

**A REVELATION OF.....**

**3 MIRACULOUS  
CONCEPTIONS**

**POINTING THE WAY TO THE ROLE  
OF JESUS**

**ONE OF A SERIES OF REVELATIONS ON VARIOUS  
ASPECTS OF SCRIPTURE, AS INSPIRED BY THE  
HOLY SPIRIT.**

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## **A NOTE FROM DAVID.....**

Today was a day for getting back to 'normal', after two special weeks during which the Lord had blessed me in amazing ways. Firstly through the visit of my friend, and our Ministry Representative in India, Asher Peri. Then, the Lord speaking to me through His prophets in a 'presbytery' at a conference Asher and I attended together. Confirming previous words He had spoken to me directly (Always a relief that one is hearing correctly!) and encouraging me along the path I have been taking, amidst certain scepticism and opposition.

Of course, the Lord is full of surprises! Today's 'normal' day became another memorable one as He gave me the outline of this revelation during my daily quiet time, reading the Word and talking with my Lord.

This means more work, as inspiration and perspiration are 'soul mates' if we are to fulfil the Lord's purposes! While the Lord doesn't need us to build His kingdom, He chooses to use His followers to do the work on His behalf. Not so He can have 'time off', but rather, to train us in His ways. To serve Him and others, as Jesus did.

My faith is increasingly strengthened as He shows me more and more 'previews' of the coming of Jesus through types and patterns in Scripture. In events that took place, often thousands of years before Jesus came, lived, died, and overcame death, on our behalf. For this was always to be the culmination of God's plan for His people.

I trust that you too, will be inspired and encouraged by the perfect plan of God to bring us both back into close and intimate relationship, through the ultimate sacrifice of 'a life for a life', yes, His only son, Jesus.

May God bless you, and you bless God.

His servant and yours,

*David Tait*

# ***PART 1: THE BACKGROUND***

## **DEFINITION OF TERMS**

**TYPE** — occurs only once in Scripture (1 Cor. 10:11, A.V. marg.). The Greek word *tupos* is rendered “print” (John 20:25), “figure” (Acts 7:43; Rom. 5:14), “fashion” (Acts 7:44), “manner” (Acts 23:25), “form” (Rom. 6:17), “example” or “ensample” (1 Cor. 10:6, 11; Phil. 3:17; 1 Thess. 1:7; 2 Thess. 3:9; 1 Tim. 4:12). It properly means a “model” or “pattern” or “mould” into which clay or wax was pressed, that it might take the figure or exact shape of the mould. The word “type” is generally used to denote a resemblance between something present and something future, which is called the “antitype.”<sup>1</sup>

**TYPOLOGY** (Gk. *typos*, ‘seal-impression’). A way of setting forth the biblical history of salvation so that some of its earlier phases are seen as anticipations of later phases, or some later phase as the recapitulation or fulfilment of an earlier one.

### **I. In the Old Testament**

There are two archetypal epochs in the OT which are repeatedly presented in this way: the creation and the Exodus from Egypt. The Exodus is viewed as a new creation, or at least as a repetition of the original creative activity. He who in the beginning constrained the unruly sea within bounds, saying, ‘Thus far shall you come, and no farther’ (Gn. 1:9f.; Jb. 38:8-11), manifested the same power when he restrained the waters of the sea of reeds at the Exodus (Ex. 14:21-29). This parallelism is specially emphasized when the Creator’s overthrow of the primeval symbols of chaos, \*Rahab and the dragon (Jb. 26:12f.), is taken up and applied to his victory at the Exodus (Pss. 74:12-14; 89:8-10). Rahab

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<sup>1</sup>Easton, M. G., M. A. D. D., *Easton’s Bible Dictionary*, (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.) 1996.

becomes a 'type' of Egypt (*cf.* Is. 30:7) and the dragon (Leviathan) of Pharaoh (*cf.* Ezk. 29:3).

The restoration of Israel from the Babylonian captivity is portrayed as both a new creation and a new exodus. The verbs which are used of the Creator's workmanship in Gn. 1 and 2 (Heb. *bārā'*, *yāšar*, *'āšâ*) are used of his activity in the restoration of the exiles (*cf.* Is. 43:7, where all three verbs appear together). The dragon-typology of creation, which had already been taken over as a picture of Yahweh's victory at the Exodus, now became a means of describing this new victory. When the arm of Yahweh is called upon to 'awake . . . as in days of old', when it 'cut Rahab in pieces' and 'didst pierce the dragon' (Is. 51:9), God is being urged to repeat in this new situation the mighty acts of creation and Exodus. If at the Exodus he saved his people by making 'a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters' (Is. 43:16), so he will be with the returning exiles when they pass through the waters (Is. 43:2), making 'a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert' (Is. 43:19). As the Exodus generation was led by a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night, which moved behind them when danger threatened from the back, so the exiles receive the promise: 'The Lord will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rear guard' (Is. 52:12). Of the later generation as of the earlier it would be true that 'they thirsted not when he led them through the deserts; he made water flow for them from the rock' (Is. 48:21).

In the language of typology, the earlier series of events constituted a 'type' of the later; the later series was an 'antitype' of the earlier. Or it may be said that the successive epochs of salvation-history disclose a recurring pattern of divine activity, which the NT writers believed to have found its definitive expression in their own day.

## **II. In the New Testament**

The typological relation between the two Testaments was summed up in Augustine's epigram: 'In the OT the NT lies hidden; in the NT the OT stands revealed.' In the NT the Christian salvation is presented as the climax of the mighty works of God, as the 'antitype' of his 'typical' mighty works in the OT. The Christian salvation is treated as a new creation, a new exodus, a new restoration from exile.

*a. New creation.* ‘It is the God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ’ (2 Cor. 4:6). The Fourth Gospel perhaps provides the clearest instance of creation typology, with its exordium ‘In the beginning . . .’ echoing the opening words of Gn.: the divine Word which called the old creation into being has now become flesh to inaugurate a new creation. Those who are ‘in Christ’, according to Paul, constitute a ‘new creation’ (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15). Paul and the seer of Patmos join in seeing the curse of the primordial fall reversed by the redemptive work of Christ (Rom. 8:19-21; Rev. 22:1-5). The gospel establishes ‘new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells’ (2 Pet. 3:13; *cf.* Rev. 21:1).

