

Christianity Clarified Volume 64

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

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

As the word transition suggests, there is movement, an arrival of something that passes only to begin the arrival and eventual passing of something else, on and on through human history.

Here on Christianity Clarified are revealed six crises that we have labeled humanity's greatest half-dozen, having the greatest impact upon mankind.

And they are as follows. Number one, the creation, fall, and flood of the earth. Two, the call of Abraham, Moses, the establishment of Judaism, and the nation of Israel, all recorded in the book of Genesis.

[1 : 12] Three, the arrival of Israel's promised Messiah, his crucifixion, resurrection, and rejection by the nation to whom he was sent, all recorded in the four Gospels.

Four, the call of Saul of Tarsus to become Paul the Apostle, who will join Jew and Gentile into one body called Christianity that will be translated or raptured to heaven as recorded in the book of Acts and the writings of Paul.

And five, the great tribulation, the return of Christ, Israel's Messiah, and his kingdom established for the thousand-year period as revealed in Revelation chapter 19.

And lastly, number six, the final human rebellion at the end of the millennium, followed by the ushering in of the eternal state that will mark the end of all transitions as found in Revelation chapter 20.

And of all the six events, it was number three, the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as the very centerpiece of all human history.

[2 : 25] It was that event, more than anything else, that changed absolutely everything. The great Creator became our Savior, and all God's fullness dwelleth in Him.

And of the six events listed, three are history. We are now living in the fourth, which could end today, and the fifth would begin. And anyone failing to see the deep significance of these six events is as out of the loop as anyone could be, which happens to be the very position of the greater part of Earth's population, for the past, for the present, and yet for the future.

But it need not be true of anyone seriously searching the Scriptures, which is precisely what Christianity Clarified is all about. Our present transition concerns the ministries of the Apostles Peter and Paul, exploring the strategic contributions made by both.

Some were similar, and some very dissimilar, as their roles unfold on upcoming sessions of Christianity Clarified.

Having just reminded ourselves of the six key transitional events of human history, we are now to engage the third of the sixth. And it is the arrival of Israel's promised Messiah, His crucifixion, resurrection, and subsequent rejection by the nation to whom He was sent, all of which are recorded in the four Gospels.

[4 : 1 0] In continuing that third event, we are right on the cusp of the fourth, but we must resist getting ahead of ourselves, because much yet remains in this third event.

And we will deal with the time period of Jesus and His interaction with the Apostle Peter. Their connection was very significant, and a key, or perhaps the key, with Peter playing the most dominant role of all the Apostles.

Of the twelve, it will be Peter, James, and John, who were the inner circle of the twelve, and of those three, it will be Peter, who occupies the position of prominence.

That will surface repeatedly, well into the ten years recorded in the first half of the book of Acts. Peter will eventually function as the bridge between Judaism and Christianity.

He will be the spokesperson in Acts chapter 1, regarding the replacement of Judas Iscariot with Matthias, and again, the strategic spokesperson on the day of Pentecost, related in Acts 2, followed by his delivering another key message, in Acts 3, to that crowd that was gathered in the temple area, following the healing of the man born lame.

[5 : 3 0] Peter, it would be, who would conduct the interview with Ananias and Sapphira, revealing their deception about the price received for the land that they sold. Their lying resulted in their immediate deaths, obviously imposed by Peter with supernatural power and authority given to him.

Acts 10 conveys the extraordinary mission of Peter to the Roman army officer Cornelius, a Gentile, to whom Peter reluctantly ministered, by opening the door of faith to a non-Jewish recipient.

It was a significant breakthrough event, and it was Peter, whom God led to conduct it. In Acts chapter 12, Peter is placed in prison for refusing to be silenced, regarding Jesus and his resurrection, only to be miraculously freed and let out of the prison by an angel, obviously dispatched by God.

And Peter will be the one to offer the definitive and compelling word when the apostles and elders are gathered together in Acts 15 to settle the issue of whether Gentiles were required to undergo circumcision in addition to their having believed on Christ.

After Peter's input, we are told the whole assembly fell silent, obviously moved by Peter's position and authority. The primacy exercised by Peter is beyond dispute.

[6 : 5 8] And there is no indication he was challenged, due no less to their having acknowledged his authority. But soon after, Peter and his powerful authority will end.

Why? That too is very significant, as we shall see upcoming. The primacy and prominence of the apostle Peter begs the question, what was its origin?

Precisely how was it that an undeniable influence was exercised by Peter that did not appear to be shared by the other eleven, at least not to the same degree?

It was Peter, clearly front and center, who would preside over many situations involving Jesus the Messiah, both before his ascension back to heaven and afterwards, as referenced in the book of Acts for the first 15 chapters.

Where and when did this man Peter come to the surface and become chosen by Christ to fill such an important role as not merely one of the twelve apostles, but clearly as the spokesman and leader?

[8 : 0 6] Only one passage reveals the first meeting between Jesus and Peter. It is recorded by the apostle John, who will write the account years later, after Jesus had already returned to heaven.

This John is the same who not only wrote the gospel that bears his name, but he was also inspired of God years later to write the first, second, and third letters of John near the end of the New Testament, as well as the book of Revelation that concludes the Bible.

So now we have the man by the name of John, who is writing about another man named John, called John the Baptizer, another very strategic player in the plan and program of God.

And he is delivering an electrifying message about the kingdom of heaven coming to earth, whereby all of wayward earth's ills would be addressed.

