

Samson, A Type of Christ

To anyone who knows the story of Samson (Chapters 13-16 in the Book of Judges), it seems impossible that such a lustful, foolish and ungodly person as that could in any way anticipate the incarnate Holy One of Israel. Yet, on closer look, that certainly appears to be the case. Consider first the following:

- Samson is the embodiment of disobedient Israel; the Samson narrative recapitulates the overall story of the Nation of Israel in extraordinary detail. And Christ was the embodiment of Israel; He was the true and faithful Israel, carrying out the mission that the disobedient Nation didn't and wouldn't. So, if $a = c$ and $a = b$, then $b = c$.
- Jonah was a type of Christ in many respects. Jesus called attention to Jonah to remind us of what He would accomplish. Yet Christ was the obedient prophet who returned from the dead to give life to sinful Gentiles, whereas Jonah was a disobedient prophet. Jonah was a type of the Nation of Israel as well as of Christ.
- Jesus' name in Hebrew is Joshua. Joshua was a type of Christ in this one, major respect: Joshua led the Conquest to take and purify the Promised Land. And what Joshua did anticipated Jesus' conquest of sin and evil; but He will also purify not only the land, it will be the entire world. But in very few other respects did Joshua anticipate Christ. And Joshua, son of Nun, is not specifically mentioned in the N.T. as a type.

Not every person, thing or event in the Old Testament is specifically designated as a type in the N.T., but many nevertheless should be understood as types, depending on how they correspond or are proleptic. We should understand that the ultimate Author of Scripture has sovereignly organized His cosmos so that it reflects the glory of the Son, even in advance of his Advent. *In other words, a type and its anti-type need only correspond in some respect or respects, but not necessarily in every respect. And there can be types in the O.T. without being specifically identified as such.*

Now, the parallels . . .

- At the time of Samson, the Nation of Israel was at the end of a period of decline and compromise; so it was when Jesus came.
- Samson had a miraculous birth. So did Jesus. Samson's mother was sterile, she couldn't get pregnant. Jesus' mother was a virgin and couldn't get pregnant. Isaac's birth also was miraculous; Isaac is a type of Christ. (Samuel's birth also should be regarded as miraculous, as was that of Joseph, though they weren't pre-announced. Moses was miraculously preserved after his birth, but the birth itself wasn't miraculous.)
- Samson's birth was announced in advance by an angel. So was the birth of Jesus. (Besides that of Samson and Jesus, there's only one other pre-announced and miraculous birth in the Bible, that of John the Baptist, but it's part of the Jesus' birth narrative.)
- Samson was set apart to God from birth. So was Jesus.
- Samson was purposely given to Israel to effect deliverance from their oppressors. So was Jesus.
- The "I am" appears uniquely in the Samson narrative, as it does in the Gospels.
- The Spirit of the Lord was upon Samson, as it was on Jesus.
- Samson sought a bride; so does Jesus.
- Samson had supernatural power to use to accomplish God's mission of deliverance; so does Jesus.
- The people of Israel handed Samson over to their enemy rather than join him and being delivered, just exactly as would happen to Jesus later in time.
- Samson spoke riddles; Jesus spoke parables.
- Samson took hold of the gate of Gaza and tore it loose, so that those locked inside could leave; this is what Jesus did to the gates of *Sheol* at His resurrection.
- Samson was sold to the enemy, betrayed for a price. So was Jesus.
- Samson was humiliated by the enemy. So was Jesus.
- Samson lost his supernatural power for a time in a dungeon, but he then regained it. This is a figure of death and resurrection. In both narratives, that of Samson and that of Christ, there's a period of time during which it seems all was going to end in failure. When Samson was taken into captivity, it seemed that all hope was lost. But Samson was revived, His supernatural powers were returned to him and he then miraculously overcame the enemy. Likewise, Jesus will, at His Return, vanquish the Enemy.

