

Dr. Matthew S. Harmon, Bible's Use of the Bible,

Session 3, Typological Patterns,

Podcast Audio Overview

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You know, usually when you look at a building's blueprint, there's this expectation of just pure, straightforward utility. Like you see a line, it denotes a wall. Right.

It's very literal. Exactly. You see a square, it represents a window.

The entire document is just relentlessly functional, and it's all entirely visible right there on the surface. It's basically a literal map of intentions. You know, you are looking at a static means to an end with absolutely no hidden layers.

But imagine looking at an ancient architectural schematic and, well, at first glance you just see the basic layout of the walls and the windows. Then someone hands you a specialized pair of glasses. Oh, I like where this is going.

And suddenly you realize that the way those windows are arranged, they actually cast a very specific shadow on the floor. And that shadow spells out a message. A hidden message.

Yes. And that message predicts the design of a completely different, infinitely more complex building that won't actually be constructed for another thousand years. Which is wild to think about.

I mean, you're moving from a simple two-dimensional reading of a schematic to uncovering this multi-dimensional time-spanning architecture. It demands a completely different way of interacting with the text right in front of you. And uncovering that hidden time-spanning architecture is exactly what we are doing today.

So whether you're a theology student prepping for a big paper, or you're just you. Someone who is insanely curious about how ancient texts connect across centuries in ways that defy basic literary conventions. This deep dive is custom-built to spark some major ha-ha moments.

It really is. Our source material today is this incredibly dense, genuinely fascinating lecture by Dr. Matthew S. Harmon from his series, *The Bible's Use of the Bible*. And we are going to focus specifically on session three, which really unpacks the mechanics of what he calls typological patterns.

And you know, just to set the ground rules up front, we are looking at this strictly through the lens of Dr. Harmon's textual and historical analysis. The goal here isn't to endorse a specific theological framework, but really rather to reverse engineer how these ancient writers actually constructed their narratives. Right.

We want to understand the nuts and bolts of their literary techniques. Exactly. We're impartial observers just trying to convey the ideas in his original source material.

So our mission today is to decode that hidden architecture. We are going to figure out how ancient historical events act as these structural shadows, predicting later greater realities, and crucially, how to spot these patterns without basically going completely off the rails and seeing connections that aren't actually there. Which is surprisingly easy to do, unfortunately.

Oh, totally. And I have to admit, when I first encountered Dr. Harmon's formal academic definition of typology, I had to read it like three times. It felt like staring at a really dense legal contract.

The terminology is definitely thick. I mean, Harmon defines a typological pattern as, and I'll quote it here, the 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. Okay, let's unpack this, because that is a towering stack of academic jargon.

But there is a really brilliant literary mechanism hiding inside of it. Let's start with the phrase intentional scriptural shaping. Yeah, that's the key.

He is stressing that these structural connections are absolutely not accents of history. They aren't coincidences. When a biblical author writes about a person or an event, what scholars call the type or the donor text, they aren't just acting as objective biographers logging every single detail of a person's day.

Right. They are acting as curators. And that is the selective component of Harmon's definition.

The author is actively filtering history. They're leaving stuff out. Huge amounts of information.

They leave it out to aggressively highlight very specific elements. They want the reader's eye drawn to a particular pattern of behavior or, you know, a specific sequence of events to basically build an expectation for a future reality. And that engineered expectation is what he calls the expectational analogy.

Exactly. And all this curation happens within what Harmon calls progressive revelation, meaning the biblical timeline isn't just history repeating itself in a flat, monotonous circle. It's more like a spiral that is constantly escalating upward.

And that escalation is the engine of typology. You have the type, which is the original historical shadow, and then you have the anti-type, which is the later substance or the ultimate fulfillment. Right.

And the rule of thumb here is that the anti-type must always be greater than the type. Like consider the exodus motif. That's a great example.

You have the original historical event, the literal physical liberation from Egypt. That is your baseline type. But when later prophets like Isaiah begin promising a new exodus, they aren't just predicting another border crossing.

No, they are projecting an event that will massively overshadow the original. Like the new exodus is described with this incredible cosmic language. Deserts blooming.

