

Luke 1:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

John would go before the Lord 'in the spirit and power of Elijah' to turn hearts. This explicitly identifies John as the prophesied Elijah figure from Malachi 4:5-6, who would prepare the way for the Messiah. The 'spirit and power' (Greek 'pneumati kai dynamei,' πνεύματι καὶ δυνάμει) refers not to Elijah's reincarnation but to the same Holy Spirit anointing and prophetic authority. The mission involves reconciliation—'turn the hearts of the fathers to the children'—restoring covenant relationships broken by sin and preparing a people spiritually ready for the Lord's coming.

Historical Context

Malachi's prophecy (Malachi 4:5-6) was the last word of Old Testament prophecy, promising Elijah's return before 'the great and dreadful day of the LORD.' Jewish expectation of Elijah's return was widespread in the first century. John's desert lifestyle, prophetic preaching, and call to repentance consciously embodied Elijah's ministry pattern. Jesus later explicitly identified John as the promised Elijah (Matthew 11:14, 17:12-13), though John himself denied being Elijah personally (John 1:21), understanding his role as fulfilling Elijah's function rather than being Elijah himself.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does John's ministry 'in the spirit and power of Elijah' fulfill Old Testament prophecy while establishing New Testament realities?
2. What does the emphasis on turning fathers' hearts to children suggest about the spiritual preparation needed for receiving the Messiah?

Interlinear Text

καὶ αὐτοῦ προελεύσεται ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ ἐν πνεύματι
And he shall go before he in the spirit
G2532 G846 G4281 G1799 G846 G1722 G4151

καὶ δυνάμει Ἡλίου ἐπιστρέψαι καρδίας πατέρων ἐπὶ
And power of Elias to turn the hearts of the fathers to
G2532 G1411 G2243 G1994 G2588 G3962 G1909

τέκνα καὶ ἀπειθεῖς ἐν φρονήσει δικαίων ἐτοιμάσαι
the children And the disobedient in the wisdom of the just to make ready
G5043 G2532 G545 G1722 G5428 G1342 G2090

κυρίῳ λαὸν κατεσκευασμένον
for the Lord a people prepared
G2962 G2992 G2680

Additional Cross-References

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

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;

Psalms 78:8 (Spirit): And might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not stedfast with God.

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

1 Chronicles 29:18 (References Lord): O LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people, and prepare their heart unto thee:

Revelation 20:4 (Parallel theme): And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

Colossians 1:12 (Parallel theme): Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:

Psalms 111:10 (References Lord): The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever.

1 Peter 2:9 (Parallel theme): But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

Isaiah 29:24 (Spirit): They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine.