

Sermon Brief, Helpful Links, Discussion Questions

April 11, 2021

“Was It Not Necessary: How the Old Testament Prepares us for Jesus part 1”

Genesis 1-3

1. I wanted to preach a new series on what Luke teaches us about Jesus. But I realized as I was preparing that Luke assumes a lot of knowledge of the Old Testament. In order to grasp the significance of what Luke says about Jesus you need to understand the Old Testament well enough to understand why he tells these stories about Jesus.
2. So before I begin the series on Jesus from Luke, I want to do a short series on the Old Testament and how it gets us ready for Him. You might say, this is like a series *before* the series. Specifically, **over the next several weeks, I want to explain four key concepts that will help you summarize the message of the Old Testament.**
3. Now summarizing the message of the Old Testament in four weeks may seem difficult to do for a number of reasons. For starters, the Old Testament is a very big book. It's got all kinds of different material. And it's complicated. You can understand someone picking it up and wondering, what is it all about?
4. That's actually a good question. What *is* the Old Testament about?
5. The first step to knowing what the Old Testament is about is knowing what the Old Testament is.
6. The problem is people have lots of different ideas about what the Old Testament is. Some people think it is a magic book, others an inspirational book, and still others more of a reference manual. The reality is the Old Testament is much bigger and better than any of that.
7. The Old Testament fundamentally is telling a story. That means to understand the Old Testament you have to know what that story is about. This is fundamental. Until you understand the basic theme of the story the Old Testament is telling, it's going to be hard to understand much. You'll especially have a hard time understanding Jesus.
8. To understand Jesus and the Old Testament, we have to find a way to summarize the story it is telling. There are a couple different ways we might do that. One way we could summarize the Old Testament is to say that it is about God. Another way you could summarize it is to say that it was designed to get us ready for Jesus. But there's at least one more way you could summarize the Old Testament and it's the way Jesus most often did.
9. According to Jesus the Old Testament is about the kingdom of God.
10. Now obviously, having the author of the Old Testament tell us what the Old Testament about, is a pretty big start to understanding it. But if his summary is going to really be helpful, you have to know what the kingdom of God is. **This is the first key concept for understanding the Old Testament.** If the Old Testament is telling a story and Jesus says the story is about the kingdom of God, to understand the Old Testament you have to understand what he means by the kingdom of God.
11. You might answer that question by looking up the word Jesus uses for kingdom up in a Greek dictionary. If you did, you would see it has something to do with God's rule or reign. But if you look more closely at the way Jesus uses this term, you'll see it clearly is about something more specific than simply God's universal rule over all.

To understand what he means exactly, you have to go from looking at the definition of the word kingdom, to the Old Testament story itself.

12. **Fortunately, when we open up our Old Testament to discover that story, we don't have to go far. On the first few pages of the Bible, we find three of the key components to understanding God's great kingdom program.**
13. First of all, we are given a picture of God's Kingdom **PLAN** in Genesis 1 and 2. From the very beginning, God's plan was to establish a kingdom here on earth, which He would rule through chosen human representatives. And yet of course, we know, that's not the way the world looks right now at all, which is why the second thing the Old Testament does is tell us exactly what the **PROBLEM** is. After God gives us a picture of what He designed the world to be, it's like Adam and Eve, took that picture and smashed it into a thousand little pieces in Genesis 3, and so we might ask, what next? Can God fix this? Does God want to fix this?
14. In a sense, that's what the rest of the Old Testament is about. The Old Testament story reveals God's great **PROMISE** to fix what man had broken, to establish His Kingdom, to reverse the effects of the fall, and to enable man to rule over His Creation. And it tells us how. It slowly but surely reveals more and more of God's great promise plan to glorify Himself by saving sinners, judging sin and accomplishing what He intended to accomplish all the way back in the beginning through a descendant of Eve who would serve as our great deliverer.
15. The problem of course is that the Old Testament story ends without that great deliverer having come yet. The Old Testament story leaves you hanging, which is where the gospel of Luke comes in! Luke looks at those great promises and says Jesus is the fulfillment and let me tell you some stories now about Jesus to show you exactly how He did it.

Helpful Links:

1. [God Wins: A Big Picture Overview of the Story of the Bible](#)
2. [An Interview with Stephen Dempster on Old Testament Theology](#)

Discussion Questions:

1. I once heard someone say that Jesus is like the exclamation point and the Old Testament is like the sentence. What do you think they meant by that? In what way does that demonstrate the importance of understanding the Old Testament?
2. What is your attitude toward the Old Testament? What do you appreciate about it? What challenges have you faced as you have studied it?
3. What are some different ways people think of what the Old Testament is? What do we mean when we say the Old Testament fundamentally is telling a story? What difference does that make on the way we approach the Old Testament?
4. What are the three different ways we mentioned on Sunday that you can summarize the story of the Old Testament?
5. What proof do we have that the Old Testament is a story about the kingdom of God?
6. What is the kingdom of God?
7. What are some of the key elements of God's plan for the universe that we see in Genesis 1 and 2?

8. How would you explain where the problems in the universe started according to Genesis 3? Try to take what we see in this passage and summarize it in principle form. In other words, complete the following sentence. Man's problems started when:
9. In what way does the story we read about Adam and Eve give us a picture of the entire Old Testament story?
10. What makes Genesis 3:15 so significant?
11. The Old Testament slowly but surely reveals more and more about this great Promised Deliverer. What are some other important things the Old Testament tells us about this Promised One?
12. In what way does understanding this about the Old Testament story help you understand what is happening in the gospel of Luke?