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TYPOLOGICAL FULFILLMENT: The Key to Messianic Prophecy

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SYNOPSIS

Predictive prophecy is fairly straightforward. As such, Micah 5:2 is a predictive prophecy directly and specifically fulfilled with the birth of Christ in Bethlehem. Typological prophecy is somewhat more complex in that it involves a divinely intended pattern of events encompassing both historical correspondence and intensification. "Typology views the relationship of Old Testament events to those in the new dispensation not as a 'one-to-one' correspondence, in which the old is repeated or continued, but rather in terms of two principles, historical correspondence and escalation."¹ When Matthew says that the virgin birth of Jesus is the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy (7:14), he is speaking of typological rather than predictive fulfillment. Only when the elegance of typology is comprehended can the mystery of Scripture be fully apprehended.

Matt was a new Christian zealous for the things of God. As such, he found a book on "evidences" and began memorizing a list of prophecies made in the Old Testament, fulfilled in the New. His favorite was the virgin birth prophecy of Isaiah 7:14— "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel."²

If ever there was a clear-cut case of fulfilled prophecy, this was it. The very first chapter of the very first book of the New Testament chronicles the birth of Jesus, seven-and-a-half-centuries later, as the glorious fulfillment of what the Lord had said through the prophet Isaiah— "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" — which means, 'God with us'" (Matt. 1:23). Overflowing with exuberance, Matt shared the prophecy and its fulfillment with Izzy, his Jewish coworker.

Things immediately became difficult. Izzy, an articulate Jewish apologist fluent in Hebrew, had heard it all before. He quickly disabused Matt of the notion that Isaiah had a virgin birth in view.

“The Hebrew word *almah* has nothing to do with virginity,” he retorted dismissively. “It simply designates a young woman of marriageable age. If Isaiah had had virginity in mind, he would have used the word *betulah*.”

Izzy had just caught his stride. “Context, context, context,” he repeated indignantly. “If only people would pay attention to context! Isaiah was not prophesying a virgin birth. He was prophesying that the birth of his son Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz would be a sign guaranteeing God’s temporal salvation of Judah, in danger of being destroyed by two superpowers to the North. Read it for yourself! The fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14 is found in Isaiah chapter eight.”

Matt was stunned. “I’ll research and return,” he stammered weakly.

“I’ll be waiting,” Izzy retorted triumphantly.

A week later, they happened upon one another at the local Starbucks. This time Matt was prepared. He had enlisted more “evidences” and listened to Isaiah chapters 7 and 8 more times than he could remember. Over coffee and bagels he reported what his research had revealed: “Isaiah’s prophecy was fulfilled twice: once in the eighth century and a second time at the dawn of the Christian epoch in the first.”

Izzy could not help but roll his eyes. “A whole week and the best you can come up with is double fulfillment?” he sputtered sarcastically. “Think! Do you really want to say that Isaiah’s wife was a virgin when she gave birth? Or that Judah was saved from two superpowers when Jesus was born?”

Izzy left Starbucks solidified in unbelief. As far as he was concerned, single-fulfillment was all there was or ever would be. Isaiah’s prophecy was fulfilled in his own generation and that was the end of its significance. The Christian notion that Isaiah’s virgin birth prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus Christ was sheer nonsense.

Matt followed moments later, badly shaken in his faith. His attempts to answer Izzy’s objections were born out of sheer desperation. He now realized that Isaiah 7:14 was fulfilled in Isaiah 8. And it didn’t take a budding theologian to know that double-fulfillment brought with it a host of unintended consequences.

Tragically, Matt and Izzy were completely unaware of the explanatory power inherent in what is known as typological fulfillment. Thus, their communication was short-circuited. Had Matt understood the difference between typological and predictive fulfillment, he may well have been able to reach Izzy. Had Izzy understood the difference, he may not have dismissed Messiah on the pretext of a mere literalistic Old Testament interpretation.

