

## Did the Law and the Prophets End with John?

Written by Administrator

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It is commonly supposed that John the Baptist was the last prophet and that with him the era of prophets and prophesying had ended. This assumption is due to the fact that the statement of Jesus has been grossly misunderstood. In Luke 16:16 we read:

"The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it" [KJV].

The same is recorded by Matthew - but as usually differently in accordance with the Synoptic principle. Please note Matthew 11:12-13 [KJV]:

"And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent ones take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John."

This in no way can mean that the law and the prophets were nullified or ceased to exist after John the Baptist. For Jesus himself said that not even the smallest letter or point of the law will cease to be binding as long as heaven and earth exist and that whoever breaks the least command of the law will be called least in the kingdom [Matthew 5:18-19]. In Luke, in the very verse which follows his statement concerning the law, prophets and John the Baptist, Jesus said:

"And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail."

If God's law ceased to be in effect after John the Baptist, then there would have been no sin. But John writes that sin is transgression of the law:

"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" [1

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John 3:4 KJV].

Therefore God's law had to be in effect after John the Baptist otherwise no one could have committed sin if God's law ceased to be in effect after John. The word 'law' in the texts of Luke and Matthew does not refer to the commandments, statutes and judgements of which we read in the books of Moses. Those who believe so try to separate the law into so called ceremonial, civil and moral commands. Thus according to them all commands have ceased with John the Baptist except the Ten Commandments. But nothing can be further from the truth.

The so called ceremonial and ritual commands were never given by the true God in the first place. But I will not deal with this in the current article. I will point out that the word 'law' in the texts of Matthew and Luke - refer to the five books of Moses and not the law itself. In Matthew 12:5 the word 'law' occurs and refers to the books of Moses:

"Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless?"

In Luke 10:26-28 again the word 'law' refers to the books of Moses:

" He said to him, "What is written in the law? What is your reading *of it?*" So he answered and said, " 'You shall love  
the the Lord your  
God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,'  
and  
'your neighbor as yourself.'  
"

And He said to him,  
"You have answered rightly; do this and  
you will live."

These two commands were not written on the Tables of Stone and were no part of the Ten Commandments. They were written in the books of Moses. In John 1:45 the word 'law' refers to the books of Moses and not the commandments or statutes:

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"Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

But elsewhere in the Gospel of John the word 'law' is extended to refer even to the writings outside of the books of Moses. In chapter 10:34, 12:34 and 15:25 we read:

"Is it not written in your Law, 'I have said you are "gods"'?"

"We have heard from the Law that the Messiah will remain forever, so how can you say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this 'Son of Man'?"

"But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: 'They hated me without a cause.'"

Even though the word 'law' is used it actually refers to the books of Psalms. In the books of Moses, in the writings and the books of prophets there were prophecies which foretold the days of John the Baptist who was to be the forerunner of Jesus when the New Covenant would be established and when the law, the writings and the prophets would be extended to all the nations. For in the Old Covenant era they pertained to the nation of Israel only. The prophecies of the Old Covenant did not all end with John for there are prophecies there which have not yet been fulfilled. They are still to be fulfilled in the future. The key word in Matthews' text is "prophesying." The law and the prophets were prophesying until John. Meaning that the focus was John and Jesus since from then on the kingdom of God was proclaimed to all nations. If the Law and the Prophets ceased with John, then the entire Old Testament lost its authority and Jesus had no Scriptures and the Apostles had no Scriptures from which to teach. However, Jesus and the Apostles regarded only the Old Testament as Scriptures. Jesus never had the New Testament. In fact, even when the Gospels were written and the book of Acts, and the epistles by the apostles, they were not regarded as the Holy Scripture. The text in Timothy which states that "all Scripture is given by God" refers only to the Old Testament, for certain books of the New Testament were not even written as yet and therefore they could not have been a part of "all Scriptures." I am not saying that the New Testament has no value but simply that it was not regarded as the Bible by the Apostles and the early believers. Their Bible consisted only of the Law, the Prophets and the Writings - namely only of the Scriptures we now call the Old Testament.

