

BIBLE TYPOLOGY

Typology is a way of setting forth the biblical history of salvation so that some of its earlier phases are seen as the pre-ordained forerunners of later phases, or some later phases as the fulfilment of an earlier one. Typology involves a correspondence between a pre-ordained person, event, act or thing in the Old Testament with a person, event, act or thing in the New Testament. The pre-ordained person, event, act, or thing in the Old Testament constitutes a *type* of the person, event, act or thing in the New Testament. The person, event, act or thing in the New Testament is the *antitype* of its counterpart in the Old Testament. It is only in the light of the antitype that the relevance of the type can be appreciated. Types are pictures or object lessons by which God has taught His children concerning His plan of redemption. They are a "shadow" of things to come and not the very image of those things. In this context a shadow is a limited idea or likeness of the reality it foreshadows. It is the typical nature of the Old Testament. The Old Testament represents externally in rites and ceremonies foreshadowed things future and more perfect (CP Col 2:16-17; He 8:1-5; 10:1). It should be noted here that the Bible is not as full of types as many in the church believe; that is, types that can be proved by scripture but there are quite a number nonetheless. Some Christians though make nearly every person and thing or historical event of the Old Testament typical, but that only leads to confusion and an incorrect understanding of God's word. Searching for hidden meanings in every passage of scripture and stressing their typical teaching without supporting scripture clouds the literal teaching and soundness of many Bible truths.

Everything in scripture intended as a divine type is confirmed by at least two or three plain statements somewhere else in scripture. The only authority for types and the application of them is scripture itself (CP 2Cor 13:1).

We cannot apply types without positive scripture support for them, yet many examples of so-called types abound in contemporary church teaching. (CP Gen 3:21). Many Christians have been taught that the skins God used here to clothe Adam and Eve were the first sin covering, foreshadowing the blood covering Jesus provided in His substitutionary atonement on the cross, but there is absolutely no scriptural support for this teaching whatever. The skin coverings were undoubtedly made from animals that God had taught Adam to offer as sacrifice in looking forward to the coming redeemer, because Adam in turn had taught his sons to offer up sacrifices (CP 4:1-7). But we cannot read into it anything more than that. We cannot teach that it means something which scriptures do not support. The animal sacrifices and sin offerings on the Day of Atonement, which we will be examining shortly, foreshadowed the blood covering Jesus provided in His substitutionary atonement on the cross. It was not the animal skins which God used to cover Adam and Eve.

It is claimed that Joseph was a type of Christ because his life so closely resembled Christ's, but it needs more than mere resemblance to constitute a type. There must be positive scripture to support the claim

and nowhere in the New Testament are we taught that Joseph was a type of Christ. However numerous applications can be made apart from the authentic types and antitypes, and they are permissible as such - illustrations or applications. Many so-called types are found in the plain history of the lives of Bible characters, and they make interesting studies, but not as true Bible types because they lack identification as such in New Testament scripture. The life of Joseph to that of Christ is a case in point. Though they are not recognised as type and antitype in scripture, the two lives nevertheless closely resemble each other, and the facts about them make impressive illustrations.

It is also claimed that Rebekah, Ruth, Esther and the Shulamite maiden from the Song of Solomon are all types of the church, and the bride of Christ, but that is incorrect because firstly, the church is never typified, symbolized or illustrated by a woman, married or unmarried, in scripture. On the contrary, the church, as the body of the man, Jesus, is also referred to as a man in scripture (CP Eph 2:14-16; 4:11-13). It seems incongruous that the body of a man would be referred to as a woman. Secondly, the bride of Christ is quite openly revealed in scripture as the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, which will become the eternal home of all the redeemed of God from Abel to the very last soul saved in the Great Tribulation (CP Rev 21:2, 9-10, 24-27). Some even try to prove the doctrine of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit - the Trinity - by the fact that Noah's Ark had three stories. They also try to prove the pre-tribulation rapture of the church by the fact that Enoch was translated to heaven before the flood (CP Ge 6:16; 5:21-24).

These are but a few examples of man-made Bible types that have absolutely no foundation in the Bible. The objection to this method of Bible interpretation is that it wrests the scriptures out of their natural and historical setting and intent. It destroys the simplicity of the word of God, detracts from its trustworthiness, and leads people to believe that there is a hidden and mysterious meaning to every detail of scripture. The safe way is to prove every doctrine with plain passages of scripture related to the subject. Avoid so-called hidden meanings of the words. They only lead to fanciful and confusing interpretations. Types should be understood and interpreted only in the light of their antitypes. The type and the antitype must agree with each other as well as with all related scripture.

