

Types and Shadows

1

A Tapestry of Types

This lesson kicks off a new module, a series of ten lessons that examine the rich tapestry of types in the Bible. By now you would appreciate that the expression, “The Bible is an extraordinary book,” is far more than a mere cliché. Its unity of purpose and message is unrivalled for a book compiled over a period of sixteen centuries, and even its two main divisions – the Old Testament and the New Testament – are bound together with threads of interdependent meaning.

In **1 Corinthians 10:11**, Paul writes to New Testament Christians and describes their connection with the people of Old Testament times. The *New King James Version* translates Paul’s words in this way:

“Now all these things happened to [Old Testament Israel] as examples, and they were written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages have come.”

Just as Jesus taught by parables (a natural story with a spiritual meaning), so God has woven all that happened to Israel in the Old Testament into a large parable to teach us spiritual truths. The New Testament interprets and fulfills all that is spoken of in the Old Testament.

The *Amplified Bible* sheds further light on **1 Corinthians 10:11**:

“Now these things befell them *by way of a figure* – as an example and warning [to us]; they were written to admonish and fit us for right action by good instruction...”

What happened to the people of the Old Testament happened “by way of a figure.” Exactly what this means is the subject of this lesson, in particular, and this module as a whole.

▶ **A Tapestry of Types** ◀

The Tabernacle of Moses

The Tabernacle of David

The Sacrificial System

The Restoration of the Temple

The Gates of Jerusalem

The Feasts of Israel

Two Mountains

The High Priest

The Torn Veil

Read Matthew 5:17-18

The New Testament is not the *end* of the Old Testament, in the sense of the abolishing of it, but rather the *fulfillment* of the Old Testament. As we saw in **ES101-02**:

- The New Testament is in the Old Testament *concealed*
- The Old Testament is in the New Testament *revealed*

In **Romans 16:25-26**, Paul speaks of “the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God.” Concealed within the pages of the Old Testament was a mystery hidden even to the prophets who penned its words, for they “searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow” (**1 Peter 1:10-11**).

This concealing and revealing of the mystery of God’s plan of salvation is what types and shadows are all about. God has used every possible means to illustrate the truths of the Gospel. Like multifaceted diamonds, these concealed treasures, once dug up, shine with “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ” (**2 Corinthians 4:6**).

Read Romans 15:4

What is a Type? And What is a Shadow?

While it’s not our purpose to explore the more academic study of what is called “typology,”* it’s important to our study of God’s Word to understand exactly what is meant by some words commonly used by Bible scholars.

Defining “type”

The word “type” is taken directly from Paul’s original Greek wording in **1 Corinthians 10:11**. The word translated “examples” by the *New King James Version* and “ensamples” by the *King James Version*, is the Greek word *tupos*, which literally means “type.” This is reflected in Young’s Literal Translation, which renders Paul’s words as:

“And all these things as *types* did happen to those persons...”

The word “type” simply means “that which prefigures the coming reality.” We see an example of this in **Zechariah 3:8**, where the prophet declares:

“Listen, O high priest Joshua and your associates seated before you, *who are men symbolic of things to come*: I am going to bring my servant, the Branch.”

In Zechariah’s time, the high priest Joshua was a literal man. Yet he was also “symbolic of things to come.” And Zechariah then interprets exactly what Joshua

* Typology is a method of interpreting some parts of Scripture by seeing a pattern represented in a person, event or ceremony that allegorizes and foreshadows a later reality.

was symbolic of: “my servant, the Branch” – another name for the Messiah and itself a rich allegory (see **Isaiah 11:1; Jeremiah 23:5; 33:15; Zechariah 6:12**).

The *Believer’s Study Bible* provides this definition of the word “type”:

“A biblical type is a person or incident which carries a prophetic significance beyond itself.”¹

The *Bible Knowledge Commentary* offers this description:

“A type may be defined as an exceptional Old Testament reality which was specially ordained by God effectively to prefigure a single New Testament redemptive truth.”²

Let’s list the three elements of this definition of what a “type” is:

- An exceptional Old Testament reality
- Specially ordained by God
- To prefigure a single New Testament redemptive truth

The Bible is rich in such types – New Testament redemptive truths that are pre-figured in Old Testament history.

“Types are pictures, object-lessons, by which God taught His people concerning His grace and saving power. The Mosaic system* was a sort of kindergarten in which God’s people were trained in divine things, by which also they were led to look for better things to come.”³

Another writer builds on this picture of “the divine kindergarten”:

“God in the types of the last dispensation was teaching His children their letters. In this dispensation He is teaching them to put the letters together, and they find that the letters, arrange them as they will, spell Christ, and nothing but Christ.”⁴

Defining “shadow”

But what of this word “shadow”? What does it mean and how does it relate to the word “type”? Let’s take a look at one verse where Paul uses the word “shadow.”