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Therefore the two quotes from Luke and Matthew in no way prove that there can be no prophets in the New Era and under the New Covenant. In fact, there are many passages in the New Testament which prove that there were prophets after John the Baptist and that there could be prophets throughout the New Covenant era and even today.

I will begin with Acts 2:17-18, a quote from Joel which apostle Peter applied to his own time:

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants

I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy" [NKJV].

The last days began with John the Baptist. This is evident from the following passages [Hebrews 1:1-2; 1 Peter 1:20; 1John 2:18; Jude 17-19; James 5:1-9]. If the prophecy ceased with John the Baptist how then could God pour out his spirit on all flesh [nations] and how could they see visions, dream dreams and prophesy during the last days, that is, during the New Covenant era?

In Acts 13:1 we are plainly told that there were prophets well after John the Baptist and when the congregations were already well established:

"Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul."

Simeon and Lucius were negroes and therefore not prophets from the Old Covenant era. God chose them to be prophets. In Acts 15:32 we read:

"Now Judas and Silas, themselves being prophets also, exhorted and strengthened the brethren with many words."

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There were others who were prophets since Judas and Silas were *also* prophets. Philip the evangelist who baptized the eunuch from Ethiopia had four young virgin daughters who were prophetesses. Acts 21:9 states:

"Now this man had four virgin daughters who were prophetesses" [New American Standard Bible].

There was also an important prophet called Agabus. He predicted the coming of the severe famine which occurred in the days of Claudius Caesar. Acts 11:27-28 states:

"During this time some *prophets* came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. This happened during the reign of Claudius."

He was one among other prophets who came - proving that there were prophets in the New Covenant congregations and assemblies. In Acts 21 Agabus is again mentioned. When Paul was on his way to Jerusalem, which was his final visit and during which he was arrested, Agabus prophesied that he would be arrested and bound in Jerusalem. Acts 21:10-11 reads:

"After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. Coming over to us, he took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, "The Holy Spirit says, 'In this way the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.'"

This took place many years after John the Baptist and even Jesus' resurrection. Yet we find Agabus the prophet prophesying which proves that prophesying did not end with John the Baptist.

Paul states in Ephesians 2:19-22 the following:

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"Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.

And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit."

That 'prophets' are those of the New Covenant era is apparent from Epesians 4:4:

"And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ."

In the assemblies of the New Covenant as apostles are given so are also prophets, evangelists and other offices in order to edify the believers.

In 1 Corinthians 12:27-31 Paul writes:

"Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles?

Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?

Now eagerly desire the greater gifts."

In the assemblies under the New Covenant era prophets are greater than teachers and healers, or the miracle workers, or the speakers in tongues. The book of Revelation was written many years after John the Baptist when supposedly the era of the prophets had ended. But in Revelation 22:6-10 we read:

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"The angel said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God who inspires the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place." "Look, I am coming soon! Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy written in this scroll."

I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me.

But he said to me, "Don't do that! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers the prophets and with all who keep the words of this scroll. Worship God!"

Then he told me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this scroll..."

The scroll of Revelation was a prophetic scroll. It was written by a prophet. And the angel stated that John the prophet had fellow prophets who were his brothers in Christ. God has indeed poured out His spirit on all flesh - all nations - for He has called and appointed prophets throughout the New Covenant era who prophesied.

Therefore the prophetic era did not end with John the Baptist as implied in Luke but rather the law and the prophets prophesied until John - that is, pointed things out and pertained to that time. If the prophets ceased with John then Jesus could not have been a prophet. But he was not only the Son of God but also the Prophet. He himself admitted that when he spoke of his death - sending a message to Herod that a prophet cannot die outside of Jerusalem. Also the two disciples who met Jesus on the way to Emmaus clearly stated that Jesus was a mighty prophet [Luke 24:19].

Apostle Peter quoted Moses' words concerning the Prophet whom God was to send and in his mind this Prophet was Jesus [Acts 3:22-23. Jesus was the Prophet, the Priest, the King and the Son of God. All New Covenant believers are also prophets [for Paul said that all may prophesy but in turns], they are priests for they belong to royal priesthood, they are kings - for they shall reign with Christ and they are sons and daughters of God - a part of God's divine family.

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