

Let’s begin by reading the passage in context:

Matthew 11:12-13

“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.”

At face value, verse 13 might seem like it means the Law and the Prophets (the Old Testament) predicted the coming of John the Baptist specifically. But that’s not quite what Jesus is saying.

Instead, He is pointing out a *transition in redemptive history*. The phrase “the Law and the Prophets” is a common Jewish way of referring to the Hebrew Scriptures (see Matthew 5:17, Luke 24:44). These Scriptures governed God’s covenant relationship with Israel, offering His commandments through Moses and speaking His will through prophets.

A Turning Point in God’s Plan

Jesus is identifying John the Baptist as the last in the line of the Old Testament prophets—the final messenger under the old covenant who

prepares the way for the Messiah (cf. Isaiah 40:3, Malachi 3:1; 4:5).

Luke 16:16

“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.”

This verse from Luke echoes the same point but with added clarity. John’s appearance marks the end of one era and the beginning of another—the inauguration of the kingdom of God through the preaching of the gospel.

Old Covenant vs. New Covenant

Under the Old Covenant:

- Access to God was mediated through priests, the temple, and sacrifices (see Leviticus).
- The people depended on prophets to hear from God (see 1 Samuel 3:1).
- Forgiveness was temporary and symbolic, tied to ritual and the law (Hebrews 10:1-4).

But under the New Covenant, established through Christ:

What Does “All the Prophets and the Law Prophesied Until John” Mean?

- Jesus becomes our High Priest (Hebrews 4:14–16), giving us direct access to God.
- The Holy Spirit now dwells in believers, guiding and convicting us from within (John 14:26; Romans 8:14).
- Forgiveness is complete and eternal through Jesus’ sacrifice (Hebrews 10:10–14).

Hebrews 1:1–2

“Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son...”

So when Jesus says the Law and the Prophets “prophesied until John,” He is marking the end of that former way of God communicating with His people. From John onward, the good news of the kingdom is preached—not just to Israel but to all who would believe.

“The Kingdom Suffers Violence” - What Does That Mean?

Matthew 11:12, “the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force,” is complex, but here’s a balanced interpretation:

What Does “All the Prophets and the Law Prophesied Until John” Mean?

- “Suffers violence” likely refers to the spiritual intensity and resistance surrounding the arrival of God’s kingdom. The gospel brings confrontation with the powers of darkness and the sinfulness of man.
- “The violent take it by force” points to those who respond to the gospel with *passionate, determined faith*, pushing past obstacles to lay hold of the kingdom (see Luke 13:24 - “Strive to enter...”).

In other words, Jesus is highlighting the urgency and spiritual effort it takes to respond to the gospel. This doesn’t mean salvation is earned by works—but that entering God’s kingdom requires serious commitment, turning from sin, and trusting Christ fully.

What It Means for Us Today

We no longer need a prophet or priest to bring us near to God. Through Jesus Christ, the way has been opened:

Hebrews 10:19-22

“Since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus... let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith...”

The time of waiting for God’s Word through a prophet is over. Today, every believer can walk in fellowship with God, guided by Scripture and the Holy Spirit.

Let us then press in with all our hearts. The kingdom of God is open—but we must pursue it with faith, repentance, and spiritual hunger.

James 4:8

“Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.”

May the Lord help us to seek His kingdom earnestly and live as faithful citizens in it.

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