It was the very announcement Israel had been waiting to hear for 4,000 years. It was way back in Genesis 3, right after the disobedience of Adam and Eve, that God announced he would provide a Redeemer, a Savior who would be born of a woman that would accomplish a reconciliation between himself as creator and the world he created that had gone wrong.

[9 : 38] This John, this John the Baptizer, was now announcing to the world, here he is! His name is Jesus, and he is the sacrifice, the Lamb of God that will enable God to make good on his promise of redemption.

Huge numbers of Jews were hearing and believing John's message. It was absolutely stunning! John was telling the people, God has made good on his promise to send a Redeemer, and after 4,000 years of waiting, here he is!

Behold the Lamb of God who will take away the sins of the world. And among the many who heard was one by the name of Andrew, who was accompanied by another man, not identified, and Andrew could not wait to find his brother and tell him all about this.

His brother's name was Peter. Folks, this is so good, you can only find it in God's Word, and more of it's coming. John the Baptist had been raised up by God to be the messenger, the very one prophesied to identify and introduce the promised Messiah to Israel upon his arrival.

The prophet Malachi had depicted John as that messenger 400 years earlier, and now, here in the Gospel of John, after four centuries, John the Baptist is making known his discovery.

[11 : 09] It's Jesus! He, the long-awaited promised one, has arrived. John tells us he beheld the Spirit of God descend upon Jesus like a dove, and in Matthew's account of chapter 3, John tells us he heard a voice out of heaven saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

Among all the Jews in that audience was one by the name of Andrew, along with another unidentified man. These two began following after Jesus, no doubt due to their heightened interest.

Soon, Jesus stopped upon realizing he was being followed. Turning, he asked them, What are you seeking? They answered, Teacher, where do you live?

It was a question almost automatically, following the person's name being, Where are you from? Where do you call home? It's all small talk, get acquainted stuff, only logical that one's residence address, follow the identity of his person.

Jesus replied with, Come on, I'll show you. The text tells us they stayed with Jesus that day. We do not know whether they spent the balance of the day with Jesus, or whether they were with him overnight.

[12 : 33] If overnight, it would have been the simplest of accommodations. Later, we will be told by Jesus, He had no permanent address saying, The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.

It appears Jesus was saying he was homeless, long before homelessness became as common as it is today. But even more accurately, we can say Jesus was a camper.

By design, he had no place of permanent residence, no rented apartment, and apparently didn't make use of inns that were few and far between. Still, his lodging routine in that day was not terribly unusual, especially for someone on the move as much as Jesus was.

In any case, Andrew and his unnamed companion spent hours with Jesus, and no doubt gathered much information about this mysterious one that John the Baptizer was so excited about.

And upon parting from Jesus, all Andrew could think about was, I've got to go and tell my brother Simon Peter about this. I can't wait to see the look on his face when we tell him, Peter, we have found the Messiah.

[13 : 50] And Andrew brought his brother Peter to Jesus and introduced him. Wouldn't you just give anything to have been able to hear that introduction and the conversation that accompanied it?

So would I. On what basis did Jesus elevate Peter above the other 11 disciples? It is obvious he did so.

John's Gospel, chapter 1, reveals Peter to have been on board with Jesus earlier than the others, with the exception of Andrew, Peter's brother, and Andrew's unnamed companion.

Between those three, what were their respective ages? We are not told. We do know one's maturity of years was a consideration when being considered for responsibility and leadership.

Jewish culture and tradition normally elevated the senior member to leadership of the group. Recall Reuben, if you will, the eldest son of Jacob in Genesis 37.

[14 : 55] It was he who was able to overrule the plan of his younger brothers to kill their younger brother Joseph. So, continuing on later in the culture, Peter may well have been not only the big brother of Andrew, but also the senior member of the entire band of the Twelve Apostles.

Such would easily explain Peter's consistent role of spokesman for the Twelve in virtually every situation that would arise. And Peter would continue that obvious role of spokesperson after Jesus returned to Heaven.

It would also explain the special commission Jesus would give Peter at that stunning event at Caesarea Philippi, we will soon consider in Matthew 16.

Then it will become apparent the standard Roman Catholic interpretation of that key event suffered from the all-too-present faulty assumption we have repeatedly warned against.

Also, the Protestant view of the matter fared no better than the Catholic by faulty assumptions of their own. Both Catholics and Protestants were guilty of the charge Jesus leveled upon the two disciples shortly after his resurrection.

[16 : 11] He'd encountered them in Luke 24 while on the Emmaus Road. Jesus chided them by saying, They were foolish and slow of heart or dull in their thinking because they had failed to consider all that the prophets had spoken concerning himself, the Messiah.

He told them, Ought not the Messiah to have suffered these things and then to enter into his glory? Their problem was the same then as many today, both Catholic and Protestant.

When we interpret a passage dealing with any subject without considering what the Bible says elsewhere about that same subject, we are doomed to a faulty assumption caused by not getting all of the Bible has to say on that subject.

A false or less than complete interpretation is nearly guaranteed. And once again, we will see the only truly competent and accurate interpretation is not what the Catholics or Protestants give it, but what the Bible itself gives it when all the parts are put together to form the whole.

The Bible is its own best interpreter of itself. It is precisely why the scriptures are not merely to be read, but studied and compared.

[17 : 32] We learned a lot about that in our pursuit of hermeneutics, remember? We will shortly engage the key text that, more than any other, provides the basis for the Roman Catholic position of the Apostle Peter being the first pope.

