

# Types and Shadows Reveal Jesus Christ in the Old Testament

June 16, 2012 by [Scott LaPierre](#) [12 Comments](#)



Many people enjoy reading about Jesus in the New Testament without knowing He's revealed throughout the Old Testament in types and shadows. In the Bible, we have an account of someone finding Jesus and recognizing He is the Messiah. The person was Philip and he wanted his friend, Nathaniel, to meet Him too. When Philip spoke to Nathaniel, he revealed why he thought Jesus was the Messiah:

"We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the Prophets, wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

*John 1:45*

The "Law and the Prophets" was a title for the Old Testament before the New Testament was written. Philip understood the Old Testament was

about Jesus, which is why he believed Jesus was the Messiah. He expected Nathaniel to be convinced He was the Messiah as well because he would also recognize Him as the One identified in the Law and the Prophets.

## **Jesus Said the Old Testament Is About Him**

- Luke 24:27—“Beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, [Jesus] expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things **concerning Himself.**”
- Luke 24:44—“[Jesus] said, ‘All things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms **concerning Me.**’”
- John 5:39, 46—“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are **they which testify of Me...**For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he **wrote about Me.**”
- Hebrews 10:7—“[Jesus said,] ‘Behold, I have come—in **the volume of the book it is written of Me.**’”

## **Jesus Is Primarily Revealed Two Ways in the Old Testament**

**First, there are prophecies of Him.** For example these verses state He would:

- Be from the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10)
- Receive King David’s throne (2 Samuel 7:12-13)
- Be spat upon and beaten (Isaiah 50:6)
- Be silent in the face of accusations (Isaiah 53:7)
- Spend a season in Egypt (Hosea 11:1)
- Ride into Jerusalem on a donkey (Zechariah 9:9)

And the list goes on. And on. And on. [Jesus fulfilled around 350](#)

## **The second way the Old Testament reveals Jesus is through types and shadows:**

- Hebrews 10:1 says, "The law [was only] a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities" (ESV).
- Colossians 2:16-17 says a "festival or a new moon or sabbaths [are] a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ."

"Shadows" are a fitting way to describe the types of Christ in the Old Testament because shadows provide an idea of what something looks like without completely revealing the object. The Old Testament does this with Christ. A shadow is evidence that something is casting it, or in the case of Christ, it is Someone. Finally, nobody looks at a shadow and believes it is the real thing. Nobody sees the shadow of a tree or car and thinks it is a tree or car. Shadows have no substance. They are not the reality. In Colossians 2:17, Jesus is the substance and in Hebrews 10:1, He is the reality.

## **The New Testament identifies many types and shadows of Christ in the Old Testament**

- Matthew 12:40 compares Jesus with Jonah: "For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."
- John 3:14 compares Jesus with the Bronze Serpent: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up."
- John 6:32-33 compares Jesus with the manna: "Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."
- Romans 5:14 compares Jesus with Adam: "Adam is a type of Him

who was to come."

- First Corinthians 5:7 compares Jesus with the Passover Lamb: "For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us."
- First Corinthians 10:4 compares Jesus with the rock that accompanied Israel in the wilderness: "[Israel] drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ."
- Hebrews 10:20 compares Jesus' body with the veil in the temple that when "torn" on the cross revealed the access believers have to the Father: "[We have] a new and living way [to God] which [Jesus] consecrated for us, through the veil, [which] is, His flesh."
- Hebrews 11:17-19 [compares Isaac with Jesus](#). When Abraham sacrificed his son, it was a picture of God sacrificing His Son: "Abraham...offered up Isaac...He considered that [God was able even to raise him from the dead](#)."

## **Certain people serve as types and shadows of Christ**

- [Joseph is a type and shadow of Jesus Christ](#)
- [Abigail is a type and shadow of Jesus Christ](#)
- [Job is a type and shadow of Jesus Christ](#)

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Watch this sermon I delivered as a [guest preacher](#) about Jonah serving as a type and shadow of Jesus Christ...

Jonah serves as one of the clearest types and shadows of Jesus Christ. When Jesus was asked for a sign, He staked His death, burial, and resurrection on the prophet. Additionally, the storm the disciples experienced with Jesus in the boat parallels the storm Jonah experienced when the sailors threw him overboard. Having Jesus in the boat with the disciples didn't stop the storm they experienced any more than a relationship with Jesus stops the storms we experience. Jonah died and calmed the storm so they might live, but only Jesus calms the storm of God's wrath that's against us so we might live eternally.

