

The Necessity of the Simultaneous Passing of the Law with The Fulfilling of the Promised Inheritance (Part I)

When it comes to questions about "the Law," we usually think of Paul's query: "What purpose does the Law serve?" Permit me to make an observation and ask my own question:

For my observation, notice that Paul phrased his query in the present tense *twenty years after Pentecost!* And...

For my question, let me say this: I'm now convinced that we today actually need to ask the more fundamental question, "What was 'the Law' anyway?" Or better yet, "What all was involved in 'the Law' or what the first century Jew would call 'the Torah'?"

Before answering this, I feel I must share a couple of brief personal sidenotes:

I don't believe that every time we find the unqualified/unmodified phrase "the law" in the Bible that it's a reference to the Law of Moses. And I also don't believe that every time the unqualified/unmodified word "law" is found without the definite article that it's a reference to something other than the Law of Moses. In such cases...

I simply believe that the context must determine what law is under consideration, meaning that there are times when I believe this term was chosen to represent (1) the Law of Moses, or (2) something other than the Law of Moses, or (3) law in general —including the Law of Moses. And...

Since the English term "law" is found 523 times in the King James version of the Bible, we obviously don't have time to discuss the context of every instance. So...

Let's just answer *our* question for today: "What was involved in the Law, the Judaic Law, the Torah (or even 'Torah' without the article)?"

Let's hear from a couple of rabbis first.

In answer to the question, "What Is Torah?," one Rabbi Ephraim wrote, "The word 'Torah' shares the same grammatical root as the word 'morah' which is an instructor or a teacher. Therefore 'Torah' is a set of instructions or teachings..." He said that to the Jew, in its most generic sense, the Torah included the Prophets as well as the Pentateuch; in fact, he wrote that "the prophets ... contain many *laws* [emp. mine] and prophecies" (JewishAnswers.org). So just as the Prophets contain laws, the Torah contains prophecies.

In answer to the same question, "What Is Torah?," one Rabbi David Hargis wrote, "When Torah is mentioned, it's most often associated with the Torah of Moses, meaning the Torah or teaching which God gave to Israel in the wilderness. However, YHVH uses the word *Torah* to signify His instructions [or laws] throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, including the Prophets and the Psalms. Since all of His Word is His teaching, all of it is His Torah" (Messianic.com). Thus...

Generically Jews consider the Torah or the Law to involve all the Old Covenant Scriptures, but specifically they consider the Torah or the Law to be only the Pentateuch (which, btw, means "five books"); i.e., it depends on context. So...

This explains why there are times when the phrase "the law and the prophets" was used in reference to the entirety of Hebrew Scripture, while at other times the abbreviated form, "the Law," was used instead. (This is a figure of speech called a "synecdoche" in which someone names a part of something in order to bring to mind the whole of it).

A perfect example of this is found in Jesus' own words in Matthew 5:17-18: "Don't think that I came to destroy THE LAW OR THE PROPHETS. I didn't come to destroy, but to fulfill. For assuredly I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from THE LAW till all is fulfilled." Ya know...

One would think that if someone's talking about fulfilling something, he'd emphasize the prophets in which we find most of the predictions, but Jesus specified/emphasized "the Law" instead. Why? Because, as F. W. Grosheide said, the shortened phrase "the Law" was a "Jewish designation" for "the Old Testament"; i.e., as I said a moment ago, "the Law" was a synecdoche (an all-inclusive phrase) for the entirety of Hebrew Scripture. Anyway, back to the rabbis from whom we quoted...

Besides Jesus' statement in Matthew 5, are there any other passages which support how these rabbis replied to the question, "What was the Law"? Or "What made up the Law?" I think so.

Let's hear from a couple inspired writers and speakers who indicate that, to first century Jews, "the Law" was comprised of more than just *mitzvot*—the 613 laws found in the Pentateuch; it also, according to Jesus, included narratives (Mat. 12:5) as well as mere informative statements (John 10:34). But, pertinent to our study today,...

