

“The law and the prophets were until John”

In Luke chapter 16, Jesus Christ made the following statement: “The *law* and the prophets were *until* John [the Baptist]. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached...” (verse 16). Was Christ saying that God’s spiritual law was in effect *only until* the time of John, and that since that time it is no longer in effect?

Although that is what some people believe, we will now see that this is *not* what Christ was saying.

Actually, any question concerning this issue should be put to rest by reading the very *next* verse---verse 17: “And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the **law** to fail.”

Has the planet earth---or the starry heaven---“passed away”? Certainly not. And neither has God’s spiritual law! The fact is that God’s spiritual law *always has been*, and *always will be*, in effect!

What Christ Actually Meant

Notice the following information from *Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, under the heading “The Divisions of the O. T. Books”:

The 39 books of the O. T. were anciently divided by the Hebrews into *three* distinct classes: **(1) The Law, (Torah)** which comprised the five books of Moses---Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy....**(2) The Prophets** [which consisted of the books of Joshua through Kings, plus Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the twelve minor prophets, such as Hosea, Joel, Amos, etc.]....**(3) The Writings** [sometimes referred to as “*The Psalms*”].... [This section included not only the book of Psalms, but also Proverbs, Job, and all the other O. T. books not already mentioned.]...” (*Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, 1996 ed., page 144).

Yes, the Old Testament was divided into 3 sections---The Law, The Prophets, and The Psalms. With that in mind, notice *Christ’s reference* to this 3-fold division of the Old Testament: “Then He said to them, “These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in *the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me*” (Luke 24:44). So, in using this phrase--- the Law and the Prophets and the Psalms---Christ was merely referring to the Old Testament. Likewise, in the passage in question (Luke 16:16), He was merely referring to the Old Testament when He said, “The *law and the prophets* were until John.”

Christ meant that *until* the coming of John the Baptist, the Old Testament scriptures *alone* were preached...because that’s the only scriptures that were in existence! The New Testament had not yet been written.

Christ and John Preached the Same Gospel

One other point of interest is that Christ and John the Baptist both preached the *same* Gospel message. They both preached *repentance*, and they both preached *the Kingdom of God*.

This can be clearly seen by a *comparison* of the following two scriptures: “Now after John [the Baptist] was put in prison, **Jesus** came to Galilee, preaching *the gospel of the kingdom of God*, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. **Repent**, and believe in the gospel’”

(Mark 1: 14-15). “In those days **John the Baptist** came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, ‘**Repent**, for *the kingdom of heaven* is at hand!’” (Matt. 3: 1-2).

(Note: In their Gospel accounts, Matthew, Mark and Luke *all* spoke of “the kingdom of God.” Oftentimes Matthew---and Matthew *only*---referred to it, alternatively, as the “kingdom of *heaven*.”)