

The True Joshua



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *1 Cor. 10:1–13; Matt. 2:15; Josh. 1:1–3; Acts 3:22–26; Heb. 3:7–4:11; 2 Cor. 10:3–5.*

Memory Text: “Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come” (*1 Corinthians 10:11, ESV*).

In the book of Joshua, there is a sense that the life of its main character points beyond itself to a reality that is much greater than the man himself. We see this principle all through the Bible, such as with the land of Canaan, a symbol of our eternal hope in a new earth. And, of course, the earthly sanctuary service pointed to a greater reality: “But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation” (*Heb. 9:11, NKJV*).

But the question arises: In what way does Joshua point to a future fulfillment? How can we be sure that such an interpretation of the book is legitimate? What are the biblical principles that control the application of the book of Joshua to New Testament realities and to end-time events?

This week, we will look at principles of biblical interpretation concerning typology. We will study how the Bible itself contains indicators of typology and how the life of Joshua foreshadows the ministry of the Messiah and points to symbolism fulfilled in the church as well as in the consummation of human history.

* *Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, December 6.*

Biblical Typology

Study the following Scriptures that refer to types and try to define what biblical typology is: Rom. 5:14, 1 Cor. 10:1–13, Heb. 8:5, and Heb. 9:23.

These biblical passages use the term “type” (Greek *typos*) or “antitype” (Greek *antitypos*) to refer to the way the New Testament writer defined the relationship between an Old Testament text or event and its meaning in his own time or in the future.

Typology is a specific interpretation of persons, events, or institutions that prefigure Jesus or other realities contained in the gospel. The type corresponds to the antitype as a mold or a hollow form that reflects the original form, even if the latter, the antitype, more fully fulfills the purpose of the type. Thus, the biblical type was shaped according to a divine design that had existed concretely, or conceptually, in the mind of God, and it serves to shape future copies (antitypes).

It is crucial to understand that the writers of the New Testament did not randomly attribute a typological meaning to some Old Testament texts in order to make a point. An Old Testament type is always validated in the prophetic writings before it acquires an antitypical fulfillment in the New Testament.

Look at how David appears in the Old Testament and then how he is prefigured in the New. What lessons can we learn about how typology works from this example?

a. David (*Ps. 22:1, 14–18*): _____

b. The new David (*Jer. 23:5; Isa. 9:5, 6; Isa. 11:1–5*): _____

c. The antitypical David (*John 19:24*): _____

By looking at these texts, we discover that the Old Testament itself provides the key for identifying and applying types in the Scriptures. That is, New Testament writers, whose Scripture was the Old Testament, were inspired by the Holy Spirit to use the Old Testament types to reveal “present truth” (*2 Pet. 1:12*), especially about Jesus and His ministry.

Type and Antitype

Interpreters of the Bible cannot arbitrarily decide on what constitutes a biblical type or how that particular type is fulfilled in the New Testament and beyond. The Bible itself provides some controls and principles as to the application of biblical typology.

Similarly, the New Testament unfolds the antitypical fulfillment of a type in three distinct phases: (1) in the life of Christ (the Christological fulfillment), (2) in the experience of the church (the ecclesiological fulfillment), and (3) at the end of time (the eschatological fulfillment).

We can find these types and antitypes all through the Bible, and they are very helpful in showing readers how to understand the Bible and what truths the Word of God is teaching about Jesus, salvation, and the ultimate hope that we have.

Look at the following Old Testament types: Israel, the Exodus, and the sanctuary. How is each fulfilled in the three antitypical phases: the Christological, the ecclesiological, and the eschatological?

1. Israel

- a. Christological phase (*Matt. 2:15*)
- b. Ecclesiological phase (*Gal. 6:16*)
- c. Eschatological phase (*Rev. 7:4–8, 14*)

2. The Exodus

- a. Christological phase (*Matt. 2:19–21*)
- b. Ecclesiological phase (*2 Cor. 6:17*)
- c. Eschatological phase (*Rev. 18:4*)

3. The Sanctuary

- a. Christological phase (*John 1:14, John 2:21, Matt. 26:61*)
- b. Ecclesiological phase (*1 Cor. 3:16, 17; 2 Cor. 6:16*)
- c. Eschatological phase (*Rev. 3:12, Rev. 11:19, Rev. 21:3, Rev. 21:22*)

“Since Scripture has a single divine Author, the various parts of Scripture are consistent with each other. . . . All the doctrines of the Bible will cohere with each other; interpretations of individual passages will harmonize with the totality of what Scripture teaches on a given subject.”—Raoul Dederen, ed., *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000), p. 65.

What do you do when, at times, you find it hard to understand the meaning of certain passages?

Joshua, the Type

In the light of biblical typology, what is the significance of the multiple parallelism between the lives of Moses and Joshua? See *Exod. 3:1, 2; Josh. 1:1–3; Num. 13:1, 2; Josh. 2:1; Exod. 3:5; Josh. 5:15*.

