



ONCE WHEN VISITING my son who was in college in Florida, I went for an afternoon walk along a paved pathway. Tree roots had broken through this asphalt overlay. I walked for a couple miles and saw that these roots breaking through was a very common occurrence.

A couple of life lessons came to my mind: 1) The roots are stronger than the obstacles, 2) The roots grew toward the water they needed for nourishment which enabled the trees to grow toward the light.

When we take root in the Word of God, we find access to living water and reach toward the Light of the world. This is exactly what we need to feed our souls and to live and grow and bear fruit as God intends for us to do.

Sometimes we run into obstacles which can keep us from getting what we need if we allow it. Will our desire for spiritual nourishment overcome the obstacles like the tree roots I encountered on my walk?

Consider Jesus' parable of the sower. "And he told them many things in parables, saying: 'A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, but when the sun rose they were scorched. And *since they had no root, they withered away* (emphasis mine). Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty'" (Mt 13:3-8). If we don't have spiritual roots, we will "with away" without ever producing the spiritual fruit God wants from us.

"Thus says the Lord: 'Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the LORD. He is like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see any good come. He shall dwell in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land. Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD. He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit'" (Jer 17:5-8).

God help us all to grow roots that persistently seek the spiritual nourishment our souls need to bear fruit and be pleasing to our Lord. Let no obstacles keep us from doing so; let us determine to trust in the Lord always!

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THINK ON THESE THINGS

Philippians 4:8

July-August-September, 2026

Volume 57, No. 3

TYPES OF HOPE

By ANDY DIESTELKAMP

FOR WHATEVER THINGS were written before were written for our learning" (Rom. 15:4). So said Paul in reference to Scripture (what we call the Old Testament). What are we supposed to learn—academic facts (names, places, dates, etc.)? No, we are to learn lessons for life from history. We are to appreciate that God had (and *still* has) an eternal plan. We are to apply what we learn and "through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures... have hope."

Hope is what Moses brought the children of Israel despite their short-sighted rejection of many of his efforts. He was a man God called to lead His people out of bondage into freedom. Yet, the story of Moses is not just fascinating history; it is typological foretelling from which we learn to "have hope."

My old dictionary's *first* definition of *type* is "a person or thing (as in the Old Testament) believed to foreshadow another (as in the New Testament)." The next definition reads, "one having qualities of a higher category: model" (Webster's 7th Collegiate). Thus a *prototype* is a first or early model of something that will be greater. A *type* is a symbol or figure representing something more complex or complete. Therefore, types in Scripture serve to illustrate or signify greater meanings yet to come and help our greater understanding and appreciation.

To ignore types is to minimize understanding and likely fail to make proper applications. Additionally, types make connections and show relationships, implying planning and forethought. Thus, similarities between biblical events should not be assumed to be mere coincidences but indicators of a grand plan from an eternal Author. No one looks at an architect's

blueprint or model of a newly completed building and says, "What a coincidence, the model is similar to the actual building." Neither should we fail to see the Architect's designs.

So, when Moses told the children of Israel that "God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren" (Dt. 18:15), we see the basics of typology: 1) "like me" identifies Moses as the type, 2) "will raise up...a Prophet" indicates the future One (the antitype) whom Moses foreshadowed, and 3) the superiority of the One foreshadowed; "Him you shall hear." God elaborates by saying, "I will put My words in His mouth...and it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks...I will require it of him" (vv. 18,19). The Prophet to come, while being *like* Moses and from the children of Israel in the flesh, would be superior to all.

The message of the New Testament is that Jesus is that Prophet...and more. Recall that when Jesus was transfigured in the presence of three of His apostles and conversed with Moses and Elijah, Peter impetuously proposed erecting three tabernacles (one for each of the holy men). Yet, it was upon this suggestion that Moses and Elijah vanished and a voice from heaven said, "This is My beloved Son,...hear Him" (Mt. 17:17; Mk. 9:7; Lk. 9:35). The fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets had arrived in the person of Jesus (cf. Lk. 24:44), and we are wise to pay heed to Him. "For this One has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses" (Heb. 3:3). Certainly, Moses was a faithful servant in God's house "for a testimony (i.e. witness) of those things which would be spoken afterward, but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end" (vv5,6). Let go of Moses. Hold fast to Jesus!

