

### ***A Wondrous Type***

In the name of him in whom the Father is well pleased, dear friends in Christ: Today we arrive at the end and climax of the Epiphany season as our Lord Jesus reveals to a select few of his disciples the fullness of his divinity on the mount of transfiguration. By his authoritative teaching and his miraculous signs and wonders he's been giving them very strong hints along the way; but now he casts off the veil, as it were, and lets them see his divine glory shining even more brightly than the sun. No question about it: this very earthly man Jesus is at once and the same time true and very God.

This revelation of Christ's divine glory is, as we sang in the last hymn, a wondrous *type* of the future glory that we will share with our Lord when he returns in judgment. And that may be a term some of you are not familiar with because we don't often use the word that way. Usually when we say "type" we mean a kind or variety of something, like when saying a banana is a type of fruit, or a boxer is a type of dog. That's not the idea here at all. No, type, as it's used in the hymn, is a literary term. And to help explain it we have only to think of the old manual typewriters – which some of you may remember using and those under 30 have probably only seen in a museum. But there's a reason they were called *type*-writers. When you pushed a key, a metal little arm shot up on the head of which was a casting of the shape of the letter you pressed. It struck against a ribbon impregnated with ink in front of the paper. That left an impression behind on the paper which was called a type. The letter on the head of the arm that made the impression was called the antitype. So, the thing to see is that reality, the thing of substance, is the antitype. The type on the paper is merely a picture or image of the real thing, again which is called the antitype.

Carrying the same thought over into literature, the idea is this: a type is a foreshadowing image or picture of something far greater which appears later in the storyline. The later greater thing that the type (or types if there's more than one) give an image of is the antitype. So types are sort of prophetic. When they show up they tell us about a greater something yet to appear. And that's why the hymn writer calls the transfiguration of Jesus a type of the coming glory we all will share. This glimpse of Jesus' glory shown to Peter, James, and John on the mountain points to the time when we too, the faithful, will be glorified—not made divine like Jesus, mind you; but raised by him in bodies imperishable and sinless, which shine forth with the light of his love. And we will be ushered by our Lord into the new heaven and new earth, the eternal inheritance he has prepared for us in paradise, there to dwell in everlasting splendor. That will be glorious indeed.

And really, we get these type/antitype relationships all the time in the Bible. For instance, David single handedly facing and beating the big bad giant Goliath who terrified the armies of Israel is a type of Jesus who faces and defeats much bigger and more terrifying enemies for us, namely Satan, sin, and death. Likewise, we're told that the flood of Noah's day in which 8 people were saved through water in this life is a type of Christian Baptism by which billions are being saved through water unto life eternal. Bearing this in mind, I'd like to turn to today's Old Testament reading because it happens to be loaded with wondrous types that shine light on things that were then to come, and that we are experiencing now.

So, let me set this up: the children of Israel are encamped around the base of Mt. Sinai. Less than two months ago they were slaves in Egypt; but the Lord brought them out of there with a mighty hand and miraculous works of salvation. He led them here to receive his

commandments and instructions, sustaining them on the way with bread from heaven and water bubbling forth from rocks. Now he's come down upon the mountain before them: his glory concealed in part by clouds and thick smoke. His goal is to make them a people unto himself, a nation that will represent him before the world and show what a wonderful loving Father he is. And that's why he gives them his commands, statutes, and instructions: to order their footsteps in the paths of his righteousness.

Okay, as today's reading begins, the Lord has just done that: he's spoken to the entire nation from the mountain. They've heard the basic requirements of the Law, and they've agreed to comply. With one voice they responded, "Everything the Lord has said, we will obey." And here I need to stress that the people aren't promising to be perfectly sinless. That's not possible in this life and the Lord knows it. Therefore built into the Law he's given them are the means to deal with sin through sacrifices. So what the people are agreeing to is the justice and wisdom of God's decrees. They're saying the standards of his laws are good and correct and we will strive to obey, and when due to the weakness of our flesh we fall into sin, we will admit our guilt, repent, and seek the Lord's forgiveness in the way he has prescribed.