Yes. Deserts blooming, spiritual liberation, permanent redemption. The blueprint escalates from just a physical rescue to a total renewal of reality.

Which brings up a really vital distinction in literary analysis. We have to differentiate this from mere metaphor or philosophical allegory. Wait, let me push back on this a little bit to make sure I grasp the boundaries here.

Is this typological shaping really that different from what the first-century philosopher Philo was doing? Oh, that's an interesting comparison. Because you know, Philo looked at the Genesis narratives and essentially argued they were just allegories. He said the historical characters were just stand-ins for the soul's internal struggle between virtue and vice.

If the biblical authors are curating history to make a point, isn't typology just a dressed-up word for allegory? It is emphatically different. And Harmon draws a very hard line here. See, Philo was importing an external framework, specifically Greek Platonic philosophy, and forcing the biblical text to wear it almost like a costume.

Okay, I see. Allegory, in that sense, often just unmoors the text from the actual dirt and grime of history. Like, if the historical event didn't actually happen, the allegory still functions perfectly fine because it's just a philosophical teaching tool.

Right, it doesn't need to be real to teach a lesson. Exactly. But typology cannot survive without actual history.

Because it's actual history acting as a template for future real history. The original event has to carry the structural weight of the future event. Yes, 100%.

The historical reality of the donor text is the anchor. Typology relies on the premise that the divine author is orchestrating real-world events, and the human author is recording those real events in a highly stylized, selective way to point toward the future. Wow.

Okay, so if we accept that these historical patterns exist and are deliberately shaped, it naturally forces a massive question about the authors themselves. Did they know what they were doing? Exactly. Did the original writers know they were dropping these time capsule clues for the future? Like did Moses or David sit down and think, I am writing a multi-layered time-traveling blueprint? Or is this just something we project onto the text in hindsight? And this is actually the epicenter of a major debate in biblical scholarship.

It revolves around whether typology is inherently forward-looking or backward-looking. Okay, tell me more about that. Well, Harmon uses two prominent scholars to illustrate the tension here: James Hamilton and Richard Hayes.

Right, and James Hamilton is really the champion of the forward-looking camp. He argues that when these ancient authors were composing their texts, they were fully conscious of the promise-shaped patterns they were creating. They knew exactly what they were doing.

Yeah, they intended to signal to their immediate audiences that the current events were incomplete templates pointing toward a future resolution. Hamilton's perspective suggests a highly self-aware authorship. Take Deuteronomy 18, for example, where Moses tells the people that God will eventually raise up a prophet like you from among their brothers.

Right. Hamilton would argue Moses is explicitly leaning on the fourth wall there, telling the reader, I am a prototype. Look for the figure who fits my contours but operates on a much grander scale.

So the text itself is demanding that the reader look forward. Then Richard Hayes takes the opposite approach. He argues for a backward-looking or retrospective typology.

Which is fascinating in its own right. It is. Hayes operates on the idea that these are events flowing unpredictably in the stream of time.

So you can only truly discern the pattern after the fulfillment actually happens. The second event arrives and retroactively imparts a new layer of significance to the first event. And Hayes points to Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 5, verse 7, where Paul just casually refers to Christ as our Passover lamb.

Just drops it in there. Yeah. But if you scour the original Exodus narrative in chapters 11 and 12, the text is entirely focused on the immediate physical deliverance of the Israelites.

Right. There is no explicit footnote in Exodus saying, hey, by the way, this sacrificial animal is a placeholder for a future human messiah. Exactly.

You can only make that connection by standing in the first century, looking backward, and recognizing the structural resonance. So according to Hayes, the pattern is latent until the fulfillment unlocks it. The debate is essentially about the locus of meaning.

Is it placed there intentionally by the human author looking forward? Or is it realized retrospectively by a later author looking backward? And Dr. Haman's conclusion is that it's essentially a false dichotomy. Which I love. It's not either.

Scripture contains both explicit forward-looking types and latent backward-looking types. It's a synthesis of human intentionality and divine orchestration. And here's where it gets really interesting for me.

