

# Christianity Clarified Volume 31

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

Prayer does not replace hermeneutics, part one. On our previous volume 30 of Christianity Clarified, we barely introduced the subject of figurative language, giving two examples of the figure called simile.

We described it as one of the more often used expressions of figurative language. Simile, related to the word similar, always uses terms like as and like.

Is not my word like a hammer, saith the Lord? And Jesus told his apostles they were to be shrewd as serpents and harmless as doves.

Literally hundreds more examples utilizing simile as a figurative expression in both testaments is found, and we will give you just a few more.

[ 1 : 10 ] But now, I am compelled to interrupt this subject with an important warning about prayer. You heard me right. Well, who needs to be warned about prayer?

Isn't that something we should rely on? No, it isn't. Not when it comes to hermeneutics. And yes, you heard me right. We are not always to rely on prayer.

And why not? When we try to rely on prayer, rather than on a sound hermeneutic for interpreting Scripture, we are praying amiss. Now, before you turn a deaf ear, let me explain.

When one is studying Scripture and trying to arrive at the meaning of a certain passage, what's wrong with praying about that and asking the Spirit of God, who inspired the Scripture, to reveal to you the correct meaning?

How could that be wrong? Well, it isn't wrong. And over the past 60 years, I have done it myself more times than I could recount. So what's the problem?

[ 2 : 12 ] Here's the problem. If we think we can just ignore the sound principles of hermeneutics and be assured we have arrived at the correct interpretation of a passage because we have prayed about it, we are deceiving ourselves.

Nothing, not even sincere prayer, can take the place of using tried and true principles of hermeneutics, such as we have just entered into in our ongoing consideration of Christianity clarified.

How do we know that? Here's how. You take five preachers, each one a diligent and sincere Christian who studies the difficult passage of Scripture.

Let's make one a Methodist, one a Baptist, one a Presbyterian, and one a Lutheran, and then throw in a non-denominationalist such as myself. Each is a true born-again believer, each accepts the authority of Scripture, and each is sincerely praying regarding light and the proper interpretation of a given passage.

Yet, of the five sincere praying preachers, the five different interpretations of the same passage are arrived at, all supposedly in an answer to prayer. Now, do you see the problem?

[ 3 : 22 ] As important as prayer is, and it is truly important, we cannot ignore hermeneutics and simply pray instead. Of course, it sounds more spiritual to say, I know my interpretation is right because I prayed about it, and this is the answer God gave me.

But, so said the other preachers who came to a different interpretation. Do you see what I mean? Prayer does not replace hermeneutics, part two.

As spiritual as it may sound, we cannot say we have arrived at the correct interpretation of a given passage of Scripture simply because we have prayed about it.

Previously, we posed a hypothetical situation whereby a Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, and a non-denominational clergyman were all fervently praying for the correct interpretation of a

given passage of Scripture.

And yet, among them, five different interpretations have arisen. Each, of course, is honestly convinced theirs is the right one because, after all, they prayed about it and their interpretation is the one God gave them.

[ 4 : 39 ] Really. To that, I say, stuff and nonsense. And let me inject here another of the kind of stuff and nonsense that people are arriving at today is that some actually mustered the audacity to tell us, now, wait, wait just a moment.

What you don't understand is all of these men prayed and they were all given the right interpretation of the passage because, because you see, there is a Methodist interpretation, a Baptist interpretation, a Presbyterian interpretation, a Lutheran interpretation, and a non-denominational interpretation.

Isn't God wonderful to give each one a tailor-made interpretation that just fits the denominational needs of each group? And to that, I suspect God is also saying stuff and nonsense.

Be reminded, the point was made earlier that a mere 500 years ago these denominational groups didn't even exist, but the Bible did. So, what was the correct interpretation of that passage under consideration before?

The correct meaning of the passage is confined to the meaning that the writer of the passage intended to give it, no matter who prayed or didn't pray about it when they read it.

[ 6 : 04 ] It means what the original writer meant it to mean. That is the correct interpretation. It doesn't mean what it means to you. It doesn't mean what it means to me or what I want it to mean.

It doesn't mean what it says to me. It means what it means that the original writer intended and that's all it means. Now, you can build upon that meaning if you wish.

A number of worthwhile and true-to-life applications derive from that meaning, but don't allow the applications which are many to become the meaning which is one.

Logic, as well as intellectual integrity should loom very large in the interpretation of Scripture. While we all tend to be biased toward our own denomination or non-denominational leanings, we must safeguard as best we can that we do not allow our biases to dictate to us the meaning of Scripture. It is the meaning of Scripture that is to formulate our doctrines and not our doctrine to formulate the meaning of Scripture. The difference is incalculable and so very, very critical.

[ 7 : 26 ] Resuming the figure of simile because the use of hermeneutics is important, in fact, so important that it is not overridden even by prayer, we devoted the two previous segments of Christianity Clarified to insisting that prayer does not allow us to ignore or set aside sound hermeneutics when interpreting Scripture.

Of course, our studies should be prayerfully undertaken and our findings prayerfully delivered if we have an audience to deliver them to. Yet, all the prayer we can muster does not negate the need for a sound hermeneutics.

And this will become more and more apparent as we proceed with this critical discipline. So, for now, returning to the figure of speech labeled simile, let's consider a few more examples, and you are probably already familiar with these, but may not have known exactly what they were called. And these in question are called simile, related to the word similar, and for the obvious reasons of their similarity. Jesus used simile repeatedly, as did his apostles and the prophets in the Old Testament.

The two words employed to describe simile are as and like. Resemblance and likeness are ever the issue with simile.