It is Matthew 16 that records Peter's famous declaration. Jesus had asked the apostles who they actually thought he was. It was Peter who boldly exclaimed, You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.

But then that begs the question to explain the great difference of opinion between the ruling elite of Israel, namely the chief priests, Pharisees, and Sadducees, and the relatively uneducated, humble band of fishermen, tax collectors, and the like.

Why the difference between these two groups? The rulers, whom we may identify as the deep state of Israel, were firmly convinced Jesus was definitely not the Messiah, while the twelve, led by Peter, were fully convinced he was.

Why the great disparity? The answer is important, and it must be explored to appreciate the whole picture. Much has to do with one's presuppositions, because presuppositions often lead to faulty assumptions.

[18 : 58] Don't forget how the public ministry of Jesus began. It was with the ministry of John the Baptizer, remember? And what did the ruling elite, we call the deep state of Israel, think of John the Baptist?

Not much. Not much at all. In fact, they regarded John with derision. Why? Well, he was not one of theirs. He had no credentials they recognized.

They were the religious leaders of Israel, and they never authorized John to do anything. He certainly had no polish about him. He wore a strange garb, had a strange diet, and called upon all in his audience to repent or to change their minds about their personal and national alienation from God.

And if they do, they must then bear testimony to their repentance by undergoing the ceremonial cleansing of water baptism that John was conducting. Their doing so was a physical outward testimony of their inward repentance.

And then John refused to baptize the Pharisees and Sadducees for what he identified as their blatant hypocrisy, according to Matthew 3. Since John had earlier identified Jesus as Messiah and introduced him to Israel in John's Gospel, chapter 1, as the Lamb of God, the one who was to take away the sin of the world, then an automatic rejection of Jesus as Messiah by the deep state was guaranteed.

[20 : 33] The establishment that rejected John and his legitimacy could not then accept John's approval of Jesus, and they did not. To be sure, John the Baptist and Jesus as Messiah were a pair, and both were rejected as a pair by the Jewish leaders.

But that was not the position of Andrew and Peter, who were early disciples of John, before they would then become disciples of Jesus. One could not be consistent and reject John without rejecting John's recommendation of Jesus as well.

That is precisely what happened. The opinion of Peter and the Twelve as to the identity of Jesus differed radically from that of the Jewish leaders.

This was the heart of the matter. This one issue. The true identity and personhood of Jesus of Nazareth. It remains so today.

Why those first century factions had such opposite positions must be understood. There are three primary reasons, and the first was considered earlier.

[21 : 44] It was when Jesus chided the disciples on the Emmaus Road after his resurrection. He told them they were guilty of not believing all that the prophets had spoken when they prophesied of the suffering of the Messiah and his glory that would follow.

They, like their Jewish leaders, had focused only upon the glory part while ignoring the suffering to be realized by his crucifixion. The second reason for Peter's staunch conviction, along with the Twelve, was due to the 33 miracles performed by Jesus and his giving the Twelve the power to do the same when he sent them forth in Matthew 10.

They witnessed their Lord's miraculous healings, his power over the elements as in stilling the storm, walking on water, miraculous catch of fish, feeding of thousands, and casting out of demons.

Most of his miracles he performed in Galilee, far removed from Jerusalem, for the leadership there to witness. The third obvious reason is in Matthew 16.

When Jesus asked the Twelve who people thought him to be, Peter responded, You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.

[23 : 01] Jesus replied, Blessed are you, Peter, because flesh and blood did not reveal that to you, but my Father who is in heaven. Jesus clearly meant, Neither Peter nor any other human figured it out on their own, but my Father revealed it to you.

And you, Peter, are blessed, or spiritually well-advantaged because of it. And in addition to that blessedness, Jesus went on to bestow a commission upon Peter of enormous significance, which we will consider later.

But then, he warned them not to tell anyone that he was indeed the Messiah. But wait, wasn't that the very idea that Jesus was the Messiah, as Peter had just boldly proclaimed?

If that were not confusing enough, he went on to tell them they were going to Jerusalem, and there he would suffer many things from the elders, chief priests, and scribes, be killed and raised up on the third day.

What? What are you saying? Don't talk like that, said Peter, in rebuking Jesus. Jesus then responds, inferring that Peter is thinking just like Satan wants him to think, and it is contrary to what God his Father has planned.

[24 : 21] Now they are all perplexed. We can see them, these disciples, look at one another with stunned expressions. more stunning stuff lies just ahead.

Our previous session in Matthew 16 left Peter and the other apostles completely perplexed. They had just heard Jesus acknowledge the truth of Peter's statement regarding the true identity of Jesus.

You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God. He further told Peter that it was the Father in heaven that revealed that truth to him. But then, in an apparent, abrupt, totally unexpected statement, Jesus' next words would confuse and alarm them.

He insisted his destiny was Jerusalem, and after arriving there, he would be subjected to suffering greatly from the elders, chief priests, and scribes, be killed, and three days later be raised up.

Peter snapped. He took Jesus aside privately and rebuked him. Peter is stunned, angry, confused, saying, that shall never happen to you.

[25 : 39] It must have pained Jesus deeply to inform Peter that his protest expressed the same position Satan himself would take. From commending Peter for identifying Jesus as Messiah, he is now returning Peter's rebuke with a rebuke of his own, telling him he is thinking just like Satan thinks.

