

“Fulfillment” – Part 4 (More Typology)
Matthew 12:40

“Fulfilled” – Part 4 (More Typology)

Before we start, I want you to consider the concept of telling someone something without telling them exactly what you mean. To be elusive. The idea is to cause the person to bring to mind what you are communicating without saying it explicitly. For instance, suppose you have a loved one in a difficult surgery. The surgeon comes out and says, “I am sorry.” He didn’t say the loved one is dead, but you know that is what is meant. He didn’t blatantly say, “He died.” It is a gentler way to say something.

Jesus does this from time to time to veil the fact that He is the Messiah, the God-Man come to be judged for sin. He didn’t hide that fact. He inferred it. In some cases, if He blatantly said He was the Messiah, the Pharisees would have declared He had blasphemed and stone Him on the spot. They actually tried that in John 10:31. And, when His time came, He went to the cross, was judged for sin and died. So, sometimes, in order to wait for “His time,” Jesus had to be circumspect in His speaking. In our example this morning, Jesus uses typology to communicate what He will do in the future without giving details. He is elusive, but hidden in plain sight. The details are in the type which if they fully understood, they would have attempted again to stone Him.

Let us start by reviewing some points from the last time we dealt with “Fulfilled.”

There are four different ways that events in the New Testament can be considered “fulfilled.”

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Direct Fulfillment: Literal prediction and literal direct fulfillment.

Typical Fulfillment: A literal, historical event applied typologically.

Applicational Fulfillment: An historical event is used to draw out an application with reference to a future event.

Summary Fulfillment: No actual event is prophesied, but the fulfillment represents a summation of Old Testament prophecies.

Quoted from Dean's Lessons 15 & 16 of God's Plan for the Ages - Dispensations (2014)

This week, we will continue with the topic of typology. Here is a review of some points made last time:

Characteristics:

1. **Basis.** The work of God in history is based upon repetition of acts accomplished in accordance with principles of unchanging righteousness and mercy. (Francis Foulkes)
2. **Historical.** Both the type in the Old Testament and the anti-type in the New Testament are historical events. These are not parables or allegories, but real events.
3. **Correspondence.** There are corresponding elements between the two texts, usually Old Testament to New Testament. Roy Zuck calls this “resemblance.” “However, this should not be thought of as some superficial relationship, but rather a genuine and substantial counterpart.”(Zuck)
4. **Prefiguring.** “A type has a predictive or foreshadowing element to it. It looks ahead to and anticipates and points to the antitype. A type is a shadow (Col 2:17) that points ahead to another reality.” The Bible is Christ-centered. As a result, typology is centered around the person and work of Jesus Christ.

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5. **Heightening:** “In typology, the antitype is greater than and superior to the type. There is an increase, a heightening, an escalation.”
6. **Designated.** “I suggest that for a figure to be a type it must also have a sixth characteristic or element: *It must be designated in the New Testament.* Scripture must in some way indicate that an item is typical. As already seen, that designation need not always be by the word *typos* and related words.” (Zuck)
7. **Application.** Roy Zuck says there is “divine design.” There was a reason God set up the type/anti-type. “Types are not mere analogies or illustrations which Bible readers note. Instead they are resemblances planned by God. The type was designed by God to be the “fulfillment” and heightening of the type.” He even goes so far as to say, “A type is a form of prophecy. Prophecy is prediction by means of words, whereas typology is prediction by correspondence between two realities, the type and the antitype.” My personal view is that there is a principle applied or a concept illustrated by the type.

One of the notable types in the New Testament is introduced by Jesus Himself. It is found in Matthew 12:38-45. Most comment on Matthew 12:40. They point out that Jesus predicted He would be in the earth for three days and three nights. It is important because it factors into the day that Jesus was crucified. I could just point to “three days and three nights,” and say “see, they are the same” and move on. But what Jesus did was more nuanced and involved than just a quick comparison of days and nights. This lesson is not about what day of the week Jesus was crucified. That is a completely different discussion.

Jesus was communicating some information to the Pharisees and scribes, some overtly and some indirectly. This type contains both.

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There is other information that needs to be considered in the book of Jonah and compared to the situation found in Matthew chapter 12. There are actually five sources of information that provide a panorama associated with what Jesus said: Matthew 12:9-45; Mark 8:11-12; Luke 11:29-32, 2 Kings 14:23-25; Book of Jonah.

