

## QUESTIONS RECEIVED AND ANSWERED: Type and antitype in John 3?

By Bob Young

I received the following question: *Is it accurate biblically to describe the teaching comparing the serpent in the wilderness and Jesus (John 3) as type and antitype?*

Here is my response.

By definition: the type comes first, the antitype comes second.

The antitype, in some point or in some way, corresponds to something previous—the type.

The antitype is a subsequent (second) situation similar or parallel to a previous (first) situation, in some sense a representation of the original, a counterpart, a figure.

There are only two occurrences of the word “antitype” in the New Testament.

**In Heb. 9.24**, the humanly constructed holy place(s) are antitypes of the true.

That is, the earthly tabernacle was an antitype of the heavenly.

The earthly tabernacle (antitype) was made according to the already existing heavenly (type).

The type (heavenly) comes first, the antitype (earthly) comes second.

**In 1 Peter 3:21** is the other New Testament occurrence of the word antitype. Baptism is the antitype of the ark, because the ark came first. The ark is the type. The ark is physical, baptism is spiritual, but that does not alter the terminology, or the type-antitype application.

In Hebrews 8:5, they (the priests) serve in a sanctuary that is a representation (*hupodeigma*) and shadow (*skia*) of heavenly things....

The earthly sanctuary showed what heaven looked like, a representation, a reflection

*Hupodeigma* in this context means example or specimen

“Just as Moses had been divinely instructed when he was about to finish the tabernacle:

See that you make everything according to the type (*tupos*) shown you on the mountain.”

This text also makes clear that the type comes first.

The type, the original, comes first. Then comes the image or likeness.

The type, when understood and applied in a certain way (correctly) leads to an antitype, an accurate correspondence, representation, counterpart, figure

If we are committed to describing Bible things with Bible words, we will use type and antitype with reference to Heb. 9 and 1 Peter 3, and we will find other words to describe other Bible correspondences.

For example, regarding the serpent in the wilderness and Jesus on the cross, John 3:14, what is wrong with using the Bible description? “In the same way” means that there is a correspondence, a parallel. In John 3:14, the parallel is clearly stated — “lifted up.”

Any other parallel drawn from the comparison goes beyond what the text says, even though we are easily tempted to note the parallel of salvation. Eventually, when we define our own ideas about parallels, we encounter problems. For example, the serpent did not provide eternal salvation, only physical. It was only necessary to look upon the serpent, the serpent that brought life had the same form as the serpents that brought death. None of these other parallels or correspondences are valid with reference to Jesus, only the specific point mentioned in the biblical text — “lifted up.”