*b. New exodus.* The exodus typology is particularly pervasive in the NT. Matthew seems to view the infancy of Jesus as a recapitulation of the early experiences of Israel, which went down to Egypt and came up again (Mt. 2:15). John, by the chronology of his Gospel and otherwise, implies that Christ is the antitypical Passover lamb (*cf.* Jn. 19:14, 36). Peter’s language points in the same direction (1 Pet. 1:19), while Paul makes the thought explicit: since ‘Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed’, the ensuing festival should be celebrated by his people ‘with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth’ (1 Cor. 5:7f.). As the Israelites passed through the Sea of Reeds, so Christians have been baptized into Christ; as the Israelites received bread from heaven and water from the rock, so Christians have their distinctive ‘supernatural food and drink’ (1 Cor. 10:1-4). As, despite all those blessings, the Exodus generation died in the wilderness because of unbelief and disobedience and so failed to enter the promised land, Christians for their part are exhorted to take warning lest they fall (1 Cor. 10:5-12; *cf.* Heb. 3:7-4:13; Jude 5). For these things befell the Israelites ‘as a warning (typikōs), but they were written down for our instruction, upon whom the end of the ages has come’ (1 Cor. 10:11). This typology has an intensely ethical and paraenetic emphasis.

*c. New restoration.* The very word ‘gospel’ (euangelion) and its cognates are probably derived by the NT writers from their occurrences in Is. 40-66 to denote the ‘good tidings’ of return from Exile and rebuilding of Zion (Is. 40:9; *cf.* 52:7; 61:1). No stretch of OT prophecy has provided such a fertile ‘plot’ of gospel testimonia, from the ‘voice’ of Is. 40:3

through the ministry of the Servant in Is. 42-53 to the new heavens and new earth of Is. 65:17; 66:22.

*d. Typical persons.* In Rom. 5:14 Adam is called ‘a type (typos) of the one who was to come’ (*i.e.* of Christ, the last Adam). Adam, as head of the old creation, is an obvious counterpart to Christ, head of the new creation. All humanity is viewed as being either ‘in Adam’, in whom ‘all die’, or ‘in Christ’, in whom all are to ‘be made alive’ (1 Cor. 15:22).

No other OT character is expressly called a typos of Christ in the NT. But other OT characters typify him in some degree, by comparison or contrast—Moses, as prophet (Acts 3:22f.; 7:37), Aaron, as priest (Heb. 5:4f.), David, as king (Acts 13:22). The writer to the Hebrews, taking his cue from Ps. 110:4, sees in Melchizedek a specially apt counterpart of Christ in his priestly office (Heb. 5:6, 10; 6:20ff.). He also hints that the details of the apparatus and services of the wilderness tabernacle might yield typical significance although, from what he says in Heb. 9:6-10, this significance would involve the difference rather than the resemblance between that order and the new order introduced by Christ. It is only in the light of the antitype that the relevance of the type can be appreciated.

### **III. Post-biblical developments**

The post-apostolic age witnessed the beginning of a more unfettered Christian typology. From the first half of the 2nd century the *Epistle of Barnabas* or Justin’s *Dialogue with Trypho* illustrates the length to which the typological interpretation of OT episodes could be carried in the absence of exegetical controls. The result was that the OT acquired its chief value in Christian eyes as a book of anticipatory pictures of the person and work of Christ—pictures presented in words and even more in visible art. Perhaps the most impressive example in art is Chartres Cathedral, where the sculptures and windows on the N side depict a wealth of OT analogies to the NT story depicted by their counterparts on the S side. Thus Isaac carrying the wood is a counterpart to Christ carrying his cross, the sale of Joseph for 20 pieces of silver is a counterpart to Christ’s being sold for 30 pieces, and so forth. The whole OT is thus made to tell the Christian story in advance, but not on principles which the biblical writers themselves would have recognized.

What was spontaneous in the early Middle Ages tends to become studied and artificial when attempts are made to revive it at the present day. 'If the appeal to Scripture is to be maintained in its proper sense, and Christian doctrine is to be set on a less unstable foundation than the private judgment of ingenious riddle-solvers, some attempt is urgently needed to establish a workable criterion for the legitimate use of the typological method, and so to smooth the path of biblical theology' (G. W. H. Lampe, *Theology* 56, 1953, p. 208).

BIBLIOGRAPHY. A. Jukes, *The Law of the Offerings*, 1854; *idem*, *Types of Genesis*, 1858; P. Fairbairn, *The Typology of Scripture*<sup>6</sup>, 1880; C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures*, 1952; H. H. Rowley, *The Unity of the Bible*, 1953; G. W. H. Lampe and K. J. Woollcombe, *Essays on Typology*, 1957; S. H. Hooke, *Alpha and Omega*, 1961; D. Daube, *The Exodus Pattern in the Bible*, 1963; A. T. Hanson, *Jesus Christ in the Old Testament*, 1965; G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 2, 1965, pp. 319-409; F. F. Bruce, *This is That*, 1968; *idem*, *The Time is Fulfilled*, 1978; J. W. Drane, *EQ* 50, 1978, pp. 195-210. F.F.B.2

**MIRACLE** — an event in the external world brought about by the immediate agency or the simple volition of God, operating without the use of means capable of being discerned by the senses, and designed to authenticate the divine commission of a religious teacher and the truth of his message (John 2:18; Matt. 12:38). It is an occurrence at once above nature and above man. It shows the intervention of a power that is not limited by the laws either of matter or of mind, a power interrupting the fixed laws which govern their movements, a supernatural power.

'The suspension or violation of the laws of nature involved in miracles is nothing more than is constantly taking place around us. One force counteracts another: vital force keeps the chemical laws of matter in abeyance; and muscular force can control the action of physical force. When a man raises a weight from the ground, the law of gravity is neither suspended nor violated, but counteracted by a stronger force. The same is true as to the walking of Christ on the water and the swimming of iron at

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<sup>2</sup>*The New Bible Dictionary*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.) 1962.

the command of the prophet. The simple and grand truth that the universe is not under the exclusive control of physical forces, but that everywhere and always there is above, separate from and superior to all else, an infinite personal will, not superseding, but directing and controlling all physical causes, acting with or without them.” God ordinarily effects his purpose through the agency of second causes; but he has the power also of effecting his purpose immediately and without the intervention of second causes, i.e., of invading the fixed order, and thus of working miracles. Thus we affirm the possibility of miracles, the possibility of a higher hand intervening to control or reverse nature’s ordinary movements.

In the New Testament these four Greek words are principally used to designate miracles: (1.) Semeion, a “sign”, i.e., an evidence of a divine commission; an attestation of a divine message (Matt. 12:38, 39; 16:1, 4; Mark 8:11; Luke 11:16; 23:8; John 2:11, 18, 23; Acts 6:8, etc.); a token of the presence and working of God; the seal of a higher power.

(2.) Terata, “wonders;” wonder-causing events; portents ; producing astonishment in the beholder (Acts 2:19).