[ 8 : 44 ] And when we say there are thousands of similes in the Bible, we are not exaggerating. Psalm 1-3 says, The godly man shall be like a tree planted by the water.

For as verse 4 says, The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind drives away. And the meaning is clear. Neither is a tree nor chaff, but each reminds us of a tree or chaff when we consider these two men, one godly and one ungodly.

Both tree and chaff represent a physical parallel to the godly and ungodly man. And they have a common likeness or similarity, hence simile.

John, in chapter 1, remarks when speaking of Jesus, And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father. Peter tells his recipients to his first epistle in chapter 2, You were as as sheep going astray.

And Christ uses simile in Matthew 24, As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking.  
[10:01] In chapter 25, following, For the kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling to a far country. Each usage of the simile is for the purpose of color and emphasis.

Figurative language engages an added level of thinking that goes beyond the mere literal. As figurative language is used, the mind of the hearer is engaged on another level that transcends the literal.

This is why we use it. It's all about conveying meaning and emphasis. It's all about conveying understanding, comprehension. This is the great task set about by the Spirit of God in the giving forth of all of Scripture.

Next up, the figure of speech called the metaphor. The Bible Abounds in Metaphors Part 1 Next to the simile we have already considered as figurative language, the metaphor appears a close competitor in the frequency of usage.

Whereas the simile makes a comparison between two things or actions in its use of the words like or as, a metaphor does the same but without the use of like or as.

[11:30] It is more direct in its comparison between the two. In Matthew 5, Jesus told his disciples, You are the salt of the earth.

This is a figure of speech and no one thinks to take it literally. Had Jesus said, You are like salt or you are as salt, that would have been simile.

But this, whereby the comparison is in a more direct fashion, they are not like or as salt, they are salt. This figure is a metaphor.

M-E-T-A-P-H-O-R Again, no one is going to think they are literal salt, which would be nonsensical. Jesus is describing his disciples by saying they possess qualities that are vital to humanity in the same way that salt is vital to humanity.

Likewise, he told them they are the light of the world. He didn't tell them they were as light, which would also have been true, but it was more forceful and direct to say you are the light of the world.

[12:45] Both salt and light are literal things, but these are carried over in a direct fashion and are meant to describe the spiritual realities of the disciples by associating them with literal salt and literal light.

it's a way of saying what salt and light are to humanity in a physical way, you disciples are equivalent in a spiritual and moral way.

You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world. Speaking of which, Jesus made the same claims for himself in John 8 when he declared that he is the light of the world.

speaking metaphorically, each usage is intended to provide emphasis and gather attention.

All throughout his three plus years of earthly ministry, Jesus strived to communicate with his audience, whether it was a small band of twelve apostles or a crowd as great as the feeding of the five thousand, and he frequently did so with parables, metaphors, similes, and other figures of speech.

[14:02] At the same time, he commingled his figurative expressions with an even greater usage of the literal, all of which is to say, Jesus, as the master teacher and premier communicator, saw the value of using variety to get men's attention and hold it for the valuable content he wanted to impart.

Little wonder a common expression was voiced about Jesus, No man ever spake like this man. The Bible Abounds in Metaphors Part 2 One need always be mindful when reading the Bible as to what kind of language is being employed.

Is it literal, figurative, or some of each? Currently, we are focusing on the figurative, and we have made the point that only when one understands the literality of an expression does he then have a basis for grasping the figurative.

Both testaments are filled with both usages, and each contributes meaning in its own way. The literal we have described as plain talk, straightforward, and the most commonly kind of language used.

The figurative provides color, emphasis, or a punch, not conveyed by the literal. Now we are considering the figure of speech called the metaphor, and they are abundant in the Bible.

[15:34] Recall that the metaphor is a comparison which one thing represents another, even though the two are not at all alike in reality. Psalm 22 is referred to as a messianic psalm because it

speaks prophetically of Christ 1,000 years before his birth in Bethlehem.

David the psalmist is speaking from personal experience in his many hardships. Yet there is little doubt the expressions he utters are going to be true of David's greater son and direct descendant, Jesus the Messiah.

Read Psalm 22 if you will, and note the undeniable likenesses. And here is a goldmine in figurative language. We focus on the metaphors of verse 12.

Many bowls have compassed me. Strong bowls of Bashan have beset me round. Verses 14 and 15 are similes.

I am poured out like water. My heart is like wax. Verse 16 For dogs have compassed me.

[16:47] Verse 21 Save me from the lion's mouth. In no case was the psalmist speaking of four-legged animals, bulls, dogs, or lions.

He was employing metaphors as a figure of speech. Now, we doubt that David had ever even heard the word metaphor or knew of the usage of it.

But he did know how to communicate in language that was telling, besides being inspired by the Spirit of God. Paul the Apostle, as well in the New Testament, warns the Philippian believers in chapter 3 to beware of dogs.

The dogs of that day were the mangy vicious curs that roamed the area in packs and were feared by all. Yet, they were not the objects of Paul's warning. Nor were these four-legged canines of which David spoke.

With the use of metaphors, these dogs were two-legged human beings who, like vicious animals, opposed the gospel and the way of truth. Metaphor is again used by our Lord in Luke 13 when he was warned not to go to Jerusalem because Herod would seek to kill him, to which Jesus replied, Go tell that fox with metaphor.

[18:06] Metaphor The literal is one, but figures are many. Our explanation of the use and value of figurative language continues, and its importance is established merely by the frequency of its usage throughout the Bible.

We have already established that literal language is singular in its expression. The literal always means one and the same thing. It means what it seems to mean.

It means what everyone takes it to mean, and that is its simple, straightforward, obvious, ordinary way of understanding. Thus, the literal usage of language is singular.

