

3. PREACHING CHRIST FROM HIS PICTURES

In the last lecture we saw how the Old Testament predicted Christ's person and work with prophetic *words*. In this lecture we will see how the Old Testament predicted Christ's person and work with prophetic *pictures*. These prophetic pictures are sometimes called "types," the study of them is called "typology," and the fulfillments are called "anti-types" (*lit.* in place of the types). **A type is a real person, place, object, or event that God ordained to act as a predictive pattern or resemblance of Christ's person and work.** Let's unpack that a little:

- **A type is a real person, place, object or event:** it is true, real, and factual
- **That God ordained:** it does not resemble Christ's person or work by mere coincidence but by divine plan
- **To act as a predictive pattern or resemblance:** the same truth is found in the picture and the fulfilment
- **Of Christ's person and work:** the truth in the picture is enlarged, heightened, and clarified in the fulfilment

Example: The Passover lamb was a type of Christ. The Passover was real event. The truths of substitutionary sacrifice and redemption by blood were found in both the type and the antitype. These truths were enlarged, heightened, and clarified in the antitype. The antitype was the God-man – not just a lamb; and He redeemed from spiritual and eternal bondage – not just physical and temporary bondage.

With that preliminary understanding of typology, let us now consider a number of questions to help us identify types with confidence and interpret them in a way that extracts their riches while also honoring Scripture.

I. THE PICTURE

First, we want to ask some questions about the type itself.

Question 1: Is the type real?

Unlike an allegory, which may be fictional (e.g. Pilgrim's Progress), a type is always a real someone or something.

Question 2: Is the type a person, a place, an object, an event, an office, an action, or an institution?

There are various kinds of type in the Old Testament:

- **Typical Persons:** Adam, as a representative man, was a type of Christ (Rom. 5:19).
- **Typical Places:** Jerusalem is a type of the church, and also of heaven (Gal. 4:25,26; Heb. 12:22; Rev. 21:2).
- **Typical Objects:** The tabernacle was a type of God's dwelling with men through Christ (John 1:14; Heb. 9:8-9).
- **Typical Events:** Noah's flood typified the sudden destruction of the world yet to come at the end (Gen. 6-8; Matt. 24:37-39).
- **Typical Offices:** The prophet, the priest, and the king were all anointed with oil, and typified Christ who was anointed with the Holy Spirit to be the greatest prophet (Acts 3:22), the greatest priest (Heb. 3:1), and the greatest king (Rev. 7:14).
- **Typical Actions:** The sprinkling of blood on the mercy-seat typified the sacrificial death of Christ (Lev. 16:9,10; Heb. 9:11, 12).
- **Typical Institutions:** The Feast of the Firstfruits, in which the first produce was offered to God as a token of the full crop to follow (Lev. 23:10), was a type of the early influx of the Jews into the church of Christ (Rom. 11:16), and also of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus as God's pledge of the general resurrection (I Cor. 15:20, 23).

Question 3: Is the type explicit or implicit?

As we have seen above, some types are explicit; they are expressly identified as such in the New Testament. Other types are implicit; not explicitly identified as types but may be inferred to be such. Some Bible teachers deny this and argue that the only legitimate types are those the Bible explicitly identifies as such. I want to give five arguments against this minimizing of biblical types:

- Typology is prophecy in pictures, yet no one limits Old Testament prophecy to only what the New Testament explicitly says is a prophecy.

- Paul rebuked the Hebrews for their slowness in understanding the typology of Melchisedec, yet until then Melchisedec had not been explicitly identified as a type (Heb. 5:10-14).
- The Bible does not indicate that the explicit types are the only types, but rather presents them as sample or specimen types.
- Limiting ourselves only to explicit types would mean that while minor characters such as Melchizedek and Jonah are types (because identified as such in the New Testament), major biblical personalities such as Joseph and Joshua are not.
- The object of the types, which was to prepare God's people for the Gospel dispensation, could not have been adequately accomplished if the types were limited only to the very few that were explicitly identified as such.

If we use explicit types as examples or specimens, we can identify features, principles and rules to guide the identification and interpretation of implicit types and their antitypes.

Examples: The explicit identification of Moses as a type of Christ in his role as God's appointed mediator and leader of Israel, implies the identification of Joshua as a type of Christ in his similar role as God's appointed mediator and leader of Israel.

Also, Scripture refers to the Old Covenant institutions in general as "a shadow of good things to come" (Heb. 10:1). It does not explicitly mention every single item in the Old Covenant (e.g. the shewbread, the golden candlestick, etc). However, the general explicit identification covers the particulars, and so implies and warrants typology in the specifics.