To explain this backward-looking concept to those of us who, you know, struggle to grasp how a text can mean something the author might not have fully comprehended, Haman uses two analogies that completely changed how I view literature. They are so helpful. The first one, he brings up a mystery movie.

You are watching a tense thriller, and in the final scene, the detective reveals the killer was the butcher and the murder weapon was the candlestick. And the moment the detective says that, your brain instantly rewinds to a seemingly throwaway shot in the first act where the butcher absentmindedly dragged his hand across the candlestick on a table. Yes, while you were sitting in the theater watching Act One, that detail had absolutely no significance to you.

The meaning was totally latent. You didn't even notice it. But once you receive the revelation of the ending, you look back and realize the clue was deliberately planted the whole time.

You just lacked the terminal context required to understand its weight. The pattern was there, waiting to be activated by the ending. It fundamentally changes the rewatch value of the movie.

It totally does. But the second analogy is even better for explaining the mechanics of backward-looking typology. Luminol.

Ah, yes, the forensic chemical. Crime scene investigators walk into a room that looks spotless to the naked eye. They spray the walls with luminol, turn off the lights, hit the room with a black light, and suddenly the walls illuminate with hidden bloodstains.

It's eerie, but it's a great metaphor. Right. The vital point here, and this is how it connects to the biblical text, is that the luminol does not create the blood.

The blood was already embedded in the fibers of the room. It just required the introduction of a specific chemical agent to make the invisible visible. And Harmon is arguing that later revelation, specifically the New Testament, acts as the theological luminol.

When Paul or Matthew look back at the Hebrew Bible, they're spraying the luminol of the ancient texts, exposing typological patterns that were already deeply embedded in the historical reality. They aren't inventing the connections. Exactly.

They are revealing the divine architecture that was present all along. Having established the mechanics that these patterns exist as both explicit forward-looking clues and hidden backward-looking luminol traces, we really need to examine how they function dynamically on the page. Because understanding the theory is one thing, but seeing the execution is a whole other ballgame.

Absolutely. And Harmon provides a spectrum, moving from a blatant, neon-sign example to an incredibly subtle, mind-bending one. Let's examine the blatant example first.

In Romans chapter 5, Paul explicitly constructs a typological bridge between Adam and Christ. He literally calls Adam a type of the one who was to come. He just spells it out.

He does. But the value here isn't just in spotting the connection, you know. It's in observing the mechanics of how Paul selectively draws the analogy.

He relies heavily on the concepts of contrast and escalation. Right, because he writes that through one man's trespass, Adam's death, judgment, and condemnation spread to everyone. The donor text is one of massive macro-failure.

Huge failure. But then Paul deploys a very specific, repeated grammatical phrase to signal the escalation. He says, how much more? How much more have the grace of God and the free gift abounded for many? Paul is showing that the anti-type doesn't just reverse the type; it aggressively overwhelms it.

It dwarfs it. Yeah. Through Adam's disobedience, many were made sinners, but through Christ's obedience, many are constituted righteous.

The scale of the Restoration vastly outpaces the scale of the original ruin. So Romans 5 is Paul essentially handing us the blueprint and just explaining the math. Pretty clearly.

But then Harmon shifts our focus to Matthew chapter 4, the narrative of Jesus being tempted in the wilderness. If Paul is explicit, Matthew is entirely cryptic. I mean, I have read this narrative countless times, and I completely missed the underlying architectural resonance taking place.

Matthew's execution is wonderfully subtle. On a superficial reading, it is a straightforward account of Jesus resisting the devil's provocation. Right, like a Sunday school lesson.

Exactly. You can read it purely for moral instruction and extract immense value. But beneath that surface layer, Matthew is deliberately shaping the narrative to establish a profound structural analogy between Jesus and the historical nation of Israel.

And this is where the sheer mathematical precision of the text just blew my mind. If you look at the Old Testament donor texts, God specifically refers to Israel as his firstborn son. And as we enter Matthew 4, Jesus has just been explicitly declared God's beloved son at his baptism.

Yes. Israel is physically led by the divine presence into the wilderness. Jesus is led by the divine Spirit into the wilderness.

