payment made by his willing son. The way of access to God then is clearly open and available to all who will embrace Christ and his payment as their own substitute.

Man merely needs to respond to God's righteousness and the payment Christ made to satisfy that righteousness by exercising his trust and faith in who Jesus Christ is and what he did.

Christ, the exclusivity of his salvation. The biblical insistence upon man's salvation being secured exclusively through the finished work of Christ remains a major objection that many have about Christianity.

[29 : 06] In this present day of religious pluralism, the idea of the exclusivity of Christ is met with increased hostility. It is a narrowness many simply cannot abide.

The principal reason for their objection is always the same. Their conclusions are reached as a result of their personal logic and reasoning and to them it simply doesn't seem right that there should be but one way to heaven and if that way is Christ and Christ alone then what about all the multitudes who have never heard of Christ?

How can a loving God possibly consign multitudes to perdition for not believing in someone they'd never even heard of? Where is the fairness in that? Man's problem is he has more confidence in his own logic and reasoning than he has in the revelation God has given in his word.

What one accepts as authority is ever the problem. Never mind the fact that the same man's flawed reasoning has often failed him in the past he seems yet incorrigible about self-reliance by making himself the authority rather than God.

The death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ remain the centerpiece of all human history. It was not merely an important event. It was the important event and God will not allow man to bypass it whether from ignorance or willful rejection.

[30 : 27] To admit or entertain other ways of approaching God apart from Christ not only depreciates the death of Christ it effectively dismisses it. In writing to the Galatians the Apostle Paul declared that he did not frustrate the grace of God for if righteousness comes by the law Christ is dead in vain.

If salvation and acceptance before God can be achieved in other ways apart from personal faith in the substitutionary death of Christ then really Christ need not have bothered.

God need not have sent the Son to die for the world since other ways to God would be available. The agony of crucifixion its attendant cruelty and all it contained plus the spiritual separation between the Father and the Son was simply unnecessary.

Despite man's insistence upon his flawed logic the scriptures remind us in 1 Timothy 2 there is one God and one mediator between God and man the man Christ Jesus.

And additionally what was meant by Christ himself when he uttered that very narrow statement I am the way the truth and the life no man comes unto the Father but by me.

[31 : 41] If you dismiss those words of Christ as simply untrue what else did he say that was also untrue? And when the Apostle Peter stated that neither is there salvation in any other for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved hmm no doubt his fellow Jews in Acts 4 had as much problem believing what Peter said about Jesus as do people today.

We must be warned however the criterion for truth is not determined by who believes it or who doesn't neither by how many do or do not. Truth is what God says it is and is not what man wants it to be.

Christ the efficacy of his death Admittedly it is a fair question and a very important question. How could it be that one single person even Jesus Christ how could that one person possibly be able to affect the redemption of an entire humanity consisting not of millions of people but untold billions that's with a B untold billions of people.

After all Christ was but one single human being true it is he was one single human being but he was also one single divine being and that's what made the difference.

In his uniqueness Jesus Christ was the God-man the theanthropic one he was the enfleshment of deity the incarnated one.

[33 : 15] Miss this and you've missed the very essence of Christ's uniqueness. By unique we mean an utterly one-of-a-kind being. It was the very essence and character of his being that gave such value to what he did on that cross.

Who Christ was assigned infinite value to what Christ accomplished. The value of his work stemmed from the identity of his person. Who he was made what he did of such significance and worth.

And this too is an aspect of biblical Christianity that most of the world just doesn't get. And it's absolutely crucial. This is the whole basis of what Christianity is truly all about.

It was not merely a Galilean peasant carpenter who died on that cross. While he was that in his humanity and in that role he so thoroughly identified with man yet he was the utterly impeccable sinless and holy eternal son of the eternal father.

And in that role he so thoroughly identified with God. We know the value of a human life. Those who respect it for what it is will go to all sorts of extraordinary lengths to protect and preserve it.

[34 : 27] If this reflects the value of a human life what kind of proportionate value would you place upon God's life? While man is made in the image and likeness of God God is himself that image that being.

We might ask how you would compare the values of that which was created from him who created it. Creation came from the creator not vice versa. The thing made does not equal the value of the one who made it.