(3.) Dunameis, “might works;” works of superhuman power (Acts 2:22; Rom. 15:19; 2 Thess. 2:9); of a new and higher power.

(4.) Erga, “works;” the works of Him who is “wonderful in working” (John 5:20, 36).

Miracles are seals of a divine mission. The sacred writers appealed to them as proofs that they were messengers of God. Our Lord also appealed to miracles as a conclusive proof of his divine mission (John 5:20, 36; 10:25, 38). Thus, being out of the common course of nature and beyond the power of man, they are fitted to convey the impression of the presence and power of God. Where miracles are there certainly God is. The man, therefore, who works a miracle affords thereby clear proof that he comes with the authority of God; they are his credentials that he is God’s messenger. The teacher points to these credentials, and they are a proof that he speaks with the authority of God. He boldly says, “God bears me witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles.”

The credibility of miracles is established by the evidence of the senses on the part of those who are witnesses of them, and to all others by the testimony of such witnesses. The witnesses were competent, and their testimony is trustworthy. Unbelievers, following Hume, deny that any

testimony can prove a miracle, because they say miracles are impossible. We have shown that miracles are possible, and surely they can be borne witness to. Surely they are credible when we have abundant and trustworthy evidence of their occurrence. They are credible just as any facts of history well authenticated are credible. Miracles, it is said, are contrary to experience. Of course they are contrary to our experience, but that does not prove that they were contrary to the experience of those who witnessed them. We believe a thousand facts, both of history and of science, that are contrary to our experience, but we believe them on the ground of competent testimony. An atheist or a pantheist must, as a matter of course, deny the possibility of miracles; but to one who believes in a personal God, who in his wisdom may see fit to interfere with the ordinary processes of nature, miracles are not impossible, nor are they incredible. 1

**MIRACLES.** A number of Heb., Aram. and Gk. words are used in the Bible to refer to the activity in nature and history of the living God. They are variously translated in the EVV by ‘miracles’, ‘wonders’, ‘signs’, ‘mighty acts’, ‘powers’. Thus, for example, the Heb. word *môpêṭ*, which is of uncertain etymology, is translated in RSV by ‘miracle’ (Ex. 7:9; Ps. 78:43), ‘wonder’ (*e.g.* Ex. 7:3; Dt. 4:34) and ‘sign’ (*e.g.* 1 Ki. 13:3, 5).

The words used by the English translators preserve in general, though not always in particular instances, the three distinctive emphases of the originals. These characterize God’s activity as being:

1. Distinctive, wonderful; expressed by Heb. derivatives of the root *pl’*, ‘be different’, particularly the participle *niplā’ôṭ* (*e.g.* Ex. 15:11, Jos. 3:5), by Aramaic *ṭmāh* (Dn. 4:2-3; 6:27), and by Gk. *teras* (*e.g.* Acts 4:30; Rom. 15:19).

2. Mighty, powerful; expressed by Heb. *g<sup>o</sup>ḥûrâ* (Pss. 106:2; 145:4) and Gk. *dynamis* (*e.g.* Mt. 11:20; 1 Cor. 12:10; Gal. 3:5).

3. Meaningful, significant; expressed by Heb. *’ôṭ* (*e.g.* Nu. 14:11; Ne. 9:10), by Aramaic *’âṭ* (Dn. 4:2-3; 6:27), and by Gk. *sêmeion* (*e.g.* Jn. 2:11; 3:2; Acts 8:6).

## I. Miracles and the natural order

A great deal of confusion on the subject of miracles has been caused by a failure to observe that Scripture does not sharply distinguish between

God's constant sovereign providence and his particular acts. Belief in miracles is set in the context of a world-view which regards the whole of creation as continually dependent upon the sustaining activity of God and subject to his sovereign will (*cf.* Col. 1:16-17). All three aspects of divine activity—wonder, power, significance—are present not only in special acts but also in the whole created order (Rom. 1:20). When the psalmist celebrates the mighty acts of God he moves readily from the creation to the deliverance from Egypt (Ps. 135:6-12). In Jb. 5:9-10; 9:9-10 the word *nīplā'ôṭ* refers to what we would call 'natural events' (*cf.* Is. 8:18; Ezk. 12:6).

Thus when the biblical writers refer to the mighty acts of God they cannot be supposed to distinguish them from 'the course of nature' by their peculiar causation, since they think of all events as caused by God's sovereign power. The particular acts of God highlight the distinctive character of God's activity, different from and superior to that of men and more particularly that of false gods, almighty in power, revealing him in nature and history.

The discovery of, say, causal connections between the different plagues of Egypt, a repetition of the blocking of the Jordan, or increased knowledge of psychosomatic medicine could not of themselves contradict the biblical assertion that the deliverance from Egypt, the entry to Canaan and the healing works of Christ were mighty acts of God. 'Natural laws' are descriptions of that universe in which God is ever at work. It is only by an unwarranted philosophical twist that they are construed as the self-sustaining working of a closed system or the rigid decrees of a God who set the universe to work like some piece of machinery.

It has been argued by some philosophers and theologians that the working of miracles is inconsistent with God's nature and purpose. He is the Alpha and Omega, he knows the end from the beginning; he is the Creator who fashioned all things unhampered by any limitation imposed by pre-existent matter; he is the unchanging One. Why, then, should he need to 'interfere' with the working of the natural order?

This objection based on the character of God arises from a failure to grasp the biblical understanding of God as living and personal. His changelessness is not that of an impersonal force but the faithfulness of a person: his creative act brought into being responsible creatures with

whom he deals, not as puppets but as other persons over against himself. Miracles are events which dramatically reveal this living, personal nature of God, active in history not as mere Destiny but as a Redeemer who saves and guides his people.

A fuller knowledge of the ways of God's working may show that some supposedly unique events were part of a regular pattern. It can, however, never logically exclude the exceptional and extraordinary. While there is no such radical discontinuity between miracles and the 'natural order' as has been assumed by those who have most keenly felt the modern doubts on the subject, it is clear that Scripture speaks of many events which are extraordinary or even unique so far as our general experience of nature goes.

## **II. Miracles and revelation**

If it be granted that *a priori* objections to miracle stories are invalid, it still remains to ask what precise function these extraordinary events perform in the total self-revelation of God in history. Orthodox theologians have been accustomed to regard them primarily as the authenticating marks of God's prophets and apostles and supremely of his Son. More recently it has been argued by liberal critics that the miracle stories of OT and NT are of the same character as the wonder-stories told of pagan deities and their prophets. Both these views fail to do justice to the integral relationship between the miracle stories and the whole self-revelation of God. Miracles are not simply an external authentication of the revelation but an essential part of it, of which the true purpose was and is to nourish faith in the saving intervention of God towards those who believe.

