



ZWTF

Zapping You Whenever Thoughts Flow

Volume 8, Issue 24

The “mysterious” figure of speech known as “Condescension.”

Understanding this one figure of speech will help you understand much of Scripture. Misappropriating it will help you look like an idiot.



You will be protesting to me, then, “Why, then, is He still blaming? for who has withstood His intention?”

—Paul, *Romans 9:19*

This famous protest comes on the heels of God hardening Pharaoh’s heart and then blaming Pharaoh for having a hardened heart. As I’ve said before, this is the only way God can do business. He lives apart from time, but then decides to *create* time so that He can then create beings within the time who are dependent on time and who must learn stuff during the time’s passage. Because God never stops being God but

also because He has created this time thing, He has a “problem.” How does He keep being a timeless, no-beginning, no-end God but at the same “time” join time? I don’t think it’s that complicated for Him. He simply stoops to it. Whenever we see Him or hear from Him, therefore, He is stooping—much as very tall people must stoop when coming through short doorways. God stoops to join His own creation with all of its time zones, alarm clocks and miseries.

IT FIGURES

This stooping is always a figure of speech because God is not really this limited. I have told you this many times but it bears repeating because of this blaming issue. How can God hold people accountable for things that He makes them do? This apparent contradiction of a timeless God performing in time is a figure of speech known as Condescension. “Condescension” is a fancy word for stooping. During these times when we see or hear from God, God oftentimes acts as though He is just as mad-dened and puzzled by this time-world as we are. He does this out of empathy, to help us through our lives. He holds our hands, you might say. To do this, He must obviously (at least I thought it was obvious) step down—way, way down—from His personal realm of timelessness and talk to us like the calendar-obsessed ants that we are. After all, He is the One Who made us this way. He owes it to us, I think, to do this for us. He would not leave us here stranded in time, unaided by His timeless wisdom.

GOO-GOO

My favorite analogy for this condescension—for those who have never heard it—is human adults “talking” to infants. We goo-goo and gurgle at the infants, not because we’re actually this stupid but because we want to relate to beings who can only goo-goo and gurgle. Thus, we lower ourselves. No one assumes that we who make such noises

at these creatures known as babies talk this way at the office, or at home with our partners, or at P.F. Chang's when ordering our Thai beef and noodle salads. Not even Christians think this. But then, when it comes to God, Christians and other short-sighted people lose the analogy of adults and babies, along with their minds. It never occurs to the Christians that the gulf between God and humans must be infinitely greater than that between human adults and human babies.

Thus hamstrung, these types of people 1) read passages of Scripture showing God "goo-gooing," 2) take a snapshot of the limited passage, 3) put the caption "God" underneath the snapshot, and then 4) define God by the figure of speech (Condescension) that was going on in the verse they photographed. Because of this series of unfortunate events, these narrow-frame camera people conclude that God is, in His essence, a gurgling goof just like us, figuring things out as He wanders haphazardly along the highways and byways of His own creation, regretting this, feeling sorry for that, becoming almost uncontrollably incensed at this other thing, and generally losing His mind right along with us. He is full of terrible frustrations and personality quirks, this so-called Deity.

GOD "LOSES" ADAM

Let's watch these poor figure-of-speech deniers photograph a famous portion of Scripture where God stoops down to the anthill to commiserate with ants by asking one of the ants a ridiculous, ant-like question. My favorite example of this is the question God posed in the Garden of Eden to the ant named Adam when he said, "Adam, where are you?" *Snapshot! This is the quintessential God!* say the figure-of-speech deniers. It is? Then we're all in really big trouble, if you ask me. From this terrible mistake comes the terrible teaching (what a coincidence) that the Creator of heaven and earth doesn't know everything. He is a fellow ant right along with all the other citizens of the anthill. He plays hide-'n-seek with this particular ant named Adam—and *the ant named Adam is winning*. God can't find him. The ant-god counts to ten, says "Ready or not, here I come!" and then spends the rest of the day looking for the rogue ant.

Must I tell you how wrong it is to *define* something—anything—by a figure of speech? By this, we would conclude that Jesus Christ is a sheep door. He Himself said, "I am the sheep door" (John 10:7). Shouldn't Jesus know what He is? Let's take Him at His word, then. Let's put Him on a hinge and swing Him. *No, let's not*. It's a metaphor. The metaphor is a well-known figure

of speech. Unfortunately, Condescension is not so well known. Ignorance of it leads to the utmost doctrinal stupidities, including "Open Theism," which insists that God Himself does not know the future. The basis of this stupidity? Defining God by a figure of speech. For truly, it is just as stupid to define God by the figure of speech known as Condescension as it is to define Jesus Christ by the figure of speech known as Metaphor.

BLAME GAME

Thus, it is easy for God to blame people whom He hardens. Think of the hardening as something God does in the absolute Godhood realm, where He makes people exactly how He wants them, whether vessels of honor or dishonor. Let us limit our discussion now to vessels of dishonor.

God makes people such as Pharaoh stubborn in order to fulfill His purposes. Now consider the blaming aspect as an action that occurs on the anthill, where God comes across as seemingly forgetful that He was the One who made the vessel of dishonor the way it was in the first place. While God is in the ant mode, the absolute mode (God without the figure of speech) is not in view. Thus, the blaming becomes a predictable action that one would necessarily take in regards to a stubborn human.

The ultimate purpose of the blaming, of course, is to cause the one being blamed to 1) confront itself, 2) see the error of its ways, and 3) repent. The experience is valuable to the creature in view of its ultimate reconciliation to God. In blaming, then, God does the creature an ultimate favor. Once the vessel of dishonor learns important lessons in the time/ant realm, only then can the vessel be made aware of the ultimate Godhood of God. The vessel will then understand the "problem" (as we understand it now) of a timeless, no-beginning, no-end God Who, in order to *be* God, must determine everything ahead of time but then (in order to directly educate His creatures) must participate in the limited realm of time and unfolding experience by joining His creatures in the slogfest known as life. Joining His creatures includes blaming those whom He, Himself, ultimately hardened. This is no different than rewarding those whom He ultimately caused to do the good things for which they are being rewarded.

God does everything. He also rewards and judges human behavior. Whenever He is rewarding and judging, He is stooping. But for God's sake, this in no way compromises, let alone denies, His ultimate Godhood. —MZ