Question 4: Does the type lie in the future?

The type might be a future event, something still to happen and that will act as a stepping-stone for greater and even more distant things.

Example: Isaiah uses the forthcoming destruction of Edom as a type of the ultimate judgment of all God's enemies (Isa. 34). He also used Israel's future restoration after Babylonian exile as a type of a far greater restoration of spiritual blessings to the world (Isa. 45:17, 22).

Question 5: How would you describe the type?

Having identified someone or something as a type, it is helpful to spend time studying and meditating upon it to better picture it and describe it in any lessons or sermons we may give. Spend time in visualizing and imagining the type so that you can describe it in brief, vivid, simple, modern words. Ask and answer these questions: What size? What texture? What smell? What sounds? What taste? What colors? What position? What value? What is the historical, geographical, and theological background and context?

II. THE PRINCIPLES

So, we have identified the type and described it. We then ask, "What were the essential theological truths contained in the type?" Here are the questions to help us explore this vital issue.

Question 1: What was the type designed to teach the original audience?

One of the most common mistakes in typology is to immediately fast forward to the antitype (the fulfillment) to help us understand the type. However, we must remember that the original audience did not have the antitype to help them! We must *initially* try to consider the type in isolation from later revelation.

We can discern the essential truths originally contained in each type by asking, "What was this type designed to teach the original audience in the original setting?" This is not asking what the original audience actually learned. It is asking what it was God intended them to learn and experience. Also, this is not asking, at this stage, what of the future was seen in the type. It is simply asking what was God's original teaching purpose, apart from any future message. We must try to take the point of view of the original hearers and ask how the type was designed to minister to their needs and edify their souls.

Example: The Passover taught the original Israelites the following essential truths: (i) God's anger against sin, (ii) God's anger can be turned away by the sacrificial blood of a perfect substitute, (iii) God grants safety only to those who are "under" the blood, (iv) God's salvation redeems from bondage.

Many today are skeptical about how much the original audience grasped of the original meaning of the types. However, there are five factors to bear in mind when coming to conclusions in this area:

First, there is *the help of previous revelation*. We must not consider the types in isolation from previous revelation. The types were given against a background of accumulating biblical truth.

Second, *consider the assistance of accompanying revelation*. Though there is little in the way of direct explanation of the types by the patriarchs or prophets, we ought not to conclude that there was none. Just because it was not recorded does not mean God did not give it. There was much divine instruction not recorded in Scripture (John 20:30; 21:25). Knowing what we do about God's mercy and wisdom, it would be reasonable to infer that many types were accompanied by explanations, though they are not recorded for us in Scripture.

Third, *the Old Testament believer's Eastern mindset was very suited to typology*. We in the West are so used to oral and written teaching from an early age that it is hard for us to imagine how the Israelites could learn through other means as well. However, the Eastern mind with its more contemplative traits and reflective nature was especially suited to the intelligent use of pictures and symbols. In an important paragraph, Poythress writes:

We in the West are not very much at ease with symbolism ourselves. We live in an industrialized society dominated by scientific and technological forms of knowledge. Such knowledge minimizes the play of metaphors and the personal depth dimensions of human living. For many people "real" truth means technological truth, that is, truth swept free of metaphor and symbolism...I am convinced that God does not share our general cultural aversion to metaphors and symbols. He wrote the Old Testament, which contains a good deal of poetry and many uses of metaphor. Jesus spoke in parables, which are a kind of extended metaphor. Godly Israelites of Old Testament times were able to appreciate His language, whereas we have a hard time with it. We must adapt to the fact that symbols and metaphors can speak truly and powerfully without speaking with pedantic scientific precision. A symbol may suggest a deep truth or even a cluster of related truths without blurring everything out in plain talk and making everything crystal clear...To appreciate a symbol, we must let our imaginations play a little, and ask what the symbol suggests. What does it bring to mind? What is it like? What does it remind me of in my own past experience? What does it allude to in other writings by the same author? We must explore all these questions, but endeavor to do so like an Israelite, not like a twentieth-century Westerner.¹

Fairbairn noted how Eastern people also tended to interpret acts of providence as revelations of God's mind, which is especially relevant when we remember that typological events were all *special* acts of providence. He wrote:

While they formed part of the current events of history, they were at the same time so singularly planned and adjusted, that the persons immediately concerned in them could scarcely overlook either their direct appointment by God, or their intimate connection with His plans and purposes of grace...[These special acts of providence] had quite enough to distinguish them from the more general events of providence, and were perfectly capable of ministering to the faith and the just expectations of the people of God.²

Fourth, they also had *the benefit of practice*. After Sinai, the Israelites were trained in the use of symbolic institutions from their youngest years, and so the ability to learn through the contemplation of symbols was strengthened.