### *a. False miracles*

Jesus consistently refused to give a \*sign from heaven, to work useless and spectacular wonders, simply to guarantee his teaching. In any case the simple ability to work miracles would have been no such guarantee. There is frequent reference both in Scripture and elsewhere to wonder-working by those who were opposed to the purposes of God (*cf.* Dt. 13:2-3; Mt. 7:22; 24:24; 2 Thes. 2:9; Rev. 13:13ff.; 16:14; 19:20). The refusal to do wonders for their own sake sharply marks off the biblical miracle stories from the general run of *Wundergeschichten*.

It is noteworthy that the word *teras*, which of all the biblical terms has most nearly the overtones of the English ‘portent’, is always used in the NT in conjunction with *sēmeion* to stress that only significant portents are meant. The only exception is the OT quotation in Acts 2:19 (but *cf.* Acts 2:22).

The mere portent or the false miracle is distinguished from the true by the fact that the true miracle is congruous with the rest of the revelation. It harmonizes with the knowledge which believers already possess concerning God, even where it also carries that knowledge farther and deeper. Thus Israel is to reject any miracle-worker who denies the Lord (Dt. 13:2-3) and thus also we may rightly discern between the miracle stories of the canonical Gospels and the romantic tales or ludicrous stupidities of the apocryphal writings and mediaeval hagiography.

### *b. Miracles and faith*

The working of miracles is directed to a deepening of men’s understanding of God. It is God’s way of speaking dramatically to those who have ears to hear. The miracle stories are intimately concerned with the faith of observers or participants (*cf.* Ex. 14:31; 1 Ki. 18:39) and with the faith of those who will hear or read them later (Jn. 20:30-31). Jesus looked for faith as the right response to his saving presence and deeds; it was faith which ‘made whole’, which made the difference between the mere creation of an impression and a saving communication of his revelation of God.

It is important to observe that faith on the part of human participants is not a necessary condition of a miracle in the sense that God is of himself unable to act without human faith. Mk. 6:5 is often quoted to support such a view, but Jesus could do no mighty work in Nazareth, not because the people’s unbelief limited his power—Mark tells us that he healed a few sick people there—but rather because he could not proceed with his preaching or with the deeds which proclaimed his gospel in action where men were unready to accept his good news and his own person. Wonder-working for the crowds or the sceptics was inconsistent with his mission: it is in this sense that he could not do it in Nazareth.

### *c. Miracles and the Word*

It is a notable feature—in some cases the chief feature—of miracles that even where the matter of the event is such that it can be assimilated to the ordinary pattern of natural events (*e.g.* some of the plagues of Egypt), its occurrence is predicted by God to or through his agent (*cf.* Jos. 3:7-13; 1 Ki. 13:1-5) or takes place at an agent's command or prayer (*cf.* Ex. 4:17; Nu. 20:8; 1 Ki. 18:37-38); sometimes both prediction and command are recorded (*cf.* Ex. 14). This feature emphasizes yet again the connection between miracles and revelation, and between miracles and the divine creative Word.

#### *d. The crises of the sacred history*

Another connection between miracles and revelation is that they cluster about the crises of sacred history. The pre-eminently mighty acts of God are the deliverance at the Red Sea and the resurrection of Christ, the first the climax of the conflict with Pharaoh and the gods of Egypt (Ex. 12:12; Nu. 33:4), the second the climax of God's redeeming work in Christ and the conflict with all the power of evil. Miracles are also frequently noted in the time of Elijah and Elisha, when Israel seemed most likely to sink into complete apostasy (*cf.* 1 Ki. 19:14); in the time of the siege of Jerusalem under Hezekiah (2 Ki. 20:11); during the Exile (Dn. *passim*); and in the early days of the Christian mission.

### **III. Miracles in the New Testament**

Some liberal treatments of the question of miracles draw a marked distinction between the miracles of the NT, particularly those of our Lord himself, and those of the OT. Both more radical and more conservative critics have pointed out that in principle the narratives stand or fall together.

The contention that the NT miracles are more credible in the light of modern psychology or psychosomatic medicine leaves out of account the nature miracles, such as that at the wedding-feast in Cana and the calming of the storm, the instantaneous cures of organic disease and malformation, and the raising of the dead. There is no *a priori* reason to suppose that Jesus did not make use of those resources of the human mind and spirit which today are employed by the psychotherapist; but other narratives take us into realms where psychotherapy makes no assertions and where the

claims of spiritual healers find least support from qualified medical observers.

There is, however, evidence for regarding the miracles of Christ and those done in his name as different from those of the OT. Where before God had done mighty works in his transcendent power and revealed them to his servants or used his servants as the occasional agents of such deeds, in Jesus there confronts us God himself incarnate, freely active in sovereign authority in that world which is 'his own'. When the apostles did similar works in his name they acted in the power of the risen Lord with whom they were in intimate contact, so that Acts continues the story of the same things which Jesus began to do and teach in his earthly ministry (*cf.* Acts 1:1).

In stressing and direct presence and action of God in Christ we do not deny the continuity of his work with the previous course of God's dealing with the world. Of the list of works given by our Lord in answering the Baptist's inquiry (Mt. 11:5) it is the most wonderful, the healing of lepers and the raising of the dead, which have OT parallels, notably in the ministry of Elisha. What is remarkable is the integral relationship between the works and words of Jesus. The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the deaf hear, and at the same time that the gospel is preached to the poor by which spiritual sight and hearing and a power to walk in God's way are given to the spiritually needy.

Again, the frequency of healing miracles is far greater in the time of the NT than at any period of the OT. The OT records its miracles one by one and gives no indication that there were others unrecorded. The Gospels and the NT in general repeatedly claim that the miracles described in detail were but a fraction of those wrought.

Jesus' works are clearly marked off from others by their manner or mode. There is in Jesus' dealing with the sick and demon-possessed a note of inherent authority. Where prophets did their works in the name of God or after prayer to God, Jesus casts out demons and heals with that same air of rightful power as informs his pronouncement of forgiveness to the sinner; indeed, he deliberately linked the two authorities (Mk. 2:9-11). At the same time Jesus stressed that his works were done in constant dependence on the Father (*e.g.* Jn. 5:19). The balance between inherent

authority and humble dependence is the very mark of the perfect unity of deity and humanity.