Not so with the figurative. While there is but one expression or category of the literal, there are hundreds of figures of speech that are employed throughout Scripture.

Dr. E. W. Bollinger, in his massive volume entitled Figures of Speech in the Bible, reveals no less than 200 different figures of speech, along with their 8,000 illustrations of usage in Scripture.

[19:24] It remains the defining work on the literary usage of figurative language. It is well indexed, listing each biblical reference for its thousands of uses, along with an explanation of each figure.

Dr. Bollinger appeals to the Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, as well as English in his definitions and usages. This massive 1100-page work was originally published in Great Britain in 1898, and then reprinted in the United States in 1968.

It is doubtful that it is still in print, but it would likely be obtainable from used booksellers. However, honesty also compels me to add that this book, unparalleled as it is, goes well beyond the needs of the average Bible student, or for that matter, even the average pastor or Bible teacher.

Yet, for those wishing to possess the undisputed standard on the subject of figurative language, for you, this could be a must-have volume.

For all the rest of us, we will still pursue the need to interpret figurative language, because it occurs so frequently in the Bible, and an appreciation of it is essential to understanding hundreds of passages, and I mean that quite literally.

[20:56] Our upcoming segments on Christianity Clarified, volume 31, will cover a number of the more frequently used figures, in an effort to get you used to identifying them when you see them, and be able to appreciate them for the meanings they convey.

So remember, there is but one vehicle for the use of literal language, but there are literally hundreds of usages that engage the figurative, and, as Dr.

Bollinger so ably points out, they all have a name. So for our purposes, we shall limit our consideration of them to what we may call the top 20 uses of figurative speech, and these will constitute the bulk of their appearances in both the Old and New Testament.

The Bible abounds in metonymy. Many of the figures of speech used in the Bible are also used by us today in ordinary conversation, and the figure metonymy is one such example.

M-E-T-O-N-O-M-Y. Metonymy is a figurative expression that substitutes one word for another. And again, as in not most cases of figurative language, the real meaning is automatically understood to not be literal, but figurative.

[ 22 : 21 ] in Luke 16, where Jesus tells of Abraham conversing with the rich man in Hades, who begs Abraham to warn his brother about his lot so that they will not come to the awful place where he is.

And Abraham replies, They have Moses and the prophets. Let them hear them. Well, they did not have Moses nor the prophets with them.

What their brothers did have were the writings of Moses and the prophets. These two, Moses and the prophets, were representatives of all the information that this man's brothers would need.

They, that is, Moses and the prophets, were an example of metonymy, that is, the use of one noun in the place of a different noun, but still identified as one and the same.

Matthew 3, in describing the popularity and appeal of Jesus, tells us that Jerusalem was going out to hear him. Literally, it was not.

[ 23 : 29 ] Jerusalem was the city and was very much staying put, not going anywhere, but figuratively, it was going out to hear him in its residence.

The noun Jerusalem was exchanged for the noun of the residence. and in like fashion today, we may very well receive a news report that begins by saying, word was received today from the White House that inflation will play a role, blah, blah, blah, blah.

The White House? When did houses, even the White House, begin to speak? Well, literally, of course not. Figuratively? Certainly.

Often, because the noun president is substituted for White House. That's metonymy. An even more colorful metonymy is used in Jeremiah 18.

Jeremiah's preaching had produced many enemies who wanted to neutralize him, and they said, let's attack him with our tongues. Well, picture, if you will, the absurdity of assailing someone literally with your tongue.

[ 24 : 40 ] tongue, just how long is your tongue anyway? Well, the metonymy is obvious. The human tongue is used for speaking, and the meaning clearly is, let's assail him with ridicule, with invective, with criticism designed to defeat him, and the tongue is the noun used in place of their words or speech.

It is the same as is meant today when we say so-and-so received a real tongue-lashing from his boss. Why put it that way? Emphasis, color, variety, figurative language.

The Bible abounds in synecdoche. Synecdoche is a close relative to metonymy, and is used repeatedly throughout scripture. It's spelled S-Y-N-E-C-D-O-C-H-E, kind of a tongue twister.

It is the substitution of a part of something for the whole, or the whole for a part. Proverbs 4 delivers a warning to the younger generation by saying, Turn your foot from evil.

Just your foot? What about the rest of you? Well, it's synecdoche that uses a part for the whole, and the meaning is clear, though it is not literal. It is a figure of speech that really is saying, Keep your whole self from evil, but uses feet, probably because that's the first part of your body that moves when you go toward evil.

[ 26 : 09 ] And the meaning is clear. If you don't allow your feet to go in the direction of evil, the rest of your body can't go either. And likewise, in the Proverbs, in which a veritable figurative gold mine is to be found, we read in chapter 12, Truthful lips will be established forever, but a lying tongue is only for a moment.

And lying lips are an abomination to the Lord. Then the hand of the diligent will rule. In actuality, these body parts of lips, tongues, and hands are not the issue.

It's the whole person behind these body parts that is really the issue. The parts are more colorful expressions than referring to the person as a whole. And the town gossip may be spoken of as one whose mouth is running continuously.

But everyone knows our mouth is not the problem, but the whole person whose mouth it is. The Apostle Paul referred to his dear friends Aquila and Priscilla in Romans 16 as those who risk their own necks for him.

Meaning, of course, they jeopardize their own lives on his behalf, not just their necks. And when Caesar Augustus sent out his decree in Luke 2 that all the world should be taxed, he simply meant that world which was under his control and jurisdiction, that is, the Roman world.

[ 27 : 32 ] In Judges chapter 12, we are told that Jephthah died and was buried in the cities of Gilead. Well, we are not to assume Jephthah was somehow dissected and buried a little bit here and a little bit there.