I think we should again hear from Jesus first: In Matthew 11:13 He said that "all the prophets *and the law prophesied* until John [the Immerser]." Let's note a couple of critical issues about this statement:

Firstly, of this statement in general, consider this question: If some can use Colossians 2:14 to "prove" the Law ended at the cross, why can't I use *this* verse?

Secondly, remembering that Matthew's Gospel account was written to Jews, note that he didn't quote Jesus as saying, "The Law and the Prophets prophesied," though his audience, no doubt, would've understood that just as well, especially since that's the way Luke stated it in 16:16 of his Gospel account. No, rather than the usual "Law and the Prophets,"...

Inspired Matthew quoted Jesus as saying, "The Prophets and the Law prophesied," all the more emphasizing by sentence structure that "the Law," as well as the prophets, prophesied. Why? Because we're grammatically permitted to extract from this statement simply that "the Law prophesied." However...

Thirdly, let's consider what one prominent amil said about this verse as well as what another prominent amil said about the related statement in 5:17-18.

Harold Fowler in his College Press commentary said, "'The days of John the Baptist' are no longer a period of 'prophesying' ... of great events in the distant future, because John's appearance ushered in a transition period of announcement of the near arrival of the Kingdom of God itself. [The phrase] 'Until John' ... marks a definite end ["consummation"?] to this function [of prophecy], inasmuch as that for which all the prophets and the law had made preparation has now begun to arrive." Two Questions, Harold:

1. If "the days of John" weren't about prophesying of great events in the distant future, then what does that say of John's preaching in Matthew 3:11f concerning judgment & baptism of fire? (BTW, Fowler placed that in *our* future—very distant from the time of John, I'd say!) And...
2. If the things for which "all the prophets and the Law had made preparation" were being fulfilled in John's not distant future, then what about those Old Covenant prophecies concerning the resurrection (e.g. Dan. 12, et.al.)? Furthermore...

David Brown in his Denton Lectureship comments on Matthew 5:17f said, "The Mosaic dispensation would continue until all things predicted by the prophets were fulfilled." Notice: (A) Unless he meant to include Moses, he left out that Jesus included "the Law," making us wonder why. And (B) again I ask, "What about those Old Covenant prophecies concerning the resurrection?" I.e., is the Mosaic dispensation still extant because the resurrection prophecies have yet to be fulfilled? No, we—as I myself have had to do—just need to work a little on consistency of interpretation.

In First Corinthians 14:21 Paul, *quoting from Isaiah 28:11*, said, "In the Law it is written: 'With men of other tongues and other lips I will speak to this people....'"

Listen to these quotes about this verse in commentaries by members of the churches of Christ first.

J. W. McGarvey on this verse said that "The Old Testament generally is often called 'the Law' by New Testament writers." David Lipscomb on this verse said that "The whole of the Old Testament Scripture is called 'the Law.'" Jim McGuiggan, who debated Max King over preterist eschatology ... denying its validity, of course ... said on this verse that "The Law is the Old Testament." Mike Willis said on this verse that "Paul used the word 'Law' to refer to the entire Old Testament in this verse." Mark Bailey said on this verse that "The 'Law' refers to the Old Testament." In fact...

Every church of Christ commentator I read, who had anything at all to say about the first part of the verse, agreed that the entirety of Old Testament Scripture is represented by the phrase "the Law," meaning that when Jesus said that not one jot or tittle would pass from the Law until it was all fulfilled *necessitates* that the Law could NOT end or pass away until all the jots and tittles of all Hebrew Scripture were fulfilled! So...

It seems that the only time folks deny what all was meant by the Law in such passages as Matthew 5:17f is when we discuss preterist eschatology!

Other commentators outside the churches of Christ said such things as this:

The renowned C. K. Barrett wrote that the "*law* here is used, not for the Pentateuch alone, but for the Old Testament generally."

