

Redeemer Bible Fellowship - Sunday School (Jan. 2025)

HOW TO UNDERSTAND THE SCRIPTURES

(With an emphasis on the NT use of the OT)

I. Biblical Meaning is Single in Nature (1/5/25)

II. Biblical Meaning is Straightforward in Sense

Joel James: Usually people's biggest problem in Bible interpretation is that they read the Bible abnormally. When they open their Bibles, it's as if they forget everything they ever learned about reading. They ignore the context; they look for secret, personal meanings. Normal interpretation, on the other hand, means that you read the Bible following the reading practices you would consider sensible for reading any other...document...¹

1. Unless otherwise noted by figures of speech²

Definition: A **figure of speech** is [an intentional] departure from the natural or fixed laws of grammar and syntax.

Simile—an expressed or formal comparison between 2 things using *like* or *as*.
(*He will be like a tree*—Psalm 1:3)

Metaphor—an implied or unexpressed comparison where an idea is carried over from one element to another without the use of *like* or *as*.
(*I am the door of the sheep*—John 10:7)

Hyperbole—[an intentional] exaggeration to increase the effect of what is said.
(*...it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God*—Matt. 19:24)

Metonymy—the exchange of one noun for a related noun.
(*...God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith, is one*—Romans 3:30)

*All of these are different than the proposed allegorical interpretation method.

The **allegorical method** extracts a symbolic meaning from the text. It assumes that a deeper, more sophisticated [or 'spiritual' ie. *sensus plenior*] interpretation is to be found beneath the obvious meaning of the passage.³

¹ Joel James, *Expository Studying*, Copyright © Joel James, 2008, 26-27.

² All definitions in this section taken from Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1998/2009), 121, 123, 124.

³ Jonathan Lunde, "An Introduction to Central Questions in the NT Use of the OT," in *Three Views on the NT use of the OT*, eds. Kenneth Berding, Stanley Gundry, Jonathan Lunde (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 29.

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2. Typology should not be used as a hermeneutical grid

Word Study—In the New Testament the term *tupos* occurs sixteen times and, depending on context, can refer to “imprint,” “pattern,” “example,” or “model.” In its most basic sense, a “type” refers to a mark from a blow. In John 20:25 it refers to the “imprint” of nails in Jesus’ hands. Paul often used the *tupos* term to emphasize being an example for other Christians (Phil. 3:17; 2 Thess. 3:9; 1 Tim. 4:12; Titus 2:7). As a whole, the common idea behind *tupos* is usually correspondence or resemblance..Often in theological discussions a “type” is seen as the Old Testament thing, and the New Testament counterpart is seen as an “anti-type.” But with Hebrews 9:24, anti-type wording is linked with the Old Testament reality—the earthly tabernacle of Moses’ time. So ironically this rare use of *antitupos* concerns an Old Testament matter.⁴

Explanation—Baker notes that typology rests on correspondence or analogy between two objects, persons, or events. There are two main kinds of correspondence. One he calls **vertical**, a relationship between heavenly and earthly realities, and the other **horizontal**, a relationship between an earlier and later historical fact.

Key misconceptions:

First, typology is neither allegory nor symbolism. In either allegory or symbolism there is little import placed on the facticity of the symbol or allegory. Each item is a signpost to something more important. But typology is concerned with relationships between historical facts.

Second, typology is not exegesis. Baker writes: ‘The biblical text has only one meaning...and this is to be found by means of grammatical-historical study. If the author intended a typical significance, it will be clear in the text...Typology is not an exegesis or interpretation of a text, but a study of relationships between events, persons and institutions recorded in biblical texts.’

Finally, if types only prefigure the future, they must have some meaning other than what is apparent at the time...[However,] ‘It is only in retrospect that an event, person or institution may be seen as typical. The existence of types necessitates there being other events, persons or institutions (earlier or later) of which they are typical.’

⁴ <https://mikevlach.blogspot.com/2017/01/some-thoughts-on-type-terminology-in.html?m=1>. Accessed 12/26/24.

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The implications for our discussion are quite significant. We have already seen that though some of the OT was indeed provisional and a shadow, not all of it was. Proper understanding of typology informs us that even if the NT interprets the OT typologically and even if we are to do so, that does not allow us to ignore or cancel the meaning of the type or substitute the meaning of the antitype for it. If types were allegories or symbols, that could be done. But they are not. They are concrete historical events, persons, and promises. They look to the future, but not in a way that makes their meaning equivalent to the antitype... NT antitypes neither explicitly nor implicitly cancel the meaning of OT types. Thinking they do, misunderstands typology.⁵

Definition of a Type—An intended correspondence or pattern between 2 events, persons or institutions that is designed to import significance to the topic at hand. The intended correspondence can be discerned by:

- 1) identifying explicit language indicating typology (Rom. 5:14...Adam is a *type* of Him who was to come) or...
- 2) fulfilled prophecy (David is a type of Christ due to Christ's fulfillment of the Davidic covenant from 2 Sam. 7).

⁵ David L. Baker, "Typology and the Christian Use of the Old Testament," SJT 29 (April 1976): 146-152. Quoted in John S. Feinberg, "Systems of Discontinuity," in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments*, ed. John S. Feinberg (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1988), 78-79.