

## **Never Anthropomorphize God**

First, consider this question: “How many dogs does it take to change a light bulb?” // [A] Golden Retriever [answers]: The sun is shining, the day is young, we've got our whole lives ahead of us, and you're inside worrying about a stupid burned-out bulb? // Border Collie: Just one. And then I'll replace any wiring that's not up to code. // Dachshund: You know I can't reach that stupid lamp! // Rottweiler: Make me. // Boxer: Who cares? I can still play with my squeaky toys in the dark. // Lab: Oh, me, me!!!!!! Pleeeeeeeeeeeze let me change the light bulb! Can I? Can I? Huh? Huh? Huh? Can I? Pleeeeeeeeeeeze, please, please, please! // German Shepherd: I'll change it as soon as I've led these people from the dark, check to make sure I haven't missed any, and make just one more perimeter patrol to see that no one has tried to take advantage of the situation. // Jack Russell Terrier: I'll just pop it in while I'm bouncing off the walls and furniture. // Old English Sheep Dog: Light bulb? I'm sorry, but I don't see a light bulb? // Chihuahua: Yo quiero Taco Bulb. // Pointer: I see it, there it is, there it is, right there. // Greyhound: It isn't moving. Who cares? // Australian Shepherd: First, I'll put all the light bulbs in a little circle. // Poodle: I'll just blow in the Border Collie's ear and he'll do it. By the time he finishes rewiring the house, my nails will be dry. // The Cat's

Answer: Dogs do not change light bulbs. People change light bulbs. So, the real question is: How long will it be before I can expect some light, some dinner, and a massage?’

Now consider, folks, why was all that humorous? It’s because we have observed the stereotypical behavior of different dog breeds, and cats, and “anthropomorphized” what we see, interpreting it as if it were similar or the same as humans, we ourselves, would act. We see parallels to ourselves in the dogs, and cat, as well as in many other animals, situations, circumstances, even inanimate objects! Without going into why humans are so prone to do this, suffice it to say that we do this often, and frequently unconsciously. And we tend to do it even to God Himself. Which is unconscionable! And doing so can lead us to everlasting death in hell, all the while “thinking” we are saved by Christ Jesus! We can never be putting our words into God’s mouth!

What am I getting at here? We’re celebrating today, commemorating the ascension of our Lord back into heaven. Near the end of the forty-days after His glorious, supernatural resurrection from the dead, the Lord was “cramming” all the last minute teachings and blessings He could before He ascended back into heaven. Yet, during these forty days, the Scripture records in Acts 1:6: ‘Every time they were gathered together, they asked Jesus, “Lord, is it now the time for You to free Israel and restore our kingdom?”’ What’s your reaction to their question? They asked it not just once or twice, but every time they saw the resurrected Lord!

Had they learned nothing in the three years He'd been teaching them? Had His suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane not left an impression? The crucifixion? Did even that not change their perspective of Him? Finally, His stupendous, unbelievable yet plain-as-day resurrection from the dead, had that not enlightened them? By this question they kept asking Him, apparently not! So human were they that still they couldn't get past their primary concern of reestablishing Israel's independence, deliverance from Roman oppression. The universe-shaking import of what the Lord had just accomplished was still, in large part, lost on them.

The Lord they had known and loved for the past three years was back with them, almost like He had never left them. Almost like He had never died. But He wasn't the same. He appeared and disappeared from them in truly otherworldly fashion. He walked through walls, locked doors. He looked the same, mostly. But He was undeniably different. Transformed. Living in a much more powerful and peacefully intense way than He had before the events of Passion Week. And despite this, all they could think of was the throwing off of Roman rule. How can this be explained?

Well, we should be a bit charitable to them. For we live on the other side of those events, the ascension into heaven, the coming of Holy Spirit, the birth of the church, and the thousands of years of this Age of Grace. What we know now, gives us hindsight such as they did not have. But the single most crucial ingredient we have and not them, in those last few days before

Pentecost, is Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit is not just the Comforter, nor Helper, nor Guider. Most important for us, and all Christ Jesus' followers, the little Christs that we are, is that Holy Spirit is The Teacher. The Lord told us and them ahead of time that He would send us Holy Spirit Who would bring to our minds everything He had taught, giving us the power, *and understanding*, to live in this new Age of Grace, as the Ecclesia, the Church, the Community of Christ, against which the Gates of Hell can not stand.

On this day, the disciples were all gathered around Him as He began floating upward in the mists of a supernatural pillar of cloud. They stared up at Him as He grew smaller and smaller as the distance increased, until He disappeared from their sight. Still dumbfounded, they remained transfixed by what they had just seen, and could no longer see. Until they were roused from their daze by two angels who told them that in the same way they had seen Him go, He would someday come back. Returning to their senses at the angels' words, they gathered themselves and obeyed the Lord's final command. They walked back to Jerusalem and waited. No thumb twiddling!. They were filled with joy for even though they still didn't know when Israel would be liberated from the Romans, they knew that He was alive. That He was the Son of God, somehow God Himself. Filled with such gladness, Luke 24:52-53 reports: "Overwhelmed and ecstatic with joy, they made their way back to Jerusalem. Every day they went to the temple, to praise and worship God". Though waiting, it felt

nothing like waiting at all. To live like this every day of their lives would have been enough! But still more was to come from God.

Ten days passed, and in the Upper Room, the promised Holy Spirit arrived! We'll celebrate it next week. As if nothing had shaken their souls before this, the baptism of Holy Spirit's fire changed them like they had never changed before. Suddenly, they began to realize the enormity of what their Lord had accomplished. This was vastly greater than just liberating Israel from the Romans. That was as nothing compared to what the Lord had set in motion on His resurrection day. Suddenly, they never asked their question again. Holy Spirit made all the difference.

Before Pentecost, the disciples were still thinking as ordinary people. As they had so easily always done, they had anthropomorphized the Lord Jesus. If they thought something was vitally important, then surely it was for Him as well. Their concerns had to be significant to Him as well. In a way, they were guilty of projection, that is projecting their own thoughts, feelings and opinions on someone else. We see this happening all around us these days, particularly as liberals accuse conservatives of gross sins and high crimes, when they themselves, the liberals, are guilty of those very things, while those they accuse are usually totally innocent. Often this is done with malice aforethought, but all too often the accusers are blissfully unaware of their own hypocrisy. It's just like the hyperbolic language our Lord used when describing those who point out a speck in someone else's eye, when a veri-

table log is in their own eye! But none of this applies to the Lord. For He was simultaneously God and man. Though He hadn't reappropriated His divine powers, staying human, but as the New Man, the new humanity, He remained the example and model for us all to emulate and, eventually become as His Spirit lives in us. It was to His credit that His humanness and gentleness was so patently evident that the disciples felt such camaraderie with Him they could, without any compunction, literally pester Him with questions, which, for most people, would annoy them to no end.

In His final answer to their repeated question, in Acts 1:6, He gently turned it around to refocus them on what was really important, indeed the very mission He was now commissioning them to. In verses 7-8, His very last words to them on this earth, until He soon returns again, were, "The Father is the One Who sets the fixed dates and the times of their fulfillment. You are not permitted to know the timing of all that He has prepared by His Own authority". In other words, don't concern yourselves with the when of Israel's kingdom reestablishment. He continued, "But I promise you this—the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and you will be seized with power. You will be My messengers to Jerusalem, throughout Judea, the distant provinces—even to the remotest places on earth!" In short, Christ's ministry has now been turned over to the disciples, once Holy Spirit comes upon them. And since we are the disciples of those disciples, Christ's ministry is now ours. So the question is, how are we doing?