R. H. Lenksi, Leon Morris, F. W. Grosheide, Robertson & Plummer, as well as the 19th Century Charles Hodge all held that the "the Law" here (as well as in other similar passages that we'll touch on momentarily) refers to the Old Testament Scriptures in general. By the way, the church father known as Origen attested in the AD 200s to this as well in his *Philocalia* (9:2).

I also found it interesting that one Johann Caspar Suicer {pron. Schweitzer} wrote a two-volume set called *Ecclesiastical Thesaurus of the Writings of the Greek Fathers* in the 1600s in which he claimed that the patristics even continued to employ the phrase "the Law" as a phrase representing all of the Old Testament (vol. 2, p. 419). So...

According the Bible itself (Mat. 11:13 & 1 Cor. 14:21), we've learned that (unless it's otherwise qualified) the phrase "the Law" signifies the *entire* Old Covenant Scriptures *and* that even the first five books included *prophecies* ... prophecies that Jesus declared had to be fulfilled before that "Law" could pass. Now, with that established, allow me to share a couple important implications.

Firstly, FOR SOMETHING (e.g. a covenant, will, or testament) TO BE "FULFILLED" (as Jesus said of "the Law" in Mat. 5:18), THERE MUST COME A SPECIFIC POINT IN TIME AT WHICH ONE CAN ACCURATELY STATE OF THAT SOMETHING—in this case "the Law," the *entirety* of Hebrew Scripture—THAT "EVERY SINGLE PORTION OF THIS COVENANT, WILL, OR TESTAMENT {—"the Law"—} HAS BEEN EXECUTED." So ... *the obvious implication is that one cannot accurately say it has been fulfilled if "every single portion" of it has NOT been executed, regardless at which point the execution of each "single portion" occurred!* And this leads into my next implication.

Secondly, because Colossians 2 has become somewhat of a sore spot, even among prets, I feel I must emphasize here that, as we're preparing to get into, the Pentateuch—that which included *mitzvot* (Col. 2 sorta stuff)—was loaded with prophecies of various types, meaning that even it (specifically in this context, "the Law" proper) couldn't be considered fulfilled until *all* of its jots and tittles had been executed! So movin' on...

What are the five leading essentials that "the Law" is said to have prophesied?

Firstly, the coming of the Messiah was said to have been foretold in "the Law."

After His resurrection, Jesus approached some men on the road to Emmaus, and we're told *this* in Luke 24:27: "Beginning at Moses [i.e. the Pentateuch] *and* all the Prophets, He expounded to them in *all* the Scriptures [the Pentateuch and the Prophets] the things concerning Himself."

Then later in verse 44 we're told that Jesus said to His disciples, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me."

Philip said to Nathanael, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law ... wrote—Jesus of Nazareth" (John 1:45); and later Jesus said to some Jews, "If you believed Moses, you'd believe Me, for he wrote about Me" (5:46). One more passage, this time about Paul:

Luke said that "many came to him ... to whom he explained and solemnly testified..., persuading them concerning Jesus from ... the Law of Moses and the Prophets" (Acts 28:23). Now what in the Law of Moses might he have referenced?

He could've referenced Deuteronomy 18:18 where God prophesied of the Messiah to Moses, saying, "I will raise up ... a Prophet like you ... and will put My words in His mouth...." Or..

He could've referenced Genesis, which, although it doesn't have much in the way of "laws," it, just as Deuteronomy, is indisputably part of "The Five"—the Pentateuch—and therefore part of "the Law"—the Law of Moses.

Genesis 3:15 has God prophesying to the serpent that He, through the woman the serpent deceived, would raise up a Messiah who would crush him.

Genesis 22:18 has God prophesying to Abraham that the Messiah, the One who would bless the world, would come through his lineage. And...

Genesis 49:10 has Jacob prophesying to his sons that the Messiah would come through the lineage of Judah. By the way...