NT teaching on the virgin birth, the resurrection and the ascension emphasizes the newness of what God did in Christ. He was born of a woman in the genealogy of Abraham and David, but of a virgin; others had been raised from death, only to die again; he 'always lives' and has ascended to the right hand of power. It is, moreover, true of the resurrection as of no other individual miracle that on it the NT rests the whole structure of faith (*cf.* 1 Cor. 15:17). This event was unique as the decisive triumph over sin and death.

The miracles of the apostles and other leaders of the NT church spring from the solidarity of Christ with his people. They are works done in his name, in continuation of all that Jesus began to do and teach, in the power of the Spirit he sent from the Father. There is a close link between these miracles and the work of the apostles in testifying to the person and work of their Lord; they are part of the proclamation of the kingdom of God, not an end in themselves.

The debate continues over the contention that this function of miracle was of necessity confined to the apostolic age. But we may at least say that the NT miracles were distinct from any subsequent ones by virtue of their immediate connection with the full manifestation of the incarnate Son of God, with a revelation then given in its fullness. They do not, therefore, afford grounds in themselves for expecting miracles to accompany the subsequent dissemination of the revelation of which they formed an integral part.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY.** It is impossible to list here even a representative selection of the very extensive literature on the many aspects of the question of miracles. The following works represent points of view discussed above and will also provide references for further study: D. S. Cairns, *The Faith that Rebels*, 1927; A. Richardson, *The Miracle Stories of the Gospels*, 1941; C. S. Lewis, *Miracles, A Preliminary Study*, 1947; E. and M.-L. Keller, *Miracles in Dispute*, 1969; C. F. D. Moule (ed.), *Miracles: Cambridge Studies in their Philosophy and History*, 1965. M.H.C. 2

# ***PART 2: A REVELATION OF.....***

## ***3 MIRACULOUS CONCEPTIONS***

### **INTRODUCTION**

The procreation of the species is a hugely important drive in both the animal and human kingdoms. For when we are unable to have babies, our family line ceases in our generation. So, throughout history, producing heirs has been vital, in order to continue the species. In the case of humans too, to provide a 'superannuation policy' of children to look after us in our old age! A less important consideration now in some wealthier countries, with the introduction of the Welfare state, but one which was vital for future security during Biblical times, as indeed it still is in the majority of countries today.

Barrenness was regarded as a curse in ancient cultures, particularly amongst women, who always took the blame. Some things change only slowly! And were looked down upon, particularly by other women! (eg Sarai by Hagar)

The most detailed account of the implications of not having heirs is found in the story of Naomi in the Book of Ruth. Of course, Naomi did in fact have 2 sons, but they both died before producing offspring. The despair of Naomi upon her return home is graphically described.

*<sup>19</sup> So the two women went on until they came to Bethlehem. When they arrived in Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them, and the women exclaimed, "Can this be Naomi?" <sup>20</sup> "Don't call me Naomi," she told them. "Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. <sup>21</sup> I went away full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi? The LORD has afflicted me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me." (Ruth 1:19-21) 3*

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3 All Scripture is from *The New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 1984 unless otherwise stated.

Of course, Naomi (A type of Israel and the Jewish Church) finally found security and cultural fulfillment through her daughter-in-law Ruth' s (The Gentile Church) marriage to Boaz.. (Representing Jesus) But that is another story! (See A REVELATION OF... THE BOOK OF RUTH)

While not strictly about a true ' barren woman' , the story of Ruth accurately illustrates the problems involved. And will help us better understand the desperate position childless couples of biblical times faced.

Now, as we move on to look at these three specific families, I trust you will experience some of the emotion of the stressful situations these families faced. And their huge appreciation and cultural gratification, when God granted them their deepest desire, to produce a new generation.

However, this revelation is not really about the families themselves, wonderful though their stories may be. Instead, it shows the way God used each of these precious situations to illustrate aspects of His greatest outpouring of grace, the sacrifice of His son Jesus. Once again, we can experience a relationship with our Creator, lost on that day when Adam and Eve decided to go their own way. Which many still do today.

The first two of these joyous Family celebrations reveal aspects of the what Jesus was coming to do, while the third, reflects our required response in order to participate in the reconciliation God has made available to us.

# ABRAHAM, SARAH AND ISAAC

Abraham was the greatest man of his time, both materially and spiritually. He was a nomad. Living in a tent, the family would remain in one place over the winter while there was sufficient rain to make pastures grow for his animals to feed upon and to grow a crop, likely barley, to maturity. However, the rest of the year, they would wander from place to place with their sheep, goats and cattle to find sufficient grazing over the long, hot, dry summer months.

Spiritually, Abraham had a relationship with God that set him apart from the people of his time, directly resulting in him becoming the founding father of the Jewish race, God' s chosen people. Spiritually too, he is the one to whom we, as Christians today, trace our inheritance.

But, like us, Abraham was not perfect. While a man of tremendous faith, he still had his doubts when the physical reality didn' t appear to match the spiritual promise. Some things never change! At this point we enter his story.

## THE PROMISE OF A SON

Abram (high father) and Sarai (likely meaning, contentious) had everything the world of the day could offer - except for a son and heir. Abram complained to God about it when speaking to the Lord!

*After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: ‘Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.’<sup>2</sup> But Abram said, ‘O Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?’<sup>3</sup> And Abram said, ‘You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.’”(Genesis 15:1-4)*

God gave him an amazing promise.

*Then the word of the LORD came to him: ‘This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir.’<sup>5</sup> He took*

*him outside and said, ‘Look up at the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.’ Then he said to him, ‘So shall your offspring be.’ (Genesis 15:4-5)*

This, the first time the Lord promised him an heir must have been at a time when the couple was still in their natural childbearing years, for even though they had had difficulties in conceiving so far, Abraham immediately believed.

*<sup>6</sup> Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness. (Genesis 15:6)*

However, nothing more happened for many years. So, in their humanity, Abram and Sarai 'helped' God out by coming up with a natural solution to their problem! In keeping with the tradition of the time, Sarai suggested that her servant Hagar could act as a surrogate mother. An idea Abram readily agreed with! So Ishmael was born. This caused a lot of problems in the family. Hagar despised Sarai. Sarai resented Hagar and Ishmael. Abraham loved Ishmael dearly. But eventually gave into Sarai' s nagging and let her banish them from the camp.

Finally, when Abram was 99, the Lord appeared before him again and repeated the promise made many years earlier. This was accompanied by a name change, to Abraham (father of a multitude) and Sarah (a princess).

*<sup>15</sup> God also said to Abraham, ‘As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. <sup>16</sup> I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her.’ (Genesis 17:15-16)*

By this time Abraham had lost his faith in Sarah' s fertility, having pinned his faith on Ishmael receiving the promised inheritance.

