

Matthew 11:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.

Analysis

'For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.' This verse establishes John the Baptist as the culmination and terminus of the Old Testament era. The phrase 'all the prophets and the law' encompasses the entire Old Testament Scripture (Jews divided Scripture into Law, Prophets, Writings). These prophesied—pointed forward—anticipating Messiah's coming. 'Until John' (ἕως Ἰωάννου/heōs Iōannou) marks him as the last Old Testament prophet, the final voice of the old covenant. John stands at the hinge of redemptive history: he belongs to the old era chronologically but announces the new era's arrival. His message was the last preview; after him comes the fulfillment—Jesus Christ. Reformed theology emphasizes this redemptive-historical progression: the Old Testament prepared for Christ; He is its goal and fulfillment (Romans 10:4). Everything in the law and prophets pointed to Him, and in Him they find their meaning. This doesn't devalue the Old Testament but establishes its proper role: temporary pointer to permanent reality, shadow to substance, promise to fulfillment.

Historical Context

From Moses (circa 1400 BC) through Malachi (circa 450 BC), prophets spoke God's Word to Israel—predicting Messiah, calling to repentance, explaining covenant. After Malachi, Israel experienced 400 'silent years' without recognized prophetic voice. Then John appeared, clothed like Elijah, speaking with prophetic authority—and crowds recognized him as prophet (Matthew 21:26). But John's message differed: previous prophets said 'Messiah will come'; John said 'He's here.' Jesus's statement that John concluded the prophetic era was revolutionary:

it meant the long-anticipated age had dawned. For first-century Jews steeped in Old Testament hope, this was momentous. It also had practical implications: the ceremonial law, temple system, and old covenant structures that 'prophesied' through types and shadows were now obsolete (Hebrews 8:13). Early church controversies (Acts 15, Galatians, Hebrews) centered on this transition: how do old covenant Scriptures function now that Christ has come? The answer: they testify to Him (John 5:39) but don't bind Christians to ceremonial laws fulfilled in Christ.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does understanding the Old Testament as pointing to Christ change how you read it?
2. What does it mean practically that the law and prophets 'prophesied until John'—what changed after John?
3. How do you avoid the error of either dismissing the Old Testament or failing to see its fulfillment in Christ?

Interlinear Text

πάντες	γὰρ	οἱ	προφῆται	καὶ	ὁ	νόμος	ἕως	Ἰωάννου
all	For	G3588	the prophets	and	G3588	the law	until	John
G3956	G1063		G4396	G2532		G3551	G2193	G2491

προεφήτευσαν·
prophesied
G4395

Additional Cross-References

Romans 3:21 (Word): But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;

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