



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

BIBLE CONFIDENCE SERIES

How Do I Check the Connection for Myself?

A Beginner Guide to Verifying How the New Testament Uses the Old Testament

The short answer

Read both passages in context. Compare what they say, ask why the New Testament writer used the earlier text, and follow the connection to Jesus.

“They received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.”

Acts 17:11 WEB

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PART ONE · BEGINNER GUIDE

You can learn to check the connection

This Companion was not written to replace your Bible. It was written to help you fall in love with it. Every page is intended to send you back into God's Word with greater confidence, deeper understanding, and a clearer picture of Jesus Christ.

Foundational truth

The New Testament writers did not treat the Old Testament as a collection of disconnected sayings. They read it as God's true, unfolding story—one that reaches its fulfillment in Jesus (Luke 24:25–27, 44–47).

What you will learn

01

Find the source

Use footnotes and cross-references to locate the Old Testament passage.

02

Read both settings

Understand what each passage is saying before comparing them.

03

Name the connection

Look for a promise, pattern, explanation, echo, or allusion.

04

State the conclusion carefully

Separate what the text clearly says from a reasonable inference or debated question.

Where this guide fits

This is the final practical guide in this series. Part One uses plain language and is written for beginners. Part Two is optional and introduces intermediate ideas when you are ready to go deeper.



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WHY VERIFY?

Careful reading builds confidence—not suspicion

Verification does not mean placing ourselves above the Bible. It means slowing down enough to understand the connection the inspired writer is making. The Bereans were commended for examining the Scriptures while receiving the message eagerly (Acts 17:10–12).

Verification helps us

- Honor the Old Testament passage instead of treating it as a detached phrase.
- Follow the New Testament writer's actual argument.
- Recognize Jesus without inventing connections the text does not support.
- Understand why quotations sometimes sound different in our English Bibles.
- Speak with humility when faithful Christians disagree about a difficult passage.

The posture matters

Bring both confidence and humility. God's Word is trustworthy, and we are still learning. If a connection seems confusing, slow down and keep reading. You do not have to solve every question at once.

A simple memory anchor

Find it → read around it → compare both passages → explain the connection.

Keep your Bible open

The best way to use this guide is with both passages visible at the same time.



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STEP ONE

Find the Old Testament source

Begin with the New Testament quotation or reference. Check the cross-references, center-column notes, or footnotes in your Bible. Write down the Old Testament book, chapter, and verse. You do not need special training to begin—your Bible's notes will often point you there.

Ask three beginner questions

01

Is it a direct quotation?

Quotation marks or an introductory phrase such as "it is written" may make the source easy to spot.

02

Is it a summary or echo?

The writer may use familiar Old Testament words or images without quoting a complete sentence.

03

Could more than one passage be involved?

A New Testament sentence may bring together language from several Old Testament texts.

Do not worry if the wording is different

The New Testament may quote an ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament, summarize a passage, or combine related texts. Record the difference and keep reading. Part Two explains this more fully.

Write it down

New Testament passage: _____

Old Testament source or sources: _____

How I found the source: footnote / cross-reference / repeated wording / other



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STEP TWO

Read the Old Testament passage in context

Before asking how the passage points to Jesus, ask what was happening when it was first written. Read the paragraph and the surrounding chapter. A short book overview can help, but beginners do not need to know every historical detail.

Look for the basics

01	Who is speaking or writing? Notice whether the words come from a narrator, prophet, psalmist, wisdom teacher, or another speaker.
02	Who is being addressed? Israel, Judah, a king, the nations, an individual, or a worshipping community may be in view.
03	What is happening? Identify the problem, promise, warning, prayer, event, or act of worship.
04	What kind of writing is this? Is it a story, command, poem, proverb, prophecy, letter, or vision? Different kinds of writing communicate in different ways.
05	What is the main point? Write one plain sentence that fits the surrounding passage.

Beginner safeguard

The Old Testament passage had real meaning before the New Testament writer quoted it. Its later use may deepen, extend, or bring that meaning to fulfillment, but it does not make the original setting meaningless.



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STEP THREE

Read the New Testament passage in context

Now read the New Testament paragraph around the quotation. Ask what is happening and what point the writer is making.

Look for the writer's purpose

- Is the passage identifying Jesus or explaining His work?
- Is it explaining an event in the church, such as Gentile inclusion?
- Is it calling believers to faith, holiness, endurance, or hope?
- Is it showing that God has kept a promise?
- Is it using an earlier person, event, or institution as a pattern?

Watch the words around the quotation

Phrases such as “fulfilled,” “as it is written,” “the prophet says,” “this agrees,” or “the Scripture foresaw” help explain how the writer is using the passage.

Write one sentence

The New Testament writer uses this passage because _____

Keep reading if needed

Sometimes the writer's conclusion appears several verses later. Do not stop at the quotation if the argument continues.