Fifth, *the types met the needs of an infant church*. The coming of the Messiah was delayed for many centuries after the Fall so that God could prepare and train His "infant" church for Christ's coming. And the method of instruction best suited to their state of childhood was teaching through pictures of who and what was to come. By proceeding from the known to the unknown, from the familiar to the unfamiliar, the future was brought into their present. Through the types' resemblances to the higher future things, the realities of Christ's kingdom were made present to their faith, acting as very natural and easy stepping-stones. Henry Law puts this so graphically:

God in the types...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.³

The Old Testament record is much more than just "complicated ceremonies" and "Sunday School" stories. This is the earthly stage upon which God began to familiarize His infant people with the truths that would ultimately appear in the highest and brightest form in Christ. When seen in this light, every Old Testament person, place, object, and event is connected to Christ in one way or another, to some degree or other.

¹ Vern Poythress, *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1991), 38-39.

² Patrick Fairbairn, *Typology of Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1989), 196.

³ H Law, *Christ is All?*

Question 2: What light did later Old Testament revelation cast upon the type?

In the previous point we emphasized what essential truths God *designed* and *planned* the types to teach. This is not asserting that all, most, or even any of the original audience *fully* grasped the truths taught. It is most likely that at least some people usually did grasp some of the meaning of every type, and that most understood the essential meaning of the more common and simple types. However, it was not necessary for the teaching purpose to have been totally successful for something to be called “a type.” Much of Christ’s teaching, especially His teaching by parables and pictures, was not fully understood by His disciples at the time of teaching. However, their failure to understand everything did not disqualify the truths taught, nor render them null and void. Just as much of what Christ taught His disciples was not understood by them until some time later (John 12:16), so the teaching value of each Old Testament type increased with the progress of Old Testament revelation.

Even if we take a worst-case scenario, and assume for a moment that not one of the original audiences understood the original meaning of a particular type, does that render that type useless? No, because later Old Testament audiences, with the benefit of more revelation and more light would have understood the fundamental truths contained in the earlier types much better.

Example: The Israelites experience of substitutionary sacrifice at the first Passover would have been far better understood as a type of the ultimate substitutionary sacrifice by later generations of Israelites who had the additional benefit of the Levitical sacrifices.

As the Old Testament revelation unfolded, the prophets increasingly used previous Old Testament events and people as types. Something in the past might be prophesied as going to appear again in the future, even although there was nothing in the past event that of itself gave prophetic indication of the future.

Example: Many years after the appearance of Melchisedec, David predicted the ultimate King and Priest of God’s Church as the antitype of Melchisedec (Ps. 110:4).

As Fairbairn said, “The use of the known gave shape and form to the unknown.”⁴ The images of the past were stamped on the future. The prophets perceived the same essential elements of truth and principle in both the type and the future events, but also saw the future was to be a brighter and better exhibition of these same truths and principles.

Example: Isaiah promised captive Israel a new “exodus,” this time from Babylon (Isa. 43:2, 16, 19). Jeremiah promised a fuller revelation of the covenant of grace using the language and concepts of previous divine covenants (Jer. 31:33). Ezekiel promised the Messiah as a greater King David (Ezek. 34:23-24; 37:24-28).

As the prophets increasingly developed the existing types and added various new types, the Israelites would have increasingly learned how to interpret their Scriptures in a typological way. In doing so, they increasingly saw that the Old Testament history was pregnant with the seeds of a similar but better future.

Question 3: What were the inadequacies of the type?

There was an inbuilt inadequacy in the types, which was felt by those who truly understood them. Fairbairn said that the Old Covenant believers “were conscious of such inherent imperfections and defects adhering to the past, that they felt it required a more perfect future to render it altogether worthy of God, and fully adequate to the wants and necessities of His people.”⁵ As Poythress puts it: “The Old Testament thus reaches out in longing for Christ who brings an end to its frustrations and brings to accomplishment its promises.”⁶

Example: The Passover redeemed from physical bondage but not spiritual bondage; and the sacrifice had to be repeated every year. No lamb was every totally perfect, and even if such could have been found, any thinking person would know the impossibility of an irrational creature being an adequate substitute for his intelligent and rational life?

⁴ Fairbairn, 112

⁵ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁶ Poythress, 43.

III. THE PRACTICE

Question 1: How did an Old Testament believer use or relate to the type by faith?

A step often missed out in typological interpretation is the consideration of how the types were practically used – how did the more spiritual Old Testament believers relate to the types? What role and place did they have in their own life of faith? Let's consider two answers here:

First, some say that *the types saved those who grasped the essential truths contained in them*. If we take the most obvious Old Testament type, that of sacrifice, Patrick Fairbairn's position, and that of many modern commentators, is that as long as the offerer understood and believed the essential truths in the type, he presented an acceptable service to God, regardless of whether or not he saw in the type the future great antitype. For example, Fairbairn claimed:

[Old Testament sacrifice] had a meaning of its own, which it was possible for the ancient worshipper to understand, and, so understanding, to present through it an acceptable service to God, whether he might perceive or not the further respect it bore to a dying Savior.⁷

Fairbairn regarded the rite of expiatory sacrifice as a religious service which in and of itself “presented the sinner with the divinely appointed means of reconciliation and restored fellowship with God.”⁸ Fairbairn does allow for exceptional cases in which the more spiritual members of the Old Covenant were given special grace to rise to unusual degrees of knowledge, then says:

But yet, when we have admitted all this, it by no means follows that the people of God generally, under the Old Covenant, could attain to very definite views of the realities of the Gospel; nor does it furnish us with any reason for asserting that such views must ever of necessity have mingled with the service of an acceptable worshipper.⁹

Fairbairn's position is based upon the belief that to require the Old Testament believer to see both the fundamental truths in the type and the prophetic fulfillment of these truths would have been to ask too much of an infant believer. It was to ask him to discern the heavenly meaning amid the obscurities and imperfections of the earthly.

We must reject this position because it inevitably leads to ritualistic works-based religion and practical, though often unintentional, dispensationalism. It minimizes the revealing ability of the type, and the revealing work of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament believer's life.

Second, *the type only saved those who by faith saw the great future antitype*. While we agree with Fairbairn that the least New Testament believer was more mature than the greatest Old Testament believer (Matt. 11:11), we are compelled to say that no Old Testament believer was ever saved by understanding and trusting in merely the essential truths inherent in the types. While we agree with Fairbairn that “their acceptance as worshippers did not depend on the clearness of their discernment in regard to the person and work of Christ,”¹⁰ they must have had some discernment of Christ to be saved (John 14:6). Poythress argues along similar lines:

The shadow was not itself the reality, but a pointer to Christ who was the reality...And the shadow even brought the reality to bear on people in the Old Testament. As they looked ahead through the shadows, longing for something better, they took hold on the promises of God that He would send the Messiah. The promises were given not only verbally but also symbolically, through the very organization of the tabernacle and its sacrifices. In pictorial form God was saying, as it were, “Look at My provisions for you. This is how I redeem you and bring you to My presence. But look again, and you will see that it is all an earthly symbol of something better. Do not rely on it as if it were the end. Trust Me to save you fully when I fully accomplish My plans.” Israelites had genuine communion with God when they responded to what He was saying in the tabernacle. They trusted in the Messiah, without knowing all the details of how fulfillment would finally come. And so they were saved, and they received forgiveness, even before the Messiah came. The animal sacrifices in themselves did not bring forgiveness (Hebrews 10:1-4), but Christ did as He met with them through the symbolism of the sacrifices.¹¹

⁷ Fairbairn, 54.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 54-55.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 149.

¹¹ Poythress, 11.

In our sermons, we should pause and reflect on how Old Testament believers may have thought, felt, and responded to the types in faith, and how they may have experienced communion with Christ through them. This is not mere speculation. We have some guidance in the Psalms. However, in this area of experiential Old Testament faith, we should be suggestive rather than dogmatic, and try to provoke our hearers to deeper reflection and meditation.

Example: Instead of simply giving the rules and the regulations of the Passover, try to portray to your hearers the practical steps involved in the life of an ordinary believing Israelite. But more than that, suggest how he may have “seen” the great antitype by faith, and how he may have responded in psalms and prayers of praise, thanksgiving, and longing. Try to show the experiential side of Old Testament faith.

IV. THE PERFECTION

Having identified the type with all its essential principles, and all its imperfections and inadequacies, we now look for the anti-type, the perfect fulfillment of the type and all its essential principles

Question 1: What person, object, institution, etc., was the fulfillment of the type?

Is the antitype (the fulfillment of the type) explicit or implicit? Once we have located what we believe to be the antitype, there are a number of questions that will not only help confirm our decision, but will also help us to preach the perfection of the antitype.