Utter nonsense, which of course is almost always what figurative language sounds like when you try to incorrectly take it literally. But Gilead was a region that contained numerous small villages, and there among them Jephthah was buried.

Synecdoche expresses it this way all throughout Scripture, and it likewise describes peace and military disarmament in Isaiah 2. There, the prophet predicts that men will beat their swords into plows and their spears into pruning hooks, which characterize peace.

But then the opposite synecdoche is used also in Joel 3, when the idea is reversed by saying, Beat your plows into swords and your pruning knives into spears.

In other words, prepare for war. Emphasis, color, and variety are all contained in the figure of synecdoche. Synecdoche. The Bible abounds in personification.

[ 29 : 00 ] Personification involves, as the very name suggests, something to do with persons. This personification is attributing human-like characteristics to a non-person, an animal, or an inanimate object.

Things do not have emotions like people. Yet, when in chapter 35, Isaiah refers to the desert and the parched land as being glad, he uses the figurative literary tool called personification in saying, The desert and the parched land will be glad.

Likewise, when he writes of mountains and hills, singing, and trees clapping their hands, he engages in poetic, figurative language that no one believes for a moment should be taken literally.

Even death is spoken of as if it were a person. And while death is very real, it is not a person. But writing to the Corinthians in chapter 15, Paul exclaims, O death, where is your sting?

And then he treats the grave as if it were a human by following with, O grave, where is your victory? Both addressed as if they were intelligent persons who could provide a response.

[ 30 : 19 ] This is called personification. The Old Testament is even more replete in its use, especially in those dubbed the poetical books like Psalms, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes.

Proverbs chapter 1 speaks of wisdom as if it were a female person when he declares, Wisdom shouts in the streets. She lifts her voice in the square.

At the head of the noisy streets, she cries out. At the entrance of the gates in the city, she utters her sayings. While wisdom is an attribute of both God and man, wisdom is not a person, but is referred to as if it were.

God himself uses personification when he addresses Cain in Genesis chapter 4, saying, The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground.

Blood is certainly real, but it is not a person, despite the fact it belongs to persons. But blood does not have a voice that enables it to speak. While the idea of literalness is not applicable, the figurative certainly is, and it comes with an emphasis and an element of drama not conveyed with a literal description.

[ 31 : 37 ] As one moves through the Bible, we should be alert to things and non-person realities being spoken of as if they were persons, when clearly they are not, nor were they ever expected to be taken literally, but poetically, with the figurative language of personification.

It is sad, actually pathetic, to hear of critics of the Bible charging it with nonsense because it records non-persons speaking or emoting as persons. Have they never heard of figurative language?

Such as they themselves use every day, yet are unwilling to allow writers in the Bible to do so? The book contains an amazing variety of expressions, literal and figurative, all to its creative credit, certainly not to its debit.

Personification is a beautiful, powerful literary tool. The Bible abounds with anthropomorphisms. Another helpful volume deserving recognition is that of Dr. Roy B. Zuck, spelled Z-U-C-K. He titled his book, Basic Bible Interpretation, and it would serve you well should you acquire it.

[ 32 : 50 ] Along with several other examples, Dr. Zuck includes the figure of speech that has perplexed many a Bible reader over the years. It's called anthropomorphism.

The anthro refers to man, a human. It's related to the word anthropology, which is the study of man, and morphe, M-O-R-P-H-E.

The morphe comes from the Greek and means form or shape. We speak of a homely, worm-like, chrysalis morphing into a beautiful butterfly called a metamorphosis.

We mean it has taken on the shape or form of it. Anthropomorphism is the shape or form of man, that is, anthropos, being applied to God.

Is this true literally? No. Christ made the essence of God quite clear when he spoke with the woman at the well in John 4. He declared that God is spirit.

[ 33 : 53 ] Spirit does not occupy time or space because it is non-matter. But for purposes of communicating to man on a level he can appreciate, body parts are assigned to the deity that do not exist literally.

David in Psalm 8 recalled the work of God's fingers, and in Psalm 31 he asks God to incline his ear to him, and into thy hand I commit my spirit.

And in 2 Chronicles 16 we are told the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth. In reality, that is, in literality, these human body parts do not exist in the deity.

There are so many instances all throughout scripture where anthropomorphism is a figure of speech, and it is utilized. It is not intended to bring the deity down to a human level, although that is precisely what occurred in the Incarnation.

But rather, the plethora of occasions where human-like characteristics are applied to God are all for the purpose of communicating with man on man's terms of understanding.

[ 35 : 06 ] One thing is certain. God cannot communicate with man on God's terms of understanding. The difference between God's understanding and man's is infinite.

So, if there is to be any communication that is comprehensible, God has to stoop. He either has to refer to himself as we are, or elevate us to the level where and who he is in order to be understood. And while he has been so gracious as to stoop to where we are, you can dismiss the idea of our being elevated to where he is, so we can comprehend him. He is quite satisfied to occupy that role alone.

Look for anthropomorphisms as you work your way through the Bible. They are there in abundance as one more expression of figurative language. Does this not provide emphasis, color, variety to the subject, and enables communication otherwise not possible?

The Bible Abounds with Anthropopathism Part 1 A close relative to the anthropomorphism in the previous segment is called Anthropopathism.

[ 36 : 19 ] And while the former assigns human body parts to the deity, Anthropopathism assigns human emotions to the deity, but neither belong to God in any literal sense.

As with anthropomorphism, so it is with Anthropopathism. There is a great gulf fixed between the Creator and the creature.

