

Clarifying Christianity

Copyright EMS publishing 2019

It might seem strange that a religion or system of belief that has been around almost 2,000 years would need an introduction or explanation. However, during this period of time so many distortions, failures, and corruption have arisen as to make Christianity confusing, even to those who follow it and much more so to those that observe it from the outside.

To try to clarify what Christianity is, what it was supposed to be, and how it came into such a sad state today, we should first consider the briefest outline of Christianity. Next, we will examine a more detailed overview. Finally, the bulk of this book will focus on a more detailed explanation of Christianity.

Christianity - Short Version

Christianity is about Christ. This person lived 2,000 years ago. He was both God and man. He was predicted to offer a kingdom to the nation of Israel. This offer was rejected and he was executed. He was raised from the dead and seen by over 500 people before he ascended into heaven. God offers eternal life to anyone who trusts in Christ. This eternal life is often what is called “going to heaven”.

Christianity - Brief Version

Basically Christianity asserts that God created heaven and earth as well as angels and people. Some angels rebelled and convinced the first people to also rebel against the will of their creator. As a result, humans have been cut off from fellowship with God and ever since have had to deal with hardship and difficulty in life as a result of being born into a natural environment made hostile to us, the hurt we inflict on each other as a result of our unrestrained selfishness, and the manipulation of us by hostile angelic forces.

The solution God had in mind to rescue us from this sad situation was that he would send Jesus to be born into a people (Israel) he had chosen and through whom he had his word recorded. The Old Testament of the bible (the word of God recorded by prophets of Israel) is largely a history of these people. It is mostly a record of selfishness, vanity, disinterest in God, and outright rebellion against God. In short, they were a fair representation of all humanity. As proof of the truth of God and his word, they received prophecies, many of which have already been fulfilled, some, hundreds of years after they were made.

One prophecy was that in the future a Messiah (the Greek word Christ means the same thing, “anointed”) would come to be king. It was also foretold that he would be rejected and put to death. While Jesus (the Messiah or Christ) was dying on the cross, God placed on him the sins of the whole world. It may not be possible for us to fully understand what bearing the sins of everyone (past, present, and future) would entail, but the bible is pretty clear that this act was necessary in order for us to have the opportunity to escape being held accountable for our own sins.

It seems unlikely that a man rejected as king and executed as a criminal would be the central object of a major religion. Even though often severely persecuted the first three hundred years, Christianity became more and more sought and followed. What was most convincing was the power of a transformed life. The conversion to a sober husband, dutiful wife, loving father, or patient mother was such a compelling testimony that many sought to also follow Christ.

It seems that the more information that is presented about Christianity, the more questions are raised. For this reason, the rest of the book will be a detailed presentation following a mostly historical path but focusing on the concepts to illustrate and explain the Christian perspective.

The Adversary

A major reason Christianity is confusing and is often confused itself is that the devil (Satan) has been allowed to attack it over the centuries. One of his greatest successes was to get many to think he does not even exist. As Christianity is discussed, the role Satan has played in subverting it will be examined.

The Bible

Aside from an obscure reference by the historian Josephus, our understanding of Christianity is derived from two sources, Christian tradition and the bible. Our traditions often have accumulated teaching that is not correct or even helpful and often contribute to confusion about Christianity. For this reason, the bible stands alone as critical to understand Christianity.

A second reason the bible is central to Christianity is that it is the means by which God accomplishes what he wills. This can seem an incredible claim to those who are unfamiliar with Christianity. However, one can consider the implication of the following statements from the bible.

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. - Romans 10:17

For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. - Isaiah 55:10-11

This Book

There are two general parts to this book. The first is a more detailed description of how life on earth was created, rebelled, a people was chosen, and a kingdom promised. The failure of the people to accept the kingdom resulted in a condition where other people (gentiles) are left hanging, being members of a kingdom that has not been manifest for 2,000 years.

The second part of the book is a detailed look at how those claiming to be Christian have been led so often to do and say things that bring the name of Christ into disrepute, in addition to causing much confusion. Even more sad are the many ways Christians (who are supposed to love each other) have been led to demonstrate contempt for and even harm each other.

Chapter 1 - How Created Beings May Have Come to be Constituted

If one were to imagine himself as an all powerful god, and had a desire to create people, it would seem that there are only two options available. The first would be to create robot-like beings who would only do what they were supposed to. The second option would be to create people with free will. It would seem inevitable if beings were created with truly free will, that they would make wrong (self-

destructive) choices.

If the beings were created with free will were created as spiritual (non-physical) beings with knowledge and unable to reproduce themselves, it might describe the realm of the angels. For this group there might be a single definable choice where each being either remained faithful or rebelled. It might be that the angel group consists of beings who have been given various levels of power and authority. The rebel angels would then remain a cohesive group under the control and direction of the highest (most powerful) rebel angel.

The bible makes a brief reference to “sons of God” as having wed human women to produce a race of giants.

There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown. - Genesis 6:4

This particular group of rebelling angels (apparently having the power to manifest physically) have been singled out for particular restriction.

And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. - Jude 1:6

If the beings were created with free will were created as physical (with body, soul, and spirit) beings without much knowledge but able to reproduce themselves, it might describe the realm of humans. For this group (of two humans) the choice to rebel was made in ignorance. As a result, they and all their children would live cut-off from God in ignorance suffering the consequences of every selfish choice they make.

That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: - Ephesians 2:12

As an all powerful god, one might recognize that beings with free will will always make wrong choices at some point. This results in a never ending process of creating beings and then exterminating them for their wrong choices hoping that at some point in an infinite future a group of beings will not make wrong choices. The alternative is to create a plan that would include a method of redemption such that beings who have made wrong choices could be salvaged.

According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: - Ephesians 1:4

Chapter 2 - The Forces that Drive the Universe

The last word in the Ephesians verse (“love”) is interesting. For us to consider the nature of the universe, we need to consider this fundamental force (the choice to forgo the interest of self for the benefit of another).

Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in

iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. - 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

It defines the very character and nature of God.

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. - 1 John 4:7-8

Love is not the first thing one might think of in describing an all powerful God. However, upon reflection one might consider that a god (like those of mythology) who had human selfish characteristics, would eventually, through the use of his power, end up destroying himself along with others.

One might consider a universal axiom that selfishness is destructive and selflessness (love) is constructive. Beings created like angels might just have a single opportunity to chose which path to follow. Beings created in ignorance, like humans, might be salvageable by being given an opportunity to choose this path.

The constructive (edification) characteristic of love can be seen in contrast to the illusionary “substance” of something like knowledge by which a person may form an unrealistic view of himself.

Knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth. - 1 Corinthians 8:1b

The second key elemental force of the universe is truth. Just as love can be abandoned for selfishness, truth can be abandoned for the fleeting comforts and sensations of illusion. Both love and truth work to build up and their lack contribute to decay and destruction.