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STEP FOUR

Name the kind of connection

These four labels are simply ways to describe what you notice. You do not need to master them before you can understand the passage.

01	Promise and fulfillment God promised something that comes to fulfillment in Jesus. Example: Micah 5:2 and Matthew 2:5–6.
02	Pattern or typology An earlier person, event, or institution forms a pattern completed more fully in Jesus. Example: Passover and 1 Corinthians 5:7.
03	Quotation and explanation The writer quotes Scripture to explain a truth, event, or decision. Example: Amos 9:11–12 and Acts 15:13–19.
04	Echo or allusion Familiar words or images invite readers to remember an earlier passage. Example: Revelation 21 echoes Genesis 1–3 and Isaiah 65:17–19.

Categories are tools—not cages

A passage may involve both promise and pattern. David received promises, and his life and kingship also form patterns that reach beyond him to Jesus.

For more help, see the companion guide “Promise or Pattern? How to Tell the Difference.”

The strongest question

What evidence in the New Testament passage itself shows that this connection is intended?

Avoid free-form resemblance

Two things looking similar does not automatically make one a biblical type of the other. Look for a connection established by Scripture’s wording, storyline, covenant promises, or inspired explanation.



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STEP FIVE

Follow the Bible's unfolding story to Jesus

Jesus taught that the Law, Prophets, and Psalms bear witness to Him (Luke 24:44–47; John 5:39–40). That does not mean every verse is a hidden code. It means God's promises and saving story lead to Jesus.

Ask how the connection moves forward

- Does Jesus fulfill a stated promise?
- Does He succeed where an earlier person or people failed?
- Does He bring an earlier sacrifice, priest, temple, or king to its greater purpose?
- Does His death and resurrection begin a promised restoration?
- Does the passage point toward a fulfillment that has begun but is not yet complete?

Matthew 5:17 helps frame the whole subject

Jesus did not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets but to fulfill them. He fulfills Scripture through His teaching, perfect obedience, saving work, identity, and completion of God's redemptive purpose (Matthew 5:17).

Memory anchor

Read backward for context. Read forward toward Jesus. Let Scripture establish the path.



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STEP SIX

State your conclusion with the right level of confidence

Say what the passages clearly show, and be honest about anything you are still learning.

01	Clear The New Testament writer directly identifies, quotes, or explains the connection.
02	Strongly supported Several details support the conclusion even though the writer does not state it in one sentence.
03	Possible The connection may fit, but other careful readers may understand some details differently.
04	Uncertain The evidence is not strong enough to make a confident claim. It is faithful to say, "I do not know yet."

A useful conclusion pattern

In its Old Testament setting, this passage means _____. The New Testament uses it to show _____. This reveals _____ about God and helps me understand Jesus by _____.

Final accuracy check

- Did I read both passages in context?
- Did I distinguish the text from my assumptions?
- Did I avoid claiming more than the evidence supports?
- Does my conclusion agree with the wider teaching of Scripture?



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WORKED EXAMPLE · BEGINNER

Micah 5 and Matthew 2

When the magi ask where the King of the Jews has been born, the chief priests and scribes answer with a quotation from Micah. This is a clear place to practice the six-step process (Matthew 2:1–6).

Read both passages

Micah 5 speaks during a time of threat and humiliation, yet promises a ruler from Bethlehem whose greatness will reach to the ends of the earth (Micah 5:1–5). Matthew uses that promise to identify Bethlehem as the Messiah's birthplace and Jesus as the promised ruler and shepherd.

QUESTION	MICAH 5	MATTHEW 2
Setting	Threat and promised restoration	Herod and the visiting magi
Place	Bethlehem Ephrathah	Bethlehem in Judea
Person	A ruler for Israel	The Messiah, ruler and shepherd
Main connection	God promises a coming ruler	Jesus is identified as that ruler

Name the connection

Primary category: promise and fulfillment. Matthew explicitly connects Jesus' birth in Bethlehem with Micah's promised ruler.

One faithful conclusion

In its original setting, Micah 5 gave hope that God would provide a ruler from Bethlehem for His people. Matthew 2 identifies Jesus' birth in Bethlehem as the fulfillment of that messianic promise.

Notice the context

The quotation is not merely a prediction of a location. Micah's wider passage describes the character and reach of the coming ruler, helping Matthew's readers understand who Jesus is.

For two more full examples, review the companion case studies on Hosea 11 and Isaiah 7.



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PRACTICE PAGE

Try the process with Zechariah 9 and Matthew 21

Read Zechariah 9:9–13 and Matthew 21:1–11 before answering.