He cannot describe himself as he truly is to any of his creatures, because none are on his level to be able to comprehend. He must, if he is to communicate, come down to our level, just as he did in the Incarnation.

But in addition to that event, when he became as one of us, he never separated himself, indeed could not, from who he really was in his eternal, incomprehensible essence.

He merely covered up the fullness of his identity with a robe of human flesh. Something of his true hidden self would be revealed at the Transfiguration, and again in his glorified state, attested to by the Apostle John in Revelation chapter 1.

[ 37 : 30 ] So again, God had a bridge that needed to be crossed in order to communicate with man and be understood. Just as he lowered himself to communicate by assigning to himself human-like body parts, so also with anthropopathism is the deity assigning to himself human-like emotions and feelings.

The Lord speaks through his prophet Zechariah in chapter 8, saying, I am very jealous for Zion. God is jealous? Indeed he is.

But isn't that a human emotion? And does that speak well of the Almighty? Is not jealousy a vice and not a virtue? Well, actually, jealousy may be a vice, and often is the way we mere mortals experience it.

But jealousy can also be a virtue and a near synonym for intense loyalty. When God says he is jealous regarding Israel, as in Exodus 20, Deuteronomy 4, Joshua 24, and other references, he is

simply saying he will not tolerate Israel's interest in or worship of any other God. Israel belongs to him and him exclusively. This is not a negative, a vice. It's a virtue and an expression of fidelity.

[ 38 : 53 ] If you have a problem relating this to God, let's get practical and human about it. If you are married, are you interested in sharing your spouse with a third party? If you are, it isn't much of a marriage, or even a marriage at all, as marriages are intended to be.

Not only are you, if you're normal, unwilling to share your mate with another, the very idea is abhorrent to you. Why? You are jealous for your mate, and should be. It's a normal human emotion, and one that God shares on behalf of his chosen people Israel. It's a figurative expression called anthropopathism.

The Bible abounds in Anthropopathisms, Part 2. Throughout the Bible, we are confronted repeatedly that God is utterly unlike those of his creation.

Perhaps we can say he is more like man than any other of his creatures, because man alone is made in the image and likeness of God. But do not be misled by that term likeness.

[ 40 : 07 ] There yet remains an incomprehensible distinction between God and humans, in whom he has placed his image and likeness. While there are understandable similarities, you may be assured there remains utterly incomprehensible differences.

God is not as a man, only stronger and wiser. There is so much involved in the character and essence of this infinite God.

We can scarcely imagine the great gulf that separates deity from humanity. And as the saying goes, it is further complicated by our not knowing what we do not know.

The figures of speech utilized many times in the Bible call our attention to this. Anthropomorphism and anthropopathism assign human body parts and human emotions to God, and in reality God possesses neither.

Then why is he spoken of as if he has eyes, arms, and legs? And why is he described as jealous, angry, grief-stricken, repentant, and possessing pity?

[ 41 : 20 ] It is all an expression of divine condescension. The Almighty stoops to the level man can comprehend. Not being God's equals, there is no way we can get beyond ourselves and into his sphere to appreciate him.

And in his gracious condescension, he lowers himself to get into our sphere. It's all about communication. It's nothing short of amazing, even bewildering, that the Creator should be willing to share something of himself with his creatures.

But that's what love and grace does. And then to add to that gracious condescension, we humans are embarrassed to acknowledge there are among us arrogant humans who even fault and criticize this condescension, or simply deny the revelation altogether.

One gets the feeling, no matter what God does, he can't win. Such is the sad result of man in his fallenness. Yet, God is long-suffering.

He's incredibly patient. Another of his anthropopathisms. In his exhaustive treatment of God's morphisms and pathisms, Dr. E. W. Bollinger lists an extensive array of both.

[ 42 : 46 ] And again, the volume is entitled Figures of Speech in the Bible. It's far away the most elaborate treatment of this subject, and one is struck by page after page of the many references and the appreciative light that is shed upon both anthropopathisms and anthropomorphisms.

Another and final treatment of this that is so important will be upcoming. The Bible Abounds in Anthropopathisms Part 3 We've labored somewhat to explain the Bible's figurative usages of anthropomorphisms and anthropopathisms.

The former assigns human body parts to God, while the latter assigns human emotions. In reality, God possesses neither. We may say, or merely speculate, that God may well possess whatever the divine equivalent of human parts and emotions are.

We just don't know what they may be like, or even if they exist, as we speculate. Some things, no doubt many things, God has reserved unto himself.

And some things he has graciously condescended to reveal, and to do so in ways we mere mortals can grasp. This is where God's having eyes, hands, a face, and feet, ears, and a heart come into play.

[ 44 : 12 ] And yes, the counterpart of human emotions attributed to God, like anger, jealousy, grief, compassion, mercy, are found throughout the Bible.

We have stated that only in using human terms could God communicate any understanding to us at all. So great is that which separates our finiteness from his infinity of being.

It appears that if God the Creator is going to communicate with his creatures at all, it's anthropomorphic or anthropopathic or nothing.

He tells us of himself after a fashion by using what we are and understand. He cannot tell us of himself by what he actually is, because no human is equipped to understand that.

For an inadequate but telling illustration, how would you go about telling an ant or some other insect who and what you are actually like in your humanity?

[ 45 : 16 ] Give it a try. And even if you were able to become an ant, would you be willing to do so? At the same time, be reminded that the great gulf fixed between you and the ant does not compare with that gulf separating deity from humanity.

So, for purposes of communication and comprehension, God repents in Genesis 6 as well as grieves. In Exodus 15, he is wrathful.

And Psalm 5 has him hating. In Isaiah and Ezekiel 5, he is comforted and he pities in Joel 2.

