

Slide 1: Title

Well today we are continuing on in our Frequently Asked Questions series. It's good to take some time to tackle questions head on. As much as we would like to think that we know everything, our faith is mysterious by design and so when it comes to relating to God and living faithful lives, questions abound.

Our question for today sounds like a simple one, "Do we *really* need the Old Testament?" I would think that for many Christians we would answer in the affirmative. Yes, we do need the Old Testament...without it we would not have Psalm 23. Or so many of those crazy stories: Noah's Ark, David and Goliath, Jonah and the whale. Where would we be without these childhood classics? Yes, we need the Old Testament. However, I also think that many Christians live lives that would answer, "Well, to be honest with you, no not really. I have Jesus in the New Testament I have the church in the New Testament. I have Christmas and Easter...so I guess I really don't need the Old Testament." I suspect that many of us don't bother all that much with the Old Testament. It can be hard to understand. It's long. It can be boring. Do we even need it?

Slide 2: Various pictures

Old things get a bad rap in our modern society. New is always better right? Most things are outdated by the time they even hit the market. New is always followed by the word...improved. And many people would say the same for the Bible. The NT is better because Jesus is nice and God is love. There are no battles or warfare or long lists of rules. The NT is improved because it is so much shorter! Who needs to spend all that time going through ancient history? If the NT is better, do we even need the Old? Let us not forget the words of our Savior when he says, "I

have not come to do away with the law and the prophets, but instead I have come to fulfill them.” Jesus completes the story, he fills in the gaps, but by no means does he negate or dismiss what we find in the Old Testament.

So I am with Jesus and I am going to emphatically state that, “Yes, indeed, as Christians living in modern Western civilization, we need the Old Testament.” But as I expand a bit upon this answer I want to focus entirely on Jesus,

Slide 3: Jesus overlay

the Author and Perfecter of our faith. Jesus is our focal point; he is the Cornerstone on which our faith rests. He is the image of the invisible God. He is the Word made flesh, and so from beginning to end, this Bible is all about Jesus. It’s all about explaining to us who exactly God is. So Jesus is where we will begin as well as where we will end.

Let’s turn to Hebrews, which is the most OT of the NT books. Hebrews is helpful to us as it was written specifically to Jewish people, people who knew well the OT.

Slide 4-5: Text

Hebrew begins like this: READ Heb. 1:1-4

Slide 6: Elijah Picture

Let’s look closely at verse 1. In the past God spoke through prophets. We know that a large chunk of our OT is dedicated to the words of the prophets spoken mostly to God’s people. Often these were words of judgement and reprimand. As such, these sections of scripture are not always the most fun to read and the prophets themselves faced many struggles, both from their own people and from God’s own hand. The OT prophets stood up to authority. They often performed sign and wonders. They were loners who did not know how to fit in with civil

society. We moderns can admit that these men spoke the word of God, but we have a difficult time seeing how it could apply to our lives. But let's read on, verse 2: In these final days though, God spoke to us through a Son. Aha! So something has changed. We have moved on from prophets speaking God's word to God's own Son speaking God's word. But let's be very clear here, the words spoken whether by Jesus or Elijah or Hosea or Jeremiah, or any other prophets are still the words of God. As we have seen before, Jesus himself says clearly nothing in the law or prophets has been removed, or even replaced. Jesus says he has come to fulfill. Jesus is better than any prophet, he is the Son, but his message is the same as any prophet who came before "Repent and believe!"

Slide 7: Vineyard Picture

Jesus puts it like this: READ Matthew 21:33-46 Jesus is the Son and does that designation garner him any respect or status? Not in this world. But we cannot understand Jesus as a prophet unless we are familiar with those who have gone before.

Slide 8: FAQs About the Son

Hebrews goes on to tell us some more information about this Son. "He is the heir of everything and God created the world through Him. He truly is the beginning and the end. The Son is the light of God's glory and the imprint of God's being. He maintains everything with his powerful message. After he carried out the cleansing of people from their sins, he sat down at the right side of the highest majesty."

There is a lot here for us to digest. I really think we could analyze each of these statements in a sermon all on their own, but I want to focus on this line:

Slide 9: Highlight

He carried out the cleansing of people from their sins. Now from the NT gospels we can connect some dots and say that this occurred when Jesus dies on the cross. That was how he saved us. But there is another age old question that arises when we see this connection. Why? Why did Jesus have to die? How does that make any sense? And the writer of Hebrews would turn to you and say, don't you know the OT? Just as Jesus is the greatest of the prophets, he is also the greatest priest.

Slide 10: Priest picture

A role you can know all about from a book like Leviticus. But if we are not acquainted with the whys and hows of the OT priesthood then knowing that Jesus is the priest of all priests holds very little meaning.

Let's keep going. Hebrews continues: "And so, the Son became so much greater than the other messengers, such as angels, that he received a more important title than theirs." And what is that title? King of kings!

Slide 11: Heavenly Throne Picture

Again, verse two says that the Son was made heir over everything. He is king of all!

