

How To Interpret Types, Part Two

“The Old Testament can well be called the kindergarten of the Bible.

Intricate doctrines, abstract truths, and metaphysical concepts involved in the story of redemption as set forth in the New Testament are broken down in the Old and laid out in pieces. Someone has said that the study of types is a study of Christ in parts” (Dr. Charles H. Stevens. *The Wilderness Journey*, Scripture Truth, 11).

Types have been called “picture prophecies” because types are a kind of prophecy.

1. Types prefigure coming reality while prophecies verbally describe the future.
2. Types are expressed in events, persons, and acts while prophecies are expressed in words. “In the Old, we have the portrait; in the New we have the Person” (Stevens, 12).
3. For example, the brazen serpent (Numbers 21:9) was a picture prophecy or type of Christ’s death. Isaiah 53 is a verbal prophecy of Christ’s death. Both are predictive. Prophecy is verbally predictive. Types are typically predictive. “Typology is but the handmaiden of theology. Typology is the OT visual aid to the NT doctrines” (Stevens, 12).

What is a Type?

Dwight Pentecost defines a type: “A type is an institution, historical event or person, *ordained by God*, which effectively prefigures some truth connected with Christianity” (Pentecost, *Things To Come*, page 51).

1. An illustration looks back, such as the allegory in Galatians 4:24.
2. A type looks forward. “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). 29 times in Revelation is Christ called “Lamb.” “Types were signposts pointing toward persons, events, or things yet to come” (Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, 173).

How do we interpret a type?

A. There must be a resemblance between the type and the antitype. But there must be more than a resemblance.

B. There must be a historical reality (Hebrew 8:5; 9:23-24).

C. There must be a prefiguring. Illustrations look back: Elijah (James 5:17). Types look forward. Allegorical interpretation looks behind.

Allegorical interpretation is not ordained nor preordained by God but comes from the imagination of the interpreter: “A fitting example of the wolf dwelling with the lamb is seen in the change that came over the vicious persecutor Saul of Tarsus, who was a wolf ravaging and destroying, but who was so transformed by the Gospel of Christ that he became a lamb. After his conversion he lost his hatred for the Christians, and became instead their humble friend, confidant, defender” (Isa. 11:6). (Loraine Boettner, “Postmillennialism,” in *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views*, ed. Robert G. Clouse (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1977, 90).

D. *There must be a heightening of truth.* “The antitypes were on a higher plane than the types” (Zuck, 174).

1. Melchizedek is a type of Christ in Hebrews 6:20. Christ is superior to Melchizedek as a priest and king.
2. The Passover lamb is a type of Christ in 1 Cor 5:7 but Christ’s redemptive work is greater than the passover lamb.

E. *There must be divine design.* Colossians 2:16-17 shows divine design. The waving of the sheaf of firstfruits in Leviticus 23:11 is made a type of Christ in 1 Cor 15:23. Divine design is seen in the Feast of Pentecost.

F. *There must be a designation of a type in the NT.* “Scripture must in some way indicate that an item is typical” (Zuck, 176).

1. The Wilderness Wanderings is a Type (1Corinthians 10:1-11). Every puddle in the Wilderness does not typify the baptism.

The Manna was a type (John 6:32-35). The smitten Rock does typify Christ (1 Cor 10:4).

2. The Tabernacle is a Type (Hebrews 8:5). Every nut, bolt, socket, and board of the Tabernacle does not typify Christ. The rent veil typifies Christ (Hebrews 9:8; 10:19-20).