Question 2: Are both the type and the antitype of the same moral quality?

The evil that opposed a type (e.g. Goliath opposing David) may have been a type of something similarly evil that would later oppose the antitype (e.g. the Devil opposing the Son of David). However evil actions are never types of Christ’s person and work. This allows us to discern when a biblical character is a type of Christ, and when he is not. It is not necessary to insist that if someone was a type of Christ at one time in their life, they were a type in all parts of their lives.

Example: Jonah was a type of Christ in his suffering, “death,” “burial,” and “resurrection,” and in his preaching of repentance, which turned many to God (Matt. 16:3-4). He was not a type in his disobedience to the divine call. Moses was not a type of Christ when he murdered the Egyptian. Samson was not a type of Christ when he indulged in immorality. Adam is a type of Christ in so far as he was a representative man whose actions affected all united to him. He was not a type in his sin or its consequences.

Question 3: What are the essential resemblances?

The foundation of typology is that as the spiritual needs of man are the same in both Testaments, and as God’s way of meeting those needs is the same, there must have been the same great truths presented in the Old and New Testaments – though presented in different ways. That is why the Old Testament institutions are called shadows of Gospel truths (Heb. 10:1; 8:5; Col. 2. 16). A shadow implies likeness and resemblance with what casts the shadow.

So we are looking for the same truths in both the type and the antitype. However, it is vital to distinguish the *mere external similarities* between the type and the antitype from *the essential truths* they share. An outward or superficial resemblance between two objects, persons, etc., in the Old and New Testaments does not produce a type/antitype relationship. For example, although Noah’s ark and Christ’s cross were both wooden, that does not in itself produce a type/antitype relationship. Neither does the fact that Abel’s name meant “emptiness” prove that he was a type of Christ’s humiliation. Similarly, the fact that various people in scripture are described as shepherds does not constitute them types of Christ. A focus on outward similarity, superficial resemblance, coincidental parallels, and accidental likenesses has often elevated unimportant likenesses and brought typology into disrepute.

We must learn to distinguish between the shell and the kernel. The shell of the Mosaic ritual was the outward rituals, and the kernel was the spiritual relations and truths they embodied and expressed. Typology is concerned with the kernel, the fundamental and momentous truths and principles taught through the types. Fairbairn remarks:

Where there are external similarities, these are not the main thing nor the thing that properly constituted the typical connection between them...The occasional outward coincidences between our Lord’s personal history and things in God’s earlier dispensations were the *signs* of a typical relationship rather than that relationship itself; a likeness merely on the surface, which gave indication of a deeper and more essential agreement.¹²

¹² Fairbairn, 166.

The degree of resemblance varies considerably. In some cases the type and antitype may have a wide and close correspondence. In other cases the connection was narrower and more general. In all cases there cannot be inconsistent or unconnected meanings.

Example: Peter tells us that the flood was a type of baptism (1 Peter 3:21). However, there was virtually no outward resemblance between them, as, obviously, Noah and his family were not literally baptized in the flood waters. The type lies in the essential resemblances. In so far as it destroyed the corrupt from the earth and saved the righteous for a new and better beginning, the flood is a type of baptism, as it brings the baptized person under the spiritual influences, which may also cleanse away corruption and give a new and better beginning (1 Peter 3:21).

Question 4: Does the type present the same truth in a simpler way?

For something to act as a stepping-stone to something greater, it had to be easier to reach. So the type contained the same truth as the antitype but in a simpler form, which was easier to understand.

For example, if a young child was presented with a full-scale detailed technical drawing of a plane, he would understand nothing. He might not even see the outline of the plane due to all the overwhelming detail. However, if the child was presented with a small-scale, simple, outline drawing of a plane, then at least he would be able to identify it. He would see the “big picture.” The child would also benefit from individual separate drawings of the most important parts.

This is why the Mosaic institutions are called the *rudiments* or elementary principles of religious truth and life (Col. 2:20; Gal. 4:3; 3:24). They were small-scale, simple, outline drawings of the big spiritual picture with its spiritual and heavenly dimensions. Many parts of the institutions also acted as individual separate drawings of the most important elements of salvation. Fairbairn writes:

A series of events considerably more grand and majestic could not have accomplished the object in view. They would have been too far removed from the common course of things, and would have been more fitted to gratify the curiosity and dazzle the imagination of those who witnessed or read of them, than to indoctrinate their minds with the fundamental truths and principles of God's spiritual economy.¹³

True religion is identical in both Old and New Testaments, but is presented in the Old Testament on a lower level through the familiar, the present, the physical and the earthly. It thus acted as a stepping-stone in preparing people for the future, the spiritual, and the heavenly, the higher.