Israel wanders in that arid landscape for 40 years. Jesus fasts in that exact same landscape for 40 days. The parallels are intensely curated.

They're locking the two narratives together point for point. But the true typological escalation reveals itself when you analyze the specific nature of the temptations. This is the best part.

Right. What were the core historical failures of Israel during those 40 years? They experienced hunger and aggressively grumbled against God's provision. They lacked water and forced a test of God's presence at Massa.

And ultimately, they fell into catastrophic idolatry with the golden calf. Complete collapse. And what are the three specific vectors of attack the devil uses against Jesus? He demands Jesus turn stones into bread to satisfy his hunger.

He urges Jesus to throw himself off the pinnacle of the temple to test God's physical protection. Echoing Massa. Yes.

And he offers Jesus absolute dominion over the kingdoms of the world if Jesus will simply commit an act of idolatry and worship him. The devil is running the exact same historical playbook. It's identical.

But the genius of the narrative isn't just in the setup. It is in how the anti-type responds. When Jesus counters these three temptations, he does not just pull random inspirational platitudes out of thin air.

He specifically quotes Scripture. He quotes Deuteronomy chapter 8 and chapter 6. Exactly. Which are the exact chapters where Moses is delivering his final retrospective on Israel's wilderness failures.

Precisely. Jesus is actively wielding the historical records of the donor text's failure in order to succeed where the type collapsed. By quoting Deuteronomy regarding the manna, the testing at Massah, and the command to worship God alone, Jesus is consciously stepping into the blueprint of Israel's history.

He knows exactly what he's doing. He does. He is intentionally fulfilling the pattern.

He demonstrates that he is the true obedient son succeeding in the very crucible where the original corporate son failed. And the typological escalation here is that Jesus isn't merely a revived nation. He is the divine Son bringing terminal resolution to the pattern.

Man, my mind is just thoroughly blown by the depth of that literary engineering. But frankly, observing that level of subtlety also triggers a bit of panic for me. Panic? Why the panic? Because if the connections can be that incredibly layered and that reliant on subtle echoes, what prevents a reader from seeing them literally everywhere? Oh, the conspiracy board effect.

Exactly. Yeah. Like, what stops me from opening a text, reading a scene where a character rests against a large gray rock, then remembering that Jesus's tomb was carved from gray rock and triumphantly shouting typology?

The gray rock is a shadow of the tomb. How do we avoid slipping into interpretive anarchy? It is a critical concern and honestly a trap a lot of people fall into. If every minor detail is a type, then the concept loses all structural integrity.

Herman anticipates this, though, and he establishes strict interpretive guardrails. The first maybe concept he introduces to stabilize our reading is multiple iterations, which some scholars categorize as ectypes. Ectypes.

Okay, how does an ectype stabilize the pattern? By proving the pattern is structural, not incidental. It means a genuine typological pattern will often repeat multiple times across different historical epochs before reaching its grand finale. It is a recurring motif that builds momentum.

Herman traces the cultural mandate given in Genesis. God commands Adam to be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and exercise dominion. You don't just see that command once and then wait thousands of years for Jesus.

No, you see the pattern immediately reemerge after the flood. God gives the exact same mandate to Noah. It echoes again in the promises to Abraham and later in the royal dominion of David.

The blueprint is repeatedly drafted and refined. The pattern tracks across multiple, highly significant historical anchors. It swells until it culminates in the antitype.

Herman points to the Great Commission at the end of Matthew's Gospel as the ultimate fulfillment. Oh, that makes so much sense. Jesus declares, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me, which is the ultimate realization of dominion.

He then commands his followers to go therefore and make disciples of all nations, the ultimate spiritual realization of being fruitful and multiplying. So the guardrail is that the pattern operates on a macro-structural level. You aren't hunting for micro-coincidences; you don't validate a type just by matching a character wearing a red cloak in one era to the red blood of Christ in another.

No, you have to prove the pattern carries theological weight across multiple iterations. Herman also insists we differentiate typology from what literary scholars call the extended echo effect. Yes.

