

## Concluding reflections

### Introduction

We have observed how the Pentateuch contributes to our understanding of Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah, the Passover sacrifice, and the high priest.

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of his book, *Two Testaments, One Bible*, David L. Baker highlights “five concepts which points towards a ‘biblical’ understanding of the theological relationship between the Testaments.”<sup>1</sup>

These are: Christology; Salvation history; Typology; Promise and fulfilment; Continuity and discontinuity.

### Salvation history

Salvation figures prominently in the three distinctive ways in which we have connected Genesis, Exodus and Leviticus to Jesus Christ.

In Genesis, the patriline that leads to a unique king begins with God’s announcement that the woman’s offspring will subdue the seditious serpent.

Passover illustrates how Christ’s death on the cross ransoms, purifies and sanctifies people in order that they may become God’s possession.

The creation of the earthly sanctuary, modelled on the heavenly sanctuary, provides a vital insight into the high priest’s role in presenting atoning sacrifices to God.

The concepts of promised king, Passover sacrifice and high priest all play an important part in God’s plan of salvation.

### Promise and fulfilment

Genesis, possibly more than any other book of the Old Testament, contributes to the pattern of Old Testament promises that are fulfilled in the New Testament.

The promise of a future king lies at the heart of Genesis.

Genesis anticipates that this king, by exercising authority over all the nations, will replace the seditious serpent as the ruler of this world.

The divine speeches addressed to the members of the patriline abound in promises.<sup>2</sup>

These promises are given additional significance by being incorporated into divine oaths (or covenants) that guarantee their fulfilment.

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<sup>1</sup> D. L. Baker, *Two Testaments, One Bible: A Study of the Theological Relationship between the Old and New Testaments*, 2nd edn. (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 261.

<sup>2</sup> I. Blythin, "The Patriarchs and the Promise," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 21 (1968) 56-73, notes that almost all of the divine speeches in Genesis 12-50 include promises. See T. D. Alexander, "Promises, Divine," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, eds. T. D. Alexander and D. W. Baker (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2003), 655-62.

What begins in Genesis 3:15 as a simple promise regarding the subjugation of the serpent by one of Eve's descendants is expanded in Genesis through additional promises that have national and international dimensions.

Genesis lays a foundation on which the rest of the Bible builds.

"Promise" is a "more comprehensive term than the alternatives 'prediction' and 'prophecy'."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>6</sup> People swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument. <sup>17</sup> Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. (Hebrews 6:16-17 NIV)

In Galatians 3, Paul writes, "the law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise" (Gal. 3:17).

### **Typology**

David Baker defines typology as "the study of types and the historical and theological correspondences between them."<sup>4</sup>

Baker understands a "type" to be "a biblical event, person or institution which serves as an example or pattern for other events, persons or institutions."<sup>5</sup>

The most obvious use of typology in the New Testament is the correspondence that exists between the Levitical high priest's role in the tabernacle and Jesus Christ's portrayal as our great high priest in the heavenly sanctuary.

Jesus Christ's priesthood in the heavenly sanctuary resembles that of the Levitical high priest.

The book of Exodus provides a "paradigm of salvation."

God redeems the enslaved Israelites from the control of an evil despot and later establishes a covenant relationship with them.

The Israelite firstborn males needed to be ransomed from death, purified from the defilement of sin and sanctified.

Typology provides the key to seeing Jesus Christ as the Passover sacrifice.

As the anti-type of the original Passover sacrifice, Jesus Christ atones perfectly for human sin through his death on the cross.

There is a typological dimension to the patriline at the heart of Genesis.

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<sup>3</sup> Baker, *Two Testaments, One Bible*, 214.

<sup>4</sup> Baker, *Two Testaments, One Bible*, 195.

<sup>5</sup> Baker, *Two Testaments, One Bible*, 195.

In Genesis, there is an expectation that offspring or progeny (Hebrew *zera'*) will resemble its progenitor.

- In Genesis 6:9, we are told, “Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God” (Genesis 6:9 NIV).
- In Genesis 17, God says to Abraham, “I am God Almighty; walk before me faithfully and be blameless” (Genesis 17:1 NIV).