God has even said to acquire knowledge in Genesis 22 when he tells Abraham, Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son from me.

And in Genesis 4, he said to Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? Likewise to Adam in Genesis 3 when he asked, Adam, where art thou? How can what appears to be a lack of knowledge on the part of God, to the extent of asking questions, how does that square with he who supposedly is all-knowing?

[ 46 : 32 ] Again, it's all about communication and doing so on a level and a way that man can relate. These all belong in the literary category of figurative language identified as anthropopathism and anthropomorphism.

ZOMORPHISM IN THE BIBLE In the helpful book Dr. Roy Zuck has authored called Basic Bible Interpretation, he has listed a third morphism.

In addition to anthropomorphism and anthropopathism, which attribute human body parts and human emotions to God, this particular morphism is called ZOMORPHISM, and Dr. Zuck lists it. As the prefix ZOO suggests, ZOOLOGY or an animal confinement ZOO, ZOMORPHISM is the figurative language expression given to God when animal-like characteristics or body parts are assigned to the deity.

God? As? Like an animal? Seriously? Literally? Of course not. But figuratively?

[ 47 : 50 ] Certainly. And why would this be done? Same reason as all the others. It's all about communication. Only through communication is relationships possible.

On any and every level. So did you know that God has feathers? Really? Yes. Literally?

Of course not. But figuratively? Yes. Most definitely. The Holy Spirit could and did inspire men to write poetry as well as prose, and that the psalmist knew right well.

It was he who in Psalm 91 stated, God will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge. One reading that would immediately call to mind the mental image of a mother hen providing shelter and comfort for her chicks as she coddled them under her wings.

It isn't literal, of course, and was never intended to be by writer or reader. But it surely was picturesque poetry in a figure. This is what is meant when we say figurative language induces the reader to contemplate the saying on a different plane than the straightforward literal that may say, God will provide protection and comfort for you.

[ 49 : 11 ] It's true. But that doesn't compare with the vivid imagery of a mother hen and her chicks. Simply beautiful. Animal-like characteristics are assigned to Christ when he is called the Lion of the tribe of Judah, or the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.

Literally, he isn't either. But figuratively, he is both. And with gray color and emphasis not conveyed with the relatively bare and literal, zoomorphism, along with its figurative neighbors anthropomorphism and anthropopathism, plus the multitude of other figures of speech are found in great abundance throughout Scripture.

Is there any literary expression in greater numbers than the figures of speech? Surely you remember that there are, and what they are called, they are the literal, and they comprise every expression that is not figurative.

They far outweigh the figurative, but as said earlier, the literal is one straightforward expression, while the figurative is comprised of many dozens of different expressions as we have been naming

them.

Revisiting Hermeneutics Reference has been made often throughout the various volumes of Christianity Clarified that the Bible is both a divine and a human book.

[ 50 : 39 ] There is absolutely none other like it. It is divine in that it bears the very authority of the Creator God Himself. In its humanity, God utilized real human beings through whom He conveyed the revelation of Himself that He wanted mankind to have.

We believe that in addition to the self-disclosure the Bible provides about God, it also provides information to man designed to elicit a response.

It is as though, here it is, we have this book called the Bible as a disclosure of the Creator God. And now the question is, so what?

Now what? Where do we go, or what do we do about it? Communication demands a sender of information to be responded to by the receiver.

God is the sender. Mankind is the receiver and responder. But man cannot respond to what has been sent unless he understands the message of the sender.

[ 51 : 44 ] Understanding, interpretation, meaning is critical. For without meaning, intelligent response is impossible. This is what hermeneutics is all about.

Just wanted to remind you of that. Hermeneutics is the art and science of interpreting the Bible. It is a science because it operates within the confines of logic, established rules, and principles of literature and grammar.

It is an art because individual capabilities are sharpened and brought to bear in the judicious application of the scientific aspect. This makes hermeneutics to be a relatively unknown but critical discipline of academia.

And it is truly tragic how academia at large ignores the one discipline that alone can impart meaning and value to all other disciplines.

Yet, such is the undeniable plight and blindness that is owned by fallen mankind in general. And such is declared by the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 4 when he states, If our gospel, that is, our good news is hidden, it is hidden to those who are perishing, in whose case the God of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God.

[ 53 : 16 ] America has traded in her worship of the true God, long espoused by our founding fathers, for the God of secularism, seasoned with agnosticism and atheism that permeate the postmodern culture.

And our contention is that a woeful biblical illiteracy on the part of many people in our churches has created smooth sailing for the God of this age to effortlessly carry on his program of spiritual blindness.

This is what Christianity Clarified seeks to combat. And thanks so much for being a part of the effort. Irony in the Bible, Part 1 Among the multitude of figurative expressions used throughout the Bible, the figure of irony is one of the most dramatic and interesting.

It can be more challenging to see it as a figure because we can only see it as it was spoken and are unable to hear the tone or inflection of voice from the one who originally spoke it in the text.

Yet in nearly all these cases, we can still recognize it as irony due to the immediate context. In 1 Kings 18, the prophet Elijah was confronting the prophets of the false god Baal.

[ 54 : 44 ] As they called upon their phony god to send fire and devour the animal sacrifice that was prepared, their god Baal was not to be heard.

After their repeated begging and praying for Baal to respond, Elijah just stood by, watching and being amused by their pathetic efforts. After repeated pleading until noon with no results, Elijah could no longer remain silent.

The text says Elijah mocked them and said, Cry louder, for he is a god. Either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened.

Clearly, Elijah is not giving them sympathetic advice. Rather, he is ridiculing them with irony, biting irony, intended to mock and show them how absurd they were being.