Example: The Passover is a small-scale, simple, outline drawing of the person and work of Christ. It is easier to understand a spotless lamb than a sinless human nature. It is easier to understand a lamb's death than the death of the Son of God. It is easier to understand the deliverance from physical slavery than deliverance from spiritual bondage.

Question 5: Does the antitype present the same truth enlarged, clarified, and heightened?

When moving from type to antitype there must be a move from the lesser to the greater (Matt. 12:41-42); from the material to the spiritual; from the earthly to the heavenly. The antitype presents the same essential truths as the type, but:

- *Enlarged:* The truth, which existed in bud form in the type, comes to full flower under the antitype.
- *Clarified:* The truth, which previously was partially obscured in the shadows, is made clearer and plainer.
- *Heightened:* Although there may be an earthly or external element in the antitype, in general it will have a higher and more heavenly nature.

Example: In Hebrews 3-4 the Israelites' Canaan rest is compared to far greater rest of the believer. And the punishment of rebels is far greater than the loss of earthly rest.

V. THE PROGRESS

Question 1: What extra light does the New Testament shed on the type?

However much or little Old Testament readers understood the types, the New Testament reader can understand them much better with the benefit not only of more revelation but, above all, with the benefit of the coming of the great antitype – Jesus Christ. There are two extremes to avoid at this stage:

¹³ *Ibid.*, 179.

First we must avoid the extreme of *only in New Testament light*. Some scholars take the view that the types were shrouded in almost total darkness throughout the whole Old Testament and that it is only in the light of the New Testament that we can see any truth in the types. For example, Greidanus argues that very few of the types were originally understood as predictive by the original readers or even the writers, but only become so when viewed from the perspective of the New Testament. He writes: “Only in the light of New Testament fulfillment is the typological significance of an OT personage, event, or institution made clear... Typology is more a technique of a later writer who mines prior Scripture for similarities to God’s present activities.”¹⁴

On the basis of this, some scholars deny that typological interpretation is part of Scriptural exegesis. Exegesis, they say, has the task of discovering the meaning the author intended to convey by careful historical and linguistic investigation. Typology, they say, has to do with how these same texts were interpreted in the light of later events. For example, Greidanus argues that “whereas promises point forward to future fulfillment, typology generally moves in the opposite direction, from New Testament fulfillment to the past type.”¹⁵

Greidanus defends himself from the charge of reading meaning back into the Old Testament text, by saying that we are simply understanding the text in its full redemptive-historical context. And, also, though we discover the fuller meaning only retrospectively, it was always there from God’s perspective.

This however is going too far. We can agree with Greidanus that Old Testament believers did not see *all* that we see from our New Testament perspective. However, it is another thing entirely for scholars to say that, apart from a few exceptional types such as the Passover, Old Testament believers saw *nothing* predictive of Christ and the Gospel age in the types. If this was true, it is hard to account for the number of types in the Old Testament and the considerable proportion of Old Testament Scripture devoted to them.

Second, we must avoid the extreme of *no New Testament light*. While we reject the idea that only New Testament believers had light on the types, we must also reject the denial of New Testament light to help us understand the types. Some are of the view that we must not bring any New Testament knowledge into our consideration of the types, as the original readers did not have this. However, as long as you make clear that you are not saying the Old Testament church saw what only the New Testament church could see, there is no harm and much benefit in using the light of the New Testament to further illumine the Old Testament types. Poythress argues along similar lines in two places:

The law and the prophets were never intended to be the whole of God's communication to the world, but only the first half of it. If I am right in thinking that the New Testament completes the story that God began in the Old Testament, it is quite proper for me to look back now in the light of the full story and see what more I can learn from its first half.¹⁶

Having obtained a picture from the original historical circumstances, we are ready to extend the picture and fill it out by seeing how God continues His story and His revelation in the later prophets and in the New Testament. These further reflections may also help us to discriminate better between what is incidental and what is most central in our earlier reflection. We may sometimes correct earlier impressions when we hear more of the story.¹⁷

Example: The New Testament casts further light on the Passover and its antitype not only in the Gospel accounts of Christ’s sacrifice but also in 1 Corinthians 5:7-8, 1 Peter 1:19, and Revelation 5:6.

Question 2: What light do the types cast on the New Testament?