I think most of us understand the role of a king. We know about kings from childhood fairy tales. They are rich and powerful and in charge. They live in the palaces and command the army. They sit on the throne in royal robes and they wear the crown. We know about kings in general but if we neglect the OT then we do not know very much about this king in particular. This king was the promised Messiah. His reign is woven throughout the entire scripture. There is a long, dramatic, frustrating history between God and Israel's kings. And we are left in the dark about the importance of King Jesus unless we acquaint ourselves with this history.

My first answer to our question then, Do we *really* need the OT, is yes, if you really want to know Jesus.

Slide 12: FAQs About the Son

He is our prophet, priest and king...roles we cannot properly understand without the background. It is like jumping into the last installment of a book series. All the characters have been established, all the history has been made, but you're coming in too late to the party.

Slide 13: Tolkien Picture

Imagine if you will the greatest Tolkien fan. They have immersed themselves in the lore of Middle-earth, they know what makes each character tick. They have read and re-read every part of the trilogy as well as all the peripheral books written by Tolkien. These people are not only big fans of the literature, they have become big fans of the author. They respect and honor not only the books, but the writer himself. If we dismiss the OT we cut ourselves off from all that backstory. We will not know nearly as much or have the same appreciation for the work. Worst of all, we are not able to become big fans of the author...we just will not be familiar enough with his work. If we really want to know Jesus, we really need the OT.

Now, as I made my way through bible college and seminary, some of my favorite teachers were my OT professors. Dr. Sprinkle stands out among them.

Slide 14: Joe Sprinkle Photo

He was a misfit for sure. In a line up of random people, you would probably be able to peg him as an OT professor. He was a great teacher because when you heard him speak, you knew that he simply loved God's word. He knew it front to back. He had parsed it and studied it. He had digested it and absorbed it. He loved it. Of course he was concerned with the useful, daily application of the OT. He actually wrote a book on it, but even beyond the application, even

beyond what it meant for my life now, Dr. Sprinkle wanted to get to know the Author as best as he could. His passion went beyond the text itself, his passion was for Jesus.

Slide 15: John Oswald Photo

A few years ago, Pastor Dan Hair introduced Red Rock camp to our speaker for the week.

Another OT professor, Dr. John Oswald. Dr. Oswald was another man obsessed with Jesus, and he was that way because he was so immersed in the word of God. I wanted to share with you a few truths that I have gleaned from Dr. Oswald:

Slide 16: FAQs NT Assumes we know the OT

His answer to our question is yes, we really do need the OT because the NT assumes we know the OT. It assumes we are familiar with the themes and stories that have been set up in the OT. It assumes that we are already standing on the foundational framework that the OT has built.

Slide 17: Point #1

The OT assumes that we know that God is not of this world. He is totally holy, totally set apart. He is totally unique as the Almighty Creator. With that foundation in place, the NT radically blows the minds of every reader when it proclaims that Jesus has broken into our world! Our out of this world God, has become one of us.

Slide 18: Point #2

The OT teaches us that God is absolutely holy and just. Sin and impurity cannot stand in his presence. The NT fulfills our understanding of God by highlighting that God is also love. The wrath has not been removed. Judgment is still at hand, but we cannot know and appreciate God's patient love and mercy without knowing about his holiness.

Slide 19: Point #3

The OT shows us how God has chosen a specific people, the Israelites. We should know that God saves or condemns the Israelites as a whole, together. The NT doctrine of personal salvation through Jesus and our place in his church is filled out when we understand how God works with entire people groups.

Yes, we really do need the OT.

Slide 20: Bible picture

I want to challenge you to read more of God's word, Old and New Testaments. There are many resources that can help you do this, you can look them up online, but I wanted to share with you one that I am currently using. It is a book at a time plan that takes you through the whole Bible in one year. It's about 4 or 5 chapters a day, and as you can see there are some reflection days built in so you can take a break or catch up a bit if you are behind. We are God's people, we need to be people of the book. We need to know what it says. Some of it is tough to get through, but that struggle is well worth it. What a shame to keep God's word on the shelf. What a shame to never have unlocked the life that lies therein. So take this chart and use it as our gift to you, run with it, get into God's word. Get to know it's Author. You can start today.

Slide 21: Scroll picture

Jesus is our prophet, Priest and King and if we are committed to know who Jesus is, than we will be delighted to grasp everything bit of information we can. We will want to know his word, both the first and the second part. Remember back when you first met your spouse. In those days when you were falling in love. You cherished every note they wrote to you and wanted to know all about who they were. As your relationship grew you got to know their family, their history, their roots. You wanted to know it all, the good memories they had and the bad things they experienced. All of this information allowed you to know the person you loved more fully. The

OT is a revelation of Jesus himself. It is his history, his roots. We wrestle with the hard parts and rejoice in his triumphs. We carefully read over every word that he has written to us. We come to understand our Savior more fully when we engage with and allow ourselves to be shaped by the OT.