

CHAPTER 5

OLD TESTAMENT QUOTATIONS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Quotations in General

In the Scriptures one finds four classes of quotations:

1. Old Testament parallel passages and quotations of the Old Testament

- ✓ Gen 11:10-26 compared with 1 Chr 1:17-27
- ✓ Gen 46 compared with Num 26
- ✓ Ps 18 compared with 2 Sam 2
- ✓ 2 Kgs 18-20 compared with Isa 36-39
- ✓ 2 Kgs 24-25 compared with Jer 52
- ✓ Large portions of the books of Samuel and Kings are appropriated by Chronicles
- ✓ Textual parallels such as Ps 42:7 and Jonah 2:3

Ps 42:7 – Deep calls unto deep at the noise of your waterfalls; all your waves and billows have gone over me.

Jonah 2:3 – For You cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the floods surrounded me; all your billows and your waves passed over me.

2. New Testament quotations from the Old Testament

- ✓ These quotations are manifold and of varied forms
- ✓ In most cases they are taken verbatim, or nearly verbatim, from the LXX
- ✓ In some instances they are a translation of the Hebrew text

Matt 2:15 – and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, “Out of Egypt I called my Son.”

NKJ Hos 11:1 – When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.

LXX Hos 11:1 – Early in the morning were they cast off, the king of Israel has been cast off: for Israel is a child, and I loved him, and out of Egypt have I called his children.

- ✓ Some of the quotations differ considerably from both the Hebrew and LXX
- ✓ Sometimes several Old Testament passages are blended together:

2 Cor 6:16-18 – And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” Therefore “Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.” “I will be a Father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty.”

Exod 29:45 – I will dwell among the children of Israel and will be their God.

Lev 26:12 – I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be my people.

Isa 52:11 – Depart! Depart! Go out from there, Touch no unclean thing; Go out from the midst of her, be clean, you who bear the vessels of the LORD.

Jer 31:1 – “At the same time,” says the LORD, “I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people.”

Jer 31:9 – They shall come with weeping, and with supplications I will lead them. I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters, in a straight way in which they shall not stumble; for I am a Father to Israel, And Ephraim is my firstborn.

Jer 31:33 – But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Jer 32:38 – They shall be my people, and I will be their God;

Ezek 11:20 – that they may walk in my statutes and keep my judgments and do them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

Ezek 36:28 – Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

Ezek 37:27 – my tabernacle also shall be with them; indeed I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Zech 8:8 – I will bring them back, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. They shall be my people and I will be their God, in truth and righteousness.’

- ✓ Sometimes the Old Testament passage is merely paraphrased, summarized or hinted at:

John 7:38 – “He who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.”

Prov 18:4 – The words of a man’s mouth are deep waters; the wellspring of wisdom is a flowing brook.

Isa 12:3 –Therefore with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

Isa 44:3 – For I will pour water on him who is thirsty, and floods on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit on your descendants, and my blessing on your offspring;

Eph 5:14 – Therefore he says: “Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.”

Isa 60:1-3 – Arise, shine; For your light has come! And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; But the LORD will arise over you, and his glory will be seen upon you. The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.

Heb 13:15 – Therefore by him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name.

Hos 14:2 – Take words with you, and return to the LORD. Say to him, “Take away all iniquity; Receive us graciously, for we will offer the sacrifices of our lips.

3. New Testament quotations from the New Testament

- ✓ Paul quotes the gospel of Luke:

1 Timothy 5:18 – For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,” and, “The laborer is worthy of his wages.”

Luke 10:7 – And remain in the same house, eating and drinking such things as they give, for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not go from house to house.

- ✓ 2 Peter 2 seems to appropriate a considerable amount of Jude.

4. Quotations from non-biblical writings and oral tradition

- ✓ Paul quotes a saying of Jesus that is not recorded in the gospels:

Acts 20:35 – I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that he said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’

- ✓ Old Testament books used other historical accounts:

- The Book of the Wars of the Lord – Num 21:14
- The Book of Jasher – Josh 10:13
- The Book of the Acts of Solomon – 1 Kgs 11:41
- The Book of Shemaiah – 2 Chr 12:15

- ✓ Jude quotes from the pseudepigraphal Book of Enoch and also makes allusion to traditions of the fall of the angels, and the dispute between Michael and the devil over Moses’ body:

Jude 1:6 – And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, he has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day.

Jude 1:9 – Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, “The Lord rebuke you!”

Jude 1:14 – Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his saints.”

- ✓ Paul probably relied on oral tradition for the names of the magicians that opposed Moses.

2 Tim 3:8 – Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith;

- ✓ Paul quotes from the Greek poets Aratus, Menander, and Epimenides:

Acts 17:28 – for in him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also his offspring.’

1 Cor 15:33 – Do not be deceived: “Evil company corrupts good habits.”

Titus 1:12 – One of them, a prophet of their own, said, “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.”

Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament

Some Statistics

Roughly one tenth of the New Testament consists of Old Testament quotations. A conservative count discloses 295 explicit references to the Old Testament (it does not include allusions or literary parallelism). These quotations occupy 352 verses in the New Testament (the equivalent of the epistle to the Romans).

94 verses from the Pentateuch, 99 from the prophets, and 85 from the writings are quoted in the New Testament (the difference in the number of Old Testament verses is accounted for by the repetition of some of the verses in the New Testament).