THE SPLENDOR OF TYPOLOGICAL PROPHECY

Predictive prophecy is fairly straightforward. Micah 5:2 immediately comes to mind. When Herod asked the chief priests and the teachers of the law where Christ was to be born, they replied: “In Bethlehem in Judea...for this is what the prophet has written: ‘But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel’” (Matt. 2:5–6). As such, Micah 5:2 is a predictive prophecy that is directly and specifically fulfilled with the birth of Christ in Bethlehem as chronicled in Matthew 2:5.

Typological prophecy is somewhat more complex.³ If we ask whether Isaiah 7:14 is fulfilled with the virgin birth of Christ as chronicled in Matthew 1:23, the answer is yes and no. Izzy was right to contend that Isaiah 7:14 is fulfilled with the birth of Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz. But he was wrong to suppose that Isaiah 7:14 was not fulfilled with the birth of Messiah. Why? Because when Matthew writes—“All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ‘The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son and they will call him Immanuel’—which means, ‘God with us’” (Matt. 1:22–23)—he is speaking of typological rather than predictive fulfillment.

So what is typology? A type is a person, event, or institution in redemptive history that prefigures a corresponding but greater reality. The greater reality in which it finds fulfillment is referred to as an antitype. The writer of Hebrews specifically employs the notion of antitype in referring to the greatness of the heavenly sanctuary of which the holy temple was merely a type or a shadow: “Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one [antitype]; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God’s presence” (Heb. 9:24). Consequently, the antitype of the majestic temple is found in the Master Teacher.

In the book of Hebrews, as in the rest of the New Testament, the Old Testament history of Israel is interpreted as a succession of types that find ultimate fulfillment in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. One cannot fully grasp the meaning of the New Testament apart from familiarity with the redemptive history and literary forms of the Old Testament. Likewise, the New Testament shines light on the Old Testament and illumines the more complete significance of God’s redemptive work in and through the nation of Israel. This relationship between the Testaments is in essence typological.

The New Testament’s typological interpretation of the Old Testament, though often implicit in allusions to the Hebrew Scriptures, is made explicit in Paul’s epistles. The apostle explains to the Corinthian church that the experiences of Israel prefigured the experiences of the believer under the new covenant as “examples [types] and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come” (1 Cor. 10:11). In his letter to the Romans, Paul refers to Adam as a “pattern” (literally, type) of Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:14). He likewise taught the believers at Colossae that the dietary laws, religious festivals, and Sabbath of the old covenant were “a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality is found in Christ” (Col. 2:17).

The interpretive principle of typology is particularly pervasive in the Gospels. Jesus’ successful resistance of temptation in the desert after forty days of fasting is a direct typological contrast with the disobedience of the Israelites that resulted in their forty years of wilderness wanderings (Matt. 4:1–11; Mark 1:12–13; Luke 4:1–13). In remaining faithful to His Father, Jesus did what Israel was unable to do. Jesus is thus true Israel and is revealed as the antitype of the Hebrew prophets through His preaching of repentance, His ministry of healing, His concern for the poor and the social outcasts, and His death near Jerusalem (Luke 13:33). Though like the prophets in these ways, Jesus is demonstrated to be greater than all the previous prophets in the manner of His miraculous ministry, His claims to be God, and the vindication of those claims in His resurrection.

This, of course, is not to confuse the biblical principle of typology with an allegorical method of biblical interpretation that ignores or rejects the historical nature of the Old Testament narratives. On the contrary, typology is firmly rooted in concrete realities and always involves historical correspondence and intensification. As K. J. Woollcombe has aptly pointed out, “Typological exegesis is the search for linkages between events, persons, or things within the historical framework of revelation, whereas allegorism is the search for a secondary and hidden meaning underlying the primary and obvious meaning of a narrative” (emphasis in original).⁴ Or, as German scholar Leonhard Goppelt explains, “The historicity of what is reported and the literal meaning of the text are of no consequence for allegorical interpretation, but for typology they are foundational.”⁵ A type must therefore be a historical person, event, or institution that prefigures another reality in redemptive history that is yet future.