So relatively speaking how would you compare the worth of an ordinary insect to that of a human being? Somewhat lopsided wouldn't you say? Yes it is but not nearly as lopsided as the proportionate values of man whom God created and God himself who did the creating.

Only one of the two bears infinite worth to his being and it certainly is not man the creature. The infinite inherent intrinsic value resident in the person of Jesus Christ God's eternal son and member of the triune Godhead accomplished the transaction of like infinite value.

This is precisely how this one was more than sufficient in his sacrifice to secure the redemption of untold billions of humans all of which stood in desperate need of it.

[35 : 46] Let us never forget that. It was who Jesus Christ really was that gave such value and efficacy to what he did when he made that more than adequate payment.

Christ the necessity of his resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead should be intuitively obvious to even the casual observer of Christian teaching.

Merely consider the alternative to his rising from the dead. It's to have not risen from the dead. Other options are non-existent. Scripture reminds us in the great chapter dealing with the resurrection 1 Corinthians 15 if the dead rise not then is Christ not risen.

And if Christ be not risen then is our preaching vain and your faith is also vain. Vain means to no purpose empty invalid.

The resurrection of Christ from the dead is so utterly vital to Christianity there is no Christianity and all it claims is vain empty and worthless if Christ be not risen.

[36 : 57] Do we then mean to say that all that is claimed to be Christian rises or falls on the reality and validity of Christ rising from the dead? Precisely so. Without the bodily resurrection of Christ from the grave there is no Christianity.

The Apostle Paul follows with the implications of Christ being not risen by stating what is more all those who have already died believing in Christ are also perished.

There is no hope for them beyond the grave nor is there any hope for anyone else anticipating living again after this present life is concluded. No mistake about it.

This is the critical issue of biblical Christianity. Christ did or did not rise from that borrowed tomb of Joseph of Arimathea and there is no such thing as Christ rising from the dead kind of.

Nor will it suffice to say Christ rose from the dead for those who can believe it but for those who do not believe it thinking such a thing impossible well for those he didn't rise from the dead.

[38 : 06] But the reality the historicity of that event is not determined by human subjectivity. If Christ rose from the dead no amount of denying it will mean he didn't.

And if Christ did not actually rise from the dead no amount of believing he did no matter how sincerely will make it so. The thing is what it is no matter who believes or disbelieves it.

Thus it behooves every rational being to give very serious thought to this claim set forth so clearly in the New Testament and predicted in the Old. Added to the claims of Scripture is the stunning account that the first people to deny Christ had risen were his own apostles whom he had earlier hand-picked.

Nor would they affirm his resurrection till they had seen him for themselves. They then went on not only to make the resurrection the centerpiece of their preaching but were willing to suffer persecution and ultimately death rather than deny the resurrection of their Lord.

It alone provides the only insufficient basis for our confidence in ever living again when this present life is over. Because he lives we too shall live but only because he lives and we live in him.

[39 : 28] This is all we have and this is all we need. Christ his post-resurrection appearances for our Lord Jesus Christ to have risen from the dead was astoundingly remarkable in itself.

And had he only appeared to a few it would have been additionally remarkable. But his repeated appearances not merely to his close disciples but to above five hundred persons at once most of whom were still alive as Paul the apostle rendered the account in 1 Corinthians 15.

All this is beyond astounding. But there's more. He made these appearances repeatedly over a period of forty days. Think of that.

For nearly six weeks after his resurrection he made himself visible in multiple venues before individuals and large groups. What was the point of this lengthy exposure?

One might think that following his resurrection and a few appearances to a like few disciples he might as well have returned to heaven at the sight of his father. He easily could have done so calling the mission accomplished.

[40 : 44] Actually we are not given any clear reason for Christ remaining on earth nearly six weeks after he rose from the dead. Only that he did. Dr. Luke put it this way in the opening verses of Acts 1.

Christ showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs being seen of them forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

So apart from his appearances assuring his followers he was very much alive he engaged in teaching sessions no doubt several teaching sessions during those forty days and he spoke pertaining to the kingdom of God.

We would dearly love to know exactly what he revealed about the kingdom but we are not told. We are told and we do know from this time in Acts chapter 1 that the apostles asked Christ whether he would now after his resurrection restore the kingdom to Israel.

He did not say there would be no kingdom because of Israel's rejection neither did he say the only kingdom there would be would be spiritual in nature.