Regardless of who folks want to say wrote the various portions of the Pentateuch, they're ascribed by Jesus and inspired writers *to Moses*—they're the five books of *Moses*. Now, more generically of the Old Covenant Scriptures, i.e., moving on from the first part of the Old Covenant to the middle and the end...

To His apostles about what they should expect, Jesus said, "This happened that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law [actually Psa. 69:4], "They hated Me without a cause"" (John 15:25). Lastly...

Some Jews said to Jesus, "We've heard from the Law [actually Mic. 4:7] that the Christ remains forever" (John 12:34).

Secondly, the coming of judgment was taught to have been foretold in "the Law."

Although there isn't a statement in the New Covenant Scriptures which employs the exact phrase "the Law" in reference to predicted judgment, surely no one can doubt that when someone quoted from Moses, he was quoting from "the Law"! Right? Well...

We have that very thing done by Peter in Acts 3:22-23: "Moses truly said to the fathers, "The Lord Your God will raise up for you a Prophet, ... and ... every soul who will not hear *that* Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among"" you. So...

Where did Peter get this? From Deuteronomy 18:18-19. I alluded to it previously in regard to a prophecy of the Messiah (v. 18), but Peter took it slightly further by quoting what the Messiah would do; viz., not only would He be a Messiah, but He'd also be a Judge ... a Messiah for some, a Magistrate for others. Closely associated with this is the next leading prophecy to be fulfilled:

Thirdly, the coming of true righteousness was said to have been foretold in "the Law."

Why did I say this one's closely associated with judgment? Because the Lord plainly stated to Jeremiah, "In those days ... I will cause a righteous Branch ... to execute justice *and* righteousness in the land" (33:15, ESV). Now to the New Covenant...

When Paul began his treatise to the Christians in Rome, his thesis statement was that "the righteousness of God is revealed" (1:17); then later in 3:21 he wrote, "Now the righteousness of God apart from the Law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets."

And who, in the next chapter, did Paul choose as his primary Old Testament example concerning this righteousness? Abraham, of course! And in what part of the Old Covenant Scriptures is Abraham to be found? That's right—the Pentateuch or the Law of Moses! So, as Paul said, "the Law" witnessed concerning the righteousness of God which was to be revealed in Christ. Again, closely associated with this is the next leading and essential prophecy:

Fourthly, the coming of the Kingdom was said to have been foretold in "the Law."

To Isaiah the Lord plainly stated about the Messiah that "of the increase of His government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over His *kingdom*, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with *righteousness* from this time forth and forevermore" (9:7, ESV). Did ya catch the connection between the prophesied kingdom and righteousness? Now to the New Covenant...

Back to Paul in Acts 28:23, it states that to many "he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them ... from the Law of Moses...." So...

What in "the Law of Moses" might he have referenced to prove this? How 'bout we return to Genesis 49:10, adding verse 1 to it this time: "Jacob (Israel) called his sons and said, 'Gather together that I may tell you what shall befall you in *the last days*.... [After citing a few unpleasant matters, he said that] The scepter [a symbol of kingship, thus *a kingdom*] shall not depart from Judah [the *kingly* tribe] ... until Shiloh comes; and to Him shall be the obedience of the people." [BTW, Shiloh means Apostle-Messiah, cf. Heb. 3:1.] Once more, closely associated with the pure righteousness to be found in the kingdom, is the next and last of these five prophecies:

Fifthly, the resurrection of the saints was taught to have been foretold in "the Law."

Why did I say this one's closely associated with true righteousness? Because Paul could make it no clearer than he did in Romans 6 that the saints were to be resurrected to righteousness (esp. in vv. 8-13).

In his defense before Felix, Paul said that he believed "all things ... written in the Law and in the Prophets. I have hope in God [he said], which they themselves [i.e. his Jewish accusers] also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead" (Acts 24:14b-15a). Interestingly...