Now let us look at some typical persons in the Old Testament in the light of their New Testament antitypes: Adam as the first man is called a type of "One who was yet to come" - Jesus (CP Ro 5:12-21; 1Cor 15:45-49). As head of the old creation Adam was the counterpart of Christ, head of the new creation. Adam was the type, Christ was the antitype. All humanity is viewed as being *in Adam*, in whom "all die", or *in Christ*, "in whom all are to be made alive" (CP Ro 5:12-19; 1Cor 15:21-22). No other Old Testament character is expressly called a type of Christ in scripture, but Moses was also a type of Christ as the prophet of God (CP De 18:15-19; Ac 3:19-26; 7:37). Moses was also a type of Christ in that all who followed him were baptized unto Him in the cloud, which was the Divine Presence, and in the sea. They were thus brought under obligation to the law, to Moses and to the covenant. So too, all who follow Christ are

baptized into Christ and into His body the church by the Holy Spirit (CP 1Cor 10:1-2 with Ro 6:1-6). Moses was also a type of the faithfulness of Christ (CP He 3:1-6).

Aaron – Moses' brother – was a type of the high priesthood of Christ (CP He 5:1-5; 7:11, 19-28). Melchizedek was also a type of Christ in that he had no recorded father, mother, birth or death. As a divine being Jesus had no father, mother, birth or death (CP Mic 5:2; Jn 1:1-2; Col 1:17; He 1:8-12; 7:1-3). Melchizedek was also a type of the eternal priesthood of Christ, and of His eternal existence (CP Ge 14:14-18; Psa 110:4; He 5:6-10; 6:20; 7:1-3, 15-17).

Many Christians believe that because Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek that made Abraham the type, or representative tithe payer for all New Testament Christians. They believe that established the precedent for tithing that all Christians must follow. Not all agree with this however. A great many Christians believe that tithing is purely an Old Testament concept that does not translate to New Testament giving. They believe that under the new covenant giving is centred entirely around stewardship - the giving of ourselves, our time, our finances and our material possessions freely and spontaneously to the service of God. They do not believe that the Bible teaches that the tithe Abraham gave to Melchizedek established the precedent for tithing that all New Testament Christians must follow. Rather, they believe that Abraham's tithe had special symbolic implications related to establishing Christ's eternal priesthood. They believe this is borne out by the writer of Hebrews when he contrasts Christ's eternal priesthood with the temporary Levitical priesthood (CP Ge 14:14-20 with He 6:17-9:17).

Abraham in offering up his only promised son Isaac as a living sacrifice was a type of God, offering up his only begotten son Jesus (CP Ge 22:1-12; Jn 3:16; He 11:17-19).

Isaac was a type of the resurrection of Christ (CP Ge 22:9-12 with He 11:17-19).

Jonah, being in the belly of the whale for three days and three nights in the Old Testament, was a type of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus in the New Testament. Jesus refers to what happened to Jonah as the sign of His own death, burial and resurrection (CP Jon 1:17-2:10 with Mt 12:38-40). Notwithstanding the fact that Jesus died before He was resurrected, and that He said that what happened to Jonah was the sign of what would happen to him, many Christians do not believe that Jonah died in the whale's belly. They think that he was alive throughout the three days and three nights before the whale vomited him up. But if that is so then what happened to Jonah was not a true type of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, yet Jesus Himself said it was.

In order to be resurrected one must first die. Resurrection means a return to life subsequent to death. If Jonah never died, then simply

being vomited up by the whale did not prefigure Jesus' death and resurrection. Furthermore, the death of the antitype requires the death of the type, the same as the death of all the Old Testament animal sacrifices prefigured the death of the supreme sacrifice, Jesus. To be the type, what happened to Jonah had to be the same as what happened to Jesus. Jonah had to die and be buried in the whale before the whale vomited him up, just as Jesus died and was buried in the ground before He was resurrected, and it is apparent from scripture that this is what happened. In Jon 2:1 Jonah prayed from the belly of the whale, whereas in V2 he prayed from the belly of hell, meaning literally **Sheol** - the unseen world, the place of departed souls. In V1 Jonah prayed from the belly of the whale while he was still alive (CP V1), and in V2 he prayed from hell where his soul went between the time he died and when he was vomited up (CP V2-5). This is proved by V6-7: Jonah's statement (KJV), "The earth with her bars – (*was is not in the original manuscript*) – about me forever" refers to Sheol, where his soul was (CP V6-7). *Corruption*, also in V6, refers to the body – it means destruction. Jesus was also saved from corruption after He died (CP Psa 16:10; 49:15). (It is not expected that everyone will agree with this interpretation, so let us agree to disagree in love.)