There is a contrast between truth and love in that while love is a choice, truth is absolute. Both are characteristics of God and both proceed from him to us. Truth is manifest in everything that exists. It defines reality. Truth is constant and unchanging. Truth transcends the material universe. It is that from which the material universe is brought forth. The concept of relativity is that everything depends on something else. However, without the absolute there can be no source. Even the spiritual universe also depends on and proceeds from the absolute of truth.

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. - Genesis 1:1

A third basic force in the universe is life. This also comes from and is sustained by God.

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. - Genesis 1:26

And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. - Genesis 2:7

We know that there is animal, human, angelic and divine life. Also, we can know that aside from divine life, we are all created. It is love that places life in creation.

The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life. - Job 33:4

Too often we settle for a mechanical description of the material universe as if measurement and conjecture could satisfy a soul that craves to know its creator. When we consider love, truth, and life, we begin to see a deeper and fuller description of the universe and one in which the hand of God is not hidden.

Chapter 3 - Jesus the Creator

Jesus Christ is not often presented as the God of the Old Testament or the creator. This can tend to diminish how we think of him to just a teacher or recommender. A more accurate understanding of Christianity depends on a more accurate understanding of Christ.

Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. - Colossians 1:15-17

It is understandable that when Jesus was born in Israel that most would think of him as distinct from the God their ancestors knew.

Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? - John 14:8-9

Even more than the claim a father has over his children, so Jesus has claim over us. As our creator and the source of our life, he has the right to expect us to do as he says.

He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. - John 14:21

Because we have free will and have become in rebellion to him, Jesus offers us the opportunity to be reconciled. It is a reconciliation based on love. The word “commandments” is entolē and means injunctions, authoritative prescriptions, or precepts. This defines a relationship based on a willing conformity to and acceptance of the principles extending from the forces of truth and love. Before we can fully understand reconciliation, we need to more fully understand how we came to be disconnected from God.

Chapter 4 - The Fall of Man

Humans were created to live trusting in God. When Adam and Eve were tricked into using their own understanding to act against the instructions of God, they became disconnected from God. This disconnection is an important element to understanding our current condition.

But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. - Genesis 2:17

There has been some confusion regarding the instruction that God gave Adam. Some see the

declaration to be interpreted that the process of physical death began the day the Adam and Eve sinned only to be concluded 900 years later. This seems a bit weak. We can see that on the day they sinned something changed.

And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. - Genesis 3:7-8

It has been suggested that the word “die” (mûth) which means death (either literally or figuratively), could have meant a separation from God. We can see from the description that something had changed in their relationship with God.

We might be able to shed some light on what “died” on the day Adam and Eve sinned by considering that the bible describes two types of “birth”.

Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. - John 3:5

Here we might consider that “water” refers to natural physical birth and “Spirit” refers to the regeneration of what “died” at the time of Adam and Eve. What was lost came about through the abandonment of faith through the choice to follow our own will. The restoration of our relationship with God will rest on being “born again” brought about through an opportunity to place our faith once again in Jesus.

It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. - 1 Corinthians 15:44-47

Whatever it was that died in us when Adam and Eve sinned, it has left us to our own devices. We have an example of what such an abandonment leads to when we consider that after Adam, things got so bad on earth that everyone was exterminated except for eight people.

And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD. These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God. - Genesis 6:5-9

There is that within the human heart apart from God that is self-destructive. To illustrate how far we have come from truth, many people today think that humans are basically good and constantly evolving to higher planes of consciousness.

God had no such delusions about the “nobility” of man. Because of the evil in our selfish hearts, he changed the natural world so that we would have hardship and difficulty.

And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. - Genesis 3:17-19

One might question if God was angry, vengeful, or spiteful to so punish all of us for one sin. However, such conjecture is based on a view that man’s greatest good lies in the direction of his comfort and ease. A different perspective might see what God did as loving protection.

Consider two wealthy fathers of young men who both rebel against their fathers. One father chooses to cut off all funds from his rebellious son. The other father allows his son to continue access to his funds. The first son has to find a job to earn the money he needs to eat. The second son continues to finance whatever indulgences and whims he fancies. The difficulties the first son encounters help him come to understand reality and truth. The delusions and dissipations of the second son carry him increasingly further from truth.

The natural world was made hostile to us and even our DNA was changed to facilitate a shorter life and the prevalence of disease and disability. It is these limitations and difficulties that show us our need for God.

Today technology has largely lifted the burden of a hostile natural world and replaced it with a comfortable social world. These comforts are not blessings from God so much as seductions from Satan to divert us into the paths he would have us take. This is described in more detail in “The Satanic History of the World”.

To consider how effective these manipulations have been in getting us to be disinterested in God, one might see prisons and hospitals as some of the last places where people might still come to have an interest in God.

Chapter 6 - The Path Towards Collectivization

While we may not have a detailed understanding of Satan’s plans and objectives, we can see in his ambitions a strong desire to achieve prominence.

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. - Isaiah 14:12-14

We might deduce that since Satan cannot be everywhere at once, he needs to have humans form themselves into a collective so that he can leverage his influence over us.

The first example we have of human collectivization is at the tower of Babel. We also see that God is not in favor of such collaboration.

And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. - Genesis 11:5-7

As people began to separate from each other, their suspicions of each other (with whom they could not communicate) made them fearful and easy for Satan to manipulate through war and fear of war such that they would collectivize for protection.

Local collectivization was also easy to achieve through false religions. A primitive society might have an economic surplus that could support a priestly class of up to 20% of the population. It is not difficult to find human collaborators to support a religion that gives them a labor free life, prestige, and the freedom to blame any calamity on the people being exploited for angering the gods.

God intended the natural world to be difficult to sharpen our understanding that we needed God. As we collectivize, we begin to see strength and certainty in the collective that becomes an alternate object for our trust. This can be seen using the following illustration.

A man that trusts in God can be compared to a man asleep in the back seat of a speeding car. If he should awake suddenly, he sees someone he trusts driving and can fall back asleep with little worry. If another man asleep in the back seat of a speeding car suddenly awakes and sees no one behind the wheel, he will clamber over the seat to grab the wheel himself. In a way, those who see no one running the universe are like the man who sees no one steering the car. They can feel they should and they often wrangle together to form a group that takes control of others to ease their collective anxiety. Seeing no God, they promote themselves to the position using the power of the collective to give the illusion of control.

Chapter 7 - In the Midst of Nations

God did not plan to abandon us to the soul strangling fate of warring nations, false religions, and exploitation by our neighbors. In order for God to reach into all the nations of earth with a message that there was an opportunity to be redeemed, God chose a faithful man (Abraham) and made his descendants into the nation of Israel. He would use this nation to tell the other nations about how to be redeemed.