What is going on? We have been preaching, said Peter. We have been preaching like John the Baptist preached before us, saying, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

And John identified you as the King of Israel, the Messiah, and you will sit on the throne of the kingdom of heaven, which you just said you would give me the keys to. And now you're talking about dying?

Raised up on the third day? What is this? Can you not see the puzzled pain on the face of Peter? From this private conversation, Jesus and Peter rejoin the other disciples.

Jesus, fully aware of what he said and how it all looks like a complete contradiction to what they all thought would soon occur, Jesus then makes another statement, the truth of which will be used to fortify and encourage those perplexed disciples.

[26 : 56] He tells them, There are some of you standing here right now who will not die until you see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom. Again? What?

We do not know what further elaboration Jesus may have given them, but we do know that six days later, Peter, James, and John will get a sneak preview of their Master indescribably transfigured before them with a dazzling, glorified appearance that defies description.

And who else will show up there on that Mount of Transfiguration but Moses and Elijah who had passed off the world scene hundreds of years earlier?

And what were they discussing with Jesus? His upcoming departure? His death that would occur after he arrived in Jerusalem? That transfiguration experience would shore up the confidence the disciples would need when the time came and it was coming soon.

Matthew 16 doesn't tell us all this, but Dr. Luke fills us in, parts of it in his chapter 9. Check it out. The prominence of Peter is one of the more important issues of the first century.

[28 : 13] The interpretation of what his prominence entailed and the specific time when it was implemented will be forthcoming and what is hoped will be easily understood and above all consistent with Scripture.

We are committed to the concept that everything in the Bible is connected to everything in the Bible and that the Bible itself is not only the best interpreter of itself, but it alone is reliable and consistent.

With all due respect to the usual Catholic and Protestant interpretations of Matthew 16, which we believe were all arrived at in good faith, nonetheless, both are victims of the nemesis we have repeatedly warned about, namely, faulty assumptions made by both groups have produced diverse interpretations that are simply inconsistent with Scripture.

And to be sure, we, if Christianity clarified, are not claiming any special unction or infallible analysis of the interpretation we will be presenting.

And yes, we are as capable of making our own faulty assumptions as is anyone else. So, we are not expecting everyone to agree with the findings set forth.

[29 : 29] The most we can hope for is a respectful, thoughtful hearing, and then for each to make up their own mind. Indeed, it would be wonderful if you could be assured that everything taught here on Christianity Clarified is 100% correct.

But, there is no such assurance available. And anyone who says so, that it is, would be a good person to avoid. We've already revealed our upcoming conclusions that conflict with both the traditional Catholic and Protestant interpretations, and you need to know that up front.

As each interpretive conclusion is reached, you will have to evaluate it for yourself. This program is called Christianity Clarified, the goal of which is to make as clear as we are able the truths of the Christian faith that have been delivered once for all to the saints, as written in Jude 3.

Our analysis continues with right where we have been working in Matthew 16, beginning with verse 13. And we now arrive where the controversy really begins that so impacts both Catholics and Protestants.

Our upfront conviction is that both groups, in erroneous but good faith, have reached interpretive conclusions that have provided the doctrinal tenets governing Catholicism and Protestantism for centuries.

[31 : 01] And we have no illusions that either will pay serious attention to our conclusions. But that is not the objective of Christianity Clarified. Our objective is to clarify Christianity from the Scriptures and you and they can all yea or nay it at will.

Let us continue upcoming. We are considering the primacy of Peter the Apostle. And by primacy, we mean his being placed first among the twelve apostles Jesus had chosen as his inner circle.

Mention was also made earlier about the likelihood of Peter being the senior member age-wise of the twelve. John's Gospel chapter 1 tells us that Andrew and an unnamed man with him were the first two who became intrigued with Jesus when he was baptized by John, declaring Jesus to be Israel's Messiah.

Later, after spending hours with him, Andrew became persuaded Jesus was indeed the Messiah as John the Baptist had said. And he couldn't wait to find his brother Simon Peter and tell him.

He brought Simon to Jesus and upon introducing him, Jesus gave Simon the additional name of Peter. In Aramaic, it is translated as Cephas.

[32 : 31] At Caesarea Philippi, Peter would make the bold declaration that Jesus was in fact the Messiah, the Son of the Living God. Jesus then told him he would be given the keys to the kingdom, clearly indicating a position of authority, enabling Peter to include or exclude, to open or close, in connection with his use of the keys to the kingdom.

That passage in Matthew 16 will be examined in detail later. Its meaning has been very controversial between Catholics and Protestants for hundreds of years.

We of Christianity Clarified are persuaded that both have made faulty assumptions as to its interpretation. A clarification will be offered from related passages in the Bible itself, adding to the passages as only the Bible itself can.

But for the immediate, our intent is to establish beyond any doubt the primacy of Simon Peter that Jesus clearly bestowed upon him at Caesarea Philippi.

Just prior to that, in Matthew 15, it was Peter who asked Jesus to explain the meaning of the parable he had given about the blind leading the blind. Peter, almost exclusively, will be the one among the twelve who poses the several questions, and it will be Peter who boldly rebukes Jesus for speaking of his impending death in Jerusalem.

[34 : 04] It was a tense time of interaction between Jesus and Peter, and it was right after Jesus told Peter that he would be given the keys to the kingdom, but now he is also telling him that he, Peter, is guilty of thinking just like Satan himself thinks.