As we discovered in the first week, Joshua was presented as a new Moses who, in the life of the second generation, repeated the most significant steps of the Exodus from Egypt. Just as Moses was, Joshua was commissioned by a personal encounter with the Lord. Under the leadership of both Moses and Joshua, Israel's fame among the nations inspired fear. Moses led Israel in crossing the Red Sea, and Joshua led Israel in a miraculous crossing of the Jordan. Both leaders were reminded of the necessity of circumcision and the importance of the Passover. Manna began to fall in the time of Moses, and it ended with Joshua. Both were commanded to take off their sandals. The outstretched hand of both signaled victory for Israel. Moses gave instructions for the division of the land and the institution of cities of refuge. Joshua fulfilled the instructions. Both gave a farewell address to the nation and renewed the covenant for the people at the end of their ministry.

Study Deuteronomy 18:15–19, Deuteronomy 34:10–12, John 1:21, Acts 3:22–26, and Acts 7:37. Who fulfills the prophecy of Moses about a prophet like himself? How does Joshua fit into the picture?

Joshua's life was a partial fulfillment of the prophecy made by Moses (*Deut. 18:15, 18*). However, the prophecy made by Moses was not fulfilled in its ultimate sense. In its ultimate sense, the prophecy could be accomplished (or fulfilled) only by the Messiah. The Messiah knew the Father intimately (*John 1:14, 18*); He was true and revealed God truthfully (*Luke 10:22, John 14:6, Matt. 22:16*). God indeed put His words in His mouth (*John 14:24*). So, both the life of Moses and that of Joshua become types of the coming Messiah, Jesus.

How central is Jesus to your own walk with the Lord? Why must Jesus, and what He has done for you, be the foundation of your whole Christian experience?

The True Joshua, the Antitype

The story of Joshua must be seen through the prism of typology. The wars Joshua conducted are historical events, constituting an essential segment of Israel's history. The goal of these wars is to settle the Israelites in the Promised Land, where they can enjoy their allotted inheritance in peace and establish a new society based on the principles of God's law.

Later, Old Testament authors, such as Isaiah, present the work of the Messiah as also consisting of allotting the "desolate inheritances [to His people]" (*Isa. 49:8, NIV*), using the same terminology that is so frequent in the book of Joshua. As the task of Joshua had been to apportion the land to the Israelites, so the Messiah, portrayed as the new Joshua, assigns the spiritual inheritance to a new Israel.

Read Hebrews 3:7–4:11. How does the New Testament confirm that Joshua, the new Moses, is himself a type of Jesus Christ?

The authors of the New Testament presented many aspects of the ministry of Jesus Christ in terms of Joshua's work. As Joshua stepped into Canaan after 40 years in the wilderness, so the "antitypical Joshua," Jesus, entered His earthly ministry after 40 days in the wilderness (*Matt. 4:1–11, Luke 4:1–13*) and His heavenly ministry after 40 days in the wilderness of this earth (*Acts 1:3, 9–11; Heb. 1:2*).

After Jesus' baptism in the river Jordan (His "crossing of the Jordan" [*Matt. 3:13–17, Mark 1:9–11*]), the gospel writers quote from Psalm 2:7 and Isaiah 42:1, from a Messianic psalm and from a song about the Suffering Servant of Yahweh (*Matt. 3:17, Mark 1:11, Luke 3:22*). Consequently, through His baptism, Jesus is presented as the Divine Warrior who will—through a life of faithful obedience, even unto death—wage the wars of Yahweh against the evil forces. His life and death on the cross brought about the casting out of Satan, led the conquest over our spiritual enemies, offered spiritual rest to His people, and allotted an inheritance for the redeemed (*Eph. 4:8, Heb. 1:4, Heb. 9:15*).

What does it mean to be able to "rest" in what Christ has done for us? That is, how can we have assurance that Jesus has defeated Satan in our behalf?

Joshua and Us

Joshua, as a type, points beyond the ministry of Jesus Christ to a fulfillment in the life of the church, Christ's body. In what sense do the wars Israel fought under Joshua foreshadow the spiritual struggles of the church? How are they different? See *1 Tim. 1:18*, *2 Tim. 4:7*, *Eph. 6:10–12*, *2 Cor. 10:3–5*, and *Acts 20:32*.

The writers of the New Testament recognize the ecclesiological (church) fulfillment of the Joshua typology. The members of Christ's body, the church, are involved in a spiritual warfare against evil forces; nevertheless, they enjoy the rest of God's grace (*Heb. 4:9–11*) and the blessings of their spiritual inheritance.

What do these texts say about the ultimate fulfillment of the Joshua typology? *1 Pet. 1:4*, *Col. 3:24*, *Rev. 20:9*, *Rev. 21:3*.

The final and complete fulfillment of the Joshua typology will be accomplished at the second coming of Jesus Christ (apocalyptic/eschatological aspect).