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~Beneath The Cross~

By MATT HENNECKE

WHenever we gather to partake of the Lord's Supper, we join in remembering something we didn't witness—Jesus's crucifixion. We attempt to somehow "see" what we didn't see. Is this even possible?

When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, he told his followers to eat in remembrance of him; but I wasn't at the cross and you weren't either, so how can we remember? And we're not the only ones who weren't there. Except for one, that rag-tag group of apostles who had followed Jesus during his three-year ministry weren't there either.

You know who stood beneath the cross of Jesus when he was crucified? His mother. Why? One word: love. Hers was the undy-

ing devotion and amazing love of a mother. Despite the absolute horror she was about to witness, no one—neither the Jewish religious elite nor the Roman government—could have kept her from being at her son's side when the world was at its darkest. There's nothing in this life more powerful than a mother's love. It is only eclipsed by God's love who sent his son to die on the very cross beneath which Mary stood.

The Bible records several other women were present, but where were all the men? Where were the apostles? They'd run. Matthew 26:56 says simply "...all...left him and fled." John—the one whom Jesus loved—also stood beneath the cross of Jesus. Apparently, he'd fled with the others; but love stopped his flight and, despite the danger, he returned to be with Jesus. Of the apos-

ties, then, only one—John—saw Jesus crucified. The others had fled for their lives—the very lives Jesus was sent to save. Perhaps later, to their shame, when asked if they had seen the crucifixion of Jesus, they had to reply, "no, I wasn't there." When these ambassadors of Christ who preached the gospel throughout the known world joined with fellow Christians in taking the Lord's Supper, they likely felt pangs of guilt as they sought to remember something they had not seen.

So, again, the question: Can we remember what we've not witnessed? Can we "see" what we've not seen? Can we stand beneath the cross of Jesus and see him crucified? I think we can. I believe we are standing beneath the cross of Jesus when we assemble to partake of the Lord's Supper.

How can I say this? Because faith is all about "seeing" what we haven't seen. Hebrews 1:1 says, "faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." A bit later in the chapter—in verse 27—the writer describes faith somewhat differently. He says faith is "seeing the unseen."

Elizabeth Clephane—a young Scottish poetess—wrote the lyrics to a hymn we occasionally sing. Sadly, she died at the young age of 39, long before her work was published. One of her poems put to music is entitled "Beneath the Cross." Elizabeth believed we could "see the unseen" and she believed—despite not having been there—that we could stand and take a stand—even today—beneath the cross of Jesus. Consider her beautiful lyrics:

*Beneath the cross of Jesus
I fain would take my stand,
The shadow of a mighty Rock
Within a weary land.
A home within the wilderness,
A rest upon the way,
From the burning of the noontide heat,
And the burden of the day.*

*Upon that cross of Jesus
Mine eyes at times can see
The very dying form of One
Who suffer'd there for me.
And from my smitten heart, with tears,
Two wonders I confess:
The wonders of redeeming love,
And my unworthiness.*

*I take, O cross, thy shadow
For my abiding place.
I ask no other sunshine than
The sunshine of His face.
Content to let the world go by,
To know no gain nor loss,
My sinful self my only shame,
My glory all the cross.*

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Kissing a Lizard

By AL DIESTELKAMP

SOME TIME AGO I was listening to a talk show on the radio. The host reported a group of scientists had discovered that the saliva from a certain lizard might aid in regulating the blood sugar levels in humans. The talk show host amused himself by visualizing in his mind how this was first discovered. Did someone kiss a lizard and notice he felt better?

What really happened is that they discovered that this particular lizard only eats four times a year. Some smart person realized that normally it's impossible for any creature to eat so infrequently without throwing its blood sugar off and correctly assumed that there was something internally that regu-

lated the lizard's blood sugar. Upon experimentation, saliva turned out to be the key agent. The good news is that this discovery might be the beginning of a product that will be helpful to humans who have diabetes.

The show host didn't use this discovery to illustrate the wisdom of our Creator, but I can't help but point out that God designed everything to work right. Indeed, all of God's creation was "very good" (Gen. 1:31).