Furthermore, biblical typology, as evidenced in the writings of the New Testament, always involves a heightening of the type in the antitype. It is not simply that Jesus replaces the temple as a new but otherwise equal substitute. No, Jesus is far greater than the temple! It is not as though Jesus is simply another in the line of prophets with Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. No, Jesus is much greater than the prophets! It is not as though the new covenant replaces the old covenant as a more modern but equivalent alternative. No, the new covenant is far greater than the old covenant— “a better covenant” (Heb. 7:22)—rendering the old “obsolete” (8:13). The type, thus, is so heightened, escalated, or intensified in the antitype that by contrast it loses its own weight and significance.

Finally, I should note that antitypes themselves may also function as types of future realities. Communion, for example, is the antitype of the Passover meal. Each year the Jews celebrated Passover in remembrance of God’s sparing the firstborn sons in the homes of the Israelite families that were marked by the blood of the Passover lamb (Luke 22; cf. Exod. 11–12). Jesus’ celebration of the Passover meal with His disciples on the night of His arrest symbolically points to the fact that He is the ultimate Passover Lamb “who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Though the Last Supper and the corresponding sacrament of Communion serve as the antitype of the Passover meal, they also point forward as types to ultimate fulfillment in “the wedding supper of the Lamb” (Rev. 19:9; cf. Luke 22:15–18). On that glorious day the purified bride—true Israel—will be united with her Bridegroom in the new heaven and the new earth (Rev. 21:1–2). Thus, fulfillment of the promise is itself a guarantee of the final consummation of the kingdom of God. Says Goppelt, this already-but-not-yet typological fulfillment is indicative of “an eschatological tension in NT typology. Salvation has come in Christ; therefore, the church possesses what the fathers longed for. This salvation is hidden with Christ and is coming; therefore, the church, together with the fathers, waits for the perfect antitypes to be revealed.”⁶

In sum, then, typology involves a divinely intended pattern of events encompassing both historical correspondence and intensification. As Dr. E. Earle Ellis explains, “Typology views the relationship of Old Testament events to those in the new dispensation not as a ‘one-to-one’ equation or correspondence, in which the old is

repeated or continued, but rather in terms of two principles, historical correspondence and escalation.”⁷

Understanding typology in general is essential to grasping the surpassing significance of typological prophecy in particular. Such understanding elucidates the manner in which Isaiah’s virgin birth prophecy finds fulfillment in the near- future birth of Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz as well as ultimate fulfillment in the far-future birth of Messiah—fulfillment that entails a divinely intended pattern of events encompassing both historical correspondence and intensification.

As we will now see, the splendor of typological prophecy stands in stark contrast to subbiblical notions such as double- fulfillment, which supposes that Isaiah foresees both the virginal conception of Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz and the virginal conception of Messiah as twin mountain peaks juxtaposed one in front of the other. Izzy was right to point out that the conception of Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz was hardly virginal. Moreover, Isaiah’s prophecy is replete with definitive time markers such as, “Before the boy knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, the land of the two kings you dread will be laid waste” (Isa. 7:16, emphasis added). Only through sleight of mind can Isaiah 7:14 be doubled and driven into the distant future.

As with double-fulfillment, single-fulfillment does violence to the biblical text. Indeed, Isaiah 7:14 does not constitute a direct prediction about the Messiah at all. Though Mary gave birth to Jesus as a virgin, Isaiah did not predict the virgin birth of Jesus. As we will now see, when Matthew says the virgin birth of Jesus is the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy, he speaks of typological fulfillment, not predictive fulfillment.

ISAIAH 7:14/MATTHEW 1:23

Isaiah 7 opens with breathtaking intrigue. Ahaz, monarch of the tiny kingdom of Judah, is as “shaken as the trees of the forest are shaken by the wind” (7:2). He is in mortal terror of kings Rezin of Syria and Pekah of Israel who even now plot his ruin. Isaiah exhorts Ahaz to trust the Lord with all his heart and lean not on his own understanding. “Keep calm and don’t be afraid. Do not lose heart because of these two smoldering stubs of firewood” (7:4).

