



Introduction to Christ in the Old Testament

Do the Hebrew Scriptures contain specific and detailed prophecies and types about the person and work of the coming Messiah?

That question has also intrigued me from the earliest days after I gave my life to Jesus Christ and began to seriously study God's Word.

Nearly fifty years ago, I discovered the supreme joy of the two men walking with their unknown guest along the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus. That "stranger" said to them: "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Messiah (Christ) to suffer these things and to enter into His glory? And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures" (Luke 24:25-27). The two travelers invited Jesus into their home for a meal that evening. As He took the bread and blessed it, He began giving it to them, "And their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight" (v. 31). I pray that your response will be like mine and the two men when they asked one another "Were not our hearts burning within us when He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?" My desire is this will be a fresh new beginning of an intimate journey with our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Unity of the Message

When we study the Bible we should keep in mind its totality, its harmony, and its concept of a divine plan that is being fulfilled both in immediate historical context and in a final, climatic realization in the last days.

There is a messianic signature that runs through the Bible. James Orr in *The Problem of the Old Testament* also argued correctly for the unity of the message. "From Genesis to Revelation we feel that this book is in a real sense a unity. It is not a collection of fragments, but has, as we say, an organic character. It has one connected story to tell from beginning to end; we see something growing before our eyes. This is a plan, purpose, progress, the end folds back on the beginning, and, when the whole is finished, we feel that here again, as in primal creation, God has finished all His works, and behold, they are good" (p. 31-32).

Christ is the key to our understanding the Scriptures. The entire Bible finds its meaning and explanation in the redemption provided by Jesus Christ. It progressively unfolds the theme of redemption from Genesis to Revelation. Shadows, types and foregleams of the great doctrine of salvation by grace through faith in the death and resurrection of Christ are revealed from the opening pages. The meaning of any single passage of Scripture is always

opening pages. The meaning of any single passage of Scripture is always determined and governed by the larger context of redemption through Jesus Christ.

When Jesus Christ went to the cross, died for our sins, and rose from the dead, He provided eternal salvation for all who would accept Him by faith. Every individual in the Old Testament who was saved was saved by trusting in the provision that God would make when Christ came and died as their substitute. The ceremonies and sacrifices pointed to a future day when God would make sure all His promises in that one person. In the fullness of time we know that person was God's only Son, Jesus Christ. Those who were saved were saved by faith in the coming of His death as their sacrifice.

We need to read the Old Testament with the expectation that we will encounter Jesus Christ there. The Old Testament is Christocentric. Christ is predicted and anticipated in the Old and proclaimed in the New.

There is continuity between the two testaments. The New Testament is full of references to the Old. The Old lays a foundation for the New. Even a casual reading of the Scriptures reveals God's progressive revelation of the message of redemption that culminates in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Ultimately the Old must be read through the light of the New. The Old Testament reaches its fulfillment in the New. We can understand the Old Testament more clearly through the light of the New Testament.

Key to Interpretation

It is imperative that we first consider the teaching of the Old Testament in its historical and grammatical context. What was the author saying to his original audience and how did they understand the message? What we must not do is read into the Old Testament what was never intended by the Holy Spirit as the author of all Scripture. At the same time, we must not overlook the clear New Testament interpretation of the Old Testament passages.

We also need to keep in mind the institutions and ceremonies of the Old Testament were powerless to save the souls of men. They were devised as types of the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ. They pictured the work Christ would do in His death for our sins. Jesus is the one and only perfect priest who dealt with our sins in His perfect sacrifice of Himself. The Tabernacle and later the Temple typified the place and manner in which the LORD God met with His people and dealt with their need of a redeemer. Each of the sacrifices and offerings, feasts and festivals dealt with redemption of God's people and how they should live as redeemed people. Thus, the entire Bible is the story of God's redeeming love.

Just like on the road to Emmaus Jesus comes to our aid to help us understand the Word of God. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Romans 10:17). Our problem is in the heart, not the head. We have the evidence. It's all there. Jesus rose from the dead. He's alive! When we participate in the learning process He opens the eyes of our minds to recognize Him and causes our hearts to continue to burn within us. Even so, let our hearts burn with conviction of who You are and joyful submission to Your sovereignty, Lord Jesus!

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Later on the same day Jesus rose from the dead He told His disciples, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Again Luke tells us, "Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things"" (Luke 24:44-48). Now we are, too!

A Word about Types

Dr. John R. Sampey observed, "A type may properly be defined as a person, institution, or event in the old dispensation which was designed to prefigure a corresponding person, institution, or event in the new." In these devotions and meditations, we will keep our focus on the coming of Jesus Christ as the redeemer of lost mankind.

Here are some basics principles to keep in mind as we think through some of these great pictures of Christ in the Old Testament.

- In typology, the *physical* object or person is often used to represent a *spiritual* truth.
- Look for the consistent use of the specific symbol or type in the Old Testament. It must be an illustration of and consistent with New Testament truth. It cannot represent one thing in the Old and something unrelated in the New.
- Keep in mind that the Old Testament teaches the same truth as the New Testament. It is a fuller unfolding of the truth in the New.
- Limit the topic under consideration to the context of the Scripture passage. Don't expect the type to cover every subject of theology.
- Seek to discover the meaning of the details in the passage, but don't expect *every* detail to fit. Every *analogy*, by its very nature, falls short of the full *reality*. Don't force details to emerge from a passage that aren't there.
- Set aside the superficial speculative interpretations and look for the *basic* meaning of the symbol. What does the passage say, not what do you want it to say.
- Determine an accurate definition of any type or symbol by identifying *interpretational constants* that fit *all* the uses of that type in Scripture. For example, "lion" symbolizes power, whether applied to Satan as "a roaring lion" or to Christ as the "lion of the tribe of Judah."

Keep your heart tender toward God and humbly respect and submit to the teaching of His Word.

Like the apostle Paul: "I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead" (Philippians 3:8-11).

If you need help in becoming a Christian here is [A Free Gift for You](#).

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