Read Colossians 2:16-17

The Message words Paul’s admonition thus:

“So don’t put up with anyone pressuring you in details of diet, worship services, or holy days. *All those things are mere shadows cast before what was to come; the substance is Christ.*”

Again, the *New Living Translation* declares:

“So don’t let anyone condemn you for what you eat or drink, or for not celebrating certain holy days or new-moon ceremonies or Sabbaths. *For these*

* The term “Mosaic system” means “the system of Moses,” which embraces the ritual and sacrificial system of the Law.

rules were only shadows of the real thing, Christ himself.”

Paul calls the Old Testament law “a shadow of the things that were to come” (NIV), having “at most only a symbolic value” (NTME). According to *Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, the term “shadow,” as Paul uses it here, means:

“An image cast by an object and representing the form of that object.”⁵

When backlit by the sun, an object will cast a long shadow. When you look at that shadow you can see the basic form of the object, yet the shadow only points to the object. It is not the object itself. In the same way, it can be said that the Christ of the New Testament casts a long shadow across Old Testament history, revealing himself in countless prophetic images (read [John 5:39](#)).

Read Hebrews 8:5

Read Hebrews 10:1

There is one more term that should be explained before we look more closely at types in the Bible, and that is the word “antitype,” which simply means that which fulfils the type. While this word may sound like a purely academic term, it is in fact drawn from the original Greek used in [Hebrews 9:23-24](#), which declares:

“It was necessary, then, for the *copies* of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a *copy* of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God’s presence.”

The word translated “copy” is *antitupos*, literally “antitype.” Although modern usage of the prefix “anti-” would make this word mean “the opposite of the type,” it doesn’t actually mean this. The Greek sense of this word has the meaning of “answering to the type,” or “fulfilling the type.”

Type and antitype go together in a hand-in-glove kind of relationship. You cannot have one without the other. The type prefigures the antitype, and the antitype fulfils the type.

Examples of Types

There are three main kinds of types that can be found in Scripture:

Personal types

The lives and experiences of many people in the Old Testament illustrate a redemptive truth in the New Testament. Examples include:

- **Adam** – The apostle Paul speaks of Adam as “the figure of him who was to come” ([Romans 5:14-19](#)). Adam is a type of Christ in that through his one action the entire race of humanity was affected. Both Adam and Christ were representative men, to the point that Paul calls Christ “the

last Adam” (1 **Corinthians 15:45-49**). Yet one is marked by disobedience and the other by obedience. Whereas Adam is the root of sin and death, Christ is the root of righteousness and life.

- **Cain and Abel** – These two brothers are types of the two enduring streams of humanity, those who reject the provisions of God’s salvation and those who accept them (**Hebrews 11:4; 1 John 3:12-13; Jude 11**).
- **Melchizedek** – The priestly ministry of this enigmatic figure is given as a pre-picture of Christ’s priestly ministry (**Genesis 14:18-20; Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 5-8**).
- **Isaac** – His rescue from death is given as a type of Christ’s resurrection (**Hebrews 11:17-19**).
- **Joseph** – In his sufferings, he was a type of Christ’s suffering. He was hated without a cause (**Genesis 37:4,8; John 15:25**), ridiculed (**Genesis 37:19; Luke 22:63**), plotted against (**Genesis 37:20; John 11:53**), sold for silver (**Genesis 37:28; Matthew 26:14-16**), but eventually exalted to the highest position (**Genesis 41:41-43; Philippians 2:9-11**).
- **Moses** – His prophetic ministry is typical of Christ’s prophetic ministry (**Deuteronomy 18:15-18; Hebrews 3:5-6**).
- **David** – As a king and the “anointed one,” he was a prefigure of Christ’s kingly anointing (**2 Samuel 7:1-17; Mark 11:10; Revelation 5:5; 22:16**).
- **Jonah** – His experience inside the great fish prefigured Christ’s burial and resurrection (**Jonah 1:17; Matthew 12:40; 16:4; Luke 11:29**).

As an example of how Paul drew on Old Testament types to illustrate New Testament truths, take a look at this passage:

Read Galatians 4:22-26

In this one passage, Paul used multiple types: Hagar vs Sarah, Ishmael vs Isaac, Sinai vs Zion, natural Jerusalem vs New Jerusalem.

Historical types

Many of the historical events in the Old Testament foreshadow the reality of life in Christ. Some examples include:

- **Creation** – Just as God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light (**Genesis 1:3**), so God now shines the light of revelation into our hearts (**2 Corinthians 4:6**).
- **The Flood** – Noah’s obedience and his rescue from an ungodly world through the waters of the Flood picture our own experience in water baptism (**1 Peter 3:20-21**).

- **The Passover** – Israel’s deliverance from Egypt is rich in allegory upon which the New Testament writers draw frequently (**1 Corinthians 5:7; John 1:29; 1 Peter 1:18-19**).
- **The Red Sea and the Pillar of Cloud** – The experience of Israel passing through the Red Sea is provided as another picture of water baptism (**1 Corinthians 10:1-2**).

