**Types and Shadows in Scripture**

People often wonder: what is a type and a shadow?[[1]](#endnote-1) A type, shadow, pattern, or figure is a prophetic foretelling of future events. God has inspired His prophets to give detailed accounts of what is going to happen, but he didn’t reveal too much information so that no one will be able to fake it.

**A Type and a Shadow**

In the New Testament, the Greek word týpos, meaning “example,” describes a model or pattern in the Old Testament that is fulfilled in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. The word týpos in KJV Bible is also translated as “pattern” (Titus 2:7; Hebrews 8:5), “form” (Romans 6:17), “print” (John 20:25), “ensample” (1 Corinthians 10:11), “fashion” (Acts 7:44), “figure” (Acts 7:43; Romans 5:14), and “manner” (Acts 23:25).

The primary person, story, or event is the type, whereas the fulfillment is the anti-type. The New is in the Old concealed; the Old is in the New revealed. The apostle Paul explained it this way, “These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come” (I Corinthians 10:11)

A shadow has no substance; it is cast by something substantial. It is the physical form of a heavenly reality (Hebrews 8:5; 10:1). The Jewish ceremonies were shadows cast by heavenly realities. Christ’s life, work, and kingdom are the reality.

Types connect two or more historical persons or events by common characteristics. Whereas shadows connect two or more persons or events by common themes. Types and shadows may thus be used interchangeably to some degree.

Types are different in kind from allegories or parables in that types refer to a literal object pointing to a literal fulfillment or anti-type. Types are historical realities while comparisons and connections in allegories are more indirect.

**Specific Examples**

1-Adam was a type for humanity and for Christ: “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned (For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come” ( (Romans 5:12-14 also Genesis 1-3).

2-Moses was a type for Christ: “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen” (Deuteronomy 18:15 also Matthew 1:21)

3-The earthly Sanctuary was a type for the heavenly one: “Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount” (Hebrews 8:5 also Exodus 25:40).

**General Examples**

Typical persons are Abel, Melchizedek, Abraham, Isaac, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David, Jonah.

Typical events are the “Flood,” the “Plagues of Egypt,” the “Passover,” the “Brazen Serpent,” “Crossing the Jordan,” “Cities of Refuge.”

Typical ceremonies are the “Offerings,” “Ceremonial Cleansing,” “Feasts,” “Year of Jubilee,” “Day of Atonement.”

How Can We Interpret Types, Shadows, and Figures?

1- To acquire the right meaning, allow the Bible to interpret its own types, shadows, figures and patterns. For example, in Revelation 1:20, Christ explains the meaning of the seven stars and the seven lampstands within the context of John’s vision.

2- The interpretation of types, shadows, figures, and patterns must be consistent and in harmony with the rest of the Scriptures. Therefore, all the verses (in both the Old and New Testaments) on a given topic should be examined in context to get the correct and complete understanding of the type or shadow. “For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little” (Isaiah 28:10).

**More Examples[[2]](#endnote-2)**

Peter 3:21

Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

Hebrews 9:24

For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;

John 1:29

The next day he \*saw Jesus coming to him and \*said, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

Matthew 12:39-40

But He answered and said to them, “An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Romans 5:14

Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.

Hebrews 10:1

For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near.

Hebrews 8:5

who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned by God when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, “See,” He says, “that you make all things according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain.”

Hebrews 9:8

The Holy Spirit is signifying this, that the way into the holy place has not yet been disclosed while the outer tabernacle is still standing,

**Foreshadows[[3]](#endnote-3)**

Romans 5:14

Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.

1 Corinthians 10:6

Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved.

1 Corinthians 10:11

Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

Hebrews 8:5

who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned by God when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, “See,” He says, “that you make all things according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain.”

Colossians 2:17

things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.

Hebrews 10:1

For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near.

Hebrews 11:19

He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.

1. https://bibleask.org/what-is-a-type-and-a-shadow/ [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Source: https://bible.knowing-jesus.com/topics/Antitypes [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Source: https://bible.knowing-jesus.com/topics/Antitypes [↑](#endnote-ref-3)