

Written For Our Instruction

By Jane Titrud

Something I have come to appreciate about the Word of God over the years is that it contains multiple layers of revelation, all of which work together for our instruction. These layers are one reason a person can spend a lifetime studying God's Word and never quite comprehend it all.

Take the first book of the Bible. Genesis contains details about the creation of the universe and the early history of mankind which could never be known apart from special revelation. Yet, it only offers a few such details. It does not tell us everything we might like to know, for example, about the creation of the stars, galaxies, and far reaches of the universe. Much more is written here about the origin of man than the creation of the starry heavens. But even at that, Genesis only provides a select history with respect to mankind as well. It tells us about the creation of the first man and woman, the origin of marriage, the fall of man, the multiplication of evil on earth, Noah's flood, the scattering of peoples over the earth, and God's promises to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. However, a lot of extraneous information is obviously left out. That is because what has been revealed here was given for the purpose of teaching truth. That is, it was written for our instruction. It was never meant to just satisfy man's curiosity about the beginning. Genesis provides important background information necessary for understanding man's problem and God's solution. But it is much more than just a listing of facts.

Written in story form, Genesis tells us about real people and historical events that happened long before the Law was given to Moses. Some of the people mentioned here believed God and followed Him during particularly dark periods in human history. Enoch, for instance, walked with God, and God took him (Genesis 5:24). Noah likewise believed God and, by faith, built an ark to save himself and his family from coming judgment (Genesis 6:5–22). But, one can clearly see that by Noah's day the world had already become so engulfed in violence and the wickedness of men that God had to destroy the world by sending a worldwide flood. In other words, the fall of man and the resulting sin had already become a tremendous problem for humanity. Left to himself, man would destroy himself completely. Thus, God had to intervene in order to save His creation. He did this by choosing to work through the faith of Abraham to bring blessing and salvation to the world (Genesis 12:1–3). This is the basis of the Gospel of grace through faith that we believe and teach today. Of course, the Gospel is explained in much greater detail in the New Testament. Nevertheless, the writers of the New Testament were able to draw upon the revealing stories in Genesis in order to establish and confirm the Gospel. The following excerpt from Romans 4, as it pertains to Abraham, is especially revealing with regards to the subject at hand: *"Yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what He had promised, He was able also to perform. Therefore also IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS. Now not for his sake only was it written, that it was reckoned to him, but for our sake also, to whom it will be reckoned, as those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead"* (Romans 4:20–24 NASB).

Amidst the facts and stories provided in Genesis, another layer of revelation exists here as well. That is, some of the details recorded in Genesis have a hidden significance beyond just themselves. This level of revelation exists in the form of "types and shadows." Types, for instance, are Old Testament phenomena that can involve people, objects, facts, or events that actually existed and had meaning within their own timeframe but which also refer to some aspect of future truth. Most types and shadows either foreshadow something about Christ or some element of the Gospel. Since they prefigure things in the future, such phenomena constitute a form of prophecy. Yet, their hidden nature means they were generally not recognized for what they were during the Old Testament time period. Most Jews still do not recognize them because they are primarily revealed and explained via New Testament revelation, and most Jews do not accept the New Testament.

A good example of the phenomenon of "types" is the fact that Adam was a type of Christ. We know this because the Apostle Paul called Adam the "first man" and referred to Christ as the "last Adam" (1 Corinthians 15:45–47). In addition, the New Testament seems to indicate that Adam was given a special

representative headship over the entire human race similar to that of Christ. This is explained in Romans 5 where Paul talks about original sin and the resulting death that spread to all mankind: *“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—for until the Law sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come”* (Romans 5:12–14). In other words, people died even before the Law was given to Moses because when Adam sinned, he was acting on behalf of the entire human race—that is, “all sinned” *in Adam* (v. 12). But, when Christ died on the cross, He too was acting on behalf of the entire human race. Thus, there is a correlation here, albeit in a negative sense. Paul explained this when he went on to compare the result of Adam’s one transgression with what Christ accomplished in His one act of righteous on the cross: *“So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men”* (Romans 5:18). This correlation is at least part of what makes Adam a “*type of Him who was to come*” (v. 14).