Well, understandably, Peter is angry and confused over this uncomfortable exchange with Jesus. Knowing Peter will need more enlightenment and confirmation of what Jesus had said, both about the keys and his impending death, Jesus arranges for the miraculous event on the Mount of Transfiguration to take place.

Peter will then be given needed confirmation. And Peter's bestowal of primacy continues, with more clarification just ahead.

It is safe to say that of all the differences that separate Protestants and Roman Catholics, none is so key and critical as that which Jesus said and meant in Matthew's Gospel, chapter 16.

So very much of Roman Catholic theology that impacts the whole of the Catholic Church is derived from this passage. What the Catholics affirm from the text, is precisely what the Protestants deny.

[35 : 30] Up front, let us say that here at Christianity Clarified, there are very real problems with both the usual Catholic and Protestant interpretations and, strangely enough, both groups suffer from the same faulty assumptions.

We will give you the standard interpretations of both groups and attempt to reveal where each has gone astray. It can very easily be seen how each came to their respective conclusions and, of course, each in good faith.

But as has been noted since we began dealing with the issue of faulty assumptions, good faith and sincerity do not guarantee an accurate interpretation.

It can almost assuredly be said that all interpretations are arrived at from sincere and good faith motivation. Of course, it is possible and has happened on occasions that along would come a religious huckster or con man who may in bad faith try to convince others with an intentional twisting of a text in order to manipulate an audience for some selfish gain, either monetarily or for some ego aggrandizement.

Yet, we are not implying that Roman Catholics or Protestants are either motivated by such. But for the immediate, our goal is to provide the biblical evidence for insisting on the origin of Peter's prominence, not only among the twelve apostles during the Gospels and Acts, but the position guaranteed to Peter in the future.

[37 : 11] Even a superficial reading of the four Gospels makes it clear that of all of the twelve apostles, almost none of the eleven remaining, hardly any have any input at all compared to that of Peter.

His prominence and dominance are unmistakable. Please consider, it will be Peter alone who will be responsible for all the following, that is, asking Jesus to explain the meaning of the parable of the blind leading the blind, and by the way, all of these are from Matthew's Gospel.

Secondly, it will be Peter alone who responds to the question Jesus asked about who people thought him to be. It was Peter who boldly confessed, you are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.

It will then be Peter to whom Jesus said he would give the keys of the kingdom. And Peter will ask Jesus, how many times need I forgive one who has wronged me?

Seven? And it will be Peter who will put the question, what will we apostles receive for having followed you? And Peter will boastfully tell Jesus, all the others, Jesus, may forsake you, but you can count on me.

[38 : 24] I will never forsake you. And shortly thereafter, of course, Peter will deny his Lord three times and weep bitterly over having done so upon hearing the cock crow.

All just related from Matthew establish beyond any doubt Peter's primacy and prominence. More to come just ahead. There is no possibility of adequately grasping the four gospels or the acts of the apostles if one ignores or overlooks the prominence of Peter the apostle.

There did not appear to be any others of the twelve who were as close to Jesus or, according to the record, interacted so consistently with Jesus as did Simon Peter.

Peter. We earlier referenced several occasions from Matthew's gospel to support that claim. And to continue from Mark's gospel, it will be Peter, who has the audacity to dispute and rebuke Jesus when he revealed his upcoming death in Jerusalem.

It was a very tense exchange that occurred between Jesus and Peter. When Jesus told Peter he was being influenced in his objection and denial by none other than Satan himself.

- [39 : 43] Luke's gospel records Peter falling down at the knees of Jesus and asking him to depart from him because he, Peter, was not worthy of being in Jesus' presence.

Peter will ask Jesus whether the parable he gave about servants waiting for their masters appearing was just for them or intended for all. And it will be Peter and John Jesus sends to prepare for the upcoming Passover meal.

John, in his gospel, has Peter responding to Jesus when asked whether he would remain with him, to which Peter answered, Lord, to whom could we go?

You have the words of life. It was Peter who convinced of his own unworthiness would not allow Jesus to wash his feet. Upon then learning of its necessity, Peter asked Jesus to wash him all over.

Peter it would be who would draw his sword to defend Jesus by slicing off the ear of a servant who had come to arrest Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.

- [40 : 50] In speaking to Jesus, it would be none other but Peter who boasted that the other apostles might not stand with him, but for sure, Jesus could count on Peter.

Yet, within hours, Peter would be the one to cave. Three times when asked if he was not one of Jesus' disciples. Mere hours later, Peter would be reduced to a blubbing specimen of humanity when he heard the cock crow.

Peter went out and wept bitterly. And it will be Peter who, upon arriving at the tomb where Jesus was placed, will run right past John and rush inside the tomb to find it empty.

And later, Peter, when Peter hears the stranger on the shore of Galilee who had cried out to them was none other than Jesus, Peter jumped from the boat and went sloshing through the water to get to him.

After arriving and conversing and eating freshly prepared fish, Peter is then pained to hear Jesus ask him three times whether he really loved him more than the other apostles loved him.

- [42 : 04] These telling interactions of Peter with Jesus are those found in just the four Gospels, but more is to come that will demonstrate further time and again regarding Peter's prominence.

The case set forth for establishing the prominence of Peter among the twelve Apostles could not be more obvious in the four Gospels, but more is to come, because it is the new Peter who takes charge after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus back to heaven.