1 • Find the source

What Old Testament words does Matthew quote? _____

2 • Read the Old Testament context

What kind of king does Zechariah describe? _____

What hope surrounds His arrival? _____

3 • Read the New Testament context

What is Jesus doing, and how do the crowds respond? _____

4 • Name the connection

Promise / pattern / explanation / echo / more than one: _____

5 • Follow the story to Jesus

What does this reveal about Jesus' kingship? _____

6 • State a careful conclusion

One possible faithful summary

Zechariah promised a humble, righteous, saving King who would come to Jerusalem. Matthew presents Jesus' entry into Jerusalem as the fulfillment of that promise, while the surrounding story shows that His kingship will be revealed through the cross, resurrection, and final reign.



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PART TWO · WANT TO DIG DEEPER? · INTERMEDIATE

Why quotations may not match word for word

Many New Testament writers used the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament, commonly called the Septuagint. English Old Testaments are usually translated mainly from Hebrew and Aramaic texts. This is one reason the wording can differ.

Other reasons include

- The writer gives a faithful summary rather than a word-for-word quotation.
- The writer combines wording from more than one Old Testament passage.
- The writer adapts grammar or pronouns to fit the new sentence while preserving the passage's meaning.
- Ancient textual forms may preserve small wording differences that require careful study.

Example: Mark 1:2–3

Mark introduces his Gospel with language from both Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3 while naming Isaiah, the major prophetic source that frames the quotation. The combined texts announce a messenger preparing the Lord's way, and Mark identifies John the Baptist as that messenger before Jesus.

What not to conclude

A wording difference is not automatically an error. Compare translations, read the footnotes, locate each source, and ask how the New Testament writer uses the wording.



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PART TWO · INTERMEDIATE

One divine story can carry fuller meaning

The human authors wrote real words for real audiences, and Scripture is also God-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20–21). Because God directs the whole story, a passage may have a later significance that becomes clearer as His redemptive plan unfolds.

Important ideas

01

Near and farther horizons

A prophecy may address an immediate historical situation while also contributing to a greater messianic hope.

02

Corporate representation

One person may represent a people. Jesus can relive Israel's story faithfully, as Matthew's use of Hosea 11:1 shows.

03

Already and not yet

A promise may begin to be fulfilled through Jesus' first coming and await complete fulfillment at His return.

04

Faithful disagreement

Christians may agree that a text points to Christ while differing about the timing, extent, or precise category of fulfillment.

A worked “already and not yet” example

Jesus announced that God's kingdom had drawn near and demonstrated its power (Matthew 4:17; 12:28). Yet believers still pray for God's kingdom to come, and Revelation looks toward its complete public victory (Matthew 6:10; Revelation 11:15).

Stay anchored

Fuller meaning is not permission to make a passage mean anything we want. The later meaning must be established by Scripture and remain connected to the earlier text, the biblical storyline, and Christ.



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YOUR REUSABLE VERIFICATION WORKSHEET

Use these six questions every time

01

Where is the Old Testament source?

Record every likely source and note any wording differences.

02

What did it mean in its first setting?

Summarize the speaker, audience, situation, genre, and main point.

03

Why does the New Testament use it here?

Summarize the surrounding argument, event, or question.

04

What kind of connection is it?

Promise, pattern, explanation, echo, allusion—or an overlap.

05

How does it move the story toward Jesus?

Trace the promise, pattern, covenant, kingdom, or redemptive theme.

06

How confident should I be?

Mark your conclusion clear, strong inference, possible, or uncertain.

When you need help

Consult cross-references, several Bible translations, a trustworthy study Bible, and careful commentaries. Use them to return to Scripture with better questions—not to replace your own reading.

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THE MOST IMPORTANT CONNECTION

Would you like to begin with Jesus?

The Bible's message is good news. God created us to know Him, but every one of us has sinned and fallen short of His glory (Romans 3:23). Sin separates us from God, and we cannot repair that relationship through good works, religion, heritage, or effort.

God did for us what we could not do for ourselves. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, lived without sin, died for our sins, and rose from the dead. Through Him, God offers forgiveness, reconciliation, and eternal life as a gift of grace (Romans 5:6–8; 6:23; 1 Corinthians 15:3–4; Ephesians 2:8–9).

How do we respond?

01

Turn toward God

Repentance means turning from sin and self-rule toward God. It is not becoming perfect before you come to Him (Acts 3:19).

02

Believe in Jesus

Trust that Jesus is Lord and that His death and resurrection are sufficient to save you (John 3:16; Romans 10:9–10).

03

Call on Him

Confess your need, place your trust in Jesus, and ask Him to forgive and lead you. "Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Romans 10:13 WEB).

A prayer can express your faith

Jesus, I know that I have sinned and cannot save myself. I believe You died for my sins and rose again. I turn to You, ask for Your forgiveness, and trust You as my Savior and Lord. Help me follow You and grow in Your Word. Amen.

A prayer is not a magic formula—the words themselves do not save us. Jesus saves everyone who truly comes to Him in faith. If you have trusted Christ, begin reading His Word, tell another faithful Christian, connect with a Bible-believing local church, and learn about baptism and discipleship (Matthew 28:18–20; Acts 2:38–42).