If it turns out that this discovery can be used to help people who suffer from diabetes, we should praise God for making this lizard the way He did and for giving man the intelligence to be able to turn this into a blessing for those who were created in His image (Gen. 1:27).

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Let The One Who Boasts...

By NOAH DIESTELKAMP

ALL SOCIETIES HAVE generally assigned value to the same kinds of things. Regardless of time and culture, people have desired to be strong and powerful, to have wealth and resources, and to achieve status or influence among their peers. When someone has an abundance of these things, there has been a historical trend to assign moral value to these “successes,” even among the people of God. Despite history having abundant examples of the righteous suffering (e.g. Job) and Scripture clearly teaching that all who desire to live a godly life in Christ will be persecuted for righteousness’ sake (2 Tim. 3:12; Matt. 5:10), there is a temptation to “buy in” to the value system of human history instead of adhering to the values of God.

One area where this “value swap” can be especially insidious is in our regard for intelligence. Christianity is not (and never has been) centered on intelligence. Allow me a moment to clarify: Christianity is *reasonable* and Christianity is not *anti-intellectual*. God created us with intelligence that is unique in all of creation, intending us to be thoughtful and reasonable. I would suggest this is a mark of God’s image upon us. Additionally, God’s Word clearly and undeniably teaches the value of wisdom and understanding. A journey through the Proverbs amply illustrates this. “Blessed is the one who finds wisdom...for the gain from her is better than gain from silver...Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor” (Prov. 3:13-16). “Get wisdom; get insight...Do not forsake her, and she will keep you” (Prov. 4:5-6). Yet the way our society “measures” intelligence and the overwhelming esteem it shows for this quality is not rooted in Scripture. I fear we have substituted intelligence for wisdom with very little concern given to the consequences of doing so.

Wisdom, as praised in Scripture, *begins* with a fear of the LORD (Prov. 1:7), *is built* on knowledge of his will (Col. 1:9), and *produces* lives characterized by obedience to Jesus and good fruit (Matt. 7:24-25; Col. 1:10). Intelligence, as praised by the world at large, doesn’t have to include *any* of these qualities. While wisdom, understanding, and knowledge of God are important areas in which every Christian should be growing, intelligence is never spoken of in Scripture as being central to the development of our faith. This mismatch between what God praises and what the world values should not surprise us, because “the wisdom of this world is folly with God” (1 Cor. 3:19). If intelligence were the measure of a Christian, we would only be as righteous

as we are smart. “Consider your calling,” in the words of the Apostle Paul, “Not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise” (1 Cor. 1:26-27). The result? “No human being might boast in the presence of God... Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord” (1 Cor. 1:29,31).

Unfortunately, it is easy to let the mindset from “out there” creep “in here.” We must beware letting the values and mindset of the world become ours! James reminds us in his letter that true wisdom is demonstrated in good conduct with meekness, *not* in jealousy, selfish ambition, or boasting (Jas. 3:13-15). If our intelligence leads us down these “earthly, unspiritual, [and] demonic” paths, we can be sure that the “wisdom” we have is not the wisdom from above. “The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial, and sincere. And a

harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace” (Jas. 3:17-18). Being perceived as wise is not the same as truly having wisdom. Intelligence cannot serve as a proxy for spirituality or faith in our own lives *or* in our estimation of others. Whatever our “degree” of intelligence, it is a gift that we have received only through the grace of God to use for his glory. May God have mercy on us when we use the gifts he has given us to elevate ourselves, demean others, and adopt the carnal, prejudicial values of the world. As the LORD said through Jeremiah (and the Apostle Paul referenced in his letter to the Corinthians), “Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD” (Jer. 9:23-24).

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Presumed Innocent

By AL DIESTELKAMP

WE HAVE A RULE in our judicial system that one is “presumed innocent until proven guilty.” Judges instruct jury members about this rule very early in a trial. I believe it is a good rule in order to mete out justice. I’ll admit it bothers me when people paraphrase this rule by saying that “one is innocent until proven guilty,” leaving off the word “presumed.” A person who commits a crime is guilty whether proven or not. In fact, many people who have committed crimes have received “not guilty” verdicts merely because their guilt was not proven beyond a reasonable doubt.

Not all cultures or governments embrace this noble rule of law, and some who have this rule don’t always apply it. For instance, the Roman government applied this rule to its own citizens but not necessarily to non-citizens. It depended on the one sitting on the seat of judgment.

