

Introduction To Typology and God's Working Through Jonah

Typology refers to some thing or person which is a type or pattern of another thing or person which is at a higher spiritual level. For instance, the nation of Israel - God's elect or chosen people - is a type or pattern of the Church. The earthly Jerusalem is a type or pattern of the heavenly Jerusalem; 'the new Jerusalem' (Rev. 3:12). See also Rev. 21:2, 10.

Back in the 1980s when I first investigated the subject, most Christians, even the well informed, barely knew what the word 'typology' referred to. A statement from me that I was working on typology was usually got the response, "What is typology?"

There is much to be gained from a study of typology, it leaves the student in awe of the wonderful sovereign working of God, particularly when it relates to the lives of some of the Old Testament saints. Important events in their lives were written down under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the writers not knowing that hundreds of years later, the events would be fulfilled in great detail in the person of Jesus Christ.

Given that so much can be gained from the study of typology, it begs the question, why has this area of study suffered so much neglect? To solve the mystery, we need to look at Church history. Early in the history of the Church, many Bible teachers had the view that much of Scripture had two levels of meaning. An earthly or basic meaning, and a higher spiritual meaning. There were no solid rules with regard to determining what the higher meaning was. This left the way open for the scholar to exercise his own imagination as to what the best spiritual interpretation should be. Over time, a thorough study of Scripture was not deemed necessary because a fertile imagination could come up with a 'wonderful' interpretation of Scripture with very little effort.

Along with the problem of a lack of study, and spiritualising of Scripture, we have the increasing importance of the priest. The ordinary worker was informed that Scripture operated at a high spiritual level, and that a spiritual person, namely, the priest, was necessary to interpret the Bible. It is partly under this reasoning, along with the desire for control over peoples lives that the Roman Catholic Church at one point in its history banned the possession of the Bible for the common person under pain of death.

William Tyndale desired that the Bible be available to people in plain English. He was persecuted in England by those who opposed his plan, so he moved to France. At great risk to his personal safety, he printed copies of the NT and had them smuggled into England. Eventually he was caught through betrayal and suffered a cruel death. In 1536 he was strangled, then his body was burnt.

Regarding that valuable period in Church history known as 'The Reformation', Martin Luther (1483-1546) and other protestant reformers, notably John Calvin (1509-64), engaged in a thorough study of Scripture to gain an understanding of what it is telling us without the corrupting influence of a spiritualising mind set. In other words, they engaged in

exegesis instead of eisegesis. Exegesis (from *ex* out of) extracts information from Scripture. Eisegesis on the other hand is reading into Scripture what is not there.

John Calvin, who came after Martin Luther, was more thorough in putting aside the spiritualising work of the priests. Martin Luther did not for instance, completely put aside the Roman Catholic idea of transubstantiation. That is the claim that the communion bread and wine are miraculously changed into the body and blood of Christ even though there is no observable change. Luther spiritualised the communion service to a large extent by claiming Christ was *with* the bread and the wine in a special way. He believed in consubstantiation.

At this point, I must highlight one of the interesting consequences of the reformation for secular life. Not only did the reformation cause people to work harder because it came to be understood that God rewards hard work (the Protestant work ethic), it also caused people to reason that if God has given us a book - the Bible, which has a concrete meaning, then perhaps his physical laws (the laws of the universe) are concrete and unchanging as well. Many historians attribute the surge in science - particularly in England where the reformation had its greatest effect - to the influence of the reformation with its high regard for, and new way of looking at Scripture. For instance, the English physicist and mathematician Sir Isaac Newton (1643-1727), was a Christian and was influenced by Christian thought. Newton made several discoveries, he is well-known for his discovery of the law of universal gravitation. This unchanging law is logical because it was put in place by a God who does not change. Furthermore, God who does not change has given us Scripture which does not change and will never fail.

Now with that secular part out of the way, we will go back to the issue of typology's bad image.

A problem for typology is that there is some overlapping with allegory. Given that those in the past who didn't want to put much effort into the study of Scripture took to spiritualising or allegorising, it is no wonder that 'allegory' and 'typology' has not been regarded as a reputable area of study. Clearly, those who work in this area need to exercise some self discipline and keep to a few basic rules which I will go into later. Firstly, we will look at the meaning of 'allegory'.

Allegory

An allegory refers to a person or thing which is a pattern pointing to something which is at a higher spiritual level. For instance, we read in Galatians, "Which things are an allegory: ..." (Gal. 4:24, KJV).

The word *allegory* is a Greek word which has been adopted into the English language. At least one modern translation has swapped *allegory* for 'taken figuratively'. It says, "These things may be taken figuratively, for the women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar. Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to

the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother.” (Galatians 4:24-26).

The writer is making the point that Sarah (Abraham’s wife) is an allegory - taken figuratively for the covenant of grace. Hagar is an allegory - taken figuratively for the covenant of works. This covenant was established at Mt Sinai. Those who try to justify themselves before God by trying to keep the requirements laid down in this covenant are slaves to the covenant. Those who are connected through Christ to Sarah are free, just as the ‘Jerusalem that is above is free’.