*<sup>17</sup> Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, ‘Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of*

ninety?” <sup>18</sup> And Abraham said to God, ‘If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!’ (Genesis 17:17-18)

But God simply confirmed that Sarah was indeed to become a mother. And the Ishmael would have a spiritual inheritance too. This turned out to be those of the Moslem faith, for they trace their ancestry back to Abraham, through Ishmael.

<sup>19</sup> Then God said, ‘Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. <sup>20</sup> And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation. <sup>21</sup> But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you by this time next year.’ <sup>22</sup> When he had finished speaking with Abraham, God went up from him.  
(Genesis 17:19-22)

I suspect that Abraham didn't mention this to Sarah at the time, for it was not until the Lord came a third time that we hear of Sarah's reaction. This time she overheard the Lord speaking to her husband. And her reaction was similar to his! She was immediately ashamed of it.

<sup>9</sup> ‘Where is your wife Sarah?’ they asked him. ‘There, in the tent,’ he said. <sup>10</sup> Then the LORD said, ‘I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son.’ Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him. <sup>11</sup> Abraham and Sarah were already old and well advanced in years, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing. <sup>12</sup> So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, ‘After I am worn out and my master is old, will I now have this pleasure?’ <sup>13</sup> Then the LORD said to Abraham, ‘Why did Sarah laugh and say, ‘Will I really have a child, now that I am old?’ <sup>14</sup> Is anything too hard for the LORD? I will return to you at the appointed time next year and Sarah will have a son.’ <sup>15</sup> Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, ‘I did not laugh.’ But he said, ‘Yes, you did laugh.’ (Genesis 18:9-15)

But the date was now set. So in due course, Isaac was born.

*Now the LORD was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did for Sarah what he had promised. <sup>2</sup> Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him. <sup>3</sup> Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son Sarah bore him. (Genesis 21:1-3)*

Sarah, in particular, was very happy, even after going through labor at the age of 90! For she had attained cultural fulfilment and respect amongst the people.

*<sup>6</sup> Sarah said, "God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me." <sup>7</sup> And she added, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age." (Genesis 21:6-7)*

This was a supernatural birth to a woman past the age of menopause!

We now need to move on in the life of Isaac to see the revelation of Jesus to come.

## **THE SACRIFICE OF ISAAC**

Abraham, contrary to all human rational thought of promised succession, was instructed to sacrifice Isaac.

*<sup>2</sup> Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about." (Genesis 22:2)*

How could this be? After waiting all the years for Isaac to be born, finally seeing the line of succession God promised as possible, Abraham was told to kill off his heir! But Abraham was obedient to the Lord.

After walking for 3 days he told the servants to stay with the donkey, which presumably he had been riding, while Isaac and he walked on and made the sacrifice.

*On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance.  
<sup>5</sup> He said to his servants, 'Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy  
go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.'  
(Genesis 22:4-5)*

But even more remarkable than Abraham' s reaction, was that of Isaac! For he had now grown into a strapping young man, somewhere between 16 and 25. Having all his life ahead of him, no doubt secure in the knowledge of God' s promise for a nation of people to be birthed through his line. Yet, in spite of all this, he obeyed his father. Physically, he need not have!

Naturally though, he did question him!

*Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, <sup>7</sup> Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, 'Father?' 'Yes, my son?' Abraham replied. 'The fire and wood are here,' Isaac said, 'but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?'  
(Genesis 22:6-7)*

Abraham gave a cryptic reply!

*<sup>8</sup> Abraham answered, 'God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.' And the two of them went on together. (Genesis 22:8)*

Isaac allowed himself to be tied up by his father and placed on the altar. Was he just being obedient? Or did he believe that God would do something, in order that his destiny might be fulfilled. That a substitute would be provided? Or perhaps that he would be resurrected? Whatever were his thoughts, he allowed it to happen.

*<sup>9</sup> When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. (Genesis 22:9)*

Abraham steeled himself to do that which went against both logic and emotion.

*<sup>10</sup> Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.  
(Genesis 22:10)*

The Angel of the Lord came to their joint rescue!

*<sup>11</sup> But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. <sup>12</sup> "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."  
(Genesis 22:11-12)*

Imagine their relief when the substitute was provided!

*<sup>13</sup> Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. (Genesis 22:13)*

The promise of succession was then renewed.

*<sup>15</sup> The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time <sup>16</sup> and said, "I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, <sup>17</sup> I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, <sup>18</sup> and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me." (Genesis 22:15-18)*

They returned to the servants, who had been looking after the donkey and their possessions while they were away.

*<sup>19</sup> Then Abraham returned to his servants, and they set off together for Beersheba. And Abraham stayed in Beersheba. (Genesis 22:19)*

# A PICTURE OF JESUS

## THE TYPES:

**The Father**.....*Abraham*

**Jesus**.....*Isaac*

**Holy Spirit**.....*Servants*

- 1. Abraham was prepared to sacrifice his only son, in obedience to the Father.**  
*The Father was prepared to sacrifice His only son, Jesus, for us.*
- 2. Isaac, conceived supernaturally, submitted to Abraham's will. For his life a substitute sacrifice was provided.**  
*Jesus, conceived supernaturally, submitted to the Father's will and became (remains) a substitute sacrifice for us.*
- 3. The servants looked after Abraham and Isaac.**  
*The Holy Spirit teaches and guides us today.*
- 4. Both Abraham and Sarah believed the miracle birth impossible, even when told by God.**  
*Many people still disbelieve the Gospel message of reconciliation to the Father through the sacrifice of Jesus.*

## THE SHUNAMMITE'S SON

The prophet Elisha travelled round from place in Israel, encouraging the people to go on for God. as an itinerant preacher, he needed accommodation, somewhere to stay while fulfilling His calling.

A wealthy lady from Schunem, with an elderly husband, had him for meals during his frequent visits, being blessed by his presence. One day she had the bright idea to build a room on the roof of her house for Elisha to use as a home away from home.

Elisha appreciated this very much, so asked what he could do for her. She didn' t want anything, seemingly being content with her life. However, Elisha' s servant Gehazi knew that deep down, she regretted, as had Sarai earlier, not having had a baby. This was seemingly impossible for her, as her husband was too old to be fertile. Very likely, she was no ' spring chicken' herself.

Let us move on in her story and see how it relates to Jesus.

### THE BIRTH OF A SON

After being informed of her desire by Gehazi, Elisha called the woman to come, have a talk and receive God' s promise.

*<sup>15</sup> Then Elisha said, ‘Call her.’ So he called her, and she stood in the doorway. <sup>16</sup> ‘About this time next year,’ Elisha said, ‘you will hold a son in your arms.’ (2 Kings 4:15-16a)*

Her reaction was similar to Sarah and Abraham' s. Disbelief! Ours too?