Though the faithless Ahaz greatly tried God’s patience, the ever faithful Almighty provided a sign guaranteeing Rezin and Pekah would come to ruin: “The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel.” And “before the boy knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, the land of the two kings you dread will be laid waste” (7:14–16).

What God promised came to pass. Isaiah “went to the prophetess and she conceived and gave birth to a son” (8:3). Before the boy knew how to say, “My father or my mother” (v. 4), Syria and Samaria were laid waste by superior Assyrian forces. Despite God’s providential care, Ahaz sought favor from king Tiglath-Pileser III of Assyria with resources pilfered from the temple treasury. Worse still, he abandoned temple sacrifice, going so far as to sacrifice his own sons to the gods of Tiglath-Pileser.

As a consequence of sin, the salvation Ahaz experienced was only temporary. Ahaz was reduced to a mere puppet king, his every move controlled by an evil

Assyrian empire. One hundred and fifty years later, the temple itself suffered destruction and all Jerusalem lay in ruin. Yet God was not done with the people of the promise. Seven hundred years after faithless Ahaz, Matthew saw the temporary salvation of Judah as a type of the eternal salvation the people of God would experience through Jesus.

While Izzy's contention that the Hebrew word *almah* has nothing to do with virginity is right, it is also wholly irrelevant. Matthew recognized a historical pattern of events surrounding the birth of Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz that found quintessential fulfillment in a corresponding historical pattern surrounding the birth of Messiah. Although Isaiah's wife gave birth to Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz in a fashion common to all humanity, the historical pattern reached a climax in the miraculous virgin birth of Messiah. Thus, though Isaiah's wife did not give birth as a virgin, Mary most certainly did.

Even apart from the tapestry of typology, Izzy would do well to recognize that belief in the virgin birth of Jesus Christ is not merely based on blind faith. As noted, miracles are not only possible but necessary in order to make sense of the universe in which we live. According to modern science, the universe had a beginning and is unfathomably fine-tuned to support intelligent life. The origin of life, information in the genetic code, irreducible complexity in biological systems, and the phenomenon of the human mind pose intractable problems for solely natural explanations. Thus, reason forces us to look beyond the natural world to a supernatural Designer who miraculously intervenes in the affairs of his created handiwork.

If we accept the evidential basis for believing that an uncaused first cause created the universe, we should have no problem opening our minds to the possibility of an actual virginal conception. Sadly, it has become all too common for modern people to buy into a unique brand of fundamentalism that values rhetoric and emotional stereotypes over reason and evidential substance. Those who suppose that the virgin birth is mythological would be well served to carefully consider the evidences just as they would be wise to open their minds to the possibility that Jesus is the antitype who intensifies all the types in the tapestry of the Old Testament.

HOSEA 11:1/MATTHEW 2:15

A further example of typological prophecy that has stumbled seekers and solidified more than a few skeptics in suspicion of the Scriptures is Hosea 11:1: "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son." It no doubt makes skeptics like Izzy dizzy to hear Christians pretend Hosea's prophecy is fulfilled in Immanuel rather than Israel. Yet that is precisely what Matthew contends. "Joseph got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod. *And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'Out of Egypt I called my son'*" (Matt. 2:15, emphasis added).

In context, the Magi came to Jerusalem from the east and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him" (2:2). When Herod heard this he called together the chief priests and the

teachers of the law, and asked them where Christ was to be born. They replied by citing the prophet Micah who predicted that Jesus was to be born in Bethlehem. Thus, Herod gave orders to “kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under” (2:16). But an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph and urged him to “take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him” (2:13).

