

## “THE TYPOLOGY OF THE BIBLE” SERIES

### #1: “Typology: What Is It?”

SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 8:5-6; 9:9; 10:1; Colossians 2:17

#### INTRO:

“Typology” is, simply, the study of prophetic symbols of the Old Testament that have their ultimate fulfillment or reality in the New Testament. While they have temporary significance relative to the old covenant of law, they find their eternal significance in the new covenant of grace. These prophetic “symbols” are at the heart and core of what I’m referring to when I say that “The Old Testament is the New Testament concealed, and the New Testament is the Old Testament revealed.”

It is the New Testament that identifies these prophetic symbols. They are referred to in the New Testament by three Greek words:

1. TUPOS, meaning “type,” “example,” or “pattern”;
2. SKIA, meaning “copy” or “shadow”; and
3. PARABOLE, meaning “parable” or “figure.”

Both the Greek TUPOS and SKIA are used in Hebrews 8:5 in describing the ministry of the priests and the tent or Tabernacle, which preceded the Temple in Jerusalem: “...*the tent (tabernacle) where they serve is just a copy and a shadow of the real one in heaven. Before Moses made the tent (or tabernacle), he was told, “Be sure to make it exactly like the pattern you were shown on the mountain!”* In other words, God intended the priests and the Tabernacle or Temple under the Old Covenant to be shadows of that which was coming with the New Covenant, so it was very important that Moses follow God’s instructions in every detail.

In Hebrews 10:1, the Greek SKIA is translated “shadow.” The Contemporary English Version renders it: “*The law of Moses is like a shadow of the good things to come. This shadow isn’t the good things themselves, because it cannot free people from sin by the sacrifices that are offered year after year.*” In other words, the Mosaic Law System was inadequate to accomplish forgiveness of sins, which the restoration of man to fellowship with God required, but it fore-shadowed that which would provide forgiveness of sins.

The Greek PARABOLE is used in two passages in Hebrews. In 9:8-9, the writer again refers to the system of the Old Covenant: “*All of this is the Holy Spirit’s way of saying that no one could enter the most holy place while the tent was still the place of worship. This also has a meaning for today. It shows that we cannot make our consciences clear by offering gifts and sacrifices.*”

The other Hebrews passage is 11:17-19, where the author says that Abraham's willingness to obey God in offering Isaac as a sacrifice, because he believed that God would raise him to life again and keep His promise to continue his lineage through him, was a figure or parable of our faith in God's promise of resurrection under the New Covenant. The CEV has this passage: *"Abraham had been promised that Isaac, his only son, would continue his family. But when Abraham was tested, he had faith and was willing to sacrifice Isaac, because he was sure that God could raise people to life. This was just like getting Isaac back from death."*

There are some additional things we need to know before we jump into a study of the typology of the Old Testament...

***FOR ONE THING, WE NEED TO KNOW THAT A "TYPE," "FIGURE," OR "SHADOW" IS NOT IDENTICAL TO WHAT IT FORESHADOWS.***

To give you somewhat of an example, think of twins that are not identical. Similarly, the Old Testament "types" are not identical to their New Testament anti-types.

For a biblical example, let's take the Mosaic Law. We just read in Hebrews 10:1 that even though it was a "shadow" of God's ultimate plan for making every believer righteous, it didn't accomplish the forgiveness of sins; it merely, so to speak, kicked the can of God's judgment down the road a ways until the perfect sacrifice, which was Christ, could be made.

Another biblical example is the Tabernacle, or Temple, itself. The book of Hebrews describes it – its courtyard, rooms, and furnishings, and the duties of the priests and high priest. It was a "type" or "figure" of the Christian belief system and the church, but it was in no way *exactly* like them.

***FOR ANOTHER THING, WE NEED TO KNOW THAT THE ANTI-TYPE OR THAT TO WHICH THE TYPE POINTS IS ALWAYS SUPERIOR OR BETTER THAN THE TYPE.***

In Hebrews 9, the writer, in writing of the sacrificial system of the Old Covenant, says in verses 23-28:

*"These things are only copies of what is in heaven, and so they had to be made holy by these ceremonies. But the real things in heaven must be made holy by something better. This is why Christ did not go into a tent that had been made by humans and was only a copy of the real one. Instead, he went into heaven and is now there with God to help us.*

*"Christ did not have to offer himself many times. He wasn't like a high priest who goes into the most holy place each year to offer the blood of an animal. If he had offered himself every year, he would have suffered many times since the creation of the world. But instead, near the end of time he offered himself once and for all, so that he could be a sacrifice that does away with sin.*

***“We die only once, and then we are judged. So Christ died only once to take away the sins of many people. But when he comes again, it will not be to take away sin. He will come to save everyone who is waiting for him.”***

Other examples of the type being inferior to the anti-type are found in Matthew’s gospel account. In Matthew 12:40, Jonah is the type, and Christ is the anti-type: ***“He was in the stomach of a big fish for three days and nights, just as the Son of Man will be deep in the earth three days and nights.”***

In Matthew 24:37: ***“When the Son of Man appears, things will be just as they were when Noah lived.”***

Still another example is in John 3:14, where Jesus says, ***“And the Son of Man must be lifted up, just as that metal snake was lifted up by Moses in the desert.”***

#### **WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND THE VALUE OF TYPES AND SHADOWS.**

According to Hebrews 9:8-9, they serve to teach us about the New Covenant plan of salvation. After describing the tent or Tabernacle of the Old Covenant, the writer says:

***“All of this is the Holy Spirit’s way of saying that no one could enter the most holy place while the tent was still the place of worship. This also has a meaning for today. It shows that we cannot make our consciences clear by offering gifts and sacrifices.”***

According to 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 10:11, the Old Testament types and shadows serve as examples for our admonition. After reminding the Corinthian Christians of the Israelites who left Egypt under the leadership of Moses, he wrote: ***“These things happened to them as a warning to us. All this was written in the Scriptures to teach us who live in these last days.”***

In Hebrews 10:1, the writer tells us that Old Testament types and shadows are prophetic of that which was to come through Christ’s New Testament: ***“The Law of Moses is like a shadow of the good things to come. This shadow isn’t the good things themselves, because it cannot free people from sin by the sacrifices that are offered year after year.”***

Finally,

#### **WE NEED TO BE AWARE OF SOME RULES CONCERNING TYPES.**

- 1. To be a bona-fide type or shadow, the Old Testament thing must have more than a mere resemblance to a New Testament thing.***

There must be a clear indication that the type was preordained to point to an anti-type, as in Romans 5:12-14, where Paul explained:

***“Adam sinned, and that sin brought death into the world. Now everyone has sinned, and so everyone must die. Sin was in the world before the Law came. But no record of sin was kept because there was no Law. Yet death still had power over all who lived from the time of Adam to the time of Moses. This happened, though not everyone disobeyed a direct command from God as Adam did.***

***“In some ways Adam is like Christ who came later...”***

- 2. To be a true type or shadow, the analogy between the Old Testament thing and the New Testament thing must be clearly pointed out.***

Sometimes the analogy is directly stated, as in Romans 5:14, part of the passage we just considered: ***“...In some ways Adam is like Christ who came later.”*** Another example is in Psalm 110:4, which is quoted in Hebrews 6:20: ***“The Lord has made a promise that will never be broken: You will be a priest after the order of Melchizedek.”***

Sometimes the New Testament anti-type is called by the name of the Old Testament type, as in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 5:6-7, where Paul wrote: ***“Stop being proud! Don’t you know that a little yeast can spread through the whole batch of dough? Get rid of the old yeast! Then you will be like fresh bread made without yeast, and that is what you are. Our Passover lamb is Christ, who has already been sacrificed.”***

In Hebrews 9:24 is another example of the new anti-type being called by the name of the old type: ***“...Christ did not go into a tent that had been made by humans and was only a copy of the real one. Instead, he went into heaven and is now there with God to help us.”***

- 3. When there are many partial types of something, the anti-type should be determined by the combination of all of them.***

An example is all the various sacrifices required under the Old Covenant. Together, they point to our ***“living sacrifice”*** or to Christ.

- 4. Sometimes an Old Testament type has two contrary New Testament anti-types.***

For example, while the Old Testament flood is a type of salvation to believers, it is a type of judgment to unbelievers.

- 5. Sometimes the type assumes the name of the anti-type and the anti-type that of the type.***

For example, “the church” is called “Mount Zion,” and “Christ” is called “David” (Hosea 3:5; Ezekiel 34:23; Micah 4:7).

- 6. We must guard against making too much of a type and against “alleged” types that are not real types.***

This has been done with Eliezer, Abraham's servant, and with Rebekah, Isaac's wife, as well as with Jonah and Joseph. Some theologians are really good at seeing types and creating types where it is not clear at all that God intended them to be types. And their creations are often used to prove unscriptural teachings.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

One trustworthy theologian has written:

**"A type has been well defined, to be a prefigurative action or occurrence, in which one event, person, or circumstance is intended to represent another similar to it in certain respects, but future and distant. To constitute one thing the type of another, something more is wanted than mere resemblance. The former must not only resemble the latter, but it must have been designed so to resemble it, in its original institution. And there is no other rule by which we can distinguish a real from a pretended type than the Scripture itself. For these reasons, I have not insisted on the resemblances between the Messiah and eminent characters in the Old Testament. Though it is both pleasant and profitable to discover allusions to the Son of God in every page of Scripture, we are by no means justified in asserting that one person or event is undoubtedly the type of another; unless, as in the instances of Adam, Abel, Noah, the Passover, and other chief institutions of the Levitical Law, we can show from Scripture that the resemblance was originally designed and was not merely a coincidence. The sacrifice of Isaac by his father was so evidently typical of the sacrifice of Christ, that there can be no doubt of the design which was to be answered by this otherwise mysterious event. On the very spot where Christ was afterwards crucified, Abraham is commanded to slay his son. It is needless to recapitulate the coincidences between the sacrifice of Isaac and of Christ; they are to be found in every commentary. That the meaning of all the circumstances of this mystical sacrifice of his son was revealed to Abraham, that he learned from them that the promised Messiah, should in like manner bear wood of the cross and die for mankind, and that Abraham, in obeying the divine command, rejoiced to see the day of Christ, and then he saw it and was glad, is well argued..."**

There are several reasons I believe it will be valuable to you to be exposed to the "typology" of the Bible:

- 1. It is very interesting;**
- 2. It connects the Old and New Testaments, revealing the continuity of God's plan through the millennia;**
- 3. It will help you to be confident in the divine inspiration of the Bible; and**
- 4. It will help you understand the Christian belief system and the doctrines of biblical Christianity.**