

We are looking through the great gospel history of Luke and considering a most important time in all of recorded and religious history. Luke introduced his readers the two of the most important characters in all of the Bible history, OT and NT. They were living at the same time and as Paul states the fullness of time, the right time. One of them of course was Jesus, God's only begotten Son, the most important character in all of God's creative history and the other is John the Baptist. Paul writes in Galatians 4, *But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. Gal 4:4,5* This was that time, *God sent forth His Son*. Jesus, who was *born under the law*, He was born at the end of the Old Covenant period and was about to usher in a New Covenant (*the new covenant in my blood 1 Cor 11:25*), the era of the Church, the Ekklesiá (from ek, "out from and to" and kaléō, "to call") – a people called out from the world and to God.

God was closing out one covenant (OT) and in Jesus establishing a new one (NT). Jesus by His sacrifice on the cross, for Adam's sin, was establishing a new way for man to stand righteous before God, by faith. This was not new as Paul wrote in Romans 4, *For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." Rom 4:3* Paul was quoting Genesis 15:6. Man could never be justified by works. That is the point of the Old Covenant, having the Law of Moses the Jews had sought to establish their own righteousness, as if they could make themselves right with God through keeping the Law and offering sacrifices in the temple (works) and not by faith. To this Paul wrote,

*knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. Gal 2:16*

*David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, And whose sins are covered; Blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin." Rom 4:6-8*

Jesus was about establishing a new covenant in His blood *Luke 22:20* (by His shedding His life for sin on the cross). Of this new way to be righteous before God John wrote, *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9* and then believer receive the power to live godly by the divine power of the Holy Spirit (*By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence. 2 Peter 1:3 NLT*). The new covenant believer is not under the OT Law as the Jews were, but under God's provision of grace, living *according to the Spirit*.

*1 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. 3 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. Rom 8:1-4*

So let now consider this other major figure, John the Baptist. Of him Jesus stated, *Assuredly, I*

*say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. He was born and lived under the old covenant. Paul wrote to Christians in Roman, many of Jewish heritage, What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God. Rom 3:1,2 The Jewish people had the oracles of God (divine responses or utterances (it can include the entire Old Testament)). John had the Law and the Prophets, the heritage of being the children of God, God's chosen people and heirs the the coming Messiah. But John only had repentance from dead works, he didn't have Jesus blood to cover sin or the Holy Spirit that would enable believers to live godly. He came baptizing with water, he came to prepare the way.*

God promised this redeemer to His people Israel. The prophet Isaiah proclaimed, *"Fear not, you worm Jacob, You men of Israel! I will help you," says the Lord And your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. Is 41:14 The Psalms declare, You have with Your arm redeemed Your people, The sons of Jacob and Joseph. Ps 77:15 Job declares the Redeemer lives and will stand on the earth, For I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth. Job 19:25*

The Jewish nation had been given God's Law, the standard of right and wrong but had failed as they attempted to live it. Judaism considers Malachi to be the last of the biblical prophets. After the Babylonian captivity Israel came back to their land and in the period of Ezra and Nehemiah they rebuilt the city of Jerusalem and the Temple. The prophet Malachi (my messenger) was 400 years intertestamental period came after the prophet Malachi (my messenger). His message was,

*34"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing! 35See! Your house is left to you desolate; and [k]assuredly, I say to you, you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!' " Luke 13:34*

*7So he was saying to the crowds who were going out to be baptized by him, "You offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8Therefore produce fruits that are consistent with repentance, and do not start saying to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,' for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children for Abraham. 9But indeed the axe is already being laid at the root of the trees; so every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."*

Jesus the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. He was bringing in the NT, John was closing out the OT.

An angel of the Lord had spoken to Joseph, *"Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."* Matt 1:20,21 His name was to be Jesus (*"Yehoshua"/Jehoshua, contracted to "Joshua"*) which means *"Yahweh saves"* (or *"Yahweh is salvation"*) He was, Emanuel, God's only begotten Son come in the flesh and He had come into the world to be God's deliverer, the Messiah, *"Yahweh saves"*. God had worked through the Jewish nation from Abraham to this time when He sent *His only begotten Son*, the Messiah to them. John wrote, *He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.* God in Christ was beginning a new work (a New Covenant) and yet at the same time God was drawing to a close the period of period of the OT, the time of the Law and the Prophets.

We live in the time of Grace.