**Anacoluthon**

Anacoluthon (from the Greek term *an* + *akolouthos*, meaning “not following”), occurs when there is a break in the normal grammatical structure of a sentence. Scholars differ widely in how to classify the many various aspects of anacoluthon. However, one type called “suspension of the subject” happens when a person stops speaking before they finish their sentence. Another type called “digression” happens when a person changes the subject in the middle of a sentence or speech, and when they return to the original thought, it is concluded differently than would have naturally been expected. Other classifications include mid-sentence changing of verb tense, number, gender, or other aspects of grammar and syntax.

Below are three examples of “suspension of the subject.”

* In Matthew 9:6, Jesus leaves a sentence unfinished when he says, “But so that you know the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins…” but he completes the thought by his actions when he heals the paralyzed man (see also Mark 2:10). The unexpected pause fixes the attention of the listener upon the speaker, causing anticipation. The result is that Jesus’ words and actions create a double impact, emphasizing his authority from God to both forgive and minister physical healing.
* In Mark 11:30-32, when the religious leaders challenged Christ’s authority, he counter-questioned them: 30 “Was the baptism of John from heaven or of human *origin*? Answer me.” 31And they discussed among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say, ‘Then why did you not believe him?’ 32But if we say, ‘Of human *origin*…’” (they were afraid of the people because they all considered John to be a prophet).” The abrupt stop in verse 32 indicates that the Jews did not know how to move forward in their response to Jesus, so they simply stopped speaking in mid-sentence.
* In Revelation 3:9, the speaker halts the sentence before its completion with “…who say they are Jews, and are not, but are lying…,” introducing an anacoluthon. However, this interruption serves as a deliberate stylistic choice, leading to a new, conclusive statement: “Look, I will make them come and bow down at your feet and know that I have loved you.”

Anacoluthon usually occurs at times of uncertainty, or in times of great emotion or intensity, as seen in the examples above. In Scripture, the figure of speech imparts strength and force to the language and is intended to catch and fix the reader’s attention.

To see more uses of and commentary about figures of speech used in the Bible, use the [REV search tool](http://revisedenglishversion.com/search), and articles on figures of speech can also be found at: [stfi.org/tag/figures/](https://stfi.org/tag/figures/).

[For anacoluthon, see E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979. Originally published by Eyre and Spottiswoode: London, 1898), 720-24.]