[41 : 54] He simply said it is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the father hath put in his own power. He continued by telling them that apart from their seeing the kingdom established there was a specific calling he imparted to them.

It was a reiteration of what he disclosed at the conclusion of the gospels namely the apostles would be recipients of a special endowment from the Holy Spirit and he would enable them to carry out their extensive ministry the ministry of being witnesses to Christ Israel's Messiah.

His being revealed and available in some fashion for 40 days after rising from the dead had to have so firmly fixed his resurrection in the minds of the apostles there could be no possibility of their denying it or forgetting it.

It had to have been the principal factor in buoying up their spirits and stiffening their backbone against the formidable onslaught of persecution just ahead and following the ascension of their Lord.

Wonderful. Many infallible proofs. Forty days of dynamic teaching. Priceless. Christ his bodily ascension to heaven.

[43 : 16] Apart from the two accounts we have from the inspired pen of Dr. Luke the beloved physician we really have no information about the ascension of Christ. The good doctor mentions it in both of the books he wrote both in Luke and in the Acts and in Luke it's the last chapter and in Acts it's the first.

And it had to have been really something. Christ told them earlier he would be returning to his father. Didn't say exactly when or exactly how. It isn't likely they expected it to happen as it did.

Bodily. Right before their very eyes. He had just promised them they would soon be especially empowered by the Holy Spirit and they should remain in Jerusalem until it happened.

Then all of a sudden right before their very eyes their Lord literally begins lifting off the ground physically. Rising higher and higher until just as a speck in the sky he's gone.

They all stand there looking upward stunned by what they just witnessed. They could not take their eyes off where they last saw him become smaller and less visible until gone.

[44 : 28] Keep looking. Keep staring. Maybe he will come right back somehow. But no he was gone. It took the intervention of two angels to interrupt their intense gaze into the upward regions.

The angels offered a mild rebuke in the form of a question. You men from Galilee why are you standing here gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus shall so come again in like manner as you have seen him go into heaven.

Well why wouldn't you stand there and gaze? Who wouldn't? You're pinching yourself to make sure you're awake and that you did in fact witness what you thought you just saw.

Still stunned by it all the apostles look at each other quizzically as if to say did you all see what I just saw? The angels jarred them all back to the matter at hand and while Dr. Luke doesn't say it in Acts 1 he does in the gospel bearing his name Luke 24 where he records his other account of the ascension and what followed immediately saying and it came to pass while he blessed them he was parted from them and carried up into heaven and they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God.

Well I guess. Great joy. The Greek calls it mega joy. How could it be less? They knew what they knew and they knew they knew it.

[46 : 07] No chance anyone under any circumstances could ever take this from them nor the joy that accompanied it. One could only imagine the repeated times they would each relive this event the ascension of their Lord right before their eyes and the angel the whole bit and they worshipped with a perpetual joy.

Can you not see how this compelled and impelled these devoted followers to do as they did and give as they gave to make this wonderful gospel of the death burial and resurrection of their Lord available to all great joy of course.

Christ his post ascension ministry. We are not given great details about what it is that Christ is engaged in doing following his ascension to heaven. We do know he sat down by the majesty on high in Hebrews 1 that he is making intercession for the saints in Hebrews 7 yet there is another very strategic engagement Christ fulfilled that is frequently overlooked and the consequences of this endeavor are truly staggering.

We speak of what the ascended Christ provided by way of new information to Paul the Apostle formerly Saul of Tarsus. Apparently what Christ chose to reveal to Paul sometime after he was resurrected and ascended to heaven was new information.

Information that Christ had never revealed to his 12 apostles prior to leaving them when he ascended from the Mount of Olives. Paul describes the incident or incidents in 1 Corinthians 12 and refers to them as an abundance of revelations.

[47 : 50] The Greek word for revelations is a word from which we get the English term hyperbole, a deliberate exaggeration, an exaggeration known and understood to be deliberate.

Think of the revelations as super abundant revelations, a plethora, mega revelations. But revelations about what? At first one might think the risen Christ would be bringing the Apostle Paul up to speed concerning himself since Paul never had the benefit of knowing Christ for the three plus years that the original 12 Apostles knew him.

It would only seem logical that Christ would fill in for Paul everything he was lacking. But no, this does not appear to be the case, at least based on what Paul himself tells us about that abundance of revelations the risen Christ revealed to him.