God told Abraham that his descendants would have the land of Canaan given to them. However, it would be over 400 years until the sins of the people living there were so bad, that they would, like the people before the flood, have gained for themselves a judicial sentence of extermination. During this time the descendants of Abraham would be multiplying as slaves in Egypt. When God brought them out of Egypt, he brought them to mount Sinai and made an agreement with them so that they would be his chosen people.

Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not

sown. - Jeremiah 2:2

The word “espousal” can be expanded to betrothal in Egypt and marriage at Sinai. A further picture of this covenant or “marriage” (contract, agreement, or testament) can be seen in Exodus.

And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basons; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words. - Exodus 24:6-8

The picture of a marriage between Israel and God is further shown in the negative as the nation turned away from God to follow after false religions and is often rebuked by the prophets God sent to the nation for their “adultery”.

And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also. - Jeremiah 3:8

The nation had split in two (Israel and Judah). Ten tribes constituted Israel and remnants of each tribe fled to Judah when God allowed the Assyrians to destroy Israel. Still Judah did not turn from idolatry. As a result God had the remaining nation of Judah taken as slaves to Babylon for 70 years. Upon their return, they finally abandoned idolatry.

The nation of Judah (now called Israel) was supposed to get a new covenant (testament) with God that would bring in a kingdom with the Messiah as king. This was the point at which Israel could be used by God to bring his message of redemption to all mankind.

Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. - Jeremiah 31:31-34

Chapter 8 - The Arrival of the King

The arrival of Jesus, who was both God and man, on earth was announced by angels. Wise men from the east (probably using the prediction of the time of his birth written by the prophet Daniel over 400 years earlier) came to see him. Yet when he was brought to the temple eight days later, only two old people were interested.

God had a last prophet called John the Baptist call the people of the nation to repent and receive a water baptism in preparation for the ministry of Jesus.

In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. - Matthew 3:1-2

It was John's purpose to prepare the people for the arrival of Jesus.

I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: - Matthew 3:11

Since so much confusion has arisen in Christianity concerning baptism, it can be helpful to clarify that the word baptism is a transliteration of the word baptizo in Greek that was used to refer to an immersion (usually in water) such as when a ship sank or dishes were washed. It would have been much less confusing if the bible translators had used the word "immerse". The reason they chose to transliterate rather than translate the word was because at the time the bible was translated, the practice of sprinkling babies with water had already been long established and they did not want cause people to become upset that what they had been doing might not be correct.

Two main problem areas of confusion for Christianity would be thinking that instructions for Israel would apply to them and that traditions carry the same weight as God's word. To achieve clarity, one has to be willing to reconsider assumptions and traditions.

Chapter 9 - Salvation in Israel

Most Christians want to have assurance that they are going to heaven when they die and not to eternal punishment in hell. This state is often called "being saved". In considering how one becomes "saved", it is possible to become confused because of the two ways this can be achieved.

Abraham is described as "having righteousness imputed to him" because of his faith. In chapter eleven of Hebrews a list of Old Testament characters is given, each cited for his faith. However, at the end of the list we are told that they did not receive the promise.

And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect. - Hebrews 11:39-40

These saints of the Old Testament would have to wait until they were raised from the dead to receive their eternal life (the promise).

And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever. - Daniel 12:1-3

Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years. - Revelation 20:6

The Jews of the time of Jesus were familiar with the objective of gaining eternal life. Although many (such as the Sadducees) did not believe in a resurrection.

And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. - Matthew 19:16-17

The law was given to Israel for several reasons. Some, like the Pharisees, mistakenly thought the law was the means for them to earn eternal life. Their thinking they had kept the commandments was refuted by Jesus.

For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. - Matthew 5:20-22

A purpose of the law was to establish an understanding of what God desired. It was the motive of faith (trusting in the promises of God) that should lead a Jew to seek to keep the law. It was this faith that was to be the basis of gaining eternal life upon his resurrection from the dead.

Another purpose of the law was to show us that it could not be kept. This realization would create the knowledge that God's help was needed.

For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. - Romans 7:14-15

The advent of the kingdom that John the Baptist and Jesus announced would bring in an alteration to the hope for eternal life. Baptism and repentance would bring the forgiveness of sins not so much to secure eternal life but to prepare the heart for faith in Jesus that would secure eternal life before death.

Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. - Galatians 3:24

The kingdom of God offered by Jesus would bring in a change in how Israel could obtain eternal life (salvation). Jesus told Nicodemus that to enter the kingdom, one had to be born of the Spirit.

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. - John 3:3

Jesus taught that this faith would secure immediately secure eternal life.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. - John 5:24

Jesus declared that it was through his blood that the new covenant (testament), promised by the prophet Jeremiah, would be established with Israel as the basis for the kingdom.

Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you. - Luke 22:20

Chapter 10 - The Almost and Future Kingdom

The offer by Jesus of the kingdom to the nation of Israel was legitimate. However, it required the acceptance by the nation (like the acceptance of the first covenant at Mt. Sinai that established their nation). Everything Jesus did and said was consistent with this offer being made to Israel. Jesus even told his disciples what would be expected of them in this kingdom.

Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen. And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen. - Mark 16:14-20

Some of the signs that attested to the immanent kingdom were;

1. Miraculous healings including raising the dead.
2. Being filled with the Holy Spirit.
3. Imparting the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands.
4. Speaking in other languages.
5. Speaking the word of God.

Some of the practices observed in anticipation of the kingdom were;

1. The continuation of repentance and water baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
2. A common meal where a reminder of the declaration by Jesus of his blood for the new covenant was observed.
3. Keeping the law and temple observances.
4. Pooling of financial resources.

After the ascension of Jesus and the ministry of the Apostles in Jerusalem and the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit were demonstrated to authenticate their ministry and several thousand people individually trusted in Jesus, the nation as a whole remained uninterested.

There was a theoretical window of opportunity for the nation of Israel to receive her king. From the announcement of the birth of Jesus until the destruction of the temple 70 years later, There was not a single word said or act done by Jesus that would indicate the failure of Israel, It is only with the book of Revelation (written after the destruction of the temple) that the future kingdom is described and prophesied.

The future kingdom will come when a faithful remnant of Jews escape the antichrist and flee Jerusalem to be kept and protected by God 3 1/2 years in the wilderness until Christ returns. This appearance of

Christ will then be welcomed and the kingdom established.

Chapter 11 - A Failure to Receive Truth

There can be value to clarifying Christianity in considering the failure of Israel to receive Jesus. Paul tells of a reason a record was kept of the history of Israel.

Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. - 1 Corinthians 10:11

Most of human development is learning what we have to do to get what we want. For most people, the idea of God or eternal reward seems too abstract and insubstantial to hold much interest. The nation of Israel even had promises of blessings and curses to make God seem more relevant and practical, but even this proved an insufficient inducement.

