

Luke 1:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.

Analysis

John's ministry to 'turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God' describes the work of true prophetic ministry—calling God's people back to covenant faithfulness. The word 'epistrephei' (turn) indicates repentance, a fundamental change of direction. Not all Israel would turn (hence 'many,' not 'all'), anticipating the reality of both believing and unbelieving Israel. From a Reformed perspective, this demonstrates effectual calling—John's preaching would effectively turn many whom God had chosen, while others would reject the message, fulfilling divine sovereignty in salvation.

Historical Context

First-century Judaism had strayed into legalism and ritualism, losing sight of heartfelt devotion to God. John's prophetic call to repentance addressed both moral corruption and spiritual complacency, preparing hearts for Messiah's coming.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. What does it mean to truly 'turn to the Lord' versus merely religious practice?
2. How does John's ministry of turning people to God prepare for Christ's gospel?
3. Why does even powerful preaching only turn 'many' rather than all people?

Interlinear Text

καὶ πολλοὶ τῶν νήπων Ἰσραὴλ ἐπιστρέψει ἐπὶ¹
And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to

κύριον τὸν θεὸν αὐτῶν
the Lord God their

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 21:32 (Parallel theme): For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.

Daniel 12:3 (Parallel theme): And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.

Isaiah 49:6 (References Israel): And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

Luke 1:76 (References Lord): And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways;

Malachi 3:1 (References Lord): Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.

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