Let us start by getting our Bibles out and read Matthew 12:9-45. This gives us some context for the Matthew 12:40. There is more going on than the Pharisees and scribes just questioning Jesus.

Note the following pieces of information gleaned from our reading:

1. Jesus already performed a “sign” by healing a man with a shriveled hand, on the Sabbath. Jesus healed many people. The miracles authenticated who He was and continues to be. Prophets in the Old Testament and apostles in the New Testament had gifts used to authenticate them as being sent from God.
2. The result was that “the Pharisees went out and conspired against Him, as to how they might destroy Him.” They do not want to determine if they should worship Him. They already decided he was a threat and wanted to destroy Him. No matter how many signs He does, they will only want to kill Him the more. All of the gospels indicate that. The proof of that is the crucifixion.
3. There is another “fulfillment” passage in this context which quotes from Isaiah 44:1-4. This is the first of the four “Suffering Servant” passages in Isaiah. This is not the topic of this lesson. As you see, there is a great deal of information, many details which are part of the fabric of Scripture for which there is not time to deal with.

Let us focus on the contents of the Matthew 12:38-45 passage and understand what Jesus is doing when he references “three days and three nights.”

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Matthew 12:38 Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to Him, “Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.”

Scribes and Pharisees. These were the religious leaders and also the leaders in Jewish civil matters. The Pharisees believed in resurrection. The Sadducees, another prominent Jewish sect that was represented in the Sanhedrin (Jewish ruling counsel), did not believe in resurrection, and are not mentioned here. The point of the three days and three nights is that afterwards Jesus would be resurrected. They didn’t want to believe this would happen thinking that the disciples would steal the dead body and then claim resurrection. So the chief priests and Pharisees had Pilate post guards at the tomb (Matthew 27:62-66). Then because of their efforts to prevent the disciples from stealing the body, the guards verified the actual resurrection. Then they had to bribe the guards to tell a different story, a lie. So, even this sign doesn’t convince them. They know the truth in spite of what their lying eyes tell them.

Matthew 28:2 And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it.

Matthew 28:3 And his appearance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow.

Matthew 28:4 The guards shook for fear of him and became like dead men.

I am jumping the gun here, but I need to make this point in connection with the Pharisees. The point of the “sign” is not just that Jesus was in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights but what happens at the end of that time. He is resurrected! He is alive again. By trying to

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prevent the disciples from providing an illusion that Jesus was resurrected, they actually provided proof of His resurrection. That is the point of the sign. OK, I am repeating myself. But I don't want you to miss it.

Teacher. They address Jesus as “teacher.” This is a title of reverence. Although Jesus did not attend any rabbinical school, he knows more than any of the religious leaders at that time. They were fearful of the possibility that He would lead an uprising against Rome and cause them to lose power, prestige and prosperity (John 11:47-48). But they constantly tried to trap Him in some error. He always had an answer that confounded them. It is interesting, that here, they did not call Him “rabbi,” only “teacher.”

Sign. A sign is something unusual like a miracle or healing that would mark Jesus as empowered by God.

Eugene H. Merrill, was an “assistant professor of Semitics and Old Testament studies at Dallas Theological Seminary.” He gives a good, brief, definition of “sign.” He says, “The full import of the term *sēmeion* cannot be discussed here, but its basic theological meaning is well known: It is a miraculous act produced to authenticate its agent and to induce faith in God on the part of the observer.” [The sign of Jonah in JETS 23/1 March 1980, pp 23-30, available on-line from https://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/23/23-1/23-1-pp023-030_JETS.pdf]

They needed to see His credentials from God. He had been doing this constantly throughout His ministry. But they wanted one crafted for them, right here, right now. They wanted a sign done on demand. But they really wanted Him to fail so they could discredit Him.

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We want. This is not so much a request as a demand. It is not a subjunctive mood nor is it an imperative, moods not based upon reality. This is present active indicative. This is reality. We want it. Careful what you ask for.

Matthew 12:39 But He answered and said to them, “An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet;

Evil. This is a word we have encountered in the book of Judges. As we saw in the book of Judges, this is not just some immoral act, this is the abandonment of God, turning their backs on their God. We often think of this in terms of “antinomianism” or anti-law. But just as bad or perhaps worse, this is legalism refined by the Pharisees. Because of their threats to “put out” those that don’t abide by their teachings, people would obey them and hence end up going against the true intent of the Law. Being “put out” is being put out of the Temple. Essentially it was like being excommunicated.