Here, as in Isaiah 7:14, historical correspondence between Israel’s sojourn in Egypt and the sojourn of Immanuel in Egypt is not random but is a divinely intended pattern of events intensified in Christ. As pointed out by R. C. H. Lenski, God “might have arranged for the transfer of the holy family to Babylon by the aid of the magi. Abstractly considered it would have made no difference from what foreign land God would recall Jesus.”⁸ Instead, “God brought about the first sojourn and made that first sojourn a factual prophecy of the second, which he also brought about. The first is thus a divinely intended type of the second. It is *not* accidental that the angel sent Joseph to Egypt and to no other land” (emphasis in original).⁹

First we note the reason for exile in Egypt. The extraordinary evil of Jacob’s sons exiled Joseph in Egypt, just as the extravagant evil of Herod exiled Jesus there. Furthermore, we note God’s providential care for the royal seed of Abraham whereby Immanuel like Israel is preserved in the midst of sojourn in Egypt. Finally, beyond historical correspondences there is a corresponding escalation of type in antitype. Immanuel did what Israel could not. Israel succumbed to the wiles of the world, the flesh, and the Devil during her desert sojourn, whereas Immanuel, true Israel, triumphed over every trial and temptation.

And even that is but grasping a thread on the underside of the tapestry of typology. For in the type is impregnated a pattern by which the majesty of the antitype may be more fully appreciated. Jacob and his sons were designated sons of God by adoption. Jesus is designated the son of God in unique and absolute fashion. Says Lenski,

Read apart from the antitype, this designation had only its ordinary meaning, but read in conjunction with the antitype, Jesus, “my son” becomes highly significant. Deuteronomy 32:18 states that Israel was begotten as Jehovah’s son, and this is a fatherhood which exceeds that of Abraham and of Jacob (Isa. 63:16) and thus points to the miraculous begetting of the Son Jesus “of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 1:20; Luke 1:35). We now see how Matthew connects “my son” in Hosea and Israel’s early sojourn in Egypt as a true type and a divinely intended prophecy of “my Son,” the Messiah, who likewise must sojourn in Egypt. Both had to leave the Holy Land, and all the Messianic hopes connected with them seemed to be utterly lost in far-off Egypt. Yet, “did call out of Egypt” places the sure hand of God behind all these hopes. Israel returned from Egypt for its mission, and so did this greater Son, Jesus.¹⁰

The overarching point here is to underscore the need to make careful distinctions between predictive prophecies such as Micah 5:2, which finds fulfillment in Jesus’ birthplace in Bethlehem (Matt. 2:5), and typological prophecies such as Hosea 11:1,

which are typologically fulfilled in Christ (Matt. 2:15). Failure to recognize the difference has led more than a few to outright doubt and disbelief. While it is remarkable that the birthplace of Jesus is accurately prophesied centuries in advance, it is perplexing to look up Matthew's citation of Hosea 11:1 and find it to reference Israel rather than Immanuel. Only when the elegance of typology is comprehended is the mystery of Scripture more fully apprehended.

A helpful analogy may be found in the genealogy we encounter at the beginning of Matthew's gospel. As is the case with typology, a failure to recognize that there's a whole lot more going on than a literalistic recapitulation of generations will lead to an unnecessary suspicion of the text. At first blush Matthew's genealogy appears to be absurd—even contradictory to the genealogy presented by Luke. Further examination reveals it to be ingeniously constructed to highlight the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Matthew, writing to a primarily Jewish audience, emphasizes that Jesus Christ is the seed of Abraham and the legal heir of David, the long-awaited King of Israel who would ultimately restore his people from exile. As such, Matthew records fourteen generations from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile, and fourteen from the exile to the Christ (Matt. 1:17). As a former tax collector, Matthew thus skillfully organizes the genealogy of Jesus into three groups of fourteen, the numerical equivalent of the Hebrew letters in King David's name ($4+6+4 = D+V+D$). As such, he simultaneously highlights the most significant names in the lineage of Jesus and artistically emphasizes our Lord's identity as Messiah who forever sits upon the throne of David.

Luke, writing to a primarily Gentile audience, extends his genealogy past Abraham to the first Adam, thus highlighting that Christ, the Second Adam, is the Savior of all humanity. Calling Adam "the son of God" (3:38) and strategically placing the genealogy between Jesus' baptism and the desert temptation, Luke masterfully reveals Jesus as *Theanthropos*—the God-Man. While Luke's genealogy stretches from the first Adam to the second, in concert with the gospel of Matthew, only mountain peaks in the lineage are accounted for.

