



“Understanding the Bible”

Section 3: What is the Message of the Bible?



Unit 3.5 – All Signs Point to a Savior

I) Finding the Old Testament Footprints of Christ

- When we talk about the main message of the Bible, it is important to clarify that the “Good Book” is not primarily about one idea, but about one person: *Jesus Christ*. All of Holy Scripture should be considered *Christian* Scripture because all of Scripture points ultimately to Christ. Jesus himself claimed the entire Old Testament was about Him, and He even used these ancient Hebrew documents to point to His identity as the Messiah. In Luke 24, we encounter a narrative where Jesus is walking on the road to Emmaus with two men right after His resurrection. These men were grieving over the death of Christ because of their great hope that He would redeem Israel. They did not recognize Jesus as He began this seven-mile journey with them, but instead of immediately claiming His true identity, He began to speak from the Old Testament to reveal who He was and why He had to die to complete His ministry of salvation. **Luke 24:27** tells us, “*And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.*” In this unit, we will take a look back at the footprints of Jesus in the Old Testament to better see how all of Scripture points to Him as our Lord and Savior. These glimpses of Christ that we see in the Old Testament are what are known as “types and shadows,” because in these stories we see characters who are a symbolic “type” of Christ, or narratives that are a “shadow” of what is to come in the New Testament upon Christ’s arrival.

II) A Second Look at the Second Adam

- When we encounter the Creation account in Genesis 1, we are introduced to the concept of God’s image. Of all the creatures of the earth, God waited until the end of the sixth day to create human beings and crown them with the privilege and responsibility of being image-bearers who reflect God’s love and holiness to the rest of the world (Genesis 1:27). Even before he sinned, Adam was a type of Christ whose life was pointing the world to Jesus. This is for the following reasons: (1) Adam and his family were charged with preserving God’s image; (2) Adam was called to have dominion over all the earth; (3) Adam was presented as a representative for the entire human race; and (4) The marriage of Adam and Eve was formed to demonstrate a deep and eternal love. If we look closer, we can see that these realities ultimately point us to Jesus Christ. It is Christ who... (1) restores God’s image; (2) claims dominion over all the earth; (3) is the representative for all of humanity who would place their faith in Him; and (4) takes the human bond of a loving marriage and defines its purpose by uncovering the greater relationship it symbolizes: The relationship of Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5:32). This is ultimately why Christ is referred to as the “Second Adam,” because it was Jesus who succeeded everywhere the first Adam failed. **Romans 5:17** says, “*For if, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one-man Jesus Christ.*”

III) The Portrait of a Promised Seed

- After the Fall of Man in the Garden of Eden, Scripture reveals the first glimpse of a gospel that would be revealed in Christ. As God was speaking to Satan the serpent and handing out His divine punishments, He says in **Genesis 3:15**, “*I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.*” This points to the coming of a messiah who would come from the seed of a woman. The entire Old Testament narrative hangs on this one promise, as the nation of Israel desperately awaits a messiah and is sorely disappointed story after story. It is not until Jesus arrives that we see this prophecy fulfilled. Satan bruises the heel of Christ as He is crucified on the Cross, but three days later as Christ comes out of the tomb His resurrection crushes the head of the serpent as Jesus makes a way from death to life.

IV) God's Ram in the Thicket

- As we continue in Genesis, we see another story that serves as a foreshadowing of Christ. In Genesis 22, God asks Abraham to do the impossible: sacrifice his son. In faith and obedience, Abraham goes up the mountain with Isaac and prepares to sacrifice him to the Lord. Just as Abraham is ready to kill his son, he is stopped by an Angel of the Lord who speaks on behalf of God. As **Genesis 22:13-14** recounts, ¹³*And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son.* This ram revealed that God Himself would provide the sacrifice through His own son, and Abraham celebrated this truth by renaming the mountain, *"The Lord will provide."*

V) The Lord as Our True Ladder

- When we read about the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11, we see that mankind tried and failed to build a tower that would reach all the way to heaven. Ever since God kicked Adam and Eve out of the garden, mankind has desperately tried to bridge the gap between God and man that sin has created. A few chapters later, we read about Jacob's dream of a divine ladder that reconnects heaven and earth. **Genesis 28:12** says, ¹²*And he dreamed, and behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it!* This dream was Scripture's first image of a bridge from God to man, and from heaven to earth. This vision would eventually come true through Jesus Christ Himself, who as the "God-Man" is the very bridge that reunites God with mankind as He joins the hand of God with the hand of man on the Cross.

VI) A Mediator Between Man's Evil & God's Goodness

- At the end of Genesis, we see another type of Christ in the person of Jacob's son Joseph. This figure was wrongly accused and experienced unthinkable punishment for the sins of his brothers and also his boss's dishonest wife. But with every trial he faced, God was using this to ultimately lead him to Egypt where he would save the people from famine and death. Joseph points to the greater purpose of his trials in **Genesis 50:20** which says, *"As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today."* The crucifixion of Christ is the pinnacle of this concept that man's evil would allowed for God's greater goodness.

VII) Both Our Priest & Our Offering

- In the book of Leviticus, we see God establishing a holy law that would allow for blood sacrifices to be made to cover over the sins of Israel. **Leviticus 17:11** states, *"for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life."* Israel needed the shed blood of animals to cover their sins as well as a priest to make these sacrifices yearly on their behalf. In the New Testament, we see that Jesus is both the priest and the sacrifice for the remission of sins for the people of God. Hebrews 7:27 summarizes, *"He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself."*

VIII) The Sacrifice in the Sign of Jonah

- While there are countless other types and shadows of Christ in the Old Testament, we will conclude this unit by looking at one that Jesus points out Himself. In the book of Jonah, we see a prophet who is called to preach repentance to the evil country of Nineveh. Jonah disobeys and tries to run from God aboard a ship, but runs right into a storm instead. He requests that the mariners throw him overboard to calm the storm. When he is thrown overboard the storm is calmed and he is swallowed into the belly of a fish. As **Jonah 1:17** reveals, ¹⁷*And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.* This sacrifice of Jonah into the water to save the mariners aboard the ship is a portrait of Christ being sacrificed for the salvation of His people. But, the length of time that Jonah spend in the belly of the fish was no coincidence either. Matthew 12:40 says, *"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."* This story, as well as many others in the Old Testament, contain a real historical character experiencing an actual historical event that ultimately points to a greater historical reality: salvation made possible only through Jesus Christ.