

CHRISTOLOGY (9)

QUESTION #6 – What were the various O.T. pictures of Jesus Christ prior to His incarnation?

It needs to be clearly pointed out that the O.T. is filled with several types and pictures which anticipate the coming of Jesus Christ into the world as a human and also anticipate the entire scope of His work. Dr. Chafer writes: "...there was released sufficient foreshadowings of the incarnate Christ whereby a comprehensive understanding might have been gained respecting His parentage, His birth, His life, His death, His resurrection, and His second advent" (Vol. 5, p. 42).

In the O.T., there are two main sources of information which give us information about Christ:

Source #1 - There are the Old Testament types.

A type may be defined as "...a divinely purposed illustration of some truth" (*New Scofield Reference Bible, NASV*, p. 7). When types are used, they actually predict or picture someone or something that will happen in the future. They are just as inspired as direct statements and they are given by God in His Word to give us doctrinal instruction.

For example, "leaven" is used as a picture of one involved in sin (I Cor. 5:6-7). This type is given by God to predict what will happen in a N.T. church if the leaven is not removed. One must be very careful, when it comes to the subject of types, not to, as Dr. Chafer said, take off on "...mere flights of fancy" (Vol. 7, p. 309). Normally, when a type is truly biblical and legitimate, it will be so indicated in Scripture.

A passage such as I Corinthians 10:11 does make it very clear that as we move through the O.T., there will be legitimate types, examples or pictures which we are to understand and by which we are to be instructed.

When it comes to the subject of typology, two extremes need to be avoided:

- 1) Making a type out of everything. A person who does this is commonly referred to as a "hyper-typer."
- 2) Rejecting the legitimate biblical types. There are legitimate types in the Bible and we need to "rightly divide" them.

Now the type that is pictured most often in the O.T. is Jesus Christ. As Dr. Chafer said: "Christ is the outstanding antitype in all typology" (*Ibid.*, p. 309).

From several O.T. pictures, we can piece together much concerning the life and work of Jesus Christ. In fact, the information can be seen in the O.T. pictures. Again, we must always keep in mind that a true type will have scriptural authority and not just some individual's fanciful speculations. In the O.T., there are at least five different typological pictures of Jesus Christ—His person and work:

CHRISTOLOGY (10)

(Typological Picture #1) - There are typological people .

There are certain people who typologically picture Jesus Christ. One such biblical type is Adam (Rom. 5:14). In this text, Adam is a negative type of what Jesus Christ would positively accomplish. Another biblical type is Aaron and the Aaronic priesthood. It is very evident that the Aaronic priesthood in the O.T. pictures Christ's N.T. work (Heb. 5:4-6; 8:1-6).

(Typological Picture #2) - There are typological events .

One such event would be the clothing of Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:21). This is clearly an event which pictures what God will do for a sinner who comes to Christ (Rev. 19:8).

(Typological Picture #3) - There are typological items .

One very obvious type in this category would be the O.T. blood sacrifices. These blood sacrifices were practiced long before the Mosaic Law was given (Gen. 4:4; 22:7). In Leviticus, it is clearly taught that a blood sacrifice is necessary to make an atonement for sin (Lev. 17:11). Even the various types of animals used for the sacrifices can be seen to typify some part or portion of the work of Jesus Christ (i.e. Lamb—Jn 1:29 which speaks of a pure, submissive, substitutionary sacrifice (I Pet. 1:19; 2:21-23; Acts 8:32).

Dr. John Walvoord writes: "Taken as a whole the sacrifices point to the one sacrifice of Christ as forever putting away sin. They make the death of Christ essential to God's plan of salvation and speak of the most profound truths of biblical revelation" (*Jesus Christ Our Lord*, p. 73).

(Typological Picture #4) - There are typological institutions and ceremonies .

These two types are placed in one category because they are so similar. For example, the seven feasts of Jehovah, as given in Leviticus 23, were instituted as ceremonial feasts. Most of those feasts are directly connected to the New Testament work and program of Jesus Christ. The Passover Feast, for example, clearly typifies the safety found in the shed blood of Christ (I Cor. 5:7).