Thus, the common objection from literalists on the left that the genealogies are deficient in number is rendered as obtuse and meaningless as is the objection based on dissimilarities between them.¹¹

JEREMIAH 31:15/MATTHEW 2:18

A final illustration that serves to underscore the criticality of distinguishing between predictive and typological prophecy is found in Matthew's quotation of Jeremiah: "When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys of Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled, 'A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more'" (Matt. 2:16–18).

Apart from typology, Matthew's contention would be laughable. In context, Jeremiah warned the Southern Kingdom of Judah that what happened to Israel in the North would soon happen in the South. Thus, it seems a stretch for Matthew to contend that Jeremiah's words are fulfilled by a first-century slaughter. I can hear Izzy now: "If only people would pay attention to context! Jeremiah's words were *not* fulfilled with the death of infants at the hand of the Roman Herod but with destruction of Israel at the hands of the Assyrian Sargon."

Sans typology there is little hope of getting through to Izzy. Being able to explain the elegance of Matthew's intent, however, opens up a wonderful avenue for communication and witness. What Matthew intends all of us—including Izzy—to understand is that there is historical correspondence between Israel's exile eight centuries prior to the time of Christ and the execution of infants at the advent of Christ. Disobedience lay at the root of both catastrophes. Says Lenski, "Israel's sin caused the Assyrians to carry the ten tribes of the northern kingdom into exile where they entirely disappeared: 'they are not.' It is the same sin that placed a foreign monster, the Idumean Herod, on the Jewish throne at the time of the birth of the Messiah and thus enabled him to slay the children of Bethlehem, so that of them, too, it was true: 'they were not.'"¹²

But Matthew intends much more than just historical correspondence. He intensifies the type in the antitype. Through citing Jeremiah 31 he underscores the glorious reality that God brings blessings out of disaster and life out of death. Jeremiah used the exile of the Northern Kingdom as a warning to the Southern Kingdom that disaster loomed on the horizon. He envisioned Rachel, beloved wife of Jacob and matriarch of Israel, in great mourning for her children—her voice rising from the heights of Ramah at the crossroads of a divided kingdom and reverberating in the ears of those who bore the bitter dregs of disobedience.

For the first-century progeny of Rachel, the sound of her voice was a poignant reminder that though weeping lasts for a night, joy comes in the morning. Thus, immediately following the citation of Rachel's weeping, God promises both "hope" and a "future" (Jer. 31:17) for true Israel. Out of the ashes would arise an eternal city that "will never again be uprooted or demolished" (31:40). As such, Matthew's citation of Rachel's mourning is at once enduring comfort for all the bereaved of Bethlehem and a sure reminder that the Lion of the tribe of Judah now stood upon the precipice of history.

As a result of the Incarnation, Jesus, not Jerusalem, would be the one around whom all true Israel would now be gathered. The earthly Jerusalem was thus a type that was heightened by the greater reality of the heavenly city where the Babe of Bethlehem is enthroned. It is toward the antitypical heavenly Jerusalem with Jesus on its throne that Israel was now to direct its eschatological gaze. Imbued in Matthew's message were warnings that all who fixate on an OBJOBJOBJ earthly Jerusalem with continued temple sacrifices were in slavery to a type. Conversely, all who recognized Messiah in their midst were free to inherit the earth (Matt. 5:5). As such, the one who

was preserved in Egypt now leads the true children of Israel into an eternal land of promise in which Herod “is no more.”

MATT AND IZZY: TAKE TWO

Matt was zealous for the things of God. He believed God had spoken and focused his energies on learning to read the Bible for all its worth. As he immersed himself in the art and science of biblical interpretation, he became increasingly aware of the profundity of Scripture. It was amazing to think that Micah prophesying seven centuries before Christ was empowered by God to correctly predict that Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. As amazing as the predictive prophecies were, the elegance of the tapestry of typological prophecy proved quite literally mind-altering. It provided a structure that knit the Old Testament to the New and facilitated the understanding of each through reference to the other. How incredible to discover that Jesus’ successful resistance of temptation in the desert after forty days of fasting in the New Testament was a direct typological contrast to the disobedience of the Israelites that resulted in their forty years of wilderness wanderings in the Old. In remaining faithful to his Father, Immanuel did what Israel failed to do!