In addition to the New Testament casting light on the Old Testament types, the types also cast light on the New Testament. While Old Testament types taught Old Testament believers about the Messiah’s future person and work, God also designed them to teach New Testament believers lessons about Christ’s person and work – lessons that they could not learn from the New Testament alone.

¹⁴ Greidanus, 251.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 252

¹⁶ Poythress, xii.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 40.

Just as we can learn much about the person and work of Christ through Old Testament prophecies of Christ's suffering in the Psalms (Pss. 22; 69), which we cannot learn from the New Testament, there is much we can learn about the person and work of Christ through the Old Testament types, which we cannot learn from New Testament events alone.

Just as an old man still finds himself applying the lessons he learned in his earliest years, so the mature Church can draw lessons from those taught her in her infancy. Just as the latter perfects the earlier, the latter also needs to learn from the more simple and elementary lessons of the earlier. Though we have the great privilege of the fuller New Testament revelation, we are still creatures of sense living in an imperfect spiritual state. Therefore, it remains difficult for us to grasp heavenly and spiritual truth without the help of some outward physical exhibitions and illustrations of it, such as we have in the Old Testament types.

Example: Jonah's thoughts, feelings, and prayers as he descended into the darkest deeps as a result of his sin, shed much typological light on Christ's thoughts, feelings and prayers as He descended into the darkness of God's anger as a result of His people's sins (Jonah 2; Matt. 12:39-40)

Question 3: Does the type have more than one reference?

This question does not imply that a type has more than one meaning. We are not assigning a double sense to the words we interpreted in (I) and (II) above. The meaning of the words remains the same. The essential truths symbolized remain the same. However, the single meaning and single sense may refer to more than one antitype in Christ's kingdom. This is not an argument for a double-meaning but a double-reference. Neither does this warrant the application of a type to two or more contradictory or unconnected antitypes. For example, the Red Sea crossing is not a type of both atoning blood and the afflictions that come upon God's people. So, what do we mean by double-reference?

First, there are *multiple-person references*. Some ideas may be applied to both Christ and His Church. This is the consequence of Christ being the head of His body, of our prospects being bound up in His, and of each member of His body being conformed to the head.

Example: The anointings of the Old Testament prefigured both the work of Christ, and our service to Him. Like Him, we too, as Christians, have an anointing from God (2 Cor. 1: 21), function as prophets or "forth-tellers of God's Word" (1 Cor. 11:4,5), priests, and kings (cf. 1 Peter 2:9; Rev. 1:6).

Second, there are *multiple-time references*. As we have seen before, the same prophecy may refer to two future events – the one nearer and the other further away – an event in time and the other in eternity. Fairbairn explains this feature of prophecy.

There are prophecies which were not so much designed to foretell definite events, as to unfold great prospects and results, in respect to the manifestation of God's purposes of grace and truth toward men. . . . The very first prophecy ever uttered to fallen man, - the promise given of a seed through the woman which should bruise the head of the serpent, and that afterwards given to Abraham of a seed of blessing, may be fitly specified as illustrations of the principle; since in either case - though by virtue, not of a double sense, but of a wide and comprehensive import - a fulfillment from the first was constantly proceeding, while "the height and fullness" of the predicted good could only be reached in the redemption of Christ and the glories of His kingdom.¹⁸

As types are prophetic pictures we may expect similar multiple-time references in them.

Example: The tabernacle was a type of God's dwelling with men through Christ (cf. John 1:14; Heb. 9:8-9), but also of God's dwelling with men in heaven for all eternity (Rev. 21:3).

So, typology helps us interpret the future as well as the past. The future of the Christian Church is often described in terms that are borrowed from the Old Testament. It is largely "through the characters, ordinances, and events of the Old Covenant, not those of the New, that the things to come are shadowed forth to the eye of faith" (Matt. 19:28; Rev. 7:4-17; 12:14; 15:8).¹⁹ Typology therefore helps us not only to understand the past fulfillment of Scripture, but also to understand how prophetic Scriptures such as Daniel, Ezekiel, and Revelation will be fulfilled in the future.

¹⁸ Fairbairn, 134.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 44.