The nation had come to be administered by an elite. Jesus referred to three elements of this elite as being dangerous because their influence could spread as subtly as yeast (leaven) grew. They were called hypocrites not so much as intentional connivers, but as self-deceived manipulators. The Pharisees thought they had obtained righteousness through their works. The Sadducees thought they had a birthright. The Herodians had no interest other than the advantages to be had through political alliance.

An example of how these people “led” the nation can be found when they confronted Jesus;

And they come again to Jerusalem: and as he was walking in the temple, there come to him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders, And say unto him, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority to do these things? And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask of you one question, and answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? answer me. And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then did ye not believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; they feared the people: for all men counted John, that he was a prophet indeed. And they answered and said unto Jesus, We cannot tell. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things. - Mark 11:27-33

Nowhere in their deliberations did these leaders ever consider what was true. In so doing, they declared themselves unworthy of an answer to which their position might have entitled them.

In a similar way, one finds Christianity often shaped into collectives the administration of which is sought by those who through ambition and ego seek to control others. The hallmark characteristic of these sort of people is their disinterest in truth.

If one listens to Christian testimonies, one often hears at the core of a person’s journey a search for truth. Jesus described those who would respond to him;

Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. - John 18:37

Chapter 12 - True Christianity, a Minority Phenomena

The failure of Israel could have been predicted from a mathematical basis alone.

Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. - Matthew 7:14

If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. - John 15:19

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. - John 3:19

Just as there were several thousand in Israel seeking the truth of God in spite of the opposition of the ruling elite, there have been thousands of Christians over the centuries who have sought the truth of Christ in spite of the opposition of churches and church leaders.

In the fourth century the Roman empire went from persecuting Christianity to making it a monopoly. From this we receive the “Christian” nations of Europe. As a result, there were two types of Christianity. The first was the institution through which political and economic advantage could be sought. The second type was the individual whereby (even with faulty, incomplete, and erroneous doctrine), one might still seek and live for Christ.

Chapter 13 - The Church, God’s plan or a kingdom default.

Many see the beginning of Christianity described in the gospels and the book of Acts. This has led to some difficulties and contentions within Christianity with the result of appearing confusing to both Christians and non-Christians. Some of this confusion surrounds the word “church”. The Greek word *ekklēsia* is translated church. This would be more correctly translated “assembly”. It was used in Greek to refer to citizens of a city called out to discuss a particular issue. Because the English word “church” carries with it a lot of established concepts, we tend to read into the bible the associated ideas rather than take out the simple idea of an assembly.

As a result of confusion regarding the “church”, some have declared that the role of Israel is finished and that the “church” has replaced her. Others declare that the kingdom Israel was waiting for is now manifest in the church. Still others declare that everything regarding Israel was concluded in Jesus who is the head of the church.

For the purposes of clarification, it can be helpful to take the bible at face value. If we see the offer of the kingdom to Israel by Jesus as legitimate and the activity of the disciples described in the first part of Acts as in expectation of the repentance of Israel and the immanent return of Jesus to establish the kingdom, we get a more accurate view of events.

The demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit was insufficient to overcome both the disinterest of

the general population and the hostility of the leading elite. The Lord led Peter to observe gentiles receiving the Holy Spirit as confirmation that they were now to be included in the anticipated kingdom. Several years after the offer of the kingdom to Israel saw limited acceptance, even after gentiles were included in the kingdom offer, Paul was called to be an apostle to the gentiles.

For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them. - Romans 11:13-14

The nation of Israel, which had a strong sense of superiority over gentiles, could not be provoked even by jealousy, to seek the kingdom. It had been the entire purpose of the formation of Israel as a nation to be used by God to bring the word of salvation to the nations. Jesus warned Israel what would happen if they neglected to serve this purpose.

He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down. - Luke 13:6-9

As an interesting historical note, the rebellion of the Judean zealots started in 66 AD. The Roman Army that came to put down the rebellion advanced for three years. There was a pause of a year resulting from political adjustments in Rome. Finally in 70 AD the Roman army finished putting down the rebellion with the destruction of the temple. The three year period with a year pause, and then final destruction does match the timing cited in the parable. It has been suggested that the book of Hebrews was written as a sort of last chance for the nation to repent and turn to Jesus as their Messiah and receive the kingdom.

In the shadow of the decline of Israel and their disinclination to be roused either through jealousy or even threat of destruction, there are gentiles coming to faith in Christ. What is called the church today has come to us today from this inauspicious beginning.

Chapter 14 - Was Israel blinded by God?

People are often offended to think that God might cause people to be unable to respond to his offer of grace or understanding.

And the LORD said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go. - Exodus 4:21

And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable. And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them. - Mark 4:10-12

Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became

vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: - Romans 1:21-24

What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day. - Romans 11:7-8

We do see God intervening with people, not so much as to manipulate their decisions, but as to compound their decisions such that their rejection of God becomes a more complete rejection. We see that Jesus warned the nation that this would happen.

And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God. Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper. - Luke 14:15-24

It is interesting to note that this parable of the supper is given in response to the declaration “Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God”. The declaration (which may have been a common salutation) may have been reflective of a general misunderstanding that kingdom entrance was automatic for those born of Israel.

For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. - Romans 11:25-27

God had intended Israel to reach the nations and bring salvation to the gentiles.

Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. - Luke 24:45-47

When Israel failed to receive the kingdom, God’s plan for gentiles to be brought into the kingdom was not frustrated. “All” of Israel will eventually be saved and receive the new covenant and kingdom. Because the remnant of Israel that survives the tribulation will all have full faith in Jesus.

Chapter 15 - The mystery of the church

What we call the church today is mostly gentile believers in Christ. This is because the offer of the kingdom to the nation of Israel has been withdrawn (for now). Paul refers to this infusion of gentiles as a mystery.

For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: - Ephesians 3:1-6

The word “mystery” is used several times in the bible. It often refers to something that was hidden or previously unknown. The disciples were told that parables were used so that they were allowed to know the mystery of the kingdom while it was not explained to others. There is even a mystery of iniquity associated with the antichrist.

We do not know everything. We most likely lack the capability to know everything. Some things we as individuals learn incrementally as understanding is built by layers. As a race, there are things that God reveals sequentially as it is his purpose.

It was common for Jews to balk at the idea of associating with gentiles. There were attempts by some (called Judaizers) to require gentile believers to convert to Judaism. It was decided by the Apostles in Jerusalem that the only requirements to be made of gentile believers were the requirements from Leviticus for gentile sojourners in Israel.

The idea that gentiles would be joint-heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the same promise was difficult to accept for three reasons. The first was the natural tendency of Jews to be dismissive of gentiles. The second was that even the disciples were unfamiliar of what the implications were of life in Christ that constituted his “body”. The third difficulty was that the apparent abandonment of the law that grace seemed to allow was difficult to imagine. Nothing so much as defined the national character of Israel as the law they were given.

Chapter 16 - The Fulfillment of the Law

Paul acknowledges that the gospel he brings carries with it a freedom from law.