In his recent book, entitled *From Prisoner to Prince: The Joseph Story in Biblical Theology*,<sup>6</sup> Samuel Emadi writes,

In the Joseph story, Moses continues to focus on the Abrahamic promises and describes how those promises are fulfilled through Joseph — the rejected, royal deliverer. Moses portrays Joseph as an anticipatory fulfilment of the promises. Joseph's ministry multiplies the seed of Israel, blesses the nations and prepares Israel to inherit Canaan. In the light of these features of the story, Moses suggests that Joseph's life is typological — one that points to a future and more complete fulfilment of God's promises.<sup>7</sup>

Emadi's discussion is hampered by an inadequate appraisal of the divine promises associated with the Abrahamic covenant.

He claims that “the Joseph story functions as the resolution to the plot of Genesis.”

However, Genesis lacks a resolution to the problem created in the Garden of Eden; it merely points forward to where the resolution will be found.

Joseph's life is typological.

As one rejected by his brothers, he tells them, “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives” (Genesis 50:20 NIV).

Genesis is also interested in other offspring who will become numerous and fill the earth.

These offspring are not part of the patriline, but they are expected to resemble the members of the patriline.

Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham. <sup>8</sup> Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through you.” <sup>9</sup> So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. (NIV) Galatians 3:7-9)

### **Continuity and discontinuity**

This category is a natural corollary of typology.

In thinking about Jesus Christ's high priestly ministry, the author of Hebrews observes both continuity and discontinuity with the Levitical high priesthood.

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<sup>6</sup> S. Emadi, *From Prisoner to Prince: The Joseph Story in Biblical Theology* (New Studies in Biblical Theology; London; Downers Grove: Apollos; IVP Academic, 2022).

<sup>7</sup> Emadi, *From Prisoner to Prince: The Joseph Story in Biblical Theology*, 147.

With Christ's ascension to the heavenly sanctuary, the earthly sanctuary, the Levitical high priesthood and its associated sacrificial system all become obsolete.

There is both continuity and discontinuity regarding the covenant mediated by Moses at Mount Sinai and the new covenant mediated by Jesus Christ.

- The author of Hebrews refers to the "new covenant" as the "second" (Heb. 8:7; 10:9).
- He contrasts it with what he variously calls "the first covenant" (Heb.8:7; 9:1, 15, 18; cf. 8:13) or "old" covenant.

When we compare the "first" and "second" covenants, there is continuity as regards having a unique connection with God, but discontinuity as regards how this is worked out in daily life.

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.<sup>10</sup> Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (1 Peter 2:9-10 NIV).

The old covenant or first covenant requires the Israelites to distinguish themselves from other people.

The new covenant removes the barrier between Jews and Gentiles that lies at the heart of the old covenant.

The Abrahamic covenant in Genesis 17 is about Abraham's fatherhood of the nations.

Paul can say, "Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." (Galatians 3:8 NIV).

### **Christology**

Jesus Christ is the one who binds the two Testaments together.

Genesis lays a foundation for viewing Jesus as the promised king, the perfect vicegerent, who will bring God's blessing to the nations of the earth.

The books of Exodus and Leviticus illustrate how God reconciles people to himself, introducing various important theological concepts: redemption from evil; ransom from death; cleansing from the defilement of sin; being made holy; belonging to a covenant community; ascension; the high priesthood.

Building on Donald Robinson's teaching, Graeme Goldsworthy adopts a 'big picture' approach that involves typology.<sup>8</sup>

Goldsworthy proposes that the biblical story from creation to the building of the temple in Jerusalem provides a pattern for the eschatological hopes of the prophets.

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<sup>8</sup> Goldsworthy's recent book, *Christ-Centred Biblical Theology: Hermeneutical Foundations and Principles* (Nottingham: Apollos, 2012), provides a helpful introduction to his methodology.

These eschatological hopes find their fulfilment in Jesus Christ.

The Old Testament cultic rituals anticipate Christ's ascension as both atoning offering and high priest.

God's redemption of Israel from Egypt leads to the creation of a replica sanctuary made by humans that eventually comes to rest in an earthly Jerusalem that is ruled over by an imperfect Davidic king.

God will redeem the nations through a more perfect process of atonement that involves the true heavenly sanctuary, which will lead ultimately to the creation of a New Jerusalem.

At the heart of this greater salvation history stands Jesus Christ, the unblemished lamb of God and perfect priest-king.

### **Conclusion**

The opening books of the Old Testament provide a firm foundation for understanding the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.