The Sources of Quotations

It is generally accepted that the sources from which the NT writers took their quotations are the Hebrew text and the Septuagint. For a while, scholars insisted that the Septuagint was the only source for quotations and they would go through great textual gymnastics to show that every New Testament quotation followed the Septuagint textual tradition.

On the other hand, some thought that elevating the Septuagint to such status was disparaging to the Hebrew text. So, they insisted that the New Testament writers had taken every quotation from the Hebrew text, even when the quote matched the Septuagint word for word.

Calmer and more objective minds have concluded that the great majority of the quotations of the Old Testament is from the Septuagint rather than from the Hebrew text. For example, the Septuagint text of Mal 3:1 is an accurate translation of the Masoretic text of the same passage. Yet, Matthew, Mark, and Luke agree literally in a rendering that is noticeable different from the Masoretic and Septuagint texts.

NKJ Mal 3:1 – Behold, I send my messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming,” Says the LORD of hosts.

LXX Mal 3:1 – Behold, I send forth my messenger, and he shall survey the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come into his temple, even the angel of the covenant, whom ye take pleasure in: behold, he is coming, saith the Lord Almighty.

Matt 11:10 – For this is he of whom it is written: ‘Behold, I send my messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.’

Mark 1:2 – As it is written in the Prophets: “Behold, I send my messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.”

Luke 7:27 – This is he of whom it is written: ‘Behold, I send my messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.’

The Formula and Method of Quotations

The New Testament writers did not use any uniform method in quoting the Old Testament. Sometimes they quoted word for word, sometimes just the general sense is given, or the citation is just an allusion to the passage instead of a formal quotation. All the New Testament writers, except Luke, grew up with and were trained on the Hebrew Scriptures. So, the language of the Old Testament was part of who these men were, and they used it liberally.

There are also many different formulas used to introduce an Old Testament quotation. The more common formulas are, “it is written,” “according as it is written,” “the Scripture says,” “it was said,” and “according as it is said.” Sometimes the place of origin is indicated:

Mark 12:26 – But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the burning bush passage, how God spoke to him, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’?

Acts 13:33 – God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm: ‘You are my Son, Today I have begotten You.’

Rom 11:2-3 – God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, “LORD, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life”?

But more frequently Moses, the Law, Isaiah, Jeremiah, or some other prophet is mentioned as writing or saying what is quoted. The New Testament writers seemed to assume that the people to whom they were writing were so familiar with the Old Testament that they just needed a passing reference in order to know what the writer was writing about.

One particular formula that deserves a more careful analysis is found in Matthew and John. It occurs for the first time in Matt 1:22:

NKJ Matt 1:22 – So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: 23 “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which is translated, “God with us.”

In this first instance, we find the full form of the formula (“this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet”). In most of the other instances, the shorter “that it might be fulfilled” (ἵνα πληρωθῆ *hina plerothe*) is used (Matt 2:15; 4:14; 21:4; John 12:38; 13:18; 15:25; 17:12; 18:9, 32; 19:24, 36). We find some variations as far as the Greek preposition and other words added to the formula, but overall the meaning seems to be the same.

NKJ John 12:38 – that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke: “Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?”

John 12:38 – ἵνα ὁ λόγος Ἰσαίου τοῦ προφήτου πληρωθῆ ὃς εἶπεν(Κυρίου(τίς ἐπίστευσεν τῆ ἀκοῆς ἡμῶν καὶ ὁ βραχίονας κυρίου ἐν τῇ ἀπεκαλύφθη

NKJ Matt 2:23 – And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, “He shall be called a Nazarene.”

Matt 2:23 – καὶ ἐλθὼν κατῴκησεν εἰς πόλιν λεγομένην Ναζαρέτ, ὅπως πληρωθῆ τοῦ ῥητος διὰ τῶν προφητῶν ὅτι Ναζωραῖος κληθήσεται

The question that this particular introductory formula poses to the interpreter is whether the events being referred to happened as a means to the fulfillment of the prophecy or the fulfillment of the prophecy was just an outcome of the event. In other words, did God design the events as a means of bringing to pass what he had foretold through prophets (telic)? Or, did the events just so happen to fulfill prophecy but were not designed necessarily to be a means of fulfilling prophecy (ecbatic)?

One does not need to look very far into the Scriptures to see that this introductory formula has a *telic* meaning. The Scriptures themselves speak of the necessity for the fulfillment of everything that predicted or typified Christ (Luke 24:25-26, 44-45).

Acts 1:16 – Men and brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus.

The Purpose of the Old Testament Quotations

The New Testament writers seem to have quoted the Old Testament with four different purposes at different times:

1. They quoted prophecy to show their fulfillment in the events described (see discussion above).

2. They quoted non-prophetic portions of the Old Testament with the purpose of establishing a doctrine:
 - a. Paul quotes the Old Testament to establish the total depravity of man (Rom 3:9-19).
 - b. Paul quotes the record of Abraham's belief in God to show that man is justified by faith rather than works (Rom 4:3).
 - c. Paul quotes the law in Deuteronomy to show that Christ is the fulfillment of the law (Rom 10:4-9).
3. They quoted the Old Testament to refute and rebuke an opponent – Matt 22:29-32, 41-46.

John 10:34-36 – Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your law, ‘I said, “You are gods”’? If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), do you say of him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’?”
4. They quoted or alluded to the Old Testament to illustrate a point or to paint images in the readers' minds or to show the divine unity of the Scriptures.
 - a. Jesus' reference to Solomon in the Sermon on the Mount.
 - b. The imagery in Revelation that parallels the imagery in Ezekiel.