

Abounding Grace Christian Church

Seeing Christ in the Old Testament: A Study of the Types of Christ – Part 17

I. Seeing Christ in the Book of Numbers.

A. Theme of the Book of Numbers.

1. **“Numbers”** was not the title of this book in the original Hebrew. It has been called this because a census was taken twice as is recorded in **chapters 1 and 26**. Dr. Bob Utlely states: **“In the Hebrew the title is ‘In the Wilderness.’ This is not the first word but it is in the first sentence, the fifth word.”**¹ The reason for bringing this out is because the original title better describes what the book is all about. Andrew Hill and John Walton assert:

“The Hebrew title of the book, ‘in the wilderness,’ is taken from the opening verse. The name is appropriate, because Numbers records the significant events associated with the period of ‘desert wandering’ prior to the death of Moses and the Hebrew occupation of Canaan.”²

2. In many ways the people of Israel are a type, or foreshadowing of the New Testament Church. In **Part 5** of this series we saw, in part, how Moses is a type of Christ as Israel’s deliverer, leading them out from under the bondage of Pharaoh and Egypt. We saw how Pharaoh compares to Satan and Egypt compares to the unsaved world. Under the New Covenant, Jesus Christ, our Deliverer, has set the believer free from the bondage of Satan and the world.

B. The Role of Moses as a Mediator – Numbers 14:11-21 (also Exodus 32:9-13; 30-32).

1. In these passages we see Moses interceding for Israel when they sinned against God. This shows Moses as a mediator between God and Israel. A **“mediator”** is understood in the following way:

“The function of a mediator is to intervene between two parties in order to promote relations between them which the parties themselves are not able to effect. The situation requiring the offices of a mediator is often one of estrangement and alienation, and the mediator effects reconciliation.”³

2. In this we see Moses as a type of Christ as the Mediator of the New Covenant. Before we accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, we were alienated from God but now through Jesus Christ we have been reconciled (**Colossians 1:19-22**). In contrasting the Old Covenant Law with Moses as the Mediator, the writer of Hebrews states: **“But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.”** – **Hebrews 8:6**. Jesus is the perfect, only and final Mediator between God and mankind (**1 Timothy 2:5**).

3. The Mediatorship of Jesus is on-going – **Hebrews 7:25**. The word **“intercession”** here means; **“to speak to someone on behalf of someone else.”**⁴ Concerning this passage along with **Romans 8:34**, Dr. Wayne Grudem writes:

“This word does not mean merely ‘to stand as someone’s representative before another person,’ but clearly has the sense of making specific requests or petitions before someone...We may conclude, then, that both Paul and the author of Hebrews are saying that Jesus continually lives in the presence of God to make specific requests and to bring specific petitions before God on our behalf. This is a role that Jesus, as God-man, is uniquely qualified to fulfill. Although God could care for all our needs in response to direct observation (Matt. 6:8), yet it has pleased God, in his relationship to the human race, to decide to act instead in response to prayer, apparently so that the faith shown through prayer might glorify him. It is especially the prayers of men and women created in his image that are pleasing in God’s sight. In Christ, we have a true man, a perfect man, praying and thereby continually glorifying God through prayer. Thus, human manhood is raised to a highly exalted position: ‘There is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus’ (1 Tim. 2:5).”⁵

¹ Robert James Utlely, *Old Testament Survey: Genesis–Malachi* (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 2000), 45.

² Andrew E. Hill and John H. Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 145.

³ J.M., “Mediator,” in *New Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. R. W. Wood et al. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 746.

⁴ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 427.

⁵ Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 2004), 627–628.

C. The Rock that Gave Water – Numbers 20:2-13.

1. In **Part 5** of this series we saw that in **I Corinthians 10:4** it states explicitly that the “**Rock**” mentioned in **Exodus 17:1-7** was a type of Christ. The children of Israel complained that there was no water. God commanded Moses to smite the rock and water would come out of it. Jesus was smitten for you and me so that we might have the living water of everlasting life (**John 4:10-14**).
2. In our current passage, we see the children of Israel complaining once again about not having water. This time, however, God instructs Moses to “**Speak to the rock before their eyes, and it will yield its water...**” (**Numbers 20:8**). Unfortunately, this time Moses disobeyed, apparently out of unbelief (**verse 12**) and possibly anger, and instead of speaking to the rock, he struck it twice. God out of His mercy, caused water to flow from the rock anyway (**verse 11**) but because of their disobedience, neither Moses nor Aaron were going to be allowed to enter the promised land (**verse 12**). (**cf. Numbers 20:22-29; Deuteronomy 32:48-52; 34:1-8**).
3. Considering this rock was also intended to be a type of Christ, we can understand why the punishment was so severe towards Moses and Aaron. In **Exodus 17:1-7**, Christ is foreshadowed as being smitten for our transgressions (**cf. Isaiah 53:4**). Christ, however, only died once and only once for our sins (**cf. Hebrews 9:27-28. Also Hebrews 6:4-6**). The idea of speaking to the rock now seems to indicate that after receiving Christ as the One who died for our sins, now we have the privilege of speaking, communicating or praying in faith that He will provide whatever we need.

D. The Bronze Serpent – Numbers 21:4-9.

1. This event is a direct type of Jesus Christ. In the New Testament, Jesus Himself refers to this event in **John 3:14-15**, saying, “**And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.**” The bronze serpent on the pole symbolizes Jesus being lifted up on the cross. Just as the Israelites had to look at the bronze serpent to be healed even so must we look to Jesus in faith to be saved from sin and to be healed from sickness.
2. Though many people are convinced of the fact that Jesus Christ died for our sins, not all believers in Christ believe that redemption also includes healing from sickness and disease.
3. Under the Old Covenant and the New, God reveals His desire to heal our bodies.
 - a. Under the Old Covenant, healing was promised to Israel if they would keep His

commands.

Exodus 15:26; 23:25.

b. All diseases were said to be under the curse of the law. **Deuteronomy 28:15,21,22,27,28,35,58-61.**

c. Jesus Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law. **Galatians 3:13-14.**

d. The prophet Isaiah prophesied that in the work of the Messiah’s redemption, forgiveness of sin and healing of the body went together. **Isaiah 53:3-5. Matthew 8:14-17** interprets **Isaiah 53:5** as referring to healing from physical sickness.

e. Praying for the sick in faith for healing is part of the work of the New Testament church. **Mark 16:15-20; James 5:14-16.**