A typical event in the Old Testament was Noah's flood. The water that carried Noah and his family to safety in the ark during the flood is a type of the salvation that is by faith in the finished work of Christ, portrayed in water baptism in the New Testament (CP Ge 6:1-14, 17-18, 22; 7:1-6, 17-23 with 1Pe 3:18-21). This is not teaching baptismal regeneration: that as water saved the eight people in the ark from drowning in the flood in the Old Testament, so water baptism saves repentant sinners from hell in the New Testament. Far from it - Peter is very careful to point out in 1Pe 3:21 that water baptism is not the washing away of our sins, but the response of our heart - the answer of a good conscience - toward God, whereby we affirm our faith in Jesus. The broad picture that Peter paints for us in V18-21 is that just as Noah's building of the ark was a testimony to his faith in God for his salvation before the flood, so believers going through the waters of baptism is a testimony to their faith in Christ for their salvation before they are baptized. Water baptism is the visible and tangible expression of our faith in the resurrected Christ and the salvation we are given as a result of that faith.

Another typical event in the Old Testament having its fulfilment in the New Testament was the lifting up of the brazen serpent on the pole by Moses in the wilderness. It typified the crucifixion of Christ and the benefits of the cross that can be obtained by all who look to Jesus for their salvation (CP Nu 21:4-9 with Jn 3:14-15). There are many facets to this type: As the serpent was a symbol of sin, so Jesus was made a sin offering (2Cor 5:21); the serpent was lifted up on the pole – Jesus was lifted up on the cross (CP Jn 3:14-15); as the sick Israelites who looked to the brazen serpent were healed, so too there is bodily healing for believers in the cross of Christ (CP Isa 53:4-5 with 1Pe 2:24); as the sick Israelites who looked upon the brazen serpent were given new life, so repentant sinners who look to Christ are given eternal life (Jn 3:14-18); as the brazen serpent on the pole brought peace and reconciliation with God for the repentant Israelites, so Christ on the cross reconciled repentant sinners to God (CP 2Cor 5:18; Col

1:19-22). Faith was necessary to look upon the serpent to be saved from death and receive new life. Faith is also necessary to look to Jesus and receive everlasting life ([CP Ro 3:21-26](#)).

Another Old Testament type having its fulfilment in the New Testament is the Passover lamb ([CP Ex 12:3-13](#)). In the Passover lamb we have a type of Christ and the redemption that is in Him ([CP Jn 1:29-33](#); [1Cor 5:7](#); [1Pe 1:18-20](#)). It is laid down in [Ex 12:46](#) and [Nu 9:12](#) that no bone of the Passover lamb was to be broken. King David also prophesied this about Jesus in [Psa 34](#), and it was typologically fulfilled in Christ at His crucifixion ([CP Ex 12:46](#); [Nu 9:12](#); [Psa 34:19-20](#); [Jn 19:31-36](#)). The rock of Horeb is yet another Old Testament type. It typified Christ as the water of life, or living water ([CP Ex 17:1-6 with Jn 4:10-14 and 1Cor 10:1-4](#)). Jesus was also typified in the Old Testament by the manna God rained down from heaven for the Israelites, as the bread of life ([CP Ex 16:4, 31, 35 with Jn 6:28-35, 47-51](#); [1Cor 10:1-3](#)). As the Israelites received bread from heaven and water from the rock to sustain them, so Christians are also sustained by feasting on the living bread and drinking of the living water – Jesus.

What befell the generation of the Israelites who died in the wilderness is an Old Testament type also. It is not immediately recognisable as a type, but it is clearly supported in New Testament scripture as such ([CP 1Cor 10:5-12](#); [He 3:7-4:13](#); [Jude 5](#)). As, despite all their blessings, the Exodus generation died in the wilderness because of unbelief and so failed to enter the promised land, so New Testament Christians for their part are exhorted to take warning lest they fail also. [1Cor 10:6, 11](#) teaches us that what befell the Israelites is a type of what can befall us if we do not heed the warning. The words *examples* in [V 6](#) and *ensamples* in [V11](#) mean type or figure. The history of the failure of the Israelites is summed up for us in [Psalm 78 \(CP Psa 78:1-72\)](#).