In Acts 1, Peter will preside over selecting the replacement for Judas who had hung himself and Matthias was chosen. In Acts 2, it had only been ten days since Jesus ascended back to heaven when the annual Jewish feast of Pentecost takes place.

Peter will be the spokesman to explain the miraculous foreign languages spoken by those who did not know the language. The miracle was in the language barrier being removed and Peter stood forth to explain it.

Of the thousands of Jews who heard Peter's powerful Pentecost sermon, three thousand responded positively to his message and underwent the baptism of John for the remission of sins.

- [43 : 25] In Acts 3, Peter will speak to the lame man in the temple, taking him by the hand and raising him up as he is healed after being born a cripple over forty years earlier.

Then Peter will address the great crowd that has gathered with a follow-up message to that which he delivered in chapter 2 at the feast of Pentecost. It was Peter who spoke to the Jewish elders in defense of their preaching the resurrection of Jesus and their refusal to stop preaching in his name.

It will be a death sentence Peter will actually pronounce upon Ananias and Sapphira his wife regarding their lying about selling price of their property.

Peter will boldly answer the Jewish leaders who threaten them and demand that they stop preaching of Jesus. It will be Peter who will heal the bedridden Aeneas in Acts chapter 9 and later be used of God to raise Dorcas from the dead.

Peter will be the vehicle to inform Cornelius the Gentile Roman army officer in Acts 10 about the person and work of Jesus and then be the first non-Jew or Gentile to embrace Jesus as Messiah.

[44 : 42] And it will be Peter whose input carries much weight at the controversial council that was held in Acts 15 to consider whether Gentiles who believed in Jesus also had to be circumcised as were the Jews.

Peter appears to have given the perspective that settled the issue. And apart from all of the foregoing, Peter will yet pen two valuable letters to his fellow Jewish countrymen who for purposes of persecution and other reasons had already fled the country.

Consequently, anyone denying the prominence of Peter during the earthly ministry of Christ should simply not be taken seriously because evidence to the contrary is irrefutable.

Roman Catholics readily see this and most Protestants do as well. Actually, how could anyone not? The present passage, more than any other, is the greatest point of controversy separating Roman Catholic theology from that of Protestants.

It is only found here in Matthew 16, beginning with verse 13. Because it is so critical, we must not hurry through it.

[46 : 12] Besides, it is rather involved and does not lend itself to a brief exposition. So very much is dependent upon the meaning of the words Peter, rock, church, gates of Hades, keys of the kingdom, binding and loosing, and kingdom of heaven.

Jesus had asked his apostles gathered together, who do people say I am? Jesus had become well known and so many were talking about him.

Jesus asked, what are they saying? Well, some say you are John the Baptist. But then, of course, you must recall that John the Baptist was dead by this time because Herod earlier had John executed.

Nevertheless, there were those who believed Jesus must be John the Baptist risen from the dead because rumors were flying. Rumors always are flying in connection with every important event.

so fake news is not new. It has been around from Genesis 3. But, said Jesus, who do you, meaning you apostles who have been with me, following me for three years, who do you say I am?

[47 : 32] It was Peter who boldly spoke out as the spokesperson for the twelve. You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus replied, Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood did not reveal that to you, but my Father who is in heaven.

And since we have earlier dealt with that expression, and it was very telling, we must resist returning there and move on to the next critical issue, and it begins in verse 18.

Jesus said, And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it.

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven. This critical key passage of Christ promising and delegating honors and responsibilities to the apostle Peter is the source of great controversy and disagreement between Catholics and Protestants.

And no one is questioning the good faith of either group with the interpretations they have set forth. We can only say that both are guilty of not taking into consideration all that is recorded in connection with this issue.

[48 : 53] Scripture enlightens and interprets Scripture. In fact, this Matthew 16 passage will reveal the necessity of comparing Scriptures. We must do what we can to capture all the Bible has to say on a given subject before drawing conclusions.

It is a vital part of what the apostle Paul stated in 2 Corinthians 2.15 regarding rightly dividing the word of God. And we shall see. We are engaging the principal verse of controversy separating Roman Catholics and Protestants.

Still, we will at least get past this first segment of the passage before the dividing controversy and it is found only in Matthew's Gospel chapter 16 containing the more complete account.

Less detailed references are found in Mark 8 and Luke 9. John omits it altogether in his Gospel. Jesus had just posed the question as to who the Twelve regarded Jesus to be.

Peter boldly replied, You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Jesus replied that it was God the Father who revealed that truth to Peter and he went on to say, You are Peter and upon this rock I will build my church.

[50 : 13] The first question is, Why did Jesus say, You are Peter? Surely Peter knew who he was. But recall now, Peter wasn't always called Peter.

What does that mean? Well, Peter was an add-on name that Jesus gave him when Andrew introduced him as his brother Simon to Jesus. That is in John's Gospel, chapter 1.

It's true, Simon is also called Peter here, but only because Matthew, who wrote this Gospel, wrote it many years later and in it he referred to Simon as Peter. But Simon was not Peter till Jesus gave him that added name in John's Gospel, chapter 1, verse 42, saying, You are Simon, son of John, you shall be called Cephas, which translated means Peter.

It is entirely possible, in fact, perhaps probable, they were speaking in Aramaic, commonly spoken among the Jews of that first century. And volumes have been written as to what the actual name Peter means.

The Greek renders it Petros, which means a stone, whereas the word rock in Greek is not Petros, but Petra, which means a large rock, as in bedrock.