What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. - Romans 6:15

We might ask how we can resolve the freedom from law, with the following of the law done by Jesus.

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. - Matthew 5:17-18

One might think of the law as divided into two realms. The first regards personal conduct. The second has national and ceremonial relevance. When Jesus institutes the new covenant with the nation of Israel (upon her receiving the kingdom), one might expect that the burdensome ceremonial requirements would be done away with or at least modified. However, it is not difficult to imagine that what was once considered burdensome will then be seen as an opportunity to give glory to God that becomes a cherished tradition for the nation.

In regard to personal conduct, the Christian has God living in him to help him grow and mature in truth and love.

Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. - Romans 13:10

For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. - Galatians 5:14

The law might be seen as a sort of booster stage for a rocket. Having accomplished its purpose, it would only be a hindrance to cling to it. Paul describes the law using the illustration of a teacher.

Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. - Galatians 3:24-25

Paul admonishes the Galatians for after having begun to follow grace, being advised to return to the law.

O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? - Galatians 3:1-3

Chapter 17 - The Body Without the Kingdom

It was expected and hoped that all of Israel would repent and be baptized for the remission of sins. This would prepare them to trust in the name of Jesus and be born again so they could enter the body of Christ. Israel, in the kingdom, was supposed to go into the whole world and make disciples of all nations. Since Israel proved reluctant to do so, the “mystery” that gentiles would be introduced into the body of Christ was revealed by Paul.

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. - Romans 8:16-17

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. - Galatians 3:28-29

It is tempting for gentile Christians to think they have replaced Israel or to imagine that they are now going to accomplish the work of the kingdom. Sadly, this sort of smugness often results from a strong faith in self and a weak faith in God.

And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. - Romans 11:17-22

As gentile believers, we become part of the body of Christ. We are grafted in. We are brought into the kingdom of God.

Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: - Colossians 1:13

We are sort of citizens of a kingdom yet to be manifested. We are waiting for this kingdom which will have no war, longer life, and a less hostile natural environment. However, there are things to do while we wait.

For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? - Romans 11:15

Chapter 18 - The mission of the church

The “great commission” (so often appropriated by Christians today) was given to the nation of Israel to make disciples of all nations. With the kingdom held in abeyance, one may rightly ask what Christians are suppose to be doing today. In spite of church history and tradition, there is no biblical direction to form institutional collectives or achieve group objectives.

If one were to formulate some guiding principle for Christians, one could consider reconciliation.

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. 2 Corinthians 5:17-19

The process of God reconciling the world to himself by Christ involves us. We can think of reconciliation as similar to restoration. Those of us who have been made “new creations” in Christ have a role to play. The bible describes our configuration as the “body” of Christ and a temple of the Holy Spirit. Our actions need to be at the direction of the head of the body (Christ) and led by the Holy Spirit.

And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. - Colossians 1:18

Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. - Ephesians 2:19-22

The work we have largely involves seeking our own maturity as well as seeking the edification (building up) of fellow Christians. As we mature, we become more sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit. As a result, we grieve and quench his work less.

Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.- Romans 14:19

But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. - Ephesians 4:15-16

The basics of the Christian life are described by Paul in Colossians.

As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: - Colossians 2:6-10

1. "Walk" by faith.
2. Being "rooted".
3. Being "built up" "in him".
4. Being "established".
5. "Abounding" in what we have been "taught".
6. Being "thankful".
7. Being vigilant.

The call for Christians is different than one might be familiar with. In the last century men were incited to join military endeavors, factory workers to greater productivity, and citizens to purchase war bonds all to archive national objectives. Even today "social justice warriors" seek to mobilize everyone to solve social ills.

The Christian is called not to either individual or collective achievement. Rather he is called to continue to grow in Christ-likeness. Whatever works are done are just as he is led by the Holy Spirit that lives in him.

Most of the failures and resulting confusion about Christianity can be found in not following what is laid out in Colossians. Whether it be crusades, religious wars, worldly entanglements, carnality,

hypocrisy, or even blasphemy, too often Christians have allowed themselves to be “spoiled” by those who would bring the name of Christ into disrepute.

Section Two - How Christianity Became Such a Mess

Basically Satan guided Christianity into a system configuration whose collective momentum would allow him and his agents to set its direction. The ultimate purpose in this hijacking was to use Western Civilization to develop the material tools he would need in his attempt to rule the whole world more directly.

By making Christianity a system, Satan could guide men of ambition and vanity, many of whom were not even Christian, to rise to levels of control and use their position to direct the system. To keep Christians compliant he had to insure that they were diverted from knowing what real Christianity was supposed to be.

It is sad how easily we were seduced by our laziness to see Christianity as a spectator sport. Our vanity seduced us into smug contempt for others. Our anxiety was relieved by seeing Christianity simply as securing a ticket to heaven. Christianity as a system run by “experts” creates a social momentum. However, such a system also produces a generational momentum and becomes integrated into a culture.

Part of clarifying Christianity is to present it as it was supposed to have been. Further clarification comes from sifting through the centuries of self-inflicted and external damage and corruption. It is by understanding how Christianity came to be usurped as well as how it continues to be that we can begin to understand what God wanted us to know.

Chapter 19 - Leadership

Having come to an understanding of what Christianity was supposed to be, we should begin to consider some of the many ways it has gone wrong. People both in the church and out of it can see a perplexing presentation of Christianity over history and at present. To achieve clarity, we will have to examine some of the many contributing factors that have combined to produce such a hodge podge of competing and contradictory claims.

One of the defects of our fallen nature is the desire for prominence. We might see this addressed by Jesus using two examples from the Lord’s supper.

And they began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing. And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. - Luke 22:23-26

He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. - John 13:4-5

Some denominations have institutionalized ceremonial foot washing as a practice for their denomination to show humility. However, the act of Jesus demonstrated humility as well as providing a useful service. The streets of villages and cities in the ancient world were usually ankle deep in donkey manure as donkeys were the means of transporting goods for millenia.

The desire for prominence and social ambition can be found in men of all cultures. The Hellenistic (Greek) world had already established with the academy a forum for men to prove their skills in rhetoric, sophistry, and erudition. Even in Israel men sought and rose to levels of admiration.

Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space; - Acts 5:34

One of the most learned men in all of Israel was called upon to render an opinion regarding the ministry of the Apostles.

And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God. - Acts 5:38-39

The best Gamaliel could come up with was “if”. He had probably heard Jesus speak. He had probably even seen those filled with the Spirit speaking in foreign languages. He may have seen Jesus perform miracles. He offered his assessment of the ministry of the Apostles. All he could offer was a pragmatic “wait and see” suggestion. Gamaliel might have been brilliant, learned, and respected. However, when it came to truth, he was as ignorant as a rock.

The influence of the flesh leads men to seek leaders who have qualities of learning, intelligence, captivating speech, and a charismatic presence. In contrast, Christian leaders should be full of humility, wisdom, faith, truth, and love. They should be led by the Holy Spirit, have a love of the brethren and God’s word.

