

The Bible's Use of the Bible

Session 3: Typological Patterns

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Abstract

In this session, Dr. Matthew S. Harmon explores biblical typological patterns, defining them as intentional, selective, and expectational analogies within the historical framework of progressive revelation. He addresses the scholarly debate between forward-looking (prospective) and backward-looking (retrospective) typology, demonstrating through detailed examples like Romans 5 (Adam and Christ) and Matthew 4 (Jesus and Israel in the wilderness) that scripture contains both kinds of patterns. Harmon also discusses multiple iterations of typological structures, distinguishes them from literary echoes or allegory, and concludes by urging interpreters to identify macro-level patterns with cautious exegesis and interpretive humility.

Outline

I. Introduction to Typological Patterns

A. Foundation of the session: Chapter 6 of How to Study the Bible's Use of the Bible: Seven Hermeneutical Choices.

B. Academic Debate: Focus on the choice between backward-looking versus forward-looking typological patterns.

II. Defining Typology and its Core Components

A. Working Definition: Intentional scriptural shaping to draw selective, expectational analogies between persons, events, institutions, procedures, oracles, or a combination of these within the historical framework of progressive revelation.

B. Phrase-by-Phrase Breakdown of the Definition:

1. Intentional scriptural shaping: The author of the later (receptor) text intentionally depicts a person, event, or institution in a specific way so the reader recognizes an analogy to an earlier (donor) text.

2. Selective, expectational analogies: The author only draws upon selected details, where the original text anticipates a later, greater reality in redemptive history.

3. Types of elements: Relies on physical realities (persons, events, institutions, procedures, oracles) rather than abstract ideas.
4. Historical framework: Rooted in real history, distinct from Philonic allegorical interpretations of virtue and vice.
5. Progressive revelation: Involves escalation, heightening, or intensification between the shadow (type) and final substance/realization (antitype).
 - a. Example: The New Exodus in Isaiah is depicted as a far greater redemptive act than the original historical Exodus from Egypt.

III. The Scholarly Debate: Forward-Looking vs. Backward-Looking Typology

A. Forward-Looking (Prospective) Typology:

1. Definition: Types that are prospective and contain promise-shaped, predictive elements evident in their original context.
2. Representative Scholar: James Hamilton, who argues that Old Testament authors intended to signal recurring patterns with a view to the future.
3. Example: Deuteronomy 18:18 (the promise of a future prophet like Moses).

B. Backward-Looking (Retrospective) Typology:

1. Definition: Types that are retrospective and can only be discerned after the secondary event (the antitype) occurs and imparts new meaning.
2. Representative Scholar: Richard Hays, who argues that correspondence is necessarily recognized in hindsight.
3. Example: 1 Corinthians 5:7 (Paul identifying Christ as the Passover Lamb; there is no explicit prospective text in Exodus 12 pointing to a personal sacrifice).

C. Harmon's Synthesis: Both prospective and retrospective types exist; scripture does not force a choice between them.

IV. Detailed Case Studies of Biblical Typology

A. Case Study 1: Romans 5:12–21 (Adam and Christ Parallel):

1. Context: Paul explicitly calls Adam 'a type of the one who was to come' (Romans 5:14).
2. Structure of Analogy and Contrast:
 - a. Entry of sin and death through one man's trespass vs. overflow of God's grace and free gift through Jesus Christ.
 - b. Condemnation from the single trespass vs. justification following many trespasses.
 - c. Reign of death through Adam vs. reigning in life through Christ.
 - d. Disobedience of one making many sinners vs. obedience of one making many righteous.
3. Escalation: Emphasized by Paul's 'how much more' phrasing, showing the antitype vastly surpasses the type.

B. Case Study 2: Matthew 4:1–11 (Jesus' Temptation in the Wilderness):

1. Context: Matthew intentionally structures the narrative to draw connections between Jesus and Israel's wilderness trials.
2. Parallel Points of Analogy and Fail-Obey Contrast:
 - a. Both are designated as God's son (Exodus 4:22 vs. Matthew 3:17).
 - b. Led by God into the wilderness (Israel by the cloud/presence vs. Jesus by the Holy Spirit).
 - c. Period of testing (Israel for 40 years vs. Jesus for 40 days and 40 nights).
 - d. Testing of hunger (Israel grumbled vs. Jesus trusted and quoted Deuteronomy 8:3).
 - e. Testing of testing God (Israel tested Yahweh vs. Jesus trusted and quoted Deuteronomy 6:16).
 - f. Testing of idolatry (Israel committed idolatry vs. Jesus worshipped God alone and quoted Deuteronomy 6:13).
3. Contextual Quoting: Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 6 and 8, where Moses retold the story of Israel's failure. Jesus succeeds where Israel failed, demonstrating a heightening of the 'Son' type.

V. The Multi-Dimensional Nature of Typology

- A. Temporal Dimension: The shadow-to-substance progression, moving from a faint pattern in the Old Testament to a clear, bold reality in the New Testament.
- B. Spatial Dimension: Anchored in vertical relationships (heavenly reality at the top, pointing down to the earthly type/shadow in earlier scripture, and the later full reality in the New Testament, as adapted from Giordano Voss).
- C. Multiple Iterations (Ectypes): Repeats of a pattern prior to its final fulfillment.
 1. Example: The Adam-commission of dominion and fruitfulness (Genesis 1:28) is repeated and modified through Noah (Genesis 9), Abraham, Israel, David, and Solomon, before culminating in Christ's Great Commission (Matthew 28).

VI. Distinguishing Typology from Other Analogies

- A. Typological Patterns: Real historical events, respect for original context, selective details, and an expectational element pointing forward.
- B. Extended Echo Effects (Literary Echoes): Selective, historical, and respectful of context, but lack the expectational/heightened escalation. Used purely for literary effect (e.g., Abraham and Isaac both lying about their wives being their sisters in Genesis).
- C. Allegory: Disregards the original historical context, squeezing every detail for spiritualized meaning based on an external philosophical or ideological framework.

VII. Hermeneutical Guidelines and Interpretive Humility

- A. Divine Intention: God embedded these patterns in scripture; they are discovered, not invented. They often require the lens of progressive revelation to see.
 1. Analogy of Luminol: A chemical spray that doesn't put blood in a room but reveals blood that was already present under specialized light.

2. Analogy of a Mystery Thriller: Clues whose significance is completely unappreciated on the first pass make perfect sense once the ending is revealed.

B. Best Practices for Modern Interpreters:

1. Look for typological patterns beyond those explicitly identified by biblical authors (e.g., Joshua as a type of Christ), but do so with caution.
2. Maintain interpretive humility; hold non-explicit typologies with a loose grip and do not be dogmatic.
3. Focus on the macro-level structures (large historical themes and multiple points of contact) rather than micro-level similarities (such as matching colors).