[51 : 35] Jesus uses two different words to make a distinction between them, and he then is saying the church he will build is not a small stone such as one could throw, but is a large mass of bedrock.

The issue is further obscured because there is no difference between the two if they were actually conversing in Aramaic. It is the Greek that makes a distinction between the two.

While we have the Greek, we do not have the Aramaic, so it is not possible to have 100% certainty. It is also reasonable to conclude Jesus was making a play on words by telling Simon that he was Peter.

And we are confident Peter knew who he was. The question now is, who or what is Jesus referring to by this rock? Thankfully, it is perhaps the main item upon which Catholics and Protestants do agree.

The official interpretation as found in the Catechism of the Catholic Church printed in 1995 is under the imprimatur of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, who has since retired as Pope of the Roman Catholic Church.

- [52 : 45] And it is also the same interpretation held by most, but not all, of the Protestant denominations and independents. And it will follow in our upcoming segment of Christianity Clarified.

The source being consulted now is the officially published Catechism of the Catholic Church bearing the imprimatur of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, a former Pope. In chapter 2, item 424, and I quote, Ambiguity then surfaces, however, when the same source also in chapter 2 states, quote, You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.

Christ, the living stone, thus assures his church, built on Peter, a victory over the powers of death. Because of the faith he confessed, Peter will remain the unshakable rock of the church.

Unquote. The ambiguity is obvious and critical. Will the church be built upon the truth of Christ being the Messiah, the Son of the living God?

Or is the church built upon Peter himself? Searching for clarification, please be reminded that the Old Testament was all of the Bible that existed during the earthly three-year ministry of Jesus when he spoke these words to Peter.

- [54 : 27] In it, there were 16 times three in 2 Samuel, and 13 times in the Psalms, all of which identify God himself as the rock.

They are found in 2 Samuel 22, quoting, The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and deliverer. Then, Psalm 18, The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and deliverer.

Verses 31 and 46. Psalm 28, unto thee will I cry, O Lord, my rock. Psalm 31, bow down thine ear to me, deliver me speedily.

Be thou my strong rock, and verse 3, for thou art my rock and my fortress. End quote. Nearly identical references to God alone as the rock are also found in Psalm 42, 62, 71, 78, 89, 92, 94, and 95, verse 1, that concludes with, Let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.

Now, with the foregoing 16 references that describe the rock as being synonymous with deity, that is, God himself, is it at all conceivable that in Matthew 16, the rock Jesus refers to means Peter?

- [56 : 07] Though we did not get the clarity we sought from the official Catholic catechism, it does appear very apparent that the Old Testament to which Jesus consistently appealed is rather conclusive about the identity of the rock.

Wouldn't this be that upon which his church would be built? And it would seem that Catholics would agree. The church Jesus would build would be upon Peter's confession of the identity of Jesus, not upon Peter himself.

Still, Peter's future role will nonetheless be critical, and it surfaces just ahead. The key text we are considering is found in Matthew's Gospel, chapter 16, beginning with verse 18.

The Apostle Peter has just confessed Jesus to be none other than the Messiah of Israel and the Son of the Living God. It was the truth regarding the identity of Jesus that he promised would be the foundation of the church, the assembly, the ecclesia that he will build.

Our previous segment referenced 16 places in the Old Testament where God himself was identified to be a rock, that is, the stability and strength of the one speaking, which in most cases was David the psalmist.

[57 : 28] It appears rather obvious that the rock so often mentioned in those Old Testament passages would be that one himself who would be the strength, the foundation, the underpinnings of the church Jesus told Peter and the twelve that he will build.

Jesus said, I will build, clearly indicating it did not yet exist when he said it, but it would be built at a future time.

Now the question is, when would that future time be? An important main feature of this church when built would be the gates of Hades will not overpower or conquer it.

Those two issues must be explained. When will this church be built and what are those gates of Hades? Then we must also identify what is meant by the word church because that involves far more than realized.

Now prepare yourself for the faulty assumption made many, many years ago by the Roman Catholics and by the Protestant church as well. That faulty assumption made by both is in all likelihood the very same one I would have made had I been in their place about 2,000 years ago.

[58 : 55] In fact, it appears rather obvious. It was assumed and still is assumed the church Jesus said he would build he began to build less than 30 days after he said it.

It could not be more obvious. And that is very often the way faulty assumptions present themselves.

They look so obvious and as a result everybody knows the church Jesus said he would build began on the day of Pentecost as recorded in the book of Acts chapter 2 just 10 days after Jesus ascended back to heaven in Acts chapter 1 except that it didn't.

It was and still is assumed that it did by both Catholics and Protestants. But that church has never yet been built.

Now I can hear your response to that news. Why that's the dumbest thing I ever heard. Where in the world did you get such a bizarre idea is that? Yes, there are churches thousands of them Catholic and Protestant and they are real churches but they are not this church of which Jesus was speaking.

[60 : 15] Why not upcoming? According to Matthew 16 when Jesus said he would build his church he also said to Peter that he would give him Peter the keys to the kingdom of heaven.

This church and the kingdom both of which were future are not the same. They will be inseparable but they are not identical nor should they be regarded interchangeable.

Words mean things. The church Jesus will build consists of people. They will be residents of the kingdom. They will be in the kingdom but they are not the kingdom.

The kingdom is a geographical sphere a domain a reality that will be the entirety of planet earth.