CONCLUSION

1. Preach Christ

My desire has been to provide a simple, step-by-step blueprint not only for interpreting the types, but for preaching them as well – specifically preaching Christ from them for the edification of God’s people. We want typological sermons to be much more than just a theological lecture in the past tense and in the third person! We want to preach the truth in a way that will change our hearers and bring them closer to the antitype. Greidanus challenges us:

Simply drawing a line to Christ is not preaching Christ. When one has drawn a line from the Old Testament text to Jesus of Nazareth, one should ask the question, “So what?” How does this line build up the congregation? Are they to admire the wonderful providence of God, or the intricate redemptive design of the Scriptures, or the ingenuity of the preacher? John Stott rightly insists, “The main objective of preaching is to expound Scripture so faithfully and relevantly that Jesus Christ is perceived in all his adequacy to meet human need.... The preacher’s purpose is more than to unveil Christ; it is to unveil him that people are drawn to come to him and receive him.”²⁰

Example: Preaching on the Passover should include calls to “Behold the lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world” (Jn. 1:29), exhortations to rejoice in Christ (1 Cor. 5:7-8) and to live for Christ (1 Cor. 6:20), and encouragement to look forward to worshipping the Lamb of God in glory (Rev. 5:12).

2. Preach the unity of Scripture

On the face of it, there appears to be significant differences between the Old and the New Testaments. So great are the seeming differences that for many their Bible only begins with Matthew 1:1. Typology helps us to revere and respect the whole Bible, even its earliest parts. Fairbairn says that, “The whole of the Old Testament will be found to rise in our esteem, in proportion as we understand and enter into its typological bearing.”²¹

It is the failure to understand typology that has led so many to conclude from the obvious external differences that the two Testaments contained two completely different religions. However, typology explains how even though there were external differences, there was still an essential and substantial underlying uniformity and unity.

Sometimes the differences between the two Testaments are so stressed and emphasized in Paul’s epistles that we might mistakenly conclude that two different religions were being presented and contrasted. However, as we have seen, Paul is usually addressing Judaizers who not only wanted to continue the types but also trusted in them, even when the antitype was come. Paul was not decrying the types, but rather their abuse in being continued and trusted in.

3. Preach (and sing) the Psalms

One of the reasons why we hear people say that “Christ is not in the Psalms” is because they have so little awareness or understanding of typology. The more you teach your people the Old Testament types, the more they will see Christ in the Psalms. When you do preach from the types, be sure to refer to relevant Psalms in your sermon and also to sing from related Psalms in that service of worship. Fairbairn also sees this connection between Typology and Psalm-singing.

How could such a book have come into existence, centuries before the Christian era, but for the fact that the Old and the New dispensations – however they may have differed in outward form, or in the ostensible nature of the transactions belonging to them – were founded on the same relations, and pervaded by the same essential truths and principles? No otherwise could the Book of Psalms have served as the great handbook of devotion to the members of both covenants. There the disciples of Moses and of Christ meet as on common ground – the one still readily and gratefully using the fervent utterances of faith and hope which the other had breathed forth ages before.²²

4. Preach the Song of Solomon

Obviously there is much debate over whether the Song of Solomon is a type, an allegory, an analogy, or whether it is to be taken just as a literal description of human love. However, as long as you are not of the view that it is a mere literal description of human love, I would hope that many of the principles in this lecture will help you to interpret the Song in a way that will edify God’s people, and help them to better understand it and experience it for themselves (see later chapter on “Preaching from Christ’s Poets”).

²⁰ Greidanus, 259.

²¹ Fairbairn, 177.

²² *Ibid.*, 75.

5. Preach humbly

Fairbairn concedes that while good biblical principles will help to remove many questions about what is a type, and what is the meaning of a type, it is not always possible to remove all dubiety and arrive at perfect precision and certainty.²³ As with prophecies, there will always be some room for debate in this related field of typology. However, the principles should prevent significant serious error in identification and interpretation of types and their antitypes.

When you cannot be certain if you have a type or not, consider preaching that portion of Scripture as an analogy, as an illustration of Christ's person and work, as something that prepared the way for Christ although perhaps it did not predict Christ.

Also, bear in mind the possibility that there may be analogies within a type. You may have something that is typological in its essential principles, and that is analogical in some incidentals. Care should be taken to distinguish what is typological and what is merely analogical.

6. Preach prayerfully

Typological exegesis requires much prayer because it is more shrouded in mystery than many parts of Scripture, because there are so few good commentaries on the types, and because there is so much room for abusing Scripture and exposing God's Word to ridicule. Let us beseech the Most High to teach us and guide us as we seek to be workmen, "that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15).

And pray for faith in these parts of God's Word. Our Western minds are drawn to scientific precision and logical certainty. These tendencies make us rather skeptical about the value of preaching from pictures, especially to highly educated congregations. However, the types make up a large part of Scripture and if we are to preach the whole counsel of God we must preach the types. And we must do so believing that God will bless our faithfulness to Him and His Word.

²³ *Ibid.*, 141.