Adulterous. Per D. A. Carson,” “Adultery” was frequently used by OT prophets to describe the spiritual prostitution and wanton apostasy of Israel (e.g., Isa 50:1; 57:3; Jer 3:8; 13:27; 31:32; Eze 16:15, 32, 35-42; Hos 2:1-7; 3:1). Here Jesus applies it to his contemporaries, as did his brother James later on (Jas 4:4). Israel had largely abandoned her idolatry and syncretism after the exile. But now Jesus insists that she is still adulterous in heart.”

Generation. Jesus is talking about the people of His day.

Sign of Jonah the prophet. The book of Jonah from which Jesus is drawing his information does not identify the three days and three nights

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in the “sea monster” as a sign. Jesus is the one who is telling us it was a sign.

Matthew 12:40 for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

There are two perspectives to the sign. On the one hand, it was a sign to the sailors on the ship of what God did to and for Jonah. From their perspective, he “died.” He spent three days and three nights in the fish. And then he was vomited up by the fish. He was brought back to life, as it were. The second perspective is as a sign for the Jews of Jesus’ day. Let us first deal with the Ninevite perspective. In order to do that, let us take a detour first to Luke, then 2 Kings, then the book of Jonah. This is the fabric of Scripture.

Luke 11:29 As the crowds were increasing, He began to say, “This generation is a wicked generation; it seeks for a sign, and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah.

Luke 11:30 For just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so will the Son of Man be to this generation.

At this point, let us go back to the book of Jonah to glean some information from there. Joachim Jeremias has an illuminating comment in the TDNT. He is commenting on the name “Jonah” in the New Testament as it was understood from the Old Testament.

“The story of Jonah provided plenty of opportunity for fantastic embellishment, and the figure of Jonah was greatly magnified in later

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Judaism. He was supposed to be the son of the widow of Zarephath whom Elijah restored to life. According to the Haggada his flight (Jon. 1) occurred in the interests of Israel. He wanted to prevent the repentance of the Gentiles causing God to punish the impenitence of Israel. With this in view, he offered his own life for that of his people. “R. Jonathan (c. 140 A.D.) said: The only purpose of Jonah was to bring judgment on himself in the sea, for it is written: ‘And he said to them, Take me and cast me into the sea’ (Jon. 1:12). Similarly, you find that many patriarchs and prophets sacrificed themselves for Israel.” Jonah was perfectly righteous.”

Although this Jewish view was written after the time of Jesus, I suspect that the Pharisees may have held a similar view. If so, they would have gotten a one, two punch from what Jesus said.

Eugene Merrill says something similar. “On the basis of the Matthean account most interpreters of this phrase correctly see that Jesus is making an analogy between Jonah’s three days and three nights of incarceration in the belly of the fish and Jesus’ confinement to Sheol. Equally correctly, many go on to suggest that Jonah’s miraculous experience is a prophetic type of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.”

In Luke, it was also a sign to the Ninevites. Eugene Merrill suggests that “resurrection” from the “fish” was the sign to Nineveh. He shows that the name “Nineveh” comes from the name of the fish-god. He suggests, “The name of Nineveh, “Fishtown,” is highly intriguing then in considering the meaning of Jonah as a sign to Nineveh, a matter to be elaborated presently.” Assuming there was a witness that followed Jonah to Nineveh or some other evidence, this “sign” would have gotten the attention of the Ninevites. Prophets needed credentials. Apparently, Jonah’s credential was the three days and three nights that he survived in the belly of the fish. Here is Eugene Merrill’s conclusion:

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“Since the Lord Jesus, according to both Matthew and Luke, spoke of Jonah as constituting in himself a sign to ancient Nineveh, a sign so persuasive that the population from king to peasant repented, something in Jonah’s experience must be found to provide adequate explanation for his effectiveness. In Matthew attention is drawn to Jonah’s having been in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights, but since Luke specifies that Jonah was a sign to Nineveh that experience in the fish must have been communicated to the Assyrian capital and have become to the Ninevites a sign that Jonah was a divine messenger. Such a sign would be particularly convincing to a people whose aetiology [study of origins] taught them that their city had been founded by a fish-god. The spectacular and timely arrival of Jonah among them created a curiosity and receptivity to his message that would have been possible in no other way. When the truth of the message of Yahweh was then proclaimed, the response was the repentance and faith recounted in the sacred text. Jesus, basing his own appeal for repentance on this account, argues *a fortiori* that if the pagan Ninevites repented at the preaching of the foreigner Jonah so much more ought his own generation to repent, “for a greater than Jonah is here.” Since the Jewish traditions of Jesus’ time knew of the connections established in this paper, his own use of them in reference to his resurrection is not at all surprising.”