Paul said they were never revealed to anyone else before. How else could we understand his statement in Ephesians 3 when he wrote that the revelation of this mystery was not made known to the sons of men in other ages past?

The essence of this new information concerned Jews and Gentiles becoming members of the same body or entity and both partakers of God's promise in Christ by the gospel.

[49 : 14] What? Jews and Gentiles together? Same body? Fellow heirs? Surely you can't be serious.

But he was. The ascended Christ was revealing to Paul what he had never revealed to the twelve with whom he traveled and taught for over three years. This was brand new content.

Content previously unheard of. Unthinkable. Jew and Gentile? One body? What is it? What would you call it? Call it the spiritual body of Christ.

It's comprised of all believers, whether Jew or Gentile. Equal members. Equal footing. Equal heirs. Complete everything. In this new organism called the church, the body of Christ, all who believe are baptized by the Holy Spirit into the spiritual body of Christ.

This apparently was one important mission and communication that radically updated information previously given. Christ, his church, is his spiritual body.

[50 : 27] Christ's church is his spiritual body. What does that mean? Christ revealed this to Paul so he could record it for our learning. It's so stated in Ephesians 1 when speaking of Christ, Paul said, He was raised from the dead and sat at God's right hand in the heavenly places.

Far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this world but in the world to come, and has put all things under his feet and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that fills all in all.

Chapters 4 and 5 of Ephesians follow with repeated references to the church, the spiritual body of Christ. It's a term that can be confusing. We know Christ had a physical body while here on earth.

He acquired it while he was incarnated as deity into human flesh and began his earthly sojourn in Bethlehem. That was his physical body that was placed on the cross and died there in our stead.

But in the scriptures, just as there is physical and spiritual bread, physical and spiritual water, physical and spiritual light, physical and spiritual life, so too there is a physical and spiritual body.

[51 : 52] Christ's physical body includes his flesh and bone, as your body does. But what comprises his spiritual body? We do.

We who are believers in Jesus Christ are his spiritual body. Why do you suppose the analogy of a body is used in connection with the believer's position in Christ?

Because nothing is so altogether as a body. Although comprised of multiple parts, there is an undeniable cohesion of the parts, so connected as to make a whole body.

What better or more accurate analogy could be used to describe the relationship of individual believers to the person of Jesus Christ? We are spiritually members of his body.

How closely connected is that? Paul, whom God uses to reveal the body concept connecting the Christian and Christ, repeatedly uses the term in Christ when he states in Galatians 3, There is neither Jew nor Greek.

[53 : 00] There is neither bond nor free. There is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. Did you hear it?

You are all one in Christ Jesus. This concept of the spiritual body of Christ is reinforced in Ephesians 5, stated with crystal clarity.

For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. He concludes by saying, This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

This truth of being in Christ was never presented nor considered until after the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Now, it remains one of the most telling and powerful truths connected with the believer and Christ's body.

Christ, His coming for His church. The coming of Christ for His church is a truth that is fraught with controversy among believers in the Lord Jesus. Much of the controversy can be eliminated by a careful reading of 1 Thessalonians 4, 1 Corinthians 15, and Titus 2.

[54 : 16] In this latter reference of Titus 2, believers are admonished to be looking for the blessed hope in the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus.

The 1 Thessalonians 4 passage elaborates on this same event by stating, But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope.

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord shall not precede those who have fallen asleep.

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first.

Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

[55 : 24] Therefore, comfort one another with these words. Note carefully the words of the last verse. It is this blessed hope, this assurance of the catching away of the body of Christ, consisting of all believers that are alive at that time, that is to be the very basis of our comfort, our consolation.

We are to use these very words setting forth this truth to be a comfort one to another, and the more so when the disposition of loved ones who have gone ahead is called into question.

This expression in 1 Thessalonians 4.17 is caught up. The Latin version uses the word *rapto* in the Vulgate. It is from this that the English word *rapture* is derived.

Incorporated into the idea is that of a breathtaking spectacle, whereby those in the body of Christ, that is, all believers, alive at the time of the blessed appearing, will be snatched away, instantaneously removed from the earth in a split second of time.

Caught up, the text says, to be ever with the Lord, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Seriously now, how likely does this appear to be?