The animal sacrifices and sin offerings for the sins of the Israelites on the Day of Atonement in the Old Testament foreshadowed the supreme sacrifice of Christ for the sins of all mankind in the New Testament. The blood of the animal sacrifices typified the blood Christ would shed as the sin offering on the cross. But the blood of the animal sacrifices could not take away the sins of the people – only Christ's blood could do that. Christ's shed blood put away sins forever. His was a once for all atonement for sins ([CP Ex 29:10-14](#); [Lev 16:1-22,27](#); [Nu 19:1-9](#); [He 9:6-10:18](#)). The sin offering on the Day of Atonement for the people in [Lev 16](#) consisted of two goats. They formed but one offering, but the two were needed to complete the type. The goat upon which the Lord's lot fell in [V9](#) was slain for a sin offering to the Lord ([CP V15-19](#)). This goat typified the death of Christ who became sin for us though He knew no sin. The second goat, called the "scapegoat" had the sins of all the people including the high priest himself and his house transferred to it by the laying on of hands by the high priest, and it was then led away and let loose in the wilderness. "Wilderness" here means a pasture or open field. It does not mean a land of desolation symbolising hell as many Christians believe. The goat was simply

sent out into the open countryside to wander where it would.

The scapegoat typified the complete pardon for sin through Christ's resurrection. The two goats completed one type of Christ in His atoning death on the cross and His subsequent resurrection. If Christ had died and remained dead His atoning death would have been in vain. It was the resurrection that made it effective ([CP Ro 4:25-5:1](#); [1Cor 15:1-23](#); [He 1:1-3](#); [2:14](#); [9:24-28](#); [1Pe 1:3](#)). Even where the goat that became the sin offering died was an Old Testament type of the location of Christ's death ([CP He 13:11-13](#)). As the carcass of the goat was burned outside the camp of the Israelites so Christ suffered and died outside the gate of Jerusalem. Therefore we are exhorted in [V13](#) to go forth "without the camp bearing His reproach". This means that as Christ suffered and died outside the city gate in order that we might be set apart for God - separated from our old sinful life and dedicated to the service of God - we should be willing to publicly identify with Christ by our commitment to His standards and purposes. We should be willing to be despised and suffer persecution for Him, and place ourselves outside the things of the world we formerly espoused.

The Day of Atonement was itself a reminder to the Israelites of the temporary nature of the Old Testament sacrifices and offerings. It was an annual event - the sacrifice of the sin offering had to be repeated every year, thus signifying to the people that it was insufficient itself to atone for sin, but foreshadowed a far better sacrifice who would be sufficient. Even the tabernacle and the holy of holies where the blood of the sin offering was sprinkled, were types of the heavenly tabernacle Christ entered into ([CP Lev 16:1-34](#); [He 8:1-5](#); [9:1-26](#); [10:1-22](#)).

A great many Christians believe that very few people were saved under the Old Covenant, but that is not correct. All who had a faith relationship with God expressed in their perseverance in obedience to the law and its sacrificial system were saved by Christ's atoning sacrifice and blood offering in the New Testament. Christ became the mediator of the new covenant not only in order that He might pay the penalty of sinners under the new covenant, but also of sinners under the Old Covenant as well ([CP Ac 17:30-31](#); [Ro 3:24-26](#); [He 9:15](#)). [He 9:15](#) confirms what [Ac 17:30-31](#) and [Ro 3:24-26](#) teaches: that Christ also paid for the sins of those who lived before the cross as well as those since the cross. Sinners who were saved under the Old Testament were saved under the atoning work of Jesus in the New Testament. In this way God was being entirely fair even though He did not punish those who sinned under the Old Covenant. For He was looking forward to the time when Christ would come and take away those sins. And now in these days also He can receive sinners in the same way, because Jesus took away their sins ([CP Ac 17:30](#)). This teaches us that in time past before full knowledge of God came through our Lord Jesus Christ, God overlooked human ignorance of Himself and much of man's sin, but now that He has been completely revealed in Christ He will no longer overlook anyone's sin. He commands that everyone now has to repent of their sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for their salvation.