And in a different time and place, we refer to Job's response to the miserable advice given by his so-called friends in chapter 12. They all portrayed themselves as know-it-alls in regard to Job's many ills.

[ 56 : 00 ] Unable to abide them any longer, Job leveled a stinging rebuke of irony to the three men when he told them, No doubt, but you are the people, and wisdom shall die with you.

Irony actually means the very opposite of what it seems to mean. If taken literally, the statement is actually a compliment on the sagacity of the three.

But it isn't intended as a compliment as Job delivered it. It was a scathing put-down. What Job really meant, as the content suggests, was, You people think you are so smart.

You actually think that when you die, wisdom will have come to an end. Again, we see the emphasis and color contained in figurative language the literal does not convey.

To Bildad, Job said, How you have helped the powerless! How you have saved the arm that is feeble! What advice you have offered to one without wisdom!

[ 57 : 08 ] And what great insight you have displayed! In all these remarks Job in chapter 26 delivered to Bildad, on the surface they sounded complimentary, but they are irony and are actually intended to convey the opposite.

This is literary ridicule at its finest, and it's called irony, a relative to sarcasm we will address later.

Irony in the Bible, Part 2 The many biblical examples of irony need to be understood as such.

If not, they are actually misunderstood, and taken as positive compliments, or remain a puzzle altogether as to their meaning. An example offered by Dr. Zuck in his book we have mentioned called Basic Bible Interpretation, he refers to an encounter, one of many, that Jesus had with the Jewish religious establishment.

It's another example of irony, where on the surface sounds complimentary, but in reality is ridicule. Our Lord tells his opposers, You have a fine way of setting aside the commandments of God in order to observe your own traditions.

Far from a compliment, Jesus delivers a stinging rebuke. Paul the Apostle did likewise when he wrote the delinquent Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 4.

[ 58 : 40 ] He told them, You have become kings. But then he followed by saying, How I wish that you really had become kings.

That the first statement was meant as irony and conveyed actually the opposite is proved by the verse that followed. He also employed biting irony in verse 10 when he told them, You are so wise in Christ.

Paul didn't mean that at all. He meant the very opposite. And we are confident the Corinthians did not take it literally as a compliment, but figuratively as the criticism it really was.

Recall the Old Testament incident in 2 Samuel 6. David the king was overjoyed because the Ark of the Covenant had been brought back to the tabernacle.

He expressed his euphoria by dancing before the Lord in the presence of the royal staff made up of handmaidens and servants. His dancing did not escape the critical eye of his wife Michael, who obviously disapproved.

[ 59 : 49 ] She came out to meet David and scornfully said, How glorious was the king of Israel today, who uncovered himself in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself.

Clearly, Michael was embarrassed and charged David with improper behavior that did not befit his royal status.

David quite put her in her place by saying, It was before the Lord, which chose me before your father and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the Lord.

Therefore, will I play before the Lord, and I will be more vile than this, and will be base in my own sight, and of maidservants, which thou hast spoken of.

I shall be had in honor. We see where God came down on this issue because the next verse says, Therefore, Michael the daughter of Saul had no child until the day of her death.

[ 60 : 59 ] Apparently, God was sore displeased with Michael, so much so that he closed her womb in a kind of punishment for her criticism. Euphemism softens hard truth.

Euphemism is perhaps the best example of one speaking with a deliberate effort to tone down or soften the impact of something one would rather not say bluntly or plainly.

The reason appears obvious. The intent is to make the information, if possible, a little less painful to our sensibilities. A euphemistic expression doesn't change the reality of a matter.

It just seeks to let the hearer down a little more gently. When speaking of Lazarus in John chapter 11, Jesus said, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth, but I go that I may awaken him out of sleep.

The disciples, thinking Jesus spoke of literal sleep, responded by saying, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. Jesus wasn't speaking of literal sleep, but of figurative.

[ 62 : 15 ] He abandoned his figurative meaning for the literal when he realized they didn't understand, and he then plainly, quite literally said, Lazarus is dead.

Apparently, the disciples at that time didn't pick up on all Christ had said because he had followed with, But I go that I may awake him out of sleep.

consistency with the figurative and literal usages would also require his raising Lazarus out of his literal death, but they would never get that until Jesus actually did it at Lazarus' tomb days later in verse 43.

Apparently, because death is the great enemy of man and will be the last enemy to be destroyed in 1 Corinthians 15.26, it was not unusual for Bible writers to reduce the emotional impact of death, and they did.

In Acts 7.60, Stephen the martyr is heard to say, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge, even while they rained a deadly barrage of stones upon him.

[ 63 : 26 ] And the text concludes by saying, And when he had said this, he fell asleep. Really? Literally? No. Literally, he died.

Euphemistically, he fell asleep. Again, in 1 Thessalonians 4, we read that we are not to be ignorant concerning them which are asleep.

And even so, them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. In verse 16, Paul drops the figurative euphemism of sleep and uses the literal that dead in Christ shall rise first.

We often use euphemisms ourselves when speaking of death. Just look at the obituary notices in your newspaper, and we find people doing everything but dying.

They are passed on, they've gone to be with the Lord, they have gone to their reward, they've joined the angel chorus, and what are they all saying? They died. Somehow, that sounds more brutally final than all the euphemisms, and that's why we use them.

[ 64 : 33 ] That's why the Bible uses them too. We told you, it is a divine but human book. It looks out for us humans. Rhetorical Questions in the Bible, Part 1 The rhetorical question is an often used literary device throughout the Bible.

Though posed as a question, in actuality, it is a direct statement of a truth or situation not to be disputed. Even though a question is asked, an outward verbal answer is not expected.