[56 : 43] Speaking after the manner of man? Not very. Not at all likely. In fact, fanciful, fairytalish, wishful thinking, or a host of other improbables.

Nonetheless, the true believer, while admitting he does not know the how or the when of it, takes great comfort as he should in the fact of it. And what makes him so certain it is factual?

Its realization is linked to the integrity of a God who cannot lie. This is the believer's blessed hope. It is the rapture of the church, well preceding the second coming of Christ that is to occur later.

One day, this blessed hope will occur, perhaps today. Christ, his second coming, part one.

There is perhaps no issue that so captures the imagination of the world at large more than the second coming of Jesus Christ. Such has been the case since his departure from the Mount of Olives when he bodily ascended out of sight in the presence of his apostles.

[57 : 52] And it may be said with certainty that no one then believed two thousand years would pass and his promise of returning would still not be realized. No doubt some refer to his long absence as likely proof that he is not coming back.

For if he were able to make good on the promise of his return, he certainly would have done so before now. Possible alternatives are all over the map. One is, Christ was simply mistaken.

He had told them he would return, but he simply couldn't do it. This, of course, requires a very mistaken Christ or a very incompetent and powerless one, a concept wholly unacceptable to anyone who knows anything about the Savior.

Or another alternative explanation for his seeming lack of return is, he did return. He returned in Acts 2, only ten days after his ascension, but in the person of the Holy Spirit.

This, too, fails miserably, contradicting everything Christ said about his return in Matthew 24. It simply will not suffice to replace a very literal physical departure and a very literal physical assurance of the angels at the ascension that Christ would so come again in like manner as you have seen him go into heaven.

[59 : 13] So, what is the answer? How do we account for the prolonged 2,000-year absence of the Messiah when he clearly said he would come again, but hasn't?

The biblical answer is, the time for his return hasn't yet arrived, and we don't know when it will, but we do know that it will.

On what do we base that? Upon the integrity of the God who cannot lie. Part of our problem is that we, in our humanity, have such a limited perspective, but God has his own perspective, and reminds us that it is we who need to adjust to him and his timetable, not vice versa.

No doubt the ancients of Old Testament times who were promised about the first coming of the Messiah probably had their misgivings, too. Each passing generation thought the Messiah would surely come in their lifetime.

After all, how long does it take for God to get his act together and make good on what he promised way back in Genesis 3.15? How long does God take?

[60 : 24] As long as he wants. His perspective, remember? The wait for God to deliver on his promise of sending the Redeemer was 4,000 years, and when he came, it was called the fullness of time in Galatians 4.

So, be reminded that we living today have waited for Christ to come for the second time, only half as long as Israel waited for his first coming.

Times, days, years, centuries, and millennias aside, be sure of one thing, Jesus is coming again. He said so. Christ, His Second Coming, Part 2 Those familiar with the subject of biblical prophecy will recall the many times the coming of Christ is mentioned.

But what many do not realize is that both the first and the second comings are referenced multiple times, scores of times, and the second coming is prophesied in much more detail many more times than the prophecies concerning His first coming to Bethlehem as the babe in the manger.

The purposes for both comings are in stark contrast, so much so that about the only thing the second coming has in common with the first coming is that they both speak of the same person.

[61 : 49] Apart from that, all else is different, radically different. That baby born of Mary, deity in flesh, came as a suffering servant to redeem, and to do so as the sacrificial lamb of which John the Baptist spoke in John 1.

He came to fulfill the promises God made to the fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He was the one who knew no sin but was made sin on our behalf so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

This all was part of God's amazing grace. But with His second coming, the string has run out on the grace of God. It's over. Grace will give way to judgment.

God has scores to settle, and He will begin doing so at the second coming. Someone has described it by saying, Jesus Christ is coming again, and this time He will not be in a good mood.

The settings and the principles are unmistakable. The Antichrist and his minions are targeted for annihilation before the conquering Christ. Vivid depictions are given of this blow-by-blow account of Earth's greatest conflict.

[63 : 01] Massive armies that will dwarf the World War II invasion of Normandy will gather themselves together to battle. assembling on the plains of Megiddo, better known as Armageddon.

From there, they will march from the north to meet the Christ who will advance from the south, and the clash to end all clashes will ensue in the valley of Jehoshaphat before the holy city Jerusalem.