Because there is some overlap between typology and allegory, it is perhaps best to declare where the word ‘allegory’ should not be used. The word ‘allegory’ is never used in Scripture in connection with a person pointing to Christ. That type of connection lands solidly in the area of typology. The lesser - the type, points to the far greater - The antitype. Jonah for instance is a type who points to Christ - the antitype. Others include Joseph and David. See my web site for details. Because of the many important facets of Christ’s life and work, no single person can adequately take on the role of type.

Before dealing fully with part of a history of a man which is a type of Christ, it should be noted that the allegorising of Scripture dealt with earlier is not completely dead. A Pentecostal pastor once informed me that it is interesting that a dove landed on Jesus at his baptism because a dove has thirteen feathers and there are thirteen gifts of the Holy Spirit. There are a few problems with his idea, firstly, the eyewitness is not declaring that he saw a dove (Matt. 3:16). Secondly, do doves actually have thirteen feathers? And finally, many will question his claim that there are thirteen gifts of the Holy Spirit.

A more serious problem is the artful allegorising of Scripture at strategic points by Christian sects to develop doctrines which bind the followers to the leader/s. A case in point is the Brisbane Christian Fellowship. This sect came to the attention of the media in Australia and was featured in the ABC ‘Four Corners’ programme under the title ‘The God of Broken Hearts’- aired in June 2008. I have written a paper on the sect which can be downloaded from my web site.

As can be seen from the above, there are a lot of opportunities for error when engaging in a study of typology. However, with a few basic rules in place, there is much to be gained from this area of study. Some of the promises made to King David do not make much sense unless they are seen in the light of typology.

As I was reading through passages of Scripture in the mid 1980s dealing with the life of King David, it occurred to me that there were many parallels between the life of David and that of Jesus Christ. As I looked further in this direction, I found that I had hit upon a rich gold seam in Scripture. Knowledge of this rich gold seam is now being shared with others, firstly through my book, *God’s Witness To Himself* published in 1990, and now through the ‘defenceofthefait.org’ web site established in 2006. See for instance, “*God’s Covenant With King David.*”.

Finally, before investigating the history of a particular OT saint to see how his life matches the life of Christ, we will put in place a few rules so as to keep on a sound path.

Typology must be kept in proper perspective with the rest of Scripture. Several doctrines have a far higher ranking than anything which can be found in typology. Of highest rank is the duty to love the Lord with all of our heart mind and strength. At second ranking is the duty to love others (Matt. 22:37-39). Understanding the substitutionary atonement is of greater importance than typology. See my paper, *The Hindu, The Muslim And The Christian* which deals with this subject. It is available from the ‘defenceofthefait.org’ web site.

Typology should not head off in the direction of small insignificant points, as in the claim about the dove mentioned earlier.

Typology should have substantial evidence. The minimum number of parallel points between the type and the antitype which I look for is five. An exception is where Scripture clearly declares a thing or an event to be a type.

Now with the above background and rules in place, lets investigate typology. I have chosen Jonah to introduce the subject of typology because it is none other than Jesus who alerts his listeners to the fact that what happened to Jonah points as a pattern or ‘type’ to himself and his work.

God's Working Through Jonah

The history of Jonah is very interesting. The Bible tells us that he tried to run away from the will of God, and that he was later swallowed by "a great fish". The great fish was most certainly a whale. For those who feel that this part of the story is too incredible to be true, I might add that it is not the only time that a man has been swallowed by a whale. In 1891, the whaling ship "*The Star of the East*" was off the Falkland Islands when it sighted a large sperm whale. Whale boats were launched and the whale was harpooned. Before the whale was killed, one of the boats was smashed and Seaman John Bartley disappeared. The whale was dismembered the following day and John Bartley was found alive in the stomach. He had lost consciousness until he was revived in the captain's cabin. He reported that he had air, but complained that it was hot and dark. In addition to the mental anguish and terror of the ordeal, he suffered physically. The digestive juices started to bleach his skin. ¹

The ordeal that Jonah, and later John Bartley went through is very interesting, however; it is not for the sake of interest that we have in the Bible the story of Jonah. It has a much deeper purpose. Jesus alluded to the purpose when he said, "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." (Matt. 12:40). It is clear from this statement that the ordeal Jonah went through was pointing to the experience of Christ. If we look at what happened to Jonah very closely, we will see that in many other ways also, he pointed to the experiences of Christ. The parallel experiences are listed below.