And this one is tricky because an echo sounds exactly like a type. They share DNA, but they really serve different functions. The extended echo effect is a purely literary device used to create narrative symmetry or highlight character traits, but it lacks the forward-looking, expectational trajectory of typology.

Give me an example of that. The classic example is in Genesis. Abraham, out of fear, lies to a foreign king and claims his wife Sarah is merely his sister.

Generations later, his son Isaac finds himself in a similarly geopolitical situation and deploys the exact same lie regarding his wife Rebecca. So the author is definitely linking those two events intentionally. Undoubtedly.

But the author is doing it to show Isaac repeating his father's moral failures. It binds the Genesis narrative together thematically. However, there is no escalation.

Okay, I see. The text is not building a pattern that points forward to a greater future savior who will also lie about his marital status. Right, that would make no sense.

Exactly. It is a closed literary loop, whereas typology is an open-ended trajectory pointing toward a terminal resolution. And as we discussed earlier with Philo, Harmon heavily warns against sliding back into allegory where you strip away the original historical context just to make a neat spiritual point.

Typology has to grow organically out of the dirt of the actual history. Which brings Harmon to a vital, overarching principle for anyone engaging with ancient texts. Interpretive humility.

Humility is key. We can plant our flags confidently when a biblical author explicitly names the type, when Paul hands us the math on Adam or David. But the water gets murky when the connections are latent or unstated.

Harmon uses the historical film of Joshua to test this humility. Because Joshua is never explicitly labeled a type of Christ by any New Testament author. Yet his name is literally the Hebrew equivalent of the name Jesus.

And his primary historical function is leading God's people across the Jordan into their promised inheritance. The structural parallels are practically vibrating off the page. It feels almost negligent not to call it a type.

The temptation to force the label is incredibly strong. But Harmon advises that if the later biblical authors did not explicitly deploy the luminol to highlight that specific pattern, we must hold the connection with a loose grip. Just appreciate it for what it is.

Right. We can acknowledge the resonance. We can appreciate the literary beauty of the parallels.

But we should not elevate it to the level of rigid, dogmatic doctrine. Interpretive humility means recognizing that while we might see a pattern, we aren't the primary architects of the blueprint. We are just the ones trying to read the shadow on the floor.

Exactly. So if we synthesize everything Dr. Harmon has laid out, we realize that typological patterns are far more than clever literary parlor tricks. They are deeply embedded historical templates.

They're designed by a divine author orchestrating real events, recorded by human authors curating those events, and they consistently escalate in scale and significance over centuries. They demand that we root the text not as a collection of isolated moral fables, but as a unified, dynamically interconnected architecture. And they remind us that we often require the retroactive luminol of a narrative's conclusion to truly comprehend what was written in the foundation all along.

It is a phenomenal way to approach historical literature. And, as we wrap up this deep dive, there was one final detail tucked away in Harmon's lecture that I really want to leave you with. Harmon briefly flashed a diagram on the screen from a theologian named Giordano Voss.

Oh, the triangle diagram. Yes. It was a simple triangle illustrating how typology functions.

But the triangle didn't just map out the flow of time, past, present, and future. It mapped out a spatial dimension. It adds a whole new layer to it.

It really does. The top point of the triangle represented a heavenly reality. From that peak, an arrow pointed straight down to the earthly types recorded in the ancient texts.

Voss was arguing that these ancient historical events weren't just templates for the future. Right. They were actual physical shadows cast down onto the earth by a higher, permanent, heavenly reality.

The earthly events were merely iterations of something vastly more real that existed above them. It's a staggering concept. Which leaves me with a profound thought for you to carry into your week.

If those ancient historical events were just shadows, temporary iterations pointing toward an ultimate reality that broke into the world through Christ, is it possible that our current historical moment, the life you are living right now, is also just a shadow? What if our current reality is just another iteration pointing toward an even greater, final, unshakable, heavenly reality that hasn't fully arrived yet? If we are actively living inside the blueprint right now, what kind of blinding luminol will be required at the end of history to show us the majestic patterns we couldn't even see we were a part of? That is something to think about. We'll let you mull that one over. Thanks for joining us on this deep dive.

Until next time.