Dr. Walvoord accurately observes: "Taken as a whole, the typical ceremonies and institutions of the Old Testament have as their main theme the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ." (For those interested in further study of this matter, I highly recommend Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 5, pp. 43-44 and John Walvoord, *Jesus Christ Our Lord*, pp. 62-78.)

The various legitimate types in the Bible clearly establish that Jesus Christ was the most unique Person in all of history with a totally unique work to accomplish. Every part of His activity was a highly calculated, picture part of the program of God.

CHRISTOLOGY (11)

Source #2 - There are Old Testament prophecies.

There is no question that the major prophetic theme of all biblical prophecy is Jesus Christ ! Jesus Christ, Himself, made it very clear that there are many predictions of Him in the O.T. – Luke 24:27–“And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He (Jesus) explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.”

Josh McDowell says that “the Old Testament contains over 300 references to the Messiah that were fulfilled in Jesus” (*Evidence That Demands A Verdict*, p. 150).

Dr. Walvoord, in thinking about the great number of biblical prophecies concerning Christ, said, “The existence on such a wide scale of prophecy concerning Christ before He was born is of great significance as no other person in all the world ever was predicted in this way nor had such detailed prophecies ascribing to Him the power and attributes of God. Such prophecy in itself was a miracle and bore testimony to a supernatural person whose claims demand that we worship and obey Him” (*Jesus Christ Our Lord*, p. 80).

Any objective and honest study of the prophecies concerning the Messiah will conclude that Jesus Christ is most definitely the “Anointed One” of God, whose life and work were clearly defined long before His incarnation.

When it comes to prophecy concerning Jesus Christ, there are two classifications:

(Classification #1) - General Prophecy.

There are prophecies expressed in general language that only the anointed of God could fulfill. A good example would be I Samuel 2:35. It is quite evident from the language that some person more than Samuel was in view because both the priesthood of Samuel and his lineage were terminated. The language is generally describing the eternal priesthood of one much greater than Samuel.

(Classification #2) - Specific Prophecy.

There are personal prophecies which specifically express the identity and work of Jesus Christ. A good example would be Isaiah 7:14 which predicts that God would be born into the world in the person of a Son and that He would be born from a virgin. This is very specific.

When it comes to studying prophecy concerning Jesus Christ, there are at least four important observations we must make:

Observation #1 - The prophecies of Christ are often given in obscure language.

Dr. Chafer observed: “...it is frequently given in obscure language such as only Spirit-led believers will discern as constituting genuine Messianic prediction” (Vol. 5, p. 45).

CHRISTOLOGY (12)

On one occasion, I personally asked an unbeliever to read Psalm 22:1, 7, 16-18. To me the language is very clearly describing in great, precise detail the suffering of Jesus Christ. However, to this lost person, he had absolutely no idea as to what the passage meant. Had this Psalm specifically said, “here is a prediction of exactly what will happen to Jesus Christ,” I am certain he would have understood. However, since this prediction sits in the 22nd Psalm and is somewhat obscure, only Spirit-led believers will know what is happening.

Observation #2 - The prophecies are often given in figurative language.

There are times when prophecies concerning Jesus Christ are stated in language that is figurative. It is not that these prophecies are so obscure that they are not relatively easy to decipher, but they are figurative in that they are given in a language that requires a figurative interpretation.

One good example of this is Isaiah 11:1. To one who carefully studies the Bible, it will be immediately evident that the point of the verse is not horticulture, but a Messianic prophecy designed to show that the Anointed One will spring up from the family line or lineage of Jesse.

E.W. Hengstenberg gives a powerful interpretation of this verse in his classic work, *Christology of the Old Testament*, “...as a tree, which has been cut down, sends forth a young shoot from its roots, which, insignificant at first, soon increases to a stately and fruitful tree, so also a king will arise from the family of David, buried in neglect and obscurity, who, inferior and unnoticed at first, will afterwards attain to great glory” (p. 187). What beautiful language to describe the work of Jesus Christ.

Observation #3 - The prophecies are often given in past or present time.