JONAH

1. The lot fell on Jonah, he is the one chosen to rescue the sailors from tragedy (Jonah 1:7).
2. The sacrifice of Jonah is needed to turn aside the wrath of God (1:12).
3. Jonah is delivered into the hands of Gentiles (1:15).
4. By the delivery of Jonah up to death, the wrath of God is turned aside (1:15).
5. At the deliverance of Jonah up to death, men believe and offer a sacrifice (1:16).
6. Jonah was delivered up to death for three days and three nights (1:17).
7. Seaweed was wrapped around his head (2:5).
8. Jonah was resurrected after three days (2:10).
9. After the resurrection of Jonah, the gospel goes to the Gentiles (3:2).
10. Jonah went to Nineveh with a changed body, his skin bleached by the digestive juices (3:3).
11. The Gentiles repent and believe (3:5-10).

JESUS

1. Jesus chosen: John the Baptist said of Jesus, "... 'Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!'" (John 1:29). See also 14:6.
2. The sacrifice of Jesus was necessary (Ephesians 5:2).
3. "and will turn him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!" (Matt. 20:19).
4. "... Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath." (1 Thess. 1:10).
5. A centurion and those with him, observing the death of Jesus and what took place, declare Jesus to be the son of God (Matt. 27:54).
6. "... For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." (Matt. 12:40).
7. "and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head..." (Matt. 27:29).
8. Jesus rose from the dead after three days (Matt. 28:1-6, Mark 8:31).
9. After the resurrection of Jesus, Gentiles trust in him. "In his name the nations will put their hope." (Matt. 12:21). See also Acts 11:18.
10. Jesus rose from the grave with a different, more powerful body (Luke 24:43, 1 Cor. 15:40-44).
11. "... salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious." (Rom. 11:11).

From all of the information above there are a few points which we should focus our attention upon.

Jonah Chosen

God was angry with Jonah when he tried to run away from the task which was given to him, however; it is quite evident that the wrath of God was not only about to fall upon Jonah, it was going to fall upon all of the inhabitants in the boat as well. The only way by which the inhabitants could be saved is through a sacrifice. A life has to be delivered up to death in order for others to be saved. The men in the boat at first try to save themselves, this is typical of many who seek to get right with God. Eventually Jonah's companions abandon all human effort and put their trust in God's way for their salvation. Through the sacrifice of Jonah, everyone in the boat is saved.

It is interesting to note that Jonah was chosen by God to be the sacrifice by which the wrath of God would be turned aside from falling upon all the inhabitants in the boat. God used the lot to make his choice known. Likewise, Jesus was chosen by God to be the means by which the wrath of God is turned aside from sinners by his death on the cross. Salvation could not be brought into effect by the sacrifice of just any person. It had to be a person of God's choosing, and he could not choose any other person; it had to be his own precious Son.

Delivered Up to Gentiles

Although Jonah was a Jew, he was not delivered into the hands of the Jews in order to be sacrificed, but rather into the hands of Gentiles. Jonah was chosen by God to be the sacrifice, but at the same time it was a voluntary sacrifice. The men in the boat did not have to chase after Jonah and capture him. He went willingly; he delivered himself into their hands, in fact he told them that they must sacrifice him. He did not give them any alternative.

Jonah went willingly without complaint. Jesus also went willingly and without complaint, "...as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth." (Isaiah 53:7).

Just as Jonah was delivered into the hands of Gentiles, likewise, Jesus was delivered up into the hands of Gentiles as he said he would be. "...They will condemn him to death and will turn him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified..." (Matt. 20:18-19).

Regarding the burial of both men, it is significant that Jonah was in the belly of the whale for three days. Jesus said of his own burial, "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." (Matt. 12:40). This declaration points to what later took place; Jesus died and rose on the third day, giving proof that he is the Son of God (Rom. 1:4).

Salvation for Gentiles

The Jews knew they were God's people, a chosen nation especially favoured by God. Most Jews, including Jonah it would appear, did not think God's blessings could or should extend to the Gentiles. Jonah was certainly hostile to the idea that Nineveh should escape the judgment of God (Jonah 1:2, 3:10-4:2). Nineveh was the capital city of the Assyrian

empire, an empire which was dominant over surrounding nations for many years, especially under Tiglath-pilaser III (745-727 B.C.).

Jonah lived in Gath-hepher (2 Kings 14:25) just north of Nazareth during the reign of Jeroboam II in the eighth century BC. At this time, Hosea and Amos were also prophesying.

Nineveh eventually forgot God's grace toward it in the time of Jonah, and it became cruel and oppressive. Consequently, God raised up the prophet Nahum to foretell its destruction. (See Nahum 1:7-8). Nineveh eventually fell to the Babylonians in 612 BC.

God's extraordinary action in forcing Jonah to go to Nineveh demonstrates that his love extends far beyond the borders of Israel.

The people of Nineveh repented of their sins and they were saved from the wrath of God. Likewise, after the resurrection of Jesus, salvation has primarily gone to the Gentiles as prophesied it would. "My name will be great among the nations..." (Malachi 1:11). In the New Testament we read, "...salvation has come to the Gentiles..." (Rom. 11:11).

End Notes

1. F.C. Payne, "*Seal of God*", Evangelistic Literature Enterprise, 1987, p. 53.

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