It is assumed that the answer will be one of agreement within the mind of the hearer. As such, the rhetorical question sets forth a position that the speaker assumes will be reinforced in the mind of the one to whom the question is directed.

The first rhetorical question in the Bible is one asked by God himself as he addressed Cain in Genesis 4. When Cain's offering to God was rejected, he became angry, and it showed by the expression on his face.

God asked Cain the usual kind of question by saying, Why are you angry? and why is your countenance fallen? God then followed that question with his rhetorical question.

[ 65 : 58 ] If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? The answer to that question was so patently obvious, it could as well have been made as a statement like, If you do well, your countenance will be lifted up.

But God put it in the form of a rhetorical question that did not expect an outward verbal answer, but was designed to reinforce the truth of the matter in the mind of Cain.

Again, in Genesis 12, Abraham posed the rhetorical question to his nephew Lot when he asked him, Is not the whole land before you? Well, of course it was, and the question did not even have to be answered.

And in chapter 18, God asked his rhetorical question to Abraham. Is anything too difficult for the Lord? So what is the obvious answer to that question?

So obvious, Abraham didn't even answer it. No, nothing is too difficult for the Lord. Recall later in chapter 18, where the Lord poses a rhetorical question to the two angels who were accompanying him.

[ 67 : 11 ] These would be the two destroying angels who would be entering the city of Sodom, from which Lot would later be rescued. The question God asked them was, Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?

In this same exchange over Sodom, rhetorical questions were abounding, as Abraham asked God, Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?

rhetorical questions are an oft-used literary device that is simply another way of making a statement, but it's in the form of a question.

But it's not a question for which the answer is in doubt, but for which the correct answer is assumed. The hearer is made to answer and concur inwardly, mentally, without saying anything outwardly. There are hundreds of rhetorical questions in the Bible, all expressing the beauty and variety of human communication. Rhetorical Questions in the Bible, Part 2 Why ask a question if the answer to it is already assumed?

[ 68 : 30 ] That's the nature of a rhetorical question. It serves the purpose of not only reinforcing, confirming a truth, but of reminding the hearer of the question as to just how obvious the matter is.

The rhetorical question is all about confirming a truth or situation and causing the one hearing the question to do the same thing in his own mind. Both Testaments contain so many rhetorical questions as to not be enumerated, except for a number of the examples we will now recall. So please remember that though each comes in the form of a question, the answer to that question is considered an already agreed to and settled issue. So here we go with samples of the famous rhetorical questions that contain in themselves built-in answers.

In conveying the truth that his disciples should, as lights of the world, let their good works and light shine before men, Jesus asked the rhetorical question in Mark 4, A lamp is not brought to be put under a jar, is it?

Or under a bed? Is it not brought to be put on the lampstand? Again, no answer is given to the question, nor need there be. The answer is automatic and reinforcing.

[ 69 : 49 ] Perhaps a more famous rhetorical question, the answer to which is so obvious, no answer is given or even expected, yet each hearer will process the unspoken answer in his own mind.

And it's found in Matthew 16, For what will a man be profited if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? For what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

No record of any answer is given, nor need there be, but one suspects the silence may have been deafening, as each hearer processed that obvious answer in his own mind.

The Apostle Paul engages in frequent polemics as a lawyer arguing his case in a courtroom. It's even a little amusing because when he asks a rhetorical question, he leaves nothing to chance in the mind of his hearer to provide the right answer within himself.

So Paul actually answers his own rhetorical question, as in Romans 3, Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also?

[ 70 : 54 ] Yes, of Gentiles also. And again, do we then nullify the law through faith? May it never be. On the contrary, we establish the law.

And in chapter 6, Paul asks again rhetorically, What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? May it never be. Or in verse 15, What then?

Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be. In chapter 8, If God be for us, who can be against us?

Paul's questions, though rhetorical and assuming an obvious answer, one gets the impression he did not want to leave the chance his audience coming up with the right answer, obvious though it was.

Something all us preachers need to keep in mind. This is the rhetorical question, a great teaching tool. You've just heard another session of Christianity Clarified with Marv Wiseman.

[ 72 : 12 ] Preview of Volume 32, Upcoming Our conclusion of Figures of Speech in the Bible will be provided in Volume 32. Perhaps the least understood and most controversial among them will be fully treated.

This is hyperbole, the figure of speech that is an understood and even deliberate exaggeration. Not knowing about the legitimacy of figurative language and its intended goals of emphasis, color, variety, and pathos, some have actually thought the speaker who utilized hyperbole was lying, simply a teller of tall tales not to be believed.

I think we can allay the fear of that. Also to be considered on Volume 32 will be a treatment of allegory, parables, and other lesser-known but important figures not as well-known but very revealing.

And then, in keeping with our goals in dealing with hermeneutics and having concluded our treatment of the law of literality and the law of figurative language, we shall embark upon other critical laws that will prove tremendously revealing.

Among them, with their examples, are the law of context, the law of first mention, the law of correspondence, the law of consequence, the law of imprecation, of prominence, the law of typology, the law of standing and state, the law of revealed difference, and others.

[ 73 : 48 ] These names may, at the moment, escape you or even leave you mildly disinterested. But I assure you, they are most interesting and most of all, very revealing.

Our contention is that it is through not knowing of these laws or how the Bible uses them that causes so much confusion and differences within Christianity.

We shall do what we can in our little corner of the world to address and dispense with that confusion through Christianity Clarified.

And, we are truly grateful to have you as a traveling companion through the Word of God with us.

This is Pastor Marv Wiseman saying, thanks so much for being a part of our happy band.

We hope to connect again on Christianity Clarified Volume 32.