*‘No, my lord,’ she objected. ‘Don’ t mislead your servant, O man of God!’ (2 Kings 4:16b)*

But as God promised it, the baby was born within a year.

<sup>17</sup> *But the woman became pregnant, and the next year about that same time she gave birth to a son, just as Elisha had told her. (2 Kings 4:17)*

## **DEATH AND RESURRECTION**

He grew up until he was old enough to go out to his father in the fields.

One day however, while with his father, he had a brain haemorrhage.

<sup>19</sup> *‘My head! My head!’ he said to his father. (2 Kings 4:19)*

His father had him raced back to his mother, in whose arms he died. She was devastated. How could this supernaturally given child die so young! So she decided, to the bemusement of her husband, who hadn't been told of the full situation, to seek Elisha's advice.

When he saw her coming, Elisha sent Gehazi to find out why she had come so unexpectedly. She didn't want to tell Gehazi, but complained to Elisha, seeking an explanation.

<sup>28</sup> *‘Did I ask you for a son, my lord?’ she said. ‘Didn't I tell you, ‘Don't raise my hopes’?’ (2 Kings 4:28)*

Elisha sent Gehazi on ahead.

<sup>29</sup> *Elisha said to Gehazi, ‘Tuck your cloak into your belt, take my staff in your hand and run. If you meet anyone, do not greet him, and if anyone greets you, do not answer. Lay my staff on the boy's face.’ (2 Kings 4:29)*

The Shunammite waited and went with Elisha. When they got back to the house Gehazi reported that the boy was indeed dead. So Elisha went in and prayed to the Lord.

<sup>33</sup> *He went in, shut the door on the two of them and prayed to the LORD. <sup>34</sup> Then he got on the bed and lay upon the boy, mouth to mouth, eyes to eyes, hands to hands. As he stretched himself out upon him, the boy's body grew*

warm. <sup>35</sup> *Elisha turned away and walked back and forth in the room and then got on the bed and stretched out upon him once more.*  
(2 Kings 4:33-35a)

Until the boy rose from the dead!

*The boy sneezed seven times and opened his eyes. (2 Kings 4:35b)*

Elisha sent Gehazi to fetch the boy' s mother.

<sup>36</sup> *Elisha summoned Gehazi and said, "Call the Shunammite." And he did.*  
(2Kings 4:36a)

His mother was deliriously happy, as one would expect!

*When she came, he said, "Take your son." <sup>37</sup> She came in, fell at his feet and bowed to the ground. Then she took her son and went out.*  
(2 Kings 4:36b-37)

## **A PICTURE OF JESUS**

### **THE TYPES:**

**The Father.....** *Elisha*

**Jesus.....** *The Shunammite' s son*

**Holy Spirit.....** *Gehazi*

- 1. Elisha prayed and the boy rose from the dead**  
*The Father sent His son to overcome death and rise from the dead.*
- 2. Shunammite's son, conceived supernaturally, died and rose again.**  
*Jesus, conceived supernaturally, died and rose again.*
- 3. Gehazi looked after Elisha and the family.**  
*The Holy Spirit teaches and guides us today.*
- 4. The Shunammite woman believed the miracle birth impossible, even when told by Elisha.**
- 5. Many people still disbelieve the Gospel message of reconciliation to the Father through the sacrifice of Jesus.**

# ZECHARIAH, ELIZABETH AND JOHN THE BAPTIST

## THE BIRTH OF JOHN

Shortly before BC was to turn into AD, there lived in Jerusalem, a godly priest Zechariah, with his upright wife, Elizabeth. They were both getting on in years, and had been unable to have a family, as Elizabeth was barren.

Unexpectedly one day, as Zechariah was on duty at the Temple, standing beside the Incense Altar getting ready to burn the incense, an angel appeared and told him that he and Elizabeth were going to have their long desired family. Naturally, he was scared when the angel appeared.

*<sup>13</sup> But the angel said to him: ‘Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John. <sup>14</sup> He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, <sup>15</sup> for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth. (Luke 1:13-15)*

Zechariah had the usual human reaction of disbelief, as had happened in our previous stories.

*<sup>18</sup> Zechariah asked the angel, ‘How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years.’ (Luke 1:18)*

And he paid for it.

*<sup>19</sup> The angel answered, ‘I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. <sup>20</sup> And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their proper time.’ (Luke 1:19-20)*

But Elizabeth became pregnant (a voice not required for this!) and culturally fulfilled.

*<sup>23</sup> When his time of service was completed, he returned home. <sup>24</sup> After this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months remained in seclusion. <sup>25</sup> ‘The Lord has done this for me,’ she said. ‘In these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people.’*  
(Luke 1:22-25)

After a visit from her cousin Mary, the mother of Jesus, Elizabeth had her baby. When it came to naming him on the eighth, circumcision day, an unusual situation developed where Elizabeth wanted to break with tradition by not naming the baby after it' s father.

*<sup>59</sup> On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah, <sup>60</sup> but his mother spoke up and said, ‘No! He is to be called John.’ <sup>61</sup> They said to her, ‘There is no one among your relatives who has that name.’*(Luke 1:59-61)

Zechariah had to answer his wife' s request to use another name, in writing.

*<sup>62</sup> Then they made signs to his father, to find out what he would like to name the child. <sup>63</sup> He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone’s astonishment he wrote, ‘His name is John.’* ((Luke 1:62-63)

It was obviously the right decision in God!

*<sup>64</sup> Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue was loosed, and he began to speak, praising God. (Luke 1:64)*

And the news quickly spread.

*<sup>65</sup> The neighbors were all filled with awe, and throughout the hill country of Judea people were talking about all these things. <sup>66</sup> Everyone who heard this wondered about it, asking, ‘What then is this child going to be?’ For the Lord’s hand was with him. (Luke 1:65-66)*

John was special, for his ministry fulfilled that of the promised return of Elijah, the introduction of the promised Messiah.

## **THE MINISTRY OF JOHN**

John prepared the way for Jesus, proclaiming key principles of the ministry to follow.