The elevation of a man is usually associated with the organization of men into a collective system that he can administer. The early church slowly transformed from being led by men of godly character to men of ambition, prominence, and political skill. The organizations they formed focused more on works which are of the flesh.

Chapter 20 - Doing Replacing Growing

Christianity as described in the New Testament has as its objective the maturing of each believer into Christ-likeness.

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: - Ephesians 4:11-13

This was transformed during the formation of the early church from spiritual growth to a litany of acts

such as the observance of holy days, celebration of mass, confession, acts of penance and contrition, and sacraments like baptism.

It is human nature to seek that which we can do as a measure of our accomplishment. This is what the Pharisees did.

And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: - Luke 18:9

We are told that God established salvation by faith (trust) in Jesus. The reason is that the alternative is to trust and glory in ourselves.

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. - Ephesians 2:8-9

One reason our accomplishments are not included in salvation is that faith in ourselves is of our flesh. The bible lists works of the flesh.

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. - Galatians 5:19-21

In the long history of the church one can observe many instances of the works of the flesh. Even in the early church in Galatia, Christians were turning away from being led by the Holy Spirit to works of the flesh.

O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? - Galatians 3:1-3

In the church at Corinth there were also demonstrated works of the flesh.

And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? - 1 Corinthians 3:1-3

It is not surprising that 2,000 years later we have such a muddled understanding of Christianity. Christianity is supposed to be about love (selflessness).

And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. - 2 Corinthians 5:15

The flesh is all about selfishness. This is that which resonates with the world. It makes what is claimed as Christianity often indistinguishable from the world.

Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. - James 4:4

Even today many churches are known for the list of rules they wish to impose. Consider the view of fornication which is so endorsed by the world today. Liberal churches often see nothing wrong and many conservative churches seek a rule declaring prohibition to achieve control. While prohibition may foster an environment where less damage results, control in the Christian life is supposed to come from the Holy Spirit.

If one seeks wisdom, which is freely available from God to all who ask, one might see reasons for avoiding fornication. Physical intimacy is something that can only be discovered once in life. If two people marry and discover this (often with tenderness and even laughter) between themselves, they build a strong relationship that can last a lifetime. Those ignorant of this wisdom harm themselves by crippling the ability to deepen intimacy.

A lack of wisdom is reflective of following the path of the flesh. Cathedrals are built, churches erected, creeds promulgated, performance monitored, and compliance coerced all to serve the ambitions of men, but are in the strength of the flesh. The advice given to the Pharisees is still valid today.

But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. - Matthew 9:13

By elevating what can be accomplished and neglecting the inner transformation that the Holy Spirit desires for each of us individually, we follow the same path that the Pharisees took. Much of the confusion regarding Christianity comes from those who claim to be Christian making declarations, assertions, and presentations that are not true. The Pharisees were called hypocrites by Jesus. This was not so much because they were intentionally deceitful, but because they had deceived themselves as well. Jesus called this type of self-deception “leaven” because it spreads like yeast.

The confusing and conflicting claims of Christianity often carry the sincerity of those who have deceived themselves. What is more sad is that truth is found in Jesus but people prefer their own ideas to the truth that could be found in him.

Chapter 21 - Control Systems

One particular way that the flesh has been manifest in Christian history is the attempt to, what might be called, “Put God in a box”. This can be seen every time Christianity is attempted to be reduced to a list of rules. Elevated men (often with good intentions) will seek to establish some sort of system that will operate to insure good outcomes.

Plutarch wrestled with the idea of how men could obtain virtue and resist the influence of destructive desires. His advocacy of the power of reason, like the Stoics, sought to persuade people based on what they thought was compellingly obvious rationale.

The idea of teaching is often based on the assumption that if someone is not doing what he should, it is because he does not know what it is he should do. When education fails to produce expected results, systems of coercion can begin to be instituted. This is done to apply force to motivate people to behave or perform in a desired way.

Governments can use threat of prison, seizure of property, and even death to motivate people in the direction they want them to go. Religious groups can use guilt, family or peer pressure, or even the threat of excommunication.

Christianity was supposed to be about the transformation of individual lives through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit in each believer. It is sad how quickly it can become a control system of rules and works

Chapter 22 - Organizational Systems

Most churches today consist of a building (and associated property). There may be organizational financial investments, endowments, or mortgages. There will probably be financial direction administered concerning the collection and distribution of funds. There may be a membership list that defines who is allowed to vote on matters affecting the church. There will be committees of people for various tasks. There will usually be a pastor or priest who directs the activities. There may be a second tier such as deacons, elders, or a pastoral staff. Even if there is no greater organizational network such as a denomination, this local system structure is almost universal.

This organizational structure evolved in the early church and while the Reformation provided some branches that made some doctrinal changes, the organizational structure seems to have continued through the centuries. This organizational structure (like all collectives) has a life of its own and its momentum imparts a direction to activity that works to keep individuals from the depth of relationship that is crucial to spiritual growth.

With the business of activities, events, programs, and even classes, people can be moved through scripted events such that there is no allowance for individuals to even visit with each other much less form the relationships that allow Christians to minister to and love one another. Basically, the direction of activity by the group precludes individual initiated action. One becomes an extension of the group performing actions directed by others.

The Pharisees had created an organizational system based on the law given to Israel. They sought to control and direct the activities of all who could be persuaded to surrender themselves to the system requirements. Jesus gave a particularly harsh warning to those so involved with their system that they lost sight of the God who it was that they claimed to serve.

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves. - Matthew 23:15

“System blindness” can also operate to such an extent that one begins to justify or excuse sin.

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. - Matthew 23:14

An organizational system is like a mechanical version of Christianity. Having been designed and programmed to follow procedures, it tends to draw people away from individual Christian maturity and growth into a focus on activity and performance. When someone thinks that “Christianity” is what is

done at a specific location and defined and described by others, he can begin to feel excluded and sees his life outside the orchestrated events as more real. In this way systems can seem to divorce individuals from Christ.

Chapter 23 - Seminaries

Perhaps the institution of seminary can be considered as representative of the damaging confluence of elevating men and organizational systems. An instructor at a seminary was once asked why so many of the students had erratic personalities. The instructor was also asked if the seminary didn't take any responsibility for the character of its students. The reply was that as long as the course work was completed accurately, a student would graduate. Any responsibility for the student and his character was considered that of the church that he attended.

Organizational systems provide for the division of labor. This may give efficiencies of scale in manufacturing processes, but it harms people by limiting them to a single function. This can provide the welcome opportunity to reject any responsibility for the character of his students by a seminary professor. However, it is difficult not to see this as similar to the washing of Pilate's hands.