In the Greek there's a much closer connection between these two sentences; in the original Paul said something more like this: I believe "all the things according to the Law as well as [all] the things having been written in the Prophets, *having* a hope in God which they themselves are also accepting of, viz. a resurrection in the about-to-be [or imminent] future." I.e....

The time for the resurrection that they had been desiring to see for 40 generations had finally arrived—IT WAS COMING TO PASS IN *THEIR* GENERATION—right around the corner, as it were. NOW... {besides perhaps Deu. 30}

Altho the simplest place for Paul to have referenced in the Old Testament concerning the resurrection of the saints would've been, of course, Daniel 12, the question is, "Where in the Pentateuch might he have gone to reference resurrection?" Well think about this: Not only did he discuss resurrection in connection with Abraham in Romans 4 & Hebrews 11, and not only did he discuss it in connection with Adam in First Corinthians 15 and Romans 5 & 6—IN THE CONTEXT OF WHICH HE MADE A CONNECTION BETWEEN *BAPTISM INTO CHRIST* AND RESURRECTION, but he also obviously meant for the audience of First Corinthians 10:1-4 to infer a resurrection-connection in the Red Sea *baptism into Moses*. Without the resurrection of the saints to righteousness, there would, of course, be no Messianic kingdom. So, yes...

All five of these essential prophecies may be found in "the Prophets" portion of "the Law," but I demonstrated their initial existence within the Pentateuch portion of "the Law" because of how I plan to apply them in my next speech concerning their relationship to the inheritance and because of the present dissension over whether or not ALL the Old Covenant Scriptures had to be fulfilled in order for the Law to pass, something I'm convinced was crucial since God apparently expected *all five* of these elements from the Pentateuch to be fulfilled. Now let's expand on this by asking...

What literary forms did "the Law" employ to prophesy these things? Well...

Firstly and obviously, the Law prophesied by/in plain language.

When Jacob prophesied of the coming of Israel's Messiah through his lineage, he made this clear statement: "The scepter shall not depart from Judah ... until Shiloh comes" or perhaps more literally, "The scepter shall not depart from Judah until his promised Seed comes" (cf. *Young's Literal Translation* on Gen. 49:10).

In Deuteronomy 18:15 & 18 (an undisputed part of the Law of Moses and therefore in part to what Jesus referred in Luke 24:44) we read these clear statements: Moses said to the people of Israel that "The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear..." Then Moses quoted God directly as saying to him, "I will raise up for [the Israelites] a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and I will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him."

Secondly, the Law prophesied by the use of, what I like to call, prediction depiction (aka shadows/types of the Law). Now...

While a "shadow" is "the image cast opposite the side of an object in the path of light," a "type" is "an imprint or impression left by the blow of something solid (aka its anti-type)," thus the name "type-writer." (BTW, I've discovered no difference in the Bible's usage of types/shadows.) Before going on to a couple examples...

There are two important issues to remember:

No. 1: Just as in any figurative language such as parables, one must be extremely careful to avoid construing a shadow/type further than it was intended to be construed; for example, yes, we might see king Jesus portraying king Herod as casting the shadow of a fox (Luke 13:32), but to assume Jesus meant that Herod was a shadow/type of a fox in every aspect of his entire life would be to insult the fox. And...

No. 2: The most important issue to remember about shadow and type is answered by this rhetorical question: With the fact in mind that a shadow and a type cannot exist (from a literal perspective, of course) without a solid object, which is more vital—the shadow and type or the object that casts the shadow and prints the type? Obviously the object is the most critical thing. And...

Paul taught this very axiom: Around AD 62 in Colossians chapter two, when speaking about things related to the Law, he said in verse 17 that they're "a shadow of the things about to come" and that "the substance [casting that shadow] is of Christ." Likewise, about a year later in Hebrews chapter 9, again with things of the Law in mind, Paul wrote in verse 23 that they're merely "copies of ... heavenly things" (cf. 10:1-4). So as we consider this...