He 9:1-26 teaches that the Most Holy Place in the earthly tabernacle where the high priest entered into once a year bearing the blood of the sin offerings represents God's throne in heaven where Christ has entered into after His death on the cross bearing His own blood to make atonement for sinners. The Mercy Seat on which the high priest sprinkled the blood emphasises that the forgiveness of sins is possible only by God's grace and mercy, not because of any works we have done, but through God's propitiatory gift to us – Jesus Christ, who was the true Mercy Seat (CP Ro 3:25; 1Jn 2:2). Propitiatory gift means that Christ Himself was the price God required to pay for the removal of sins.

Finally, let us look at one last type before closing this study – the Old Testament sabbath days. The Old Testament sabbaths were a shadow or type, of which the New Testament antitype is fulfilled in Christ (CP Col 2:16-17). The Old Testament sabbath was instituted by God for the Israelites as a memorial of their deliverance from slavery in Egypt under Pharaoh. It was a day of rest; a cessation from labour (CP De 5:12-15). The example for the sabbath rest was set by God when He ceased from His labour after completing His work of creation on the seventh day (CP Gen 2:1-3; Ex 20:8-11).

In the New Testament, *sabbath* is used only of an eternal rest with God (CP He 4:9). “Rest” here is **sabbatismos** the root of sabbath. According to “**Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible**” it means the repose of Christianity (as a type of heaven):- rest. This is the rest that God promised to the Israelites in the land of Canaan, the Promised Land, but God would not let that generation of the Israelites enter into His rest because of their unbelief and disobedience (CP He 3:7-4:10). We learn in these scriptures that although God’s rest in the Old Testament remains in the sphere of promise, it is fulfilled for New Testament Christians by faith in Christ (CP He 12:22-24). Christ gives rest to all who come to Him (CP Mt 11:28-30). The rest that Christ gives may be viewed as both a present possession, and a future blessing - the eternal rest that is in God, which is promised in He 4:9-11 for all who believe in Christ after the toils and trials of life on Earth are ended, in contrast to the Old Testament day of rest every seventh day for the Israelites (CP He 4:9-11).

There are still many other types to be found in scripture, but these will suffice for the purpose of this study. Readers are encouraged to search the scriptures for themselves. It will be a rewarding study for those who do.

ADDENDUM

We need to be reminded here that in the absence of exegetical controls or guidelines the whole of the Old Testament could be seen as a book of anticipatory pictures of the person and the work of Christ, when

in fact much of it is literal. Nonetheless there are numerous writings by Christians in the contemporary church which typify the person and the work of Christ in every book in the Old Testament without any scripture support in the New Testament whatever. Some of these types have been noted in the main part of this study but there are many, many more. We will look at one of them here: Song of Solomon. It is probably the most popular Old Testament type expounded in the contemporary church without any scripture support in the New Testament. Let us read the complete book (CP Song 1-8).

A great many Christians in the contemporary church see in this book the Old Testament type of the love relationship between Christ and His bride – the church – in the New Testament. They claim the Shulamite maiden represents the bride – the church, and her beloved, who they claim is Solomon, represents Jesus, yet there is absolutely no scripture support for this view whatever in the New Testament. In fact, in the whole of the New Testament there is not even one quotation from this Old Testament book. Furthermore, as documented in the main part of this study, the church is not even the bride of Christ, as scriptures unequivocally attest, so to teach that it is, is plainly unscriptural, and grossly irresponsible.

Song of Solomon is purely a literal teaching. It concerns Solomon wanting to make the Shulamite maiden his queen, but she was already pledged to another and remained faithful to his love throughout her stay with Solomon. She eventually returned home with her beloved as 7:10 - 8:14 clearly teaches. The purpose of Song of Solomon is not to show us the love relationship between Christ and the church by a writing of mystical meanings, but to teach us lessons which inspire virtue and fidelity. To even suggest that Christ is referred to here brings Him to the level of a seducer and puts words of coarse, unrefined flattery on His lips.

It is certain that not everyone will agree entirely with all that is expressed here and the author respects everyone’s right to disagree, but once again, let us do so in love. However, the fact remains that even if Solomon was the Shulamite maiden’s beloved, nowhere in scripture is it taught that Solomon was a type of Christ anyway. As stated earlier in this study, searching for hidden meanings in every passage of scripture and stressing their typical teachings without supporting scripture clouds the literal teaching and soundness of many Bible truths. Everything in scripture intended as a divine type is confirmed by at least two or three plain statements somewhere else in scripture. The only authority for types and the application of them is scripture itself.