In addition to classes in homiletics (how to sound like a pastor), seminaries provide additional classes to train people to be pastors of a church such as dealing with committees, financial and legal aspects of church assets, and defending denominational doctrines. Since the church is often machine-like, the pastor is to be more of a systems administrator.

The seminary student may be surprised that his instruction is not so much touching on his own growth in faith or truth, but immersion in what other people have determined to be faith and truth. His questions, thoughts, or insights are usually not sought or welcomed. He often quickly learns that to obtain employment in this career field, he will have to be an aggressive denominational franchise holder.

The chief problem with seminaries is that they present information about God as a substitute for actually knowing God. The word "theology" is defined as the study of God. The word itself carries with it an impression that God is a subject to be study and mastered. Theology is usually comprised of sub units such as Christology, Ecclesiology, Angelology, etc.

Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth. - 1 Corinthians 8:1

The contrast between knowledge and love highlights what is wrong with seminaries. Organizational systems are unable to function in relationships. Christianity was always supposed to be about relationships (us with God and each other). The more a Christian attempts to live the Christian life through systems, the less he is able to actually follow Christ. The Spirit is quenched, relationships become scripted, the flesh is elevated, and character is left free to drift.

One can look at the universities that were originally established to further Christianity that now mostly promote the religion of secularism (the worship of man in general and self in particular).

In contrast, the bible describes learning less from an organizational classroom and more from relationship.

For this very cause I sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and trustworthy child in the Lord, who will recall to your minds my methods of proceeding and course of conduct and way of life in Christ, such as I teach everywhere in each of the churches. - 1 Corinthians 4:17

But ye have not so learned Christ; If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: - Ephesians 4:20-21

Christian learning is not to be “about” Christ, it is to be of and by Christ. In the book of Romans Paul describes his frustration in trying to keep the law that had been given to the nation of Israel.

For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. - Romans 7:15

This frustration is summed up at the end of the chapter right before he describes the solution (life in the Spirit) in chapter eight.

O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? - Romans 7:24

The solution to the frustration of Paul (and all who attempt to live righteously in the flesh) is not “how” or “what” (which might be addressed in a classroom), but “who” (which can only be accomplished in relationship).

Seminaries, like churches, often fail to help Christians live for Christ because their machine-like character hinders the relationships that are needed to live the Christian life. The influence of the flesh within organizational systems often allows the ideas of men to become woven into and even supercede the instructions of Christ. These ideas are often propagated and institutionalized such that additional confusion regarding Christianity. This reflects a common human failing and was warned against by Jesus.

But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. - Matthew 15:9

Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. - Matthew 16:12

The biblical example of training church leadership is the apprentice model as seen with the relationship between Paul and Timothy. The organizational system gives us classroom instruction and is why most church services are like classroom lectures.

Chapter 24 - Being Right

The Pharisees give us another insight that we can apply to attempting to live the Christian life in the flesh. If we allow ourselves to think of the Christian life in binary terms as either doing “right” things or “wrong” things, we set ourselves up for either crippling guilt or smug pride.

Organizational systems and seminaries often brand themselves with a particular set of doctrines in attempt to define what is the “correct” configuration of Christianity. Since Christianity is supposed to be about growth (which is a dynamic process), this would seem to try to impose a static restraint on the

Christian life.

Organizational systems usually attempt to exercise control through compliance and conformity. Any deviation from what has been established is seen as error. The desire to prevent error often leads organizations to restrict their members to servile positions whose actions are only allowed in approved ways.

The bible describes Christian differences as allowable and even expected. Considering Christianity is supposed to be about individual growth, one might reasonably expect that there will be differences.

One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. - Romans 14:5

Christians are expected to demonstrate unity. This is to come from maturity which leads all to deeper love and selflessness. Unfortunately, attempting to live the Christian life as an extension of an organized system usually prevents maturity and produces contention between systems with different doctrines.

Once can see a biblical example of error correction with Aquilla and Priscilla.

And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. - Acts 18:24-26

What destroys unity is holding to factions and divisions.

Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? - 1 Corinthians 1:10-13

The difference between these two examples is that Apollos was being led by the Spirit and as such was seeking truth. The Corinthians were following their flesh resulting in a combative spirit of contention. This illustrates what might be called the difference between seeking truth and being right.

At first it might sound like being right is the same as seeking truth, but on closer examination being right is more about conformance to some standard and is static. It is useful to organizational systems as it is fixed, it can appear as final or complete truth. This perspective results in a degree of pride in having reached completion as well as hostility towards anything different as by definition, it must be in error. Since organizational systems present themselves as the final word of truth, members taking the initiative to seek further are discouraged and can even be sanctioned for their inquiry.

In contrast, seeking truth is a dynamic process that by definition will, at various stages, contain elements that only approximate truth. The person seeking truth is open to correction and as he is being led by the Spirit, more open to truth.

Chapter 25 - Denominations

One might see the 1500s in Europe as the point the Catholic church lost their monopoly on Christianity. After failing to defeat the break away Lutherans in the 1600s (not before exterminating 80% of the people in Germany), the Catholic church began a slow process of declining monopolistic control and power.

One might well argue that the reformation began with the invention of movable type and the distribution of the bible in popular language. However, the power of the Catholic church was not to be challenged by the truth of God's word as much as it was by the armies German princes had to resist the power of the Catholic church.

In France, those who would reform Christianity were inexorably exterminated or driven out. We can see that the presentation of an alternate configuration of Christianity needed the support of a ruler who had a large enough army to stop those who would discourage him. For this reason many denominations became national religions administered by political rulers. The adverse circumstances under which alternatives to Catholicism were undertaken did not provide consideration of change to the organizational system structure even while consideration of alternative doctrines was pursued.

While most of Europe settled into state sponsored and regulated religion, England still had a spark of popular support for improvements to Christian practice. These were variously resisted and even persecuted. However, the popular exploration of alternative Christian configurations was to be more fully explored in America where freedom of religion was written into the Constitution of the new government.

Sadly, most of these attempts to return Christianity to its New Testament roots carried with it the organizational systems structure that would limit what the adherents could achieve. Only slowly would a few come to see that there was no "correct" way to create a system to administer Christianity. It always was and can only function in the relationships people have.

Chapter 26 - Marketplace Christianity

Adam Smith wrote extensively about economics and market forces. He did not have a high opinion of Christianity but was encouraged by the existence of different denominations. He felt that the denominations would be forced to jettison anything that made them distinctive by market forces and thus eventually become reduced to irrelevancy.

People came to see Christianity as a system that offered baptism as an infant and sitting through a sermon once a week as the basis for getting a ticket to heaven when you died. This was not too burdensome for many before WWII. However, the prosperity available after the war began to create a social environment where people were increasingly less inclined to pay such a price for what seemed to be an increasingly less certain future.

Prosperity breeds a consumer culture. The selflessness of love that was supposed to be the objective of

Christianity becomes diverted into areas that satisfy consumer interests. The fragmentation of Christianity into divergent paths reflects some of the consumer interest.