Take the case of Jesus before Pilate. It seemed at first that Pilate embraced the “presumed innocent” concept. When Jesus was brought before him, Pilate asked, “What accusation do you bring against this man?” (Jn. 18:29). Their answer was a strange one in a court of law. They said, “If He were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him up to you” (Jn. 18:30). Can

you imagine, in our court system, an honest judge’s reaction if a prosecutor were to say that about an accused? Jesus’ accusers were asking Pilate to adopt a “presumed guilty until proven innocent” concept.

Pilate was not inclined to accept their verdict. “He knew that because of envy that had delivered Him” (Matt. 27:18) and sought ways to release him, including offering a choice between a convicted felon and the presumed innocent Jesus; but the mob cried out, “Crucify Him!” (Jn. 19:12,15).

To avoid a tumult, Pilate abandoned his “presumed innocent” approach and unjustly delivered Jesus to the executioners.

Justice was not served in killing the innocent Jesus; but God allowed it to happen so that we would not face justice for our sins. We are guilty. God knows we are guilty. Yet, instead of bringing justice, He has extended mercy to us through the blood of His innocent One. As expressed in the refrain of an old familiar hymn:

“Jesus paid it all!

All to Him I owe.

Sin had left a crimson stain.

He washed it white as snow.”

“Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!” (2 Cor. 9:15).

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Cost of past issue:

Printing, folding, addressing	\$ 469.00
Total postage (including bundles)	437.82
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Philippians 4:8

*Published quarterly by the Diestelkamp family
in the interest of purity of doctrine and practice.
Distributed free as ability permits.*

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GOD IS NOT BIG

"Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth."

ISAIAH 40:28

By DAVID DIESTELKAMP

AN ATHEIST SAID that he rejects divine creation because of the size of the universe. Why would God care about people on one insignificant planet around one small star among 400 billion stars in one galaxy among over two trillion galaxies in the universe? Why would God make a universe this big and complex to waste it on some plan on a speck with people who are made of dust?

This isn't the first time that someone asked, "What is man that You are mindful of Him? And the son of man, that You visit him?" (Ps 8:4). It's a question rooted in who and what God is, and why He would be interested in man.

The atheist's objection shows ignorance of what the Bible and the universe is saying about God. The problem with the immense size of the universe argument is that God isn't big; that is, He isn't measurable in literally any way. God is eternal and limitless. The entire universe isn't big to God because God isn't big; God is immeasurable. The universe is of a different kind than God because it is big, measurable, quantifiable—

and God is not. So, it doesn't use up or somehow waste God's resources or power in literally any way to create or maintain what we see as a big universe!

When the heavens declare the glory of God (Psa 19:1), they are declaring more than just that God can make something amazing and big. The things that are made are clearly showing "His invisible attributes...His eternal power and Godhead" (Rom 1:20). His eternal power is seen in His creation! Not just super-super human power. The universe is so big that it declares that God isn't big; He is infinite, immeasurable, and eternal. God is not just bigger than our universe; He is outside of it and isn't limited in any way.

I recognize that even the Bible uses physical and anthropomorphic terms as it grapples to help us understand what we cannot fully understand about God. But the looming danger is what I'll call the *Super-Superman god* mentality. Amplifying human capabilities to unimaginable levels creates an idol god, not the God who is not man, not material, not limited in any sense.

Nothing is hard for God. Nothing is big or complex for God. A single drop of water con-

tains about 10,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 atoms (10 sextillion - more than all the stars in our galaxy). Now try to wrap your thinking around the fact that God is capable of knowing the exact position of every atom in the entire universe at all times - without taxing His power, attention, or abilities. It's impossible for us to imagine anyone like this because we can only think in terms of big and small. But God isn't big.

Instead of disproving God, a big and complex universe is what we would expect from an eternal God. A minimalist universe might suggest a limited god with limited resources and abilities. A big universe isn't somehow a waste as skeptics might charge. Let science show us God's amazing creation—both big and small. But remember, our creation is not a waste because of God's unlimited resources and power; and it also is not a waste because what it says about God causes us to believe in and glorify Him for Who He really is.

"Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen" (1 Tim 1:17).

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