1. Proclaimed repentance for the forgiveness of sins and baptism.

*<sup>3</sup> He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. (Luke 3:3)*

2. Proclaimed the Lord' s imminent arrival.

*<sup>4</sup> As is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: "A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.' <sup>5</sup> Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. <sup>6</sup> And all mankind will see God's salvation." (Luke 3:4-6)*

3. Proclaimed godly living.

*<sup>8</sup> Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. <sup>9</sup> The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire." (Luke 3:8-9)*

## **A PICTURE OF JESUS**

### **THE TYPES:**

**The Father.....** *Gabriel*

**Jesus.....** *John*

**Holy Spirit.....** *Holy Spirit*

- 1. Gabriel announced the coming of a special messenger to proclaim salvation through repentance.**  
*The Father sent His son Jesus, as the means of obtaining salvation through repentance.*
- 2. John was to bring back people to God.**  
*Jesus was the means of bringing back people to God.*
- 3. The Holy Spirit was to be in John from birth.**  
*The Holy Spirit was in Jesus from birth.*
- 4. Zechariah believed the miracle birth impossible, even when told by Gabriel.**  
*Many people still disbelieve the Gospel message of reconciliation to the Father through the sacrifice of Jesus.*

## THE FUFILMENT IN JESUS

<sup>26</sup> *In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee,* <sup>27</sup> *to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary.* <sup>28</sup> *The angel went to her and said, 'Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.'* <sup>29</sup> *Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be.* <sup>30</sup> *But the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God.'* <sup>31</sup> *You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus.* <sup>32</sup> *He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David,* <sup>33</sup> *and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.'* <sup>34</sup> *'How will this be,' Mary asked the angel, 'since I am a virgin?'* <sup>35</sup> *The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.'* <sup>36</sup> *Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month.* <sup>37</sup> *For nothing is impossible with God.'* <sup>38</sup> *'I am the Lord's servant,' Mary answered. 'May it be to me as you have said.'* Then the angel left her. (Luke 1:26-35)

## IN THE BIRTH OF JESUS

### THE REALITY:

**The Father.....** *The Father sent the angel Gabriel to tell Mary that she was to become the mother of Jesus. (For the Father is invisible.)*

**Jesus.....** *Jesus, God' s son, is to be born to Mary.*

**Holy Spirit.....** *Conceived through the Holy Spirit.*

- 1. The Father announced the coming of the holy Son of God.**
- 2. Jesus was to inherit the throne of David, to rule spiritual Israel forever, a kingdom without end.**
- 3. The Holy Spirit would facilitate this conception.**
- 4. Mary *believed* all that the angel Gabriel told her!**

## IN THE LIFE OF JESUS

## JESUS - THE FULFILLMENT OF ISAAC

*"Isaac, conceived supernaturally, submitted to Abraham's will, and for whose life a substitute sacrifice was provided."*

### 1. Jesus Submitted to the Father's Will.

All through His life Jesus submitted to the will of His Father.

*<sup>34</sup> "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. (John 4:34)"*

Reiterated again.

*<sup>38</sup> For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. (John 6:38)"*

And confirmed before His greatest ' test' of all, one so great that His sweat was like drops of blood in anticipation!

*<sup>42</sup> "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." <sup>43</sup> An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. <sup>44</sup> And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. (Luke 22:42-44)"*

### 2. Jesus was the Sacrificial Lamb, the Substitute for our Sin.

*<sup>29</sup> The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, 'Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! <sup>30</sup> This is the one I meant when I said, 'A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.' <sup>31</sup> I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel.' <sup>32</sup> Then John gave this testimony: 'I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. <sup>33</sup> I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me,*

*‘The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’<sup>34</sup> I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God.’(John1 :29-34)*

Confirmed by the apostle Paul.

*<sup>14</sup> For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. <sup>15</sup> And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. (2 Corinthians 5:14-15)*

## **JESUS - THE FULFILLMENT OF THE SHUNAMMITES SON**

***“The Shunammite's son, conceived supernaturally, died and rose again.”***

### **1. Jesus Died.**

*<sup>33</sup> At the sixth hour darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour. <sup>34</sup> And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “**Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?**”—which means, **‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’** <sup>35</sup> When some of those standing near heard this, they said, ‘Listen, he’s calling Elijah.’ <sup>36</sup> One man ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. ‘Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to take him down,” he said. <sup>37</sup> With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. <sup>38</sup> The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. <sup>39</sup> And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, heard his cry and saw how he died, he said, ‘Surely this man was the Son of God!’”(Mark 15:33-39)*

### **2. And Rose Again**

*When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus’ body. <sup>2</sup> Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb <sup>3</sup> and they asked each other, ‘Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?’ <sup>4</sup> But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been*

rolled away. <sup>5</sup> As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. <sup>6</sup> 'Don't be alarmed,' he said. 'You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. <sup>7</sup> But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'"  
(Mark 16:1-7)

Again confirmed by the apostle Paul.

<sup>14</sup> We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.  
(1 Thessalonians 4:14)

## **JESUS - THE FULFILLMENT OF JOHN THE BAPTIST**

*"John was to bring back people to God."*

**Jesus provided the way back to God.**

He declared it Himself.

<sup>6</sup> Jesus answered, *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. <sup>7</sup> If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."* (John 14:6)

And confirmed by the apostle Paul.

<sup>19</sup> For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous. <sup>20</sup> The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, <sup>21</sup> so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 5:19-21)

## **In fulfillment of the pattern of the Old Testament.**

*<sup>11</sup> For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life. (Leviticus 17:11)*

## **Confirmed in the New Covenant.**

*<sup>11</sup> When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. <sup>12</sup> He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. <sup>13</sup> The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. <sup>14</sup> How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! <sup>15</sup> For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant. (Hebrews 9:11-15)*

# CONCLUSION

I find the numerous types and patterns the Bible contains build my faith! For how can it be chance that Isaac, miraculously born more than 2,000 years before Jesus, could so clearly reflect the substitutionary sacrifice that our Savior was to become that 'awful' day on the cross of Calvary.

And how the miracle life of the Shunammite's son, born 1,200 years before Christ, could seemingly end so purposelessly, in defeat. Yet be reinstated so gloriously, when all hope seemed lost. As we can now see so clearly, a beautiful picture of the death and resurrection of our Lord.

Finally, how the miracle life and ministry of John the Baptist could so amazingly set the scene for the Savior who was to imminently come. With a message of repentance, and of salvation through, unbeknown to him at the time, one of his relations! God has a great sense of humour!

Then there was the reaction of the parents of these 3 miracle babies. We can easily understand, in our humanity, how impossible the promise of children must have seemed. After all, they had been trying for years by themselves to produce a family, but nothing had worked. Many still experience this same sadness today. Imagine the celebrations when the pregnancies were confirmed. Even more, when the babies were born!

Their initial disbelief though, sadly but accurately reflects, the unbelief of so many people today in the salvation power of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Mary however, was of a different nature. For she believed and found favour with God. While she went through many trials and tribulations in life - imagine watching your son be crucified - she was blessed by God. Sound familiar to you? For Mary is a picture of you, and of me, once we believe in and live for Jesus.

May we take this message of hope to the entire world!