Joshua's life reflected so much of God's character that certain aspects of his life took on a prophetic character foreshadowing the activity and person of the Messiah.

For us, today, the Messiah has already come. His ministry does not need to be prefigured, but we still have the privilege of reflecting His character—the glory that Christ longed to share with His disciples (*John 17:22*) and that can become ours by contemplating the character of Christ (*2 Cor. 3:18*). The more we contemplate Jesus, the more we reflect the beauty of His character. This is so foundational to what our daily walk with Christ should lead to. This is why time in the Word, every day, is so important. This is why, too, we should also spend time dwelling on the life and character and teachings of Jesus. By beholding, yes, we do become changed.

Joshua, the type, asked the Israelites: “ ‘How long will you neglect to go and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers has given you?’ ” (*Josh. 18:3, NKJV*). How would Jesus, the antitype of Joshua, phrase that question today?

FurtherThought: “Christ’s mission was not understood by the people of His time. . . . The traditions, maxims, and enactments of men hid from them the lessons which God intended to convey. These maxims and traditions became an obstacle to their understanding and practice of true religion. And when the Reality came, in the person of Christ, they did not recognize in Him the fulfillment of all their types, the substance of all their shadows. They rejected the antitype, and clung to their types and useless ceremonies. The Son of God had come, but they continued to ask for a sign. The message, ‘Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,’ they answered by demands for a miracle. . . . The gospel of Christ was a stumbling block to them because they demanded signs instead of a Saviour. They expected the Messiah to prove His claims by mighty deeds of conquest, to establish His empire on the ruins of earthly kingdoms. This expectation Christ answered in the parable of the sower. Not by force of arms, not by violent interpositions, was the kingdom of God to prevail, but by the implanting of a new principle in the hearts of men.”—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 34, 35.

“The church needs faithful Calebs and Joshuas, who are ready to accept eternal life on God’s simple condition of obedience. Our churches are suffering for laborers. The world is our field. Missionaries are wanted in cities and villages that are more certainly bound by idolatry than are the pagans of the East, who have never seen the light of truth. The true missionary spirit has deserted the churches that make so exalted a profession; their hearts are no longer aglow with love for souls and a desire to lead them into the fold of Christ. We want earnest workers. Are there none to respond to the cry that goes up from every quarter: ‘Come over . . . and help us?’”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 156.

Discussion Questions:

- ① How does biblical typology help you better understand the ministry of Jesus Christ on your behalf?
- ② In what respect is our spiritual warfare like the conquest of Canaan, and how is it different?
- ③ Contemplate on the ultimate fulfillment of the Joshua typology. How does the picture of a world without pain, suffering, and death give us real hope in the daily struggles of life?
- ④ Joshua reflected the character of God to the extent that he foreshadowed the ministry of Christ. What are some practical ways that you can allow Jesus to reflect His character in you more completely?

Trusting in God's Timing

For four years, Kim Sun argued with his parents about the Bible every time he came home to South Korea on vacation from his theology studies at the Adventist University of the Philippines. After graduating, he kept touting Adventist doctrines as he studied for a master's degree in theology in South Korea. The arguments grew so intense that his parents' church organized a prayer vigil for his parents, who served as a church deacon and deaconess. About 100 people prayed that the parents wouldn't be swayed into leaving their church. Finally, Mother asked Sun to stop discussing the Bible.

Sun was dismayed until he heard a preacher say that God has an individual plan for each person. He realized that his plan for his parents might not be God's plan. He decided to pray and trust God's timing. He didn't talk to his parents about the Bible for two years.

In the meanwhile, Sun completed his master's and got a job with the church. He dreamed of becoming a pastor, but he didn't receive a job offer.

As time passed, Mother began to wonder if her own beliefs were blocking her son's dreams. She overheard someone ask Sun if his parents were Adventist, and he replied that they belonged to another denomination. She asked Sun directly, "Would it be helpful to you if we joined your church?"

Sun understood that his parents were worried about his future, but he didn't want them to become Adventists for his sake. "It wouldn't be helpful," he said. "You need to study the Bible for yourselves and then decide."

Sun introduced his parents to a pastor in their area, and they started Bible studies. None of Sun's Bible arguments had convinced them over five years. But as they studied the Bible, they saw Jesus' love in truths that they hadn't noticed previously. After two months, they joined the Adventist Church.

Sun was so happy! He was the first Adventist in his family, and now his parents had joined him. He remembered the joy that he had experienced several years earlier when a man's life was changed after he introduced him to Jesus in the Philippines. He remembered his desire at the time to become a full-time missionary.

Sun decided to return to the Philippines as a missionary with the 1000 Missionary Movement, an organization that is part of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's Southern Asia-Pacific Division.



Kim Sun is associate director of the 1000 Missionary Movement, whose headquarters in Silang, Philippines, were constructed with the help of a 1996 Thirteenth Sabbath Offering. Read more next week.