“Types and shadows” are not limited to the Book of Genesis. It is just that Genesis is particularly rich in them. Hebrews 11, for instance, explains that: *“By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac; and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; it was he to whom it was said, ‘IN ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS SHALL BE CALLED.’ He considered that God is able to raise men even from the dead; from which he also received him back as a type”* (Hebrews 11:17–19). Thus we see yet another example of typology in Genesis. Hebrews 11:17–19 implies that the story found in Genesis 22, about Abraham offering up his son Isaac, is ultimately a foreshadowing of the future sacrifice, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In particular, when Isaac was given back to his father alive, he became a type or foreshadowing of the resurrection of Christ.

I find these phenomena particularly fascinating in the way they underscore the fact that the Bible is truly the Word of God. Just think, “types and shadows” were incorporated into the Old Testament by writers who did not even recognize their existence at the time of their writing. Since they were not explained until the New Testament, they could hardly have been the invention of men. Indeed, just how would one go about trying to fake something one could not even perceive?

Of course, direct prophecy occurs in the Bible as well and is yet another form of revelation. There are two basic kinds of prophecy: 1) speaking *forth* from God and 2) *foretelling* future events. The fact that prophets spoke forth from God is how we got the Bible in the first place (2 Peter 1:20-21). And as far as foretelling goes, this basically tells people what to expect. There are over 300 Old Testament prophecies, for example, that pertain to the first advent of Christ alone, and some of these are remarkably detailed. Their fulfillment proves that Jesus is the Christ. Similarly, prophecies pertaining to the Second Coming and end-time events teach us what to expect.

Other layers of revelation concern the multiple ways God instructs His people about the requirement of holiness throughout His Word. God, for example, used His people Israel to reveal His righteous requirements by giving them the Law of Moses (see Deuteronomy 4:5–8). This Law included commandments, ordinances, and statutes, which were intended to reveal God’s will, define sin, and specify what was required for man to approach a holy God. Yet, He also used the Israelites themselves to illustrate the tendencies of man’s fallen heart to rebel against God. Hence, the Word teaches by example and not just by written law. Indeed, Paul tells us that the Old Testament example of the Jews is still meant to teach us today: *“Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come”* (1 Corinthians 10:11). Obviously, God’s intention here is that we learn from the mistakes of the Jews so as not to repeat them.

Finally, the revelations of God through Jesus Christ as recorded in His Word make up especially important layers of revelation. For one thing, certain facts about the person and work of Jesus Christ are absolutely vital to achieving a proper understanding of the gospel. But the nature of Christ and His teachings are important as well in that they communicate the true nature of God unto man. I believe this is one reason why Jesus Christ is called “the Word” in the Gospel of John (John 1:1&14a). Ordinarily, words exist for the sake of communication, and the same is true with respect to Jesus Christ: *“God, after*

He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature” (Hebrews 1:1–3a). See also John 14:6–10 where Jesus said to Philip, “‘He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how do you say, “Show us the Father”?’” (v. 9)

The example of Christ is yet another level of revelation. It teaches us how to live and be like Him: *“Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to his edification. For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, ‘THE REPROACHES OF THOSE WHO REPROACHED THEE FELL UPON ME.’ For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Jesus Christ; that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God” (Romans 15:2–7).* The point here is that we cannot just live for ourselves if we claim to belong to Christ. Living the Christian life is not always easy. We are not to condone sin or falsehood. Yet, we must sometimes endure the reproaches of others, as did Christ, and exercise love and patience if we are ever to be of the same mind with one another.

The example of Christ moreover encourages us with respect to the endurance it takes to “run the race” of salvation successfully. We have the example and witness of multiple believers in God who preceded us as well. Hebrews 11 lists several champions of the faith. But in Hebrews 12, Jesus is said to be the *“author and perfecter of faith” (v. 2): “Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you may not grow weary and lose heart. You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin” (Hebrews 12:1–4). “Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed. Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord” (vv. 12–14).*

Everything Christ did He did by faith and the power of the Spirit. When Hebrews 12:2 refers to Christ as the *“author and perfecter of faith,”* the context shows that this is referring to His example. The word “author” is used here in the sense of Christ being our “leader” in that He demonstrated the kind of faith we are expected to exhibit as well. When we actually do follow His example, faith is “perfected” in us because it produces fruit of the Spirit.

This is not an exhaustive list of the multiple layers of revelation that exist in the Word of God. Nevertheless, those cited show the great wisdom and foresight of God in repeatedly instructing and guiding us towards a full understanding of His truth.