



[Previous Article](#) · [copyright notice](#) · [Next Article](#)

How the New Testament Quotes the Old Testament

Bob and Gretchen Passantino

Luke 24:25-27: "He said to them, 'How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?' And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself."

Hebrews 1:1: "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe."

1. Reasons the New Uses the Old
 - a. For purposes of argumentation
 - i. Jewish Scriptural Dialectics (from Hillel)
 - (1) Inference from minor to major or vice versa
 - (2) Inference from analogy
 - (3) General principle based on a teaching from one passage
 - (4) General principle based on a teaching from two passages
 - (5) Inference drawn from a general principle to a specific example, and vice versa
 - (6) Inference drawn from an analogous passage
 - (7) Interpretation of a word or passage from within its context
 - ii. Categories of argumentation
 - (1) Doctrinal
 - (2) Prophetic
 - (3) Historical
 - b. As expressions of general truth belonging to all ages
 - c. As illustrations
 - d. As usage of familiar words and concepts, without meaning to fully represent the original text
 - i. Sometimes this reflects an appeal to common experiences and/or images.
 - ii. Sometimes this reflects an allusion to a common use for a passage that has transcended its original placement in scripture.
 - e. As literary allusions
 - f. As types
 - g. As thematic complements
2. Ways the New Uses the Old
 - a. Accurate renderings from the Hebrew Old standard to the Greek New
 - b. Accurate renderings from the Greek Old standard to the Greek New
 - c. Generally accurate renderings (paraphrases) from the Hebrew Old to the Greek New
 - d. Generally accurate renderings (paraphrases) from the Greek Old to the Greek New
 - e. Paradoxical renderings and/or applications from either the Hebrew Old or the Greek Old to the Greek New
3. How We Account for Differences in Quotation and/or Interpretation
 - a. These are reasons other than the ways the New quotes the Old listed above.
 - b. The initial recipients of the New Testament books did not have personal copies of the Old Testament, which meant that most people
 - i. This means that the majority of quotations in close conformity are from passages most people would have memorized or heard.
 - ii. This means that the meaning of the text is more significant in a consideration of inerrancy than the precise wording of the text.
 - iii. This means that quotations from less familiar texts are more likely to be quoted for reasons other than strict repetition.
 - c. Keeping in mind the different uses of the Old in the New, and the focus on meaning rather than syntax and vocabulary, it is also possible that the New Testament allusions to Old Testament passages can reflect the "many ways and many portions" by which God spoke in the Old Testament.
 - d. The New Testament allusions to Old Testament passages can reflect the "many ways and many portions" by which God spoke in the Old Testament.
4. Statistics Concerning the New Testament's Use of the Old Testament
 - a. Number of citations of all types, including dubious identifications: 613 - 2,500.
 - b. Formal citations (with introductory formulas): 150-300 (but many repetitions).
 - c. Text Types Represented: Alexandrinus, Vaticanus, a root text predating either, paraphrases -- but all from the Septuagint, not the Hebrew Old Testament.

Recommended Reading

Ellis, E. Earle. The Old Testament in Early Christianity. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991.

Ellis, E. Earle. Paul's Use of the Old Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1957.

France, R. T. Jesus and the Old Testament. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1971.

Goldingay, John. Approaches to Old Testament Interpretation. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1990.

Johnson, S. Lewis. *The Old Testament in the New*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1980.

Kaiser, Walter C. *Toward Rediscovering the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987.

Kaiser, Walter C. *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1985.

[←](#) [Previous Article](#) · [copyright notice](#) · [Next Article](#) [→](#)

Answers In Action
P.O. Box 2067
Costa Mesa, California 92628
(949) 646-9042
Answers In Action c/o aia@answers.org