Given the panoply of typological prophecies made in the Old and fulfilled in the New, Matt loved best the virgin birth prophecy of Isaiah 7:14—“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.” As far as he was concerned it was the quintessential expression of a divinely intended pattern of events that encompassed both historical correspondence and intensification.

If ever there was an intoxicating illustration of how a typological prophecy was fulfilled in Christ, this was it. The very first chapter of the very first book of the New Testament chronicles the birth of Jesus, as the glorious fulfillment of what the Lord had said through the prophet Isaiah—“‘The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel’—which means, ‘God with us’” (Matt. 1:23).

Overflowing with exuberance, Matt shared the prophecy and its typological fulfillment with Izzy, his Jewish coworker. Izzy was dumbfounded. He had always seen this prophecy as one of the greatest weaknesses of the Christian worldview. The Hebrew word *almah* in Isaiah’s prophecy had nothing to do with virginity. It simply designated a young woman of marriageable age. If Isaiah had had virginity in mind, he would have used the Hebrew word *betulah*.

Not only so but context precluded the possibility that Isaiah’s prophecy was fulfilled in the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. Isaiah did *not* prophesy a virgin birth. He prophesied that the birth of his son Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz was a sign guaranteeing God’s temporal salvation of Judah, in danger of being destroyed by two superpowers to the North.

Matt explained to Izzy that the meaning of *almah* was in essence a “red herring.” Moreover, Matt was able to show Izzy how the Jewish gospel writer Matthew saw a historical pattern of events surrounding the birth of Isaiah’s son that found quintessential fulfillment in a corresponding historical pattern surrounding the birth of

Immanuel. While Isaiah's wife gave birth to Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz in the fashion common to all humanity, the historical pattern reached a climax in the virgin birth of Messiah. Thus, while Isaiah's wife did not give birth as a virgin, Mary most certainly did!

Izzy's interest was more than piqued — particularly as Matt explained that this was not an isolated example. In the ensuing weeks, Matt was able to show Izzy how the words of Hosea, "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son," were typologically fulfilled in Christ — how historical correspondence between Israel's sojourn in Egypt and the sojourn of Immanuel there was not random but was a divinely intended pattern of events intensified in Christ. Izzy slowly glimpsed the possibility of a fulfillment that was multifaceted and majestic. Not shallow and shortsighted. Thus, he was eager to learn more.

Week by week they met at the local Starbucks. Over coffee and bagels they studied the Scriptures together. Izzy was increasingly fascinated by everything from the ingenious construction of Matthew's genealogies to the typology inherent in Herod's slaughter of infants in the vicinity of Bethlehem. At first it seemed a stretch that the words of the prophet Jeremiah could be fulfilled by Herod's first-century slaughter. In time, however, Izzy began to grasp the typological correspondence between Israel's exile and the execution of infants.

Months passed as they flipped through the Scriptures together — Izzy more familiar with the Old, Matt the New. Together they learned. As an Orthodox Jew, Izzy had been dedicated to the eternal and unalterable Mosaic law as reinterpreted by rabbis subsequent to the fall of Jerusalem. He was convinced that only through devotion to the complex code of Jewish law (*Halakhah*) could one experience nearness to God. In concert with other Orthodox Jews, he looked forward to a rebuilt temple and a Jewish Messiah who would restore the kingdom to Israel.

Now, however, he was beginning to waver. Matt explained that the temple, priesthood, and sacrifices were forever obsolete as a result of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. He showed Izzy from the Scriptures how the priests had offered sacrifices "at a sanctuary that is but a *copy* and *shadow* of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: 'See to it that you make everything according to the *pattern* shown you on the mountain.' But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises" (Heb. 8:5–6, emphasis added).

Slowly but surely the futility of the sacrificial system in light of the Savior's sacrifice became clear to Izzy. Torah study, like temple sacrifice, found satisfying fulfillment in Jesus. "Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins" (Heb. 10:11). Jesus, however, "offered for all time, one sacrifice for sins" (10:12). Jesus forever did away with the need for sacrifice, fulfilling Torah and rendering the temple null and void.

