

John 1:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me.

Analysis

John the Baptist's testimony creates a temporal paradox: 'He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me.' Jesus was born six months after John (Luke 1:26) and began ministry later, yet John declares Jesus existed 'before' him. The Greek 'protos mou en' (was first/before me) asserts Christ's pre-existence. John's ministry chronologically preceded Jesus' public ministry, yet ontologically, Christ eternally precedes John. This testimony from the forerunner establishes Christ's eternal nature.

Historical Context

John the Baptist was immensely popular, drawing crowds from throughout Judea and beyond. His endorsement of Jesus as eternally superior carried significant weight. John's disciples formed part of Jesus' earliest following (John 1:35-40). This verse appears again in John 1:30, emphasizing its importance—the greatest prophet of the old covenant recognizes Christ's absolute supremacy.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does John's willingness to point beyond himself to Christ model Christian ministry?
2. What does Christ's pre-existence mean for understanding His divine nature?

Interlinear Text

Ἰωάννης μαρτυρεῖ περὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ κέκραγεν λέγων,

John bare witness of him and cried saying

G2491 G3140 G4012 G846 G2532 G2896 G3004

Οὗτος ἦν ὅν εἶπον Ὁ ὡπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος

This he was of whom I spoke after me He that cometh

G3778 G2258 G3739 G2036 G3588 G3694 G3450 G2064

ἔμπροσθέν μου γέγονεν ὅτι πρῶτος μου ἦν

before me is preferred for before me he was

G1715 G3450 G1096 G3754 G4413 G3450 G2258

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 3:11 (Parallel theme): I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire:

Colossians 1:17 (Parallel theme): And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

Micah 5:2 (Parallel theme): But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

John 17:5 (Parallel theme): And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

Luke 3:16 (References John): John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire:

Hebrews 13:8 (Parallel theme): Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.

Isaiah 9:6 (Parallel theme): For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

John 8:58 (Parallel theme): Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.

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