Ritual types

The Old Testament also contains many rituals, prescribed by the Law, that illustrate the reality of our salvation in Christ. Examples include the sacrifices, the priesthood, the tabernacle and its furniture, all of which we will examine in greater detail later in this module.

Principles of Interpretation

As with all aspects of biblical study, it is important to apply principles of interpretation to the study of types and shadows in Scripture. Without these principles as guidelines, there can be a danger in carrying types and shadows to an extreme – focusing on the *metaphoric* interpretation of Scripture while neglecting its *literal* interpretation.

In Scripture, there can at times be multiple levels of meaning in an historical story, but the anchor for any metaphoric interpretation must be the literal sense of that verse. For example, one might study to see how Joseph is a type of Christ, but this second level of meaning should not overshadow the actual experiences of Joseph, the man – what he went through, his reactions to circumstances, and what we can learn from his example.

Just how much of the Old Testament can be regarded as typical (i.e. made of types and shadows)? This is not an easy question to answer, but two extremes should be avoided:

Over-allegorization

Some read into every trivial event a spiritual meaning. Thus the fact that Jacob’s flock was speckled (**Genesis 30:32-43**) holds a mystical significance or that the number of fish caught after the resurrection – 153 (**John 21:11**) – actually represents a hidden meaning. But this detracts from the simple historical value of the narrative. The goats were speckled because that’s what Jacob chose and the fish numbered 153 simply because that was the number they caught!

Under-allegorization

The opposite extreme is to underestimate the proliferation of types and shadows that populate the Old Testament. In the words of Professor Moses Stuart:

“Just so much of the Old Testament is to be accounted typical as the New Testament affirms to be so, and no more.”⁶

Yet by limiting the number of types solely to those mentioned by New Testament writers, one severely curbs the richness of types and shadows found elsewhere in the Old Testament. The *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* explains:

“This opinion assumes that the New Testament writers have exhausted the types of the Old Testament, while the fact is that those found in the later Scripture are but samples taken from the storehouse where many more are found. If they are not, then nothing is more arbitrary than the New Testament use of types, for there is nothing to distinguish them from a multitude of others of the same class.”⁷

There are, however, some simple rules that can act as guidelines in the study of types and shadows in Scripture:

Rule #1: “Do not read meaning *into* Scripture, but draw meaning *from* Scripture.” We should never force our meaning onto an Old Testament type but rather allow it to shed light on the New Testament reality.

Rule #2: “Always use Scripture to interpret Scripture.” An example of this is [Revelation 12:3](#), which describes “an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his head.” Without using the principle of Scripture interpreting Scripture, any fanciful interpretation could be made (a person once suggested that the “red dragon” was Red China). Yet Scripture itself interprets exactly what the dragon is (see [Revelation 12:9](#)).

Rule #3: “Give proper attention to the historical sense of the type.” You should take particular notice of its symbolic and redemptive significance to Old Testament believers. For example, even though the Passover was a type fulfilled in Christ, it was also an event for the people of Israel that meant, quite literally, the angel of death “passing over” their homes.

Rule #4: “Identify the *main* point or points of resemblance between the type and its antitype.” Don’t try to press the interpretation of the type beyond these points. For example, the life of Joseph has multiple points that correspond with the life of Jesus, yet we don’t need to work out what the camels represented and why they were “loaded with spices, balm and myrrh” ([Genesis 37:25](#)).

Rule #5: “Always interpret a type in the light of New Testament truth. Never try to establish a doctrine on a type.” For this reason, it is best to become well-acquainted with the types and shadows already explained in New Testament writings before you begin to explore the other types and shadows that may be found in the Old Testament.

Deep Things

In [Hebrews 5:11-12](#), the writer expresses a measure of exasperation with his readers. After beginning to speak of Melchizedek as a type of Christ, he writes:

“We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s word all over again. You need milk, not solid food!”

What we will be studying in this module may seem to be like “solid food,” yet the so-called deep things of God are simply a deepening of our understanding of the simplicity of the truth of the Gospel. This is the sole purpose of types and shadows in Scripture. There is no new truth outside the parameters of the Gospel. There is only a further revelation in the wonder of what God has already done for us. The Gospel is simple, but has incredible depths yet to be plumbed.

In this module, we will be plumbing more of the depths of the Gospel, using many of main types and shadows of the Old Testament as our plumbline. Our goal is not intellectual knowledge, but a deeper understanding of Christ. After all, each type and shadow ultimately points to him.

- ¹ *Believer’s Study Bible*, excerpted from QuickVerse 5.1, Deluxe Edition.
- ² *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, excerpted from QuickVerse 5.1, Deluxe Edition.
- ³ *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, excerpted from QuickVerse 5.1, Deluxe Edition.
- ⁴ *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, excerpted from QuickVerse 5.1, Deluxe Edition.
- ⁵ *Unger’s Bible Dictionary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1977), p.1001.
- ⁶ *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, excerpted from QuickVerse 5.1, Deluxe Edition.
- ⁷ *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, excerpted from QuickVerse 5.1, Deluxe Edition.

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