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## **Certain practices looked forward to Christ**

The law commanded sacrifices for sins, and each sacrifice looked forward to Jesus—the true and greater Sacrifice for sins. Circumcision

has its fulfillment in Christ because He helps us put off our sinful flesh: "In [Christ] you were circumcised... without hands by putting off... the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ" (Colossians 2:11). Hebrews 4:1-9 says the rest people enjoyed on the Sabbath was a picture of the true and greater rest that is found in Christ.

### **Miracles in the Old Testament prefigured miracles Jesus would perform in a greater way**

- Moses unleashed ten judgments on one nation (Exodus 7–12), but Jesus will unleash twenty-one judgments on the whole earth: "And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!'" (Revelation 6:15-16).
- When the Man of God healed King Jeroboam's withered hand (1 Kings 13:4-6), it prefigured Jesus healing the man with the withered hand (Luke 6:10).
- God took Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind (2 Kings 2:11), but Jesus ascended to heaven on His own (Acts 1:9).
- Elisha fed one hundred men with twenty loaves (2 Kings 4:42–44), but Jesus fed 5,000 and 4,000 men with five and seven loaves (Matthew 14:13–21 and 15:32–39).
- Elisha cleansed one man of leprosy (2 Kings 5:1–14), but Jesus cleansed ten men (Luke 17:11–19).
- Elisha knew what Gehazi had done (2 Kings 5:26), but Jesus knows what all men have done (John 2:24).
- Elisha's death gave one person temporary life (2 Kings 13:21), but Jesus' death gives many people eternal life (Romans 5:18).

What is the purpose of all the prophecies and shadows? To lead people

to Christ! Jesus said, "All the prophets and the law prophesied until John" (Matthew 11:13). Jesus was veiled throughout the Old Testament in the types and shadows, but when John the Baptist arrived as Jesus' forerunner, He was no longer veiled. John pointed at Him and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).

## The Old Testament Serves as a Treasure Map to Jesus

Paul asked a question many people would answer incorrectly:

"What purpose then does the law serve?"

*Galatians 3:19a*

Typical answers would be something like, "To show you how to be a good person," or "To help you get to heaven." The law serves the opposite purpose! Instead of showing us how to be good, it shows us we are *not* good. When we become familiar with the law and see what it requires to be "good"—or righteous—we see we "have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed (Jesus) should come...

*Galatians 3:19b*

The New Testament was written in Greek, and the word for "transgression" is [\*parabasis\*](#), which means, "going over." People transgress when they know where God has drawn the line, but they step over it anyway. Although, people can only transgress if they know where the line is drawn. The law reveals the line, and thereby also our transgressions. Romans 3:20 says, "for by the law *is the knowledge of sin.*" The law helps us see our need for a Savior by revealing our

sinfulness to us. When we look at the standard the law sets, we see how far short we fall from keeping it.

Romans 5:20 says "the law entered that the offense might abound." This does not mean God gave the law so we would sin more. Instead, God gave the law so our sins would become clear. They would seem to be "abounding" or springing up around us. In Romans 7:7, Paul said, "I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, 'You shall not covet.'" Paul did not know he was sinning until he learned the law said not to covet!

## **The Law Reveals Our Need for the Savior**

We naturally think we are good. Proverbs 16:2 and 21:2 say, "All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes," and Proverbs 30:12 says, "There is a generation that is pure in its own eyes, yet is not washed from its filthiness." How could filthy people think they are pure? They are not familiar with God's law that would reveal their filthiness to them. Jeremiah had one of the most painful ministries in Scripture because he addressed sinful people who thought they were good. Notice his and God's efforts at reaching them:

- Jeremiah 2:23—[Jeremiah said], "How can you say, 'I am not polluted, I have not gone after the Baals'? See your way in the valley; know what you have done: you are a swift dromedary breaking loose in her ways." They thought they were not polluted, but they pursued idols like an animal in heat pursues a mate.
- Jeremiah 2:35—[God said], "Yet you say, 'Because I am innocent, surely His anger shall turn from me.' Behold, I will plead My case against you, because you say, 'I have not sinned.'" God said He would judge them because they were sinners who said they were innocent.

The problem with people who think they are not sinners is they see no need for a Savior. People only want:

- A parachute when they know the plane is crashing
- A cure when they learn they have a disease
- The fire department when they know there is a fire

The law says, "Your plane is crashing... you have a disease... there is a fire!" This is what Jesus meant in Luke 5:31 when He said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick." People who think they are spiritually healthy do not recognize their need for Jesus. The law can show them they are spiritually sick.

Despite how important the law is, it does not serve the same purpose throughout our lives. Paul says it lasts until we come to faith in Jesus (the Seed).

But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed.