Matthew 12:41 The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment, and will condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

At this point, I need to make another detour. This time into 2 Kings chapter 14.

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2 Kings 14:23 In the fifteenth year of Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah, Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel became king in Samaria, and reigned forty-one years.

Jeroboam. This is Jeroboam II who reigned (793-753 B.C.) per Eugene Merrill.

2 Kings 14:24 He did evil in the sight of the Lord; he did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel sin.

Evil. This is the Hebrew of the word Jesus uses in Matthew when He calls his audience “an evil and adulterous generation.” The LXX translation of this passage uses the same word that Jesus uses in Matthew. Evil.

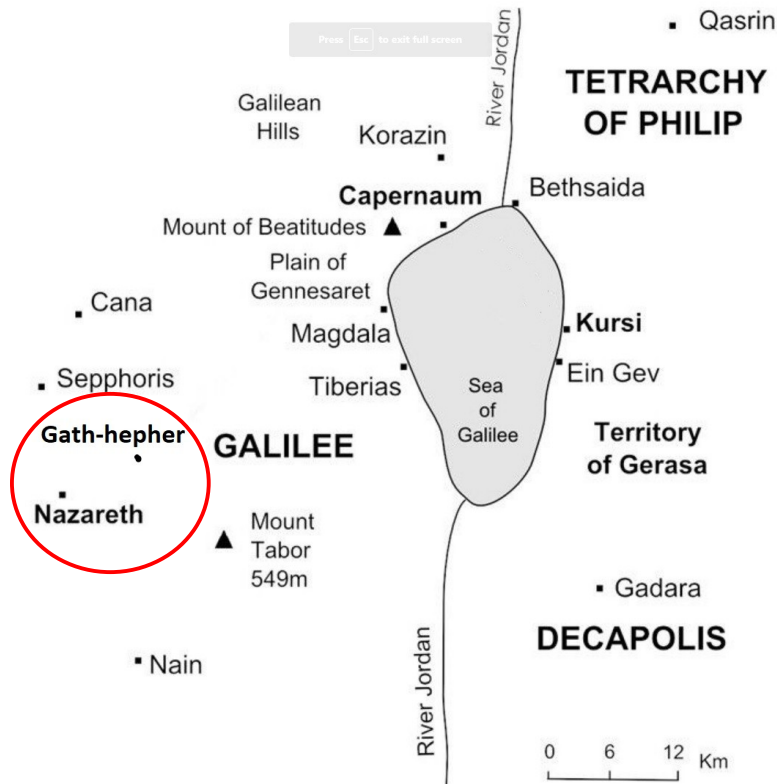
He made Israel sin. As went the king, so went the population. So that generation was evil as well. This is happening in the post-Elijah and post-Elisha era. Elisha dies in chapter 13. Jonah as a prophet to Israel appears in chapter 14.

2 Kings 14:25 He restored the border of Israel from the entrance of Hamath as far as the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the Lord, the God of Israel, which He spoke through His servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet, who was of Gath-hepher.

Jonah. I didn’t remember that Jonah was mentioned outside of the book of Jonah. But here it is. Before Jonah went to Nineveh, he was a prophet to Israel.

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Gath-hepher. This was a town in the tribal area of Zebulun. There was someone else we know of that lived in the tribal area of Zebulun. Nazareth was in the tribal area of Zebulun. Had Jonah and Jesus lived at the same time, they would almost have been neighbors. This would guarantee that as Jesus was growing up in Nazareth, he would have heard stories of Jonah who lived in a town near Nazareth.



Basic image from freebibleimages.org
Relative locations of Gath-hepher and Nazareth

Here is a summary of information on the typology between Jonah and Jesus.

1. **Childhood location.** Both Jesus and Jonah lived in the tribal area of Zebulun. Jesus lived at Nazareth and Jonah was from Gath Heber. If they had lived at the same time, on a map they would have almost been neighbors. Jesus, when growing up, would have been familiar with the area that Jonah came from.