Izzy was particularly moved by a conversation between Jesus and the woman at Jacob's well in Samaria. "Our fathers," said the Samaritan woman, "worshiped on this

mountain, but you Jews claim that the place we must worship is in Jerusalem.” Jesus corrected her faulty presuppositions with a liberating truth: “Believe me, woman,” said Jesus, “a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem....a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth” (John 4:20–21, 23).

It finally hit Izzy with the force of an earthquake: what Jesus was saying is that in His own person He replaced temple sacrifice. He is not merely mediator of a new covenant; He is the incarnation of it. Indeed He is the antitype of the whole of the old covenant. Thus to revert back to a sacrificial system was to trample the Son of God under foot, to treat as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant and to insult the Spirit of grace (Heb. 10:29; cf. 5:11–6:12; Gal. 3–5).

All of the types and shadows of the old covenant, including the holy land of Israel, the holy city Jerusalem, and the holy temple of God, have been fulfilled in the Holy Christ. As such, it is Paradise—a new heaven and a new earth—not Palestine for which our hearts yearn. It is “the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband” (Rev. 21:2) upon which we fix our gaze. And it is the Master Teacher, not a majestic Temple, that forever satisfies our deepest longings.

A few months later, Izzy found himself on bended knee. Today, he follows Messiah as a reproducing disciple maker. More than once he has used the dazzling star of typological prophecy to demonstrate to family and friends that God has spoken—that the Bible is divine as opposed to being merely human in origin.¹³

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NOTES

- 1 E. Earle Ellis, “Foreword” to Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New*, Donald H. Madvid, trans. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), x.
- 2 All Scripture quotations are from the New International Version, 1984.
- 3 I am especially indebted to two excellent articles concerning typological prophecy in general and the nature of the relationship between Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:22–23 in particular: James M. Hamilton, Jr., “The Virgin Will Conceive: Typology in Isaiah and Fulfillment in Matthew, the Use of Isaiah 7:14 in Matthew 1:18–23,” Tyndale Fellowship Biblical Theology Study Group July 6–8, 2005, online at http://www.swbts.edu/resources/SWBTS/Resources/FacultyDocuments/Hamilton/TheVirginWillConceive.7_19_05.pdf, last accessed March 23, 2011; and Duane A. Garrett, “Type, Typology,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 785–87.
- 4 K. J. Woollcombe, “The Biblical Origins and Patristic Development of Typology,” in G. W. H. Lampe and K. J. Woollcombe, *Essays on Typology*, part of the Studies in Biblical Theology series (Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, 1957), 40.
- 5 Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos: the Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New*, trans. Donald H.

- Madvid (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 18.
- 6 Ibid., 175.
 - 7 E. Earle Ellis, "Foreword" to Goppelt, *Typos*, x.
 - 8 R. C. H. Lenski, *Commentary on the New Testament: The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, reprint 2001 [1943]), 77.
 - 9 Ibid., 78.
 - 10 Ibid., 78–79; cf. Exod. 4:22.
 - 11 Matthew traces his genealogy through David's son Solomon, while Luke traces his genealogy through David's son Nathan. It may be that Matthew's purpose is to provide the legal lineage from Solomon through Joseph, while Luke's purpose is to provide the natural lineage from Nathan through Mary. It could also be that Matthew and Luke are both tracing Joseph's genealogy — Matthew, the legal line, and Luke, the natural line. As such, the legal line diverges from the natural in that Levirate Law stipulated if a man died without an heir his genealogy could legally continue through his brother (Deut. 25:5–6). Obviously, the fact that there are a number of ways to resolve dissimilarities rules out the notion that the genealogies are contradictory. For further study, see Craig L. Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1997), 199, 207–8.
 - 12 Lenski, *St. Matthew's Gospel*, 81–82.
 - 13 Excerpted from Hank Hanegraaff, *Has God Spoken? Memorable Proofs of the Bible's Divine Inspiration* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2011).