It's then that Moses takes the blood of the sacrifices already offered, and he spatters it all over the people, saying "This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you." It may sound a little rough to our ears, the pastor splashing blood all over the congregation; but it's an adoption thing. It recalls the old shepherd's trick whereby a ewe whose lamb has died is made to adopt a lamb whose mother is dead. On her own, she won't accept the strange lamb. But the shepherd washes the orphaned lamb in the blood of the lamb that died, and then she recognizes it and cares for it as her own. That's what's going on here. The Lord is saying, here are my commands, which you have not kept. Because of your sins, you don't belong to me. Now, I want to be your Father, and I want you to be my children; but the only way I'll recognize you and keep you as my own is when you're covered by sacrificial blood – blood of a lamb that died for you.

Understanding this, it becomes clear that what we're looking at is yet another type of Christian Baptism. It's through Baptism that we are washed in the blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away sin by dying for us. It's only when we're covered with his blood through Baptism that God the Father recognizes us as his children and receives us as his own.

It gets better, because then the Lord invites a select group to come forward for a closer and more personal experience. They are Moses, Aaron his brother, who serves as high priest along with his two sons, and 70 elders representing all the tribes of Israel. The indication is that they go part of the way up the mountain. That's significant because up to this point, no one but Moses has been allowed on the mountain. It's holy ground. And the Lord has ordered that anyone whose foot even touches the mountain is to be killed instantly. But now, covered by the blood as they are, it's permissible. Now they are welcomed into the Lord's presence.

And they are given a special revelation of the Lord. He appears to them visibly in human form, which is evident because the text specifically mentions his hands and feet. It intrigues me that we're not given much of a description of what he looks like. We're told more about what the Lord is standing on, a pavement as of sapphire, a bright blue stone, but clear like the sky. I suspect that's because they all fell on their faces before the Lord, rather like the disciples on the mount of transfiguration. The glory of his face being too bright, they could only bear to look at his feet.

Even so, what happens to them there in the Lord's presence is remarkable, for we're told that they ate and drank. Since there's no indication that they brought a picnic lunch with

them, we can presume that this is a meal prepared for them and served by the Lord. And that speaks volumes, because to the ancient Israelites table fellowship was an expression of close intimacy. You didn't eat with just anyone. If you shared a table with someone, it was a way of saying I consider you to be a member of the immediate family. We share the same blood. And here they are eating at the Lord's Table enjoying a feast he has prepared for them.

It's apparent that what we have here is a type of the Lord's Supper. That's when the Lord Jesus appears to us, his body and blood seen with our eyes under the forms of bread and wine. And in the Supper we enjoy table fellowship with him and one another as we eat and drink, the family of God, the same blood flowing through our veins – the blood of Jesus shed for us. It's worth mentioning too that the Lord's Supper is in turn a type of a greater feast to come: the feast of salvation we will celebrate with the Lamb in his Kingdom without end.

And there are yet more types in our text, for at this point the Lord calls Moses to go up to the top of the mountain. Joshua, his assistant and closest disciple, accompanies him part of the way, but on the 7<sup>th</sup> day Moses alone enters the cloud in which dwells the manifestation of God's glory. To the Israelites below the Lord's glory appears as a devouring fire that glows from within the cloud and is reflected off the smoke. It's a frightful sight. And it must have horrified them to see Moses, their great deliverer, enter that cloud. Moses, we know, was not consumed by the fire of the Lord; but what we have here is a type of Jesus, our great deliverer, *who was* consumed in the fire of God's wrath when he was crucified for us. Then in the sight of all he was subject to the horrors of torment that we by our sins deserved. And it's precisely because he was devoured for us by the fire of God's wrath that we are not subject to be burned forever in the fires of hell.

For forty days and nights Moses remained on the mountain in God's presence. And there he received the tablets of stone upon which the Lord had written his instructions with his own finger – not just the Ten Commandments – but the whole counsel of God to his people Israel. And this too is a type of Christ, because what Moses will carry down in his arms is the Word of God made physical, inscribed on stone so that it's unchanging. But you see, that's who Jesus is: the Word of God made physical; come down to us from above not on stone, but in human flesh and blood.

And here's the best part: he comes to make us types of himself. He's the antitype, remember, the real thing of substance that the types point to. But as he continues to speak to us through his Word and teaches us, as he washes us from sin in Baptism and its daily renewal when we confess our sins, as he feeds us with the body and blood he sacrificed for us, what he's doing is impressing himself upon us so that we will bear his image – so that when people look at us what they will see are types of him.

Therefore, dear friends, since this is God's good and holy will for us, let's open our hearts to receive his Word and eagerly pursue growth in his wisdom and truth, that we may become types of Christ wondrous to behold. In Jesus' name. Amen.

***Soli Deo Gloria!***