**It shouldn't be at all difficult to understand/acknowledge that temporal signs in the Bible always signify things greater than themselves: things spiritual, things eternal!* By the way, allow me to express the obvious:

As Paul indicated in Colossians chapter 2, prefigurements were expected by God to be phased out; otherwise, as verse 17 teaches, to not phase them out is to deny that God has fulfilled them. And, even if it isn't our intent to express that, what sort of statement are we conveying to others when we insist on continuing to observe types/shadows? Anyway...

Here are a couple examples of "the Law" prophesying in this shadow/type manner (a couple is literally all we have time for).

We actually just introduced one example a moment ago: In the Law—Deuteronomy 18 (by the way, the "nomy" part is the original Greek word for "law") we find where God told Moses that He was going to raise up a Prophet *like him*, making Moses a type/shadow of the Messiah; and this was later confirmed by Stephen in Acts 7 as well as by Peter in Acts 3 (not to mention Matthew in chapters 1 & 2 and perhaps even Paul in Hebrews 3:2).

Even Genesis (the indisputable foundation of the Pentateuch), though it doesn't have much in the way of laws, *predicted* numerous events by means of animate and inanimate *depictions*. We already touched on the significance of "Shiloh" in Genesis 49:10, so let's just allude to one other shadow: Adam was clearly a type of Christ, for around AD 57 in Romans 5:14 Paul originally wrote that "Adam ... is a type of the One about to come"; then in First Corinthians 15 he elaborated on this idea in verses 22 & 45. Well...

I'd love to have spent more time on all this, but we just don't have it; besides, as I already said, this talk is mainly just a springboard for my next/more exciting one. So...

Let Me Summarize:

Especially in context of our subject-matter today, what was "the Law" according to biblical teaching? I.e., exactly what was involved in or comprised "the Law"? Answer: The Entirety of Old Covenant Scripture—sometimes called "the Law and the Prophets" (or even "the Prophets and the Law"), sometimes called "the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms," and of course most times merely called "the Law," all of which, of course, means that not only did "the Prophets" prophesy, but "the Law" also prophesied, whether it be in types and shadows or in plain language. In those ways...

The Law prophesied of the most significant and essential facets of eschatology: (1) the arrival of the Messiah who'd (2) execute judgment and (3) resurrect His saints to (4) perfected righteousness in His (5) newly established kingdom. So...

Since in Matthew 5:18 Jesus, who came to end/consummate the Law & the Prophets, said, per *The New Century Version*, that "not the smallest letter [the jot] or even the smallest part of a letter [the tittle] will be lost [from the Law] until everything has happened," and since surely everyone agrees that such events as the judgment and the resurrection of the saints are much more significant than a mere jot or tittle, then it would seem to be a logical impossibility to say that the Law passed before those things occurred! Now...

If you are a preterist and still have doubts if ALL the Hebrew Scriptures had to be fulfilled before the Law could pass away (i.e., if you still have doubts that the Law didn't pass until AD 70 instead of at the cross), then consider the following:

Firstly, speaking of the passing of the old heavens and earth, Peter said that "the elements" were going to be destroyed. So if you believe "the elements" was a phrase representing Old Covenant things (and you should since that's the way it's always used), then consider reconciling Second Peter 3:10-13 with the Law passing away at AD 30.

Secondly, speaking of the things related to the Law, Paul said that those things (even Colossians chapter 2 type things) were "imposed until the time of the reformation." So if you believe the reformation occurred at AD 70 (and you should), then consider reconciling Hebrews 9:6-10 with the Law passing away at AD 30. And...

Lastly, speaking of the Law again, Paul said to one group, "you ... have become dead to the Law through [or by virtue of] the body of Christ." So, unless you believe "the Law" here is something different than the Old Covenant Scripture (and you shouldn't), then consider reconciling Romans 7:4 with the Law passing away at AD 30.

[Tony E. Denton for the 2011 Preterist Pilgrim Weekend seminar in Ardmore, OK.]