The carnage will be unimaginable and irreversible. Truly, the war of all wars, ancient and modern combined.

For details, none depicted so graphically as Revelation chapter 19 and Matthew 24 and 25 in the Olivet Discourse.

Our Jewish friends would do well to consult their own scriptures, our Old Testament. They tell the same story in Psalm 2, Isaiah 59, 60, 63, Daniel 2, Daniel 7, Zechariah 14, Malachi 3.

[64 : 10] If these several verses in the Old Testament do not speak with great clarity regarding the second coming of the Redeemer, earlier rejected by Israel in His first coming, then words mean nothing, and the entire matter is unintelligible and nonsensical, signifying nothing.

They and their claims are indisputable. Jesus the Messiah has come, has returned to heaven, and is coming again. Christ, His Ultimate Judgment Given the various governments established today that are entrenched in power throughout the world, it is indeed difficult to imagine them all swept aside as they are forced to fold.

Kings and presidents, dictators, warlords, prime ministers, all existing heads of all existing states, in excess of 200 governmental entities, will come to an abrupt end.

None shall be able to stand against the long absent but returned King of Kings and Lord of Lords. All their mighty armaments of war, their nuclear devices, their high-tech sophisticated weaponry, will come to naught when confronted with the one who has but to speak to subdue them all.

And when He is installed upon His holy mount, they will all appear before Him who is to be their ultimate judge. There will be no panels, tribunals, or the like, only this one supreme potentate.

[65 : 43] Nothing can escape His scrutinizing and discerning eye. Matthew spells it out in the 25th chapter of his Gospel. When the Son of Man shall come in His glory and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory, and before Him shall be gathered all nations, and He shall separate them one from another as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.

Matthew 25 text continues to describe the final disposition of the nations and their people whom the righteous judge sentences. Other passages correlating to this magnificent event can be cited at Isaiah 9 and 11, Jeremiah 23, Ezekiel 37, Daniel 7, Hosea 3, Micah 4.

Add to these the testimony of the psalmist in the 50th, the 72nd, and the 96th, culminating in the finality described in Revelation 19 and 20.

It all sounds so very improbable, perhaps impossible, maybe to some as completely fanciful. We can understand the reluctance or even the refusal of the world to place any credence in these end-time apocalyptic events.

They do not fit our present order. They do not fit the past order. They do not fit any order. They are, in many ways, simply unfathomable.

[67 : 10] Yet, we have the sure word of prophecy as to the certainty of their coming to pass. Be reminded, the most compelling reason for asserting the future coming and judgment of Jesus Christ is the undisputed historicity of His first coming and serving as God's sacrificial Lamb.

This all loudly proclaims the biblical assertion that history is going somewhere. It is not circular, but linear. There is an end game. There is a point to which all of humanity is progressing.

And this is that point. Jesus Christ is coming again. And I saw a great white throne in Him that sat on it from whose face the earth and the heavens fled away.

and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead small and great stand before God and the books were opened. And another book was opened which was the book of life.

And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the book according to their works. Revelation 20 is there for your reading. Christ, His Ultimate Reign George Frederick Handel understandably struck by the claims of the Word of God as he read the 11th chapter of Revelation was compelled to set it to music.

- [68 : 31] And out of his fascination and compulsion the famous oratorio bearing his name and the name of his subject was born. Known worldwide and performed frequently with great exuberance.

Handel's Messiah or Jesus the Messiah as seen and set to music by George Frederick Handel. What an elaborate absolute masterpiece. And it all concludes as it should.

Taken right out of the 11th of Revelation those wonderful lines. You who are familiar with the music can hear it being sung as you listen to the words of the seventh angel proclaiming them.

There were great voices in heaven saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ and he shall reign forever and ever.

repeated several times the music becomes mesmerizing. This, so beautifully depicted by the genius of Handel is precisely what is yet to take place.

- [69 : 33] Its reality is as certain as God is God. When the Apostle Paul is inspired to write of this event he records it thusly in the 15th of 1 Corinthians.

Then cometh the end when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God even the Father when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and all power for he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet.

The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. But how can this be? Some would protest. It's an entirely new order. That's how it can be and will be.

Those of whom Peter speaks in his second epistle chapter 2 are simply wrong and will be shown to be wrong. They are described as scoffers, mockers, those who exclaim, Where is the promise of his coming?