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2. **Prophets to Israel.** Both Jesus and Jonah were prophets to Israel. Jonah was “a” prophet. Jesus was “the” prophet. Jonah became a prophet to Nineveh. Jesus the Christ became the focal point of Christ-ianity.
3. **Ministry to Israel/the Jews.** Both Jesus and Jonah focused on a ministry to Israel. Jonah’s ministry was interrupted and God sent him to Nineveh, a gentile nation after the great fish vomited him up on land. Jesus’s “time” had come when Gentiles became interested in His ministry. After Jesus died and was resurrected, His disciples went to the Jew first and then the Gentile. But the Jews rejected Jesus and the ministry of His disciples. The king, in Jonah’s day, continued to make the people sin. Jonah was sent to the Gentiles. Both their ministries changed from Jew to Gentile after their “deaths.”
4. **Length of Death.** Of course, both were “dead” for three days and three nights. Jonah was not actually dead, but the crew of the ship that threw him overboard thought he was dead. The sign was that he was “eaten” by a fish. Jesus was identified as “Son of Man” in the heart of the earth Jonah was identified as Jonah in the belly of the great fish. Jesus actually died, was buried in the heart of the earth and then resurrected. He died that all mankind might believe and be saved. (live spiritually). Jonah was only assumed to be dead in the belly of the fish and then was vomited out on dry land. He “died” to save the ship’s crew and passengers that they might live physically. It is reminiscent of “substitutionary” death. When the Pharisees dug into the nuances of what Jesus said, it should have hit them like a ton of bricks. It was as if Jesus said, “I am going to die a substitutionary death for the nation, be buried for three days and three nights and then be resurrected. Afterward, Jews will reject me and salvation apart from Judaism will be available to Gentiles.” Bam!

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The substitutionary death was already on their minds even if they didn't fully comprehend it (see John 11:47-53 when Caiphas prophesies).

5. **Corrupt Rulers.** In both instances, the people in power, the king (Jeroboam II) for Jonah and the Sadducees, Pharisees and scribes for Jesus, caused the people to sin by enforcing a false religion.
6. **Name of Nineveh.** Jonah was swallowed by a great fish. Nineveh was named after the fish god which was part of the sign the Ninevites saw. The fish-god brought him to Nineveh. For Jesus he was in the heart of the earth. In Hebrew, the “earth” or “land” was where Israel was located. “Haaretz.”
7. **Foreign Reverence.** Jonah was more revered in Nineveh than he was in Israel. Jesus is more revered by Gentiles than by Jews.
8. **Documented Life.** The life of Jonah was written about in the book of Jonah. The life of Jesus was written about in the four gospel accounts.
9. **Preaching.** Apparently the Jews of Jonah's time didn't listen to him and repent. But, Ninevites repented at the preaching of Jonah. Jesus compares Himself to Jonah saying that He was greater than Jonah. The Jews rejected Jesus and did not repent. Yet, starting with the Gentiles that approached Jesus' disciples in John chapter 12, Gentiles revered Jesus and many repented and believed.
10. **Wisdom.** Matthew adds a comparison between Jesus and Solomon. History records Solomon as being one of the wisest men of history. Yet, Jesus said He was greater than Solomon. Jonah, of course, was not considered wise, so Jesus had to go to Solomon for that comparison.

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So, to finish, let us apply our list of qualifiers to this type. Does it pass the test?

Basis: God used prophets to communicate His message to men. Both Jonah and Jesus were prophets that God empowered and authenticated in similar ways. Check.

Historical: Both events are historical. Check.

Correspondence. There are multiple correspondences. Check.

Prefiguring. Jesus applies this to Himself. He indicates it is a prefiguring. Check.

Heightening. The antitype in Jesus is better than the Jonah type. Check.

Designated. We didn't make this up. Jesus applied this to Himself. Check.

Application. Again, Jesus applies this to Himself. The three days and three nights was a “sign.” Jesus Himself tells us the application. However, a greater application is God has a Plan. He does what is necessary to enact His plan. So here, God provided a “sign” to authenticate the prophets and get an audience for the preaching. In both cases, Gentiles listened, but Jews did not. Check.

Disguised, hidden, elusive, stealthy, evasive, masked, disguised