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## Until John...

Until now...

Until John...

Until...

This one word has been the source of some confusion among the body when it comes to the applicability of the Torah for the “New Testament” believer.

### **Matthew 11:12-13 (ESV)**

From the days of John the Baptist *until* now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied *until* John,

### **Luke 16:16-17 (ESV)**

The Law and the Prophets were *until* John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone forces his way into it. But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one dot of the Law to become void.

Taking these verses as translated and written, we can see how some may understand them to say that the Torah and the prophets prophesied up until the time of John the Baptist, but then something changed. However, is that really what is being said? Did something change after John?

In order to make sure we are understanding these verses correctly, we need to look deeper into the translation and the context of what was going on at the time they were written.

Let’s take a quick look at the verses in Matthew 11 and see what kinds of clues we come up with as to the meaning.

### **Matthew 11:12-13 (ESV)**

From the days of John the Baptist *until* now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied *until* John,

We see that starting with John the Baptist and up until the moment Jesus, his Hebrew name being Yeshua, was speaking, something was going on. The ESV translates the events as the kingdom of heaven had been suffering violence and the violent take it by force.

More on that a little later in the teaching.

Verse 13 tells us that the Prophets and the Law of God prophesied up until John.

So, we have the Law and the Prophets prophesying up until the prophet John the Baptist arrives. Today, some teach that this means that once John the Baptist came on the scene, the Law no longer applied. However, there is a rather large problem with such an understanding. We have just finished reading how the Law, and the Prophets, were prophesying until John.

If we are to follow through with the idea that the Law no longer applied with John, then we must also have the understanding that the Prophets no longer applied starting with John. This would mean that we could no longer use the prophets in studying what they foretold of the Messiah and all other end times events.

This understanding would mean that the Law and the prophets must all have been fulfilled BEFORE John the Baptist arrived. Please note, the verse said “**until**” John, meaning the moment John arrived on the scene, the Law and the Prophets were done; at least that would be the indication if those words truly mean what some teach they mean.

Is there still value in the prophets today? Do we still need to look to the second coming of the Messiah? Do we need to look for the end of days when 1/3 of all of the stars fall from the heavens and both the anti-Christ and the beast roam the earth? Do we still need to look out for all that Messiah warned us about in Matthew 24? What about the abomination of the desolation as spoken of in Daniel?

Were ALL of the prophecies found in the Prophets fulfilled by the time John the Baptist arrived?

Of course not.

Obviously, the Prophets **do** still have value today. They are still prophesying of what’s ahead. Likewise, the Law of God still teaches us how to live Godly, set apart lives.

We know that all of prophecy has not yet been fulfilled, thus the Prophets are still applicable. If the Prophets still apply, then we can draw the conclusion that the Law also still applies. The Law and the Prophets were both prophesying; there is nothing that says the Law stopped, but the Prophets continued. They are taken together and should be treated as such in this case.

The message in Luke 16:16 is very similar in content. However, if we read on to verse 17 we find that the idea that the Law and the Prophets were until John could not mean what we think it means.

#### **Luke 16:16-17 (ESV)**

The Law and the Prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone forces his way into it. **But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one dot of the Law to become void.**

Again we see that it couldn’t be that the Law and the Prophets no longer applied because it’s easier for heaven and earth to pass away. For more on heaven and earth passing away, please see our teaching titled “[Heaven and Earth & the Law of God.](#)”

As a quick note to remember for later, the words “good news of the” do not appear in the Greek text.

Verse 16 would be more literally rendered as saying “The Law and the Prophets until John; since then the kingdom of God is preached...”

So, now what? What changed starting with John?

In order to answer that, we must first consider who John was. John clearly states he is the voice crying out in the wilderness preparing the way of the Lord. Yeshua calls him the prophet likened unto Elijah in the very next verse.

**Matthew 11:14 (ESV)**

and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come.

This verse refers back to what the prophet Malachi said:

**Malachi 4:5-6 (ESV)**

“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD (YHWH) comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.”

What was it about John that was like Elijah?

He was a fiery prophet with a strong message; one of calling God’s people to repentance. Yes, every prophet called for repentance, but John and Elijah were two of the more courageous and aggressive ones. They brought a stern message coupled with a sense of urgency behind it.

What is it that John the Baptist taught? Listen to the urgency in these words.

**Matthew 3:2 (ESV)**

“Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand”

And

**Matthew 3:7-12 (ESV)**

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father,’ for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

“I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

Those are strong words, they have an urgency **because the kingdom of God is at hand**, it’s not far off! The urgency is present because the Messiah was coming with His winnowing fork to clear the threshing floor, gather His wheat, and burn the chaff.

Do you remember back in Matthew 11 and Luke 16, how there was something going on with the kingdom of God once John appeared?