It will be headquartered in Israel as the center of the earth. The kingdom of heaven is not the same as heaven. It is the rule and reign of heaven brought down to earth as reflected in what is popularly called the Lord's Prayer for the kingdom of heaven to come so that the will of God will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

[61 : 39] That prayer has never yet been answered in the same way that the church Jesus told Peter he would build has not yet been built.

They go together. The church and the kingdom are not the same but they are inseparable. The kingdom is the larger sphere or domain that encompasses the entire globe while the church is made up of the people who are residents of that kingdom but both are very real and very literal.

The kingdom is a literal physical geographical entity and the church and the residents that are there in it are real physical people the subjects of that kingdom.

Jesus meant them to be real and literal and the apostles obviously did as well. When we allow the Bible to shed light on itself by turning to Matthew 19 where Jesus promises the twelve apostles that they will be placed on twelve thrones as judges of the twelve tribes of Israel when Jesus comes into his kingdom that will also be when Peter will possess the keys to the kingdom.

That time is coming and it is as sure as it can be but it has not yet occurred in the same way that the Lord's prayer has not been answered yet.

[63 : 13] For anyone who thinks God's will is now being done on earth as it is being done in heaven is surely looking at a different earth than the rest of us.

What shall we make of all this? The plot thickens and thickens and thickens but the dots the dots will get connected and the picture that will result will be beautiful because scripture interprets scripture and when it does our faulty assumptions will be revealed.

You will see. The previous segment of Christianity Clarified left you with the phrase scripture interprets scripture and so it does so much so better than we can.

Right after Matthew's gospel is that of Dr. Luke. He alone of the four gospels mentioned what Jesus said recorded in Luke 12 verse 32.

Fear not little flock for your father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom. The immediate context tells us there was a large crowd he was addressing yet he called them a little flock.

[64 : 37] We can only surmise they were small in number compared to the greater population that was not present. In verse 41 Peter asked Jesus whether he was referring to the twelve alone or was he meaning the entire crowd that was there.

In either case the term little flock was relative by comparison and there would be included recipients as residents of the kingdom.

That is the same kingdom identified earlier as not yet existing as well as the not yet existing church that will be a part of that kingdom.

Catholics and Protestants both do themselves a great disservice by not allowing these terms to mean what they seem to mean and to take them in the same way as the crowds took them when Jesus spoke those words.

They were very real, very actual, very literal. It must be realized that once one departs from the customary ordinary meaning of a term and opts for it being a so-called spiritual or allegorical meaning, the interpretation thereof is at the mercy of the interpreter's imagination.

[65 : 59] No one is saying all of the Bible is to be taken literally, and we saw repeated examples in the figures of speech explained in the protracted series we did on hermeneutics found on previous volumes of Christianity Clarified.

A third-century scholar by the name of Origen, followed later by the brilliant St. Augustine in the 5th century, were both advocates of the allegorical school of interpreting the Bible.

Essentially, it promoted the concept that the literal face value meaning of a word was simply its superficial or elemental meaning.

It was like the husk of the grain, they called it. But that is the very superficial meaning of it. If you want to get at the kernel that was under the husk where the real meaning exists, one need look beyond the literal and the superficial to get at the real down-to-earth meaning, which is of course deeper and far more valuable in the same way the grain is to the husk.

Catholics and Protestants to this day have not recovered from this tragic faulty assumption. How sad! How negatively consequential!

[67 : 30] More lies ahead. Our key text is Matthew chapter 16 where Jesus tells Peter he will give him the keys of the kingdom, that Jesus will build his church and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.

The church and the kingdom are spoken of as being superior, incapable of being overcome, not even by Hades itself. Also, it implies that neither fitting that description has ever come into being, but they will.

And they will in such a way that Hades cannot conquer them, not the kingdom and not the church. Hades is the place of the dead, the realm of death itself.

It is found numerous times both in the Old Testament and in the New, and sometimes it is used as a synonym for the grave or the abode of the dead.

The use of the word gates, as in gates of Hades, refers to the seat of authority. Gates in the Bible refers to the strategic part of the city wall through which exits and entrances are made, and it was a place of considerable public traffic.

[68 : 57] They were also the location of the local government, or where the city fathers held court, settled disputes, and rendered verdicts. The gate of the city was the equivalent of our town hall, the place of legal local authority, and the gates of Hades simply means the power or the authority of Hades.

What was its power? What was its authority? Death. Hades is the cruel and predictable taskmaster of every human who ever lived.

The gates of Hades, the grim reaper, the angel of death, feared and dreaded by all. But Jesus is saying, no more.

Not in the church I will build. The gates of Hades will have no power in my church. Now the question, and it is for you to answer, do the gates of Hades exercise power in your church?

It does in mine. I cannot count the funerals I have conducted over the past 50 plus years. In every one of them, Hades had prevailed over the physical bodies of those who succumbed.

[70 : 20] Thankfully, Hades could not touch the spirits that previously lived in those bodies because they had made their exit when the body died, and to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

Still, Hades' death claimed the body, and would have claimed the spirit also had it not already been redeemed and out of the reach of death. We are assured the time is coming in Revelation 20 when even death and Hades will give up the dead which were in them.

Then, death and its master Hades will themselves be cast into the lake of fire. But is that now? No, it is not. And neither are the kingdom or the church Jesus said he will build.

You've just heard another session of Christianity Clarified with Marv Wiseman.■ cárisen
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