For since the forefathers passed on all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation. No, no, no. All things will not continue as they were.

- [70 : 38] The world and history with all its powers, corruption, and multiplied injustices will come to an abrupt halt. The day of reckoning, long scoffed and denied, will become a reality.

The world may well pinch itself to determine if it is real and not a figment of its imagination. But it is. No dream. Man's day is over.

The day of the Lord is in process and will ever continue with this rightful one seated upon the throne of David, ruling and reigning in perfect righteousness.

This is where everything is headed. This is where we will be when we arrive at this final global wrap-up. Mark it well. The righteous will rejoice and give thanks.

The unrighteous will moan and mourn for the world as they knew it, loved it, and preferred it is no more. This is why the eleventh of Revelation records, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.

- [71 : 45] And he shall reign forever and ever. Christ in the Eternal State It would seem only logical that with Christ ruling and reigning on the earth following his defeat of the Antichrist, all would then be well with the earth.

Satan is confined to the bottomless pit, the carnage of Armageddon will be passed, and the utopia longed for by humanity since the time it was lost in Genesis 3 has finally arrived.

Poverty and disease will be no more. Righteousness will cover the earth. Men will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Unemployment and social unrest will be a thing of the past.

The planet will be better off than it has ever been. The kingdom of heaven will have come to earth as has been so often prayed for. The will of God will be done on earth on an ongoing basis right here on earth.

And everybody lived happily ever after. No, not quite. Why not? Because while many who will have entered this millennial reign as believers will have a glorified body no longer capable of sin, others who have been believers, having known such during the great tribulation, will still possess their ordinary physical bodies like ours are now.

[73 : 11] They will be reproducing during the millennial reign of Christ and their children will be born just as our children are today, endowed with personal volition. Each will then exercise his will to believe on Christ for himself.

Many will do so. It's also apparent that many will not. Imagine, if you will, how many new people will have been added to the population after reproducing for a period of a thousand years.

It will constitute a huge number of newer believers as well as unbelievers. The unbelieving, because of their unbelief, will also be spiritually obtuse or spiritually blinded just as unbelievers suffer from spiritual blindness today.

Satan, referred to as the God of this world, who so successfully blinds men's minds today, will be released from his thousand-year incarceration, according to Revelation 20.

He will not have been rehabilitated one whit, but will be re-energized by revenge and the same old profound hatred of the very God who gave him his existence.

[74 : 20] He again assumes his role of seducer, deceiver, and rebel. He will succeed in recruiting many of those unregenerates born during the thousand-year reign of Christ.

They will naively follow Satan, aligning themselves with him in believing his lying promises. This time, this rebellion will not engender another Armageddon.

No protracted carnage of a lengthy campaign as was needed a thousand years earlier. This time, as recorded in Revelation 20, verse 9, God simply dispatches them with a fire from heaven that speedily devours the entire rebel band.

The summary execution of the last vestige of unbelief and rebellion has occurred with great finality. From this point onward, into the eternal state, Christ will reign unhindered and unchallenged, and he shall reign forever and ever.

You've just heard another session of Christianity Clarified with Marv Wiseman. Christianity Clarified Disc Number 7 will be available soon.

[75 : 46] The person and position in the Trinity of the Holy Spirit remains a controversial doctrine among sincere believers. Christianity Clarified addresses the principal functions and offices of the Holy Spirit with a brief but comprehensive scope.

Attention is given to the Holy Spirit in the Trinity, the creation, the Bible, the canon of Scripture, and the doctrine of divine illumination. The Holy Spirit's ministry in the life of Christ includes the incarnation, temptation, and the power of Christ.

Controversy surrounding the Holy Spirit and Pentecost considered as well as his regeneration of believers in the salvation experience, his baptism of believers, indwelling, sealing, and earnest are treated in an easily understood, scripturally supported manner.

Lastly, the reality and controversy that sometimes accompanies the subject of the Holy Spirit is addressed in describing some of the practices of believers energized more by emotional fanaticism rather than the legitimate office of the Spirit of God.

All of the above will be treated in the customary format of 20 sessions, each approximately three and a half minutes in length in the next to be released CD of Christianity Clarified, disc number seven.

[77 : 12] It's another opportunity to benefit from critical theological content in painless three minute snatches of time. We would be honored to send you disc number seven.

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