

John 1:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.

Analysis

The emphatic negative 'ouk en ekeinos to phos' (He was NOT that Light) guards against elevating John too highly. The Baptist had significant following; some even wondered if he was the Messiah (Luke 3:15). John's role was to 'bear witness of that Light' (hina martyrese peri tou photos). The distinction between Christ and His witnesses remains crucial—no matter how powerful the preacher, the message always transcends the messenger. True ministers decrease that Christ might increase (John 3:30).

Historical Context

Archaeological and literary evidence suggests John the Baptist had a substantial movement. Some of his disciples later became Jesus' followers (John 1:35-40), but others continued following John's teaching into the Book of Acts era (Acts 19:1-7). This verse corrects any tendency to venerate the messenger above the Messiah.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How do contemporary Christians sometimes elevate messengers above the message of Christ?
2. What does true humility in ministry look like according to John's example?

Interlinear Text

οὐκ	ἦν	ἐκεῖνος	τὸ	φωτός	ἀλλ'	ἵνα	μαρτυρήσῃ
not	He was	that	G3588	Light	but	was sent to	bear witness
G3756	G2258	G1565		G5457	G235	G2443	G3140

περὶ τοῦ φωτός

of	G3588	Light
G4012		G5457

Additional Cross-References

John 1:20 (Parallel theme): And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.

Acts 19:4 (Parallel theme): Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.

John 3:28 (Witness): Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him.