Do you remember when we said that in Luke 16 the phrase “the good news of” did not appear in the Greek? Well, here is where those things starting coming together in a very interesting way as we examine more closely both sets of verses.

We know from Luke that from the days of John, the kingdom of God was preached. We know that John, the prophet like Elijah, brought a forceful, urgent message of repentance. Why? **Because the kingdom of God was at hand.**

What’s so interesting about all of this? The fact that there is a sense of urgency plays an important role in how these verses should be understood and translated.

Luke 16 said the kingdom of God was preached and everyone was forcing their way into it. Matthew 11 states that “**the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force.**”

Something interesting to note, just as words were added to Luke 16, Matthew 11 has the word “suffered” added to it. It isn’t in the Greek. In fact, there is even a note in the ESV that the phrase there could be rendered as “has been coming violently”!

The word used as “forcing” in Luke 16 carries a different meaning in the Greek, than is commonly taught or understood. Here is the word found in Luke 16: (biazetai) βιάζεται, it can carry the connotation of using force in such a manner as one “*who strive to obtain its privileges with the utmost eagerness and effort*” (#973 of Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament). The Mounce Greek Dictionary states it also can mean “to press forward, earnestly rush” as used in Luke 16:16 or “to be an object of a forceful movement” as used in Matthew 11:12.

These things are *game changers* for the way we interpret these verses!

Using these common Biblical Greek resources, we should now be reading Matthew 11:12-13 as saying: Starting with the days of John the Baptist up until this moment, the kingdom of heaven has been coming violently (*forcefully*), and eager/strong/forceful people eagerly seize it!

And Luke 16:16 should be read as:

The Law and the Prophets prophesied (*context Matthew 11*) until John, since then the kingdom of God is preached and everyone presses forward (*earnestly rushes*) their way into it!

When we combine the message and purpose of John the Baptist as being in the spirit and power of Elijah with this understanding, these verses make far more sense than how they are commonly translated.

There is no violence being done to the kingdom of heaven; instead, starting with John, the kingdom of God has been coming forcefully, rushing, urgently coming! This is clear when we consider the fact that John was teaching an urgent, forceful message that the kingdom of God was at hand! The time was now! There was no more time to dilly dally around.

What did we see happen with John the Baptist when he was preaching this? People flocked to him! They sought him and the baptism he was giving! The people were eagerly seeking the kingdom and it

was coming fast as Messiah was just coming into the picture.

John was creating a sense of urgency. Up until that time there had been the Law and the Prophets that pointed to the coming Messiah and the need for repentance. It is commonly understood that there is about a 500 year silence from the Father before John the Baptist came. With the many years of silence, without prophets continuously calling the people to repentance, they may have become a little more relaxed. Sure, they were looking to the coming of the Messiah some day, hoping He'd come and rescue them from the Romans at one point. Yet without the constant call of the prophets walking around, it was only the Law and the Prophets that they could look to know what God said. The Law and the Prophets were guiding them and keeping their hope alive that the Savior was coming.

Do you think after 500 years of silence, after being used to having Prophets giving you direction, that you might become a little more complacent? Do you think you may lose a sense of urgency in the expectation that the Messiah would be coming?

Look at us today, 2000 years after Messiah. Yes, there are many Believers, but do we live with the same sense of urgency and longing that they did for the first 100 years after His resurrection? Not likely. As end times approach we **are** more aware; more and more people are waking up and answering the call of their Creator to come back to His Word. Yet still, we are not at the level of urgency and excitement that they would have had with the apostles live and in-person walking around. We're not like they would have been, knowing that Paul was coming to visit and impart some great wisdom.

Luke 16:16-17 and Matthew 11:12-13 tell us that something changed with the arrival of John the Baptist. Prior to him, the Law and the Prophets called people to repentance and pointed to the Messiah, but once John arrived, the Messiah was close on his heels and the kingdom of God became real, alive, and urgent to the people. The Messiah had finally come!

These verses didn't mean that the Law and the Prophets no longer applied to the lives of the people. No, these verses tell us that the Word had come alive to the people starting with John, the first prophet in 500 years who was preparing the way of the coming Lord.

Despite John's own denial of being the prophesied "Elijah", Messiah Yeshua did call him Elijah in Matthew 11:14 that we read earlier. Yet, Yeshua also says in Matthew 17:11 that Elijah is coming before the great and terrible day of the Lord.

This means that once again Elijah comes, or at least in the same "spirit of Elijah" like John, calling for repentance with a renewed strength and sense of urgency. He will once again be preparing the way of the Lord just before Messiah returns.

We hope that this teaching has blessed.

Remember, continue to test everything.

Shalom.

*For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at [www.testeverything.net](http://www.testeverything.net)*

**Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.**

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