- Samson's death accomplished the defeat of Israel's enemy. That's exactly what the death of Jesus accomplished (see Hebrews 2:14 and 1 John 3:8b). Samson's death benefited the Nation of Israel, although strangely they didn't welcome it. So with Jesus' death. By the way, Samson achieved this victory after prayer, as did Jesus.
- Samson's death was foretold (Genesis 49:17), as was the death of Jesus (Isaiah 53 and elsewhere).

If it be argued that Samson's life was too sinful to be a type of Christ, recall 2 Corinthians 5:21, "*He who knew no sin became sin for us . . .*" Jesus took upon Himself all the sins of all humanity to be our God-ordained sin-bearer. But it's not necessary for Samson's sinful lusts to be included among the correspondences that make him a type. **The parallels that are here are astonishing!** The reason commentators have missed this is, it's so easy to focus on the comically lustful and disobedient life that he led. That's because Samson was *also* an embodied representative of the failed Nation of Israel. Samson had a dual symbolic role: He was a type of Christ, yet also a personal embodiment of Israel, prophesying by his life the Nation's history.

Conclusion: Samson is a type of Christ.

Why is this important? None of us personally met Jesus. (Yet.) We know of Him and His atoning sacrifice and His teachings and His commandments and promises because of the Word of God. We base our faith on the Word of God, which testifies of Jesus. One of the most compelling evidences of the truthfulness and divine origin of the Word of God is its amazing coherence, beginning to end. Although its composition spans one and-a-half millennia, it has a unified meta-narrative and all its components fit perfectly into that unity. In previous Sunday School lessons we have discussed how some of these (and there are very many) fit into and comprise the whole. No matter how much we study the Word, all its detail harmonizes with its one, great over-riding theme, the glory of the Son. It can only have come from an infinitely wise, transcendent, loving and good God, One who speaks, and Who speaks only truth. The Bible cannot otherwise be explained.

Why, for example, did Jesus breathe on His disciples right after the resurrection (John 20:22)? I suggest it's because as Creator, He's creating from His followers a new race of people, a new humanity. What Jesus did reprises what God did in Genesis 2:7, "*the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.*" So now that Christ is risen, He has a new kind of life, a unique, resurrection life, to impart, a life that is eternal and that reflects His lovely Person. The gift of the Holy Spirit, following the Ascension (Acts 2:33), continues this "breathing" into His followers all thru the church age. "*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old is gone, the new has come!*" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Paul refers to this new humanity in his letters to the Ephesian and Colossian churches. Jesus is the exalted Lover who gives life.

Consider another example, marriage. It's there in the opening pages of the Bible. Male/female alienation occurs almost immediately due to sin's entry. Sexual sins abound in the opening book of the Bible. The first commandment is to love God and no one else, and the tenth commandment is, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife." They form a chiasm. Biblical marriage portrays the intimate personal relationship that God offers – no, that God *requires* – between Himself and His beloved human creatures. In the law, adultery was a capital offense. Idolatry is pictured in the Bible as adultery. Samson's problem was, he lusted after the *wrong* women, symbolizing Israel's penchant for idolatry. David's problem was lusting after the wrong woman. Solomon's problem was marrying the wrong women. Homosexuality is condemned in the Bible because it pictures a corrupt relationship, not the eternal, loving intimate personal one that God intends for us. In the N.T. sexual sins and idolatry are at the top of the many vice lists. At the very end of the Bible, a marriage occurs between Christ and His transformed, holy bride, those who follow Him in love; this climactic ending fulfills the recurring theme of marriage.

The point is this: God superintended the writing of all Scripture, beginning to end (and sovereignly controlled the flow of human events, by the way), so that this thread (and others, such as the types of Christ in the O.T.) would recur because of its core, essential significance.

What I'm saying is, all Scripture forms a coherent unity. The Bible isn't just another book, something to pick up and read from time to time. It is something unique and supernatural. It has to be that way, because it's in the Bible that we encounter the invisible, transcendent living God.