*Galatians 3:23*

We should not interpret this literally to mean there was a time when there was not faith. Justified means "declared righteous," and the law cannot justify us because we are too sinful to obey it perfectly; therefore, God graciously allows justification to take place by faith. He says to wretched sinners, "Because of your faith in My Son, I will give you His righteousness." Sadly, those unfamiliar with the gospel claim they are righteous because of the way they live, but the way they live only demonstrates their unrighteousness.

Two thousand years before Christ came:

[Abraham] believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.



*Genesis 15:6*

Abraham was justified by faith. Believers in the Old Testament looked forward to Christ's coming like believers in the New Testament look back on Christ's coming. "Before faith" means before people put their faith in Christ. Until then the law "held [them] in custody" (NIV) or "kept [them] captive and imprisoned" (ESV).

Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

*Galatians 3:24*

When people become Christians, the Old Testament served its purpose in being a tutor—or treasure map—that led them to Christ.

But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

*Galatians 3:25*

Just as "before faith came" meant before putting faith in Christ, "after faith has come" means after putting faith in Christ. At that point, we "no longer [need] a tutor," because the law has served its purpose in our lives. The Old Testament served as a map to lead us to the treasure, which is Christ.

## **Don't Miss the Treasure!**

If you learned everything the Old Testament could teach—if you could recount every story, recite countless verses—but it did not lead you to Christ, then you have made the same mistake the religious leaders made in Jesus' day. Jesus criticized them saying:

You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me... If you believed Moses, you

would believe Me; for He wrote about Me.

*John 5:39, 46*

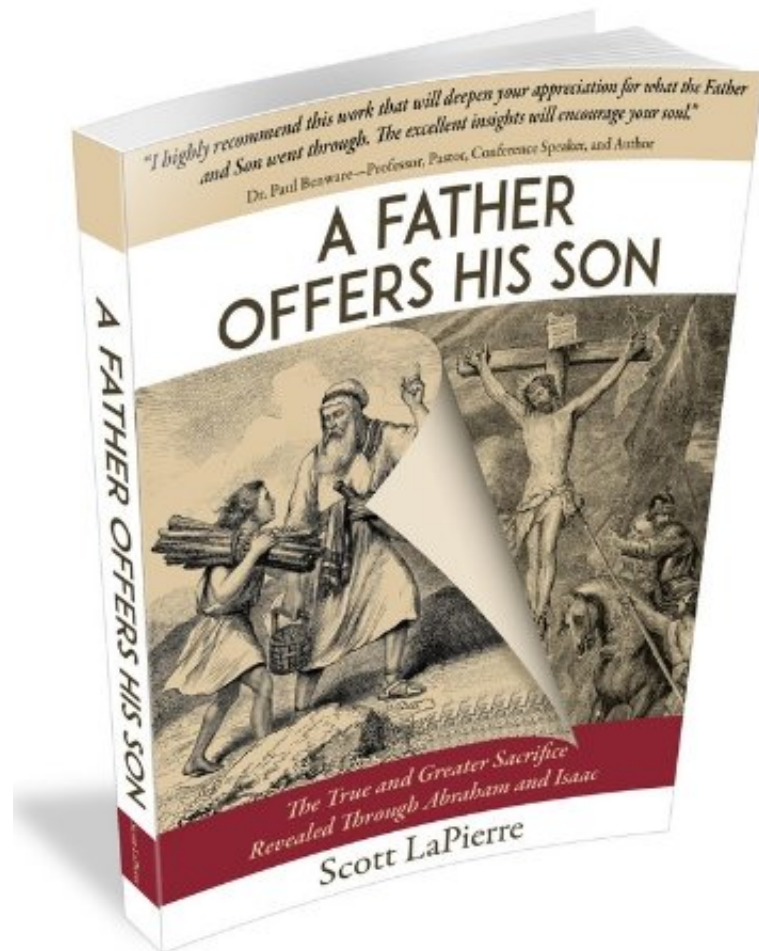
If you miss that the Old Testament testifies of Christ, then you have failed to let it be your tutor.

- In the language of Hebrews 10:1, you are missing the “reality,” which is Christ.
- In the language of Colossians 2:17 you are overlooking the “substance” we find in Christ.

You have missed the treasure! You are looking at the shadow of a tree while saying, “Look at that amazing tree!” Instead, see Christ through all the wonderful types and shadows!

### **Discussion Questions to Answer in Comments Section**

1. Do you have any questions about types and shadows?
2. Why did Jesus say the Old Testament is about Him?
3. Why is it fitting to call Old Testament types of Christ shadows?
4. What (or who) are your favorite examples of types and shadows?
5. Can you think of types or shadows that people take too far?
6. What purpose(s) does the law serve?



This post is taken from [\*A Father Offers His Son: The True and Greater Sacrifice Revealed Through Abraham and Isaac\*](#). **Get your copy today!**