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; - 2 Timothy 4:3

Legacy Christianity

There are some Christians who find comfort in continuing the heritage of their Christian traditions. They might be considered about 20% of each generation. This explains the rapid shrinkage of these denominations.

Charismatic Christianity

A little over 100 years ago the desire of people to experience a more dynamic church environment grew to a sufficient level as to sustain the formation of what might be called a “new” type of denomination. Based on the description of supernatural events in the New Testament, people drawn to this type of experience often feel that more traditional organizational church systems fail to capture what the New Testament churches had.

Social Christianity

This formation of Christianity uses traditional Christianity as a springboard to take up social ills and attempt to remedy them. Often contemporary music and a comfortable “coffee shop” atmosphere provide just the right environment to feel smug about saving the planet or the plight of the poor.

Uptight Christianity

Self-righteousness can be found in all Christian groups. However, some denominations emphasize doctrines that are particularly attractive to those who have a conservative perspective. Some of those who subscribe to Calvinistic ideas (particularly being “chosen” through election) seem to relish a superior status.

Floundering Christianity

There are some groups of Christians that have a desire for the experience of the Charismatics, to show the love that the social Christians claim, to be as faithful as the uptight Christians think they are, and actually have the love and truth described in the bible. Crippled with an organizational system, they often valiantly attempt to chase that which always seems just out of reach.

Chapter 27 - The Source of Confusion

A collective or organizational system is administered by a hierarchy that allows many people to be directed by one. Satan needed Christianity to be used by him to create a civilization that would develop and distribute the tools he needed in his attempt to rule the world.

There are two sides to Christianity. The outside shows the various organizational systems making

declarations and claims. The inside (or might might say, “at the bottom”) there are just simple Christians, often crippled by the systems they inherit, trying to find authentic Christianity and the truth and love they see promised in the bible.

Making things even more confusing is that the majority of people claiming to be Christian are not even Christian. For those outside Christianity, there may never be a way to see through the confusion. Just the idea of a “devil” seems ridiculous to most. To them, Christianity (whatever is actually was) is more comfortably viewed as a sinking ship.

If we can borrow the terms “modernism” and “post-modernism” from the art world and apply it to the social world, we might get an idea of how Satan diverted Christianity. He was able to divert Christians into the world of humanism and subsequent age of “enlightenment” to fuel the industrial revolution with the concepts of man’s evolution. However, lest these institutions he needed were to grow too powerful, he then diverted the Christian world into a post-modernist mode of irrationality to deconstruct what he no longer needed.

There are many layers of confusion which need to be dealt with if one is to find clarity regarding Christianity. The most pervasive effect at present is the transition made in the second half of the twentieth century from a society based on truth to a society based on feelings. Today charges of racism and homophobia represent some of the irrationality of a feeling based society. When truth no longer matters, confusion abounds.

Chapter 28 - Back to Basics

For those who still claim Christ, but see little around them that they can grasp that seems both substantial and true, it can be helpful to strip away what has been taken in and start constructing a view of Christianity from the ground up. For this purpose one has to use the only resource that is certain, the word of God, the bible.

Paul presented a summary of the gospel to the Corinthians upon which it can be useful to base one’s faith.

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. - 1 Corinthians 15:1-9

The key to becoming a Christian is trusting in the gospel (good news) of the death burial and resurrection of Jesus. It is through this act that the Holy Spirit can “baptize” (immerse) us into the life of Christ. This is the new birth that gives us eternal life.

There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. - Ephesians 4:4-6

Even at this first step of the Christian life, there are many confusing claims such as requirements for water baptism, repentance, etc. It is important to clearly see that each believer has the duty to judge for himself what is correct. It is understood that poor decisions may be made. However, it is important to see that clarity comes from growth and maturity. If one has made a poor decision, it needs to be recognized as maturity continues so that corrective steps can be taken. For example, a person earlier in their walk with the Lord, may offer prayers to Mary. As the Christian grows in truth and love, he may discover no biblical basis for prayers offered to Mary and begin to direct his prayers to Jesus or the Father. If one is inclined to be judgmental about “sin” (doing something wrong) rather than recognizing varying degrees of maturity, the greater “sin” might be failing to mature more than being mistaken about to whom to pray.

Some Christians when faced with confusing and even conflicting claims about Christianity can latch on to something like the King James version of the bible as a refuge or even as a bunker. However, our Christian walk was not supposed to be about finding security in anything or anyone but Christ.

The Greek word “peitho” is often translated “obey” in English. However, the word is better translated “be persuaded”. This is a key distinction because being persuaded requires us to be engaged, considering information, and making evaluations. Some of the confusion in the Christian life comes from not having an accurate understanding of what the bible actually says. The Christian may feel even greater anxiety if he thinks that he cannot trust the bible. Just as our walk with the Lord is to mature and deepen, our understanding of his word also deepens. We can use bible tools or seek bible teachers and compare what is said or presented with deepening understanding. Errors in translations are seen less as crippling impediments than as stepping stones to draw nearer to truth.

Clarity is achieved by seeking and following truth. The Holy Spirit (the Spirit of truth) aids us in this. Rather than embracing one denomination or following one bible teacher, it can be beneficial to listen to different teachers and evaluate their claims on a comparative basis. This is similar to reading a commentary on a particular bible verse and considering four or five different views of the passage.

It can be tempting to place one’s trust in a particular denomination or bible teacher because it can avoid all of the trouble and effort to make evaluations oneself. However, one can ask that if comfort and ease are more preferable to truth, is a person actually trusting in Jesus.

Chapter 29 - Cutting Through the Baloney

Much of the confusion about Christianity results from Satan exploiting us with his systems. He has raised many voices making loud, and often contradictory, claims. The ambitious, greedy, and vain are often drawn to shout the loudest. Satan has constructed the world to appeal to and resonate with our flesh.

The most successful tactic Satan has used is to provide opportunity for Christians to be assured they are on the right track and “park” themselves away from the cacophony of contending Christian claims. A Christian who can be assured he has found the “right” place will stop looking. Christianity seems no longer confusing, because, thinking he has arrived at complete faith, he no longer has any need to

search for truth.

The search for truth is not a selection of the most correct doctrine. It is drawing closer to Jesus who is truth. This is a continuing process. As we mature (draw closer to Christ), we are shaped into his image.

The purpose of life is to do the will of God. The angels split into two groups, those who would do God's will and those who wouldn't. Humans had a different path. We were created without much knowledge and were to live by faith trusting in what God told us. When Adam and Eve chose a different path, we became disconnected from God and left on our own. The way back to God and out of the darkness of the world is through Jesus.

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. - John 14:6

Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. - John 8:12

The way to have this light to cut through the fog of confusion and darkness is to grow in our relationship with Jesus. The more we come to know him, the deeper our relationship grows and the less confusion besets us.

Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. - John 8:31-32