When we approach prophetic texts, we must observe that many times they are not written in futuristic language. A.B. Davidson said that the reason for this was because the O.T. prophets saw the prophetic picture so vividly that in their thinking the event or scene was already in progress, and was already as good as accomplished (*An Introductory Hebrew Grammar*, pp. 156-157).

A good example of this is Isaiah 53. Isaiah uses present tense and past tense verbs and language and oft times presents vivid Messianic prophecies as if they were already in progress. In this prophecy, oft times perfect tense verbs are used. Grammarians refer to this as the “prophetic perfect.” William Gesenius explains the meaning: “To express facts which are undoubtedly imminent, and, therefore, in the imagination of the speaker, already accomplished” (*Hebrew Grammar*, p. 312).

Prophecies concerning Jesus Christ may be expressed, and often are expressed in present time of past time language (i.e. Ps. 22:16-18). When we think about prophecy from God’s perspective, it is already done and the present time is just leading to the moment when it will be specifically fulfilled.

CHRISTOLOGY (13)

Observation #4 - Prophecies are often given in disregard of the actual eschatological fulfillment of time.

What we mean is that prophecy concerning Jesus Christ does not always attempt to specifically define or divide the time frame of the prophecy. For example, prophecy may leap from the suffering of Jesus Christ to the glory of Jesus Christ and not attempt to consider the time element that exists between these two events.

One example is Isaiah 9:6. This verse presents Christ as a child and son, then immediately leaps ahead to the place where the government rests upon His shoulders. There is no mention of the time gap that exists between these two events.

A good example is Isaiah 61:1-2. In this text, Isaiah makes no attempt to divide the gracious preaching ministry of Jesus Christ from the “day of vengeance of our God.” When we study the Scriptures, it is clear that verse 1 pertains to Christ’s first coming and verse 2 pertains to Christ’s second coming. When Jesus Christ did come to this earth the first time, He clearly made the time distinction concerning this very specific prophecy (Luke 4:17-21). He specifically closed the book of Isaiah after He had read the part of the prophecy which He was presently fulfilling. But He did not read the part that He would fulfill at His second coming.

When Isaiah wrote the prophecy, he was not focused on the actual time element of it. He was presenting an entire portrait of the ministry of Jesus Christ. This teaches us that when the prophecy was written, it oft times disregards specific time details of eschatological fulfillment.

There are several specific O.T. prophecies that clearly establish that Jesus Christ was the Jewish Messiah:

- 1) He would be born of a virgin. Is. 7:14; Mt. 1:18, 24, 25; Lk 1:26-35)
- 2) He would be born the Son of God. Ps 2:7; Mt. 3:17
- 3) He would be born in the tribe of Judah. Gen. 49:8, 10; Micah 5:2; Lk. 3:23, 33; Mt. 1:2
- 4) He would be born in the family line of Jesse. Is. 11:1, 10; Lk. 3:23, 32; Mt. 1:6
- 5) He would be born in the line of David. Jer. 23:5; Mt. 1:1; 9:27; 15:22; 20:30-31; 21:9; Rev. 22:16
- 6) He would be born in Bethlehem. Micah 5:2; Mt. 2:1
- 7) He would be preceded by a forerunner. Is. 40:3; Mt. 3:1-3
- 8) He would have a ministry of miracles. Is. 35:5-6; Mt. 11:1-5; 9:35
- 9) He would enter Jerusalem on a donkey. Zech. 9:9; Mt. 21:1-9
- 10) He will be a stumbling block to the Jews. Ps. 118:2, 22; I Pet. 2:6-8; Rom. 9:33
- 11) He will have a ministry to the Gentiles. Is. 60:3; Acts 13:47-48
- 12) He will be sold for thirty pieces of silver. Zech. 11:11-12; Mt. 26:15
This money would be thrown in God’s House. Zech. 11:13b; Mt. 27:5a
This money would purchase a potter’s field. Zech. 11:13b; Mt. 27:7
- 13) He would be forsaken by His disciples. Zech 13:7; Mk. 14:50
- 14) He would be accused by false witnesses. Ps. 35:11; Mt. 26:59-61