

John 1:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No.

Analysis

The interrogators probe whether John fulfills prophecies of Elijah's return (Malachi 4:5) or 'the prophet' like Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15). John's denials show that while he came in Elijah's spirit (Luke 1:17), he is not literally Elijah reincarnated. This reflects Reformed hermeneutics: prophecy finds its ultimate fulfillment in Christ, not in preliminary figures.

Historical Context

Jewish messianic expectations included multiple figures: the Messiah, Elijah redivivus, and the prophet like Moses. This questioning reveals the complex eschatological landscape of Second Temple Judaism.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How do we distinguish between partial fulfillments and ultimate fulfillments of biblical prophecy?

2. What does this teach about the humility required when people assign us undeserved titles or roles?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	ἠρώτησαν	αὐτόν	Τί	οὖν	Ἑλίας	εἶ	σύ	καὶ	
And	they asked	him	What	then	Elias	Art	thou	And	
G2532	G2065	G846	G5101	G3767	G2243	G1488	G4771	G2532	
λέγει	Οὐ	εἰμί	Ὁ	προφήτης	εἶ	σύ	καὶ	ἀπεκρίθη	Οὐ
he saith	No	I am	G3588	that prophet	Art	thou	And	he answered	No
G3004	G3756	G1510		G4396	G1488	G4771	G2532	G611	G3756

Additional Cross-References

Malachi 4:5 (Prophecy): Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:

Matthew 11:14 (Parallel theme): And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come.

John 1:25 (Prophecy): And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?

Matthew 16:14 (Prophecy): And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.

John 7:40 (Prophecy): Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet.

Luke 1:17 (Parallel theme): And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.