

Mark 6:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Others said, That it is Elias. And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets.

Analysis

Others said, That it is Elias. And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets. Popular speculation about Jesus' identity reveals widespread recognition of His prophetic authority yet fundamental misunderstanding of His true nature. 'It is Elias' (Ἠλίας ἐστίν, *Ēlias estin*) identified Jesus with Elijah, whom Malachi 4:5 promised would return before the Messiah. Some genuinely believed Jesus was Elijah reappeared. 'It is a prophet, or as one of the prophets' (προφήτης ἐστίν ὡς εἷς τῶν προφητῶν, *prophētēs estin hōs heis tōn prophētōn*) categorized Him among Old Testament prophetic tradition—high honor but inadequate. All these identifications, while respectful, fell short of truth: Jesus wasn't merely a prophet or Elijah returned but the eternal Son of God incarnate. This pattern continues—many honor Jesus as great teacher, moral example, or inspired prophet while rejecting His deity and unique saviorhood. Inadequate Christology always leads to inadequate soteriology—if Jesus is merely a prophet, He cannot save. Reformed theology insists on Christ's full deity and humanity: He is God the Son incarnate, not merely a great man or inspired teacher.

Historical Context

First-century Jewish messianic expectation included various prophetic figures. Deuteronomy 18:15-18 promised a prophet like Moses, widely interpreted messianically. Malachi 4:5 promised Elijah's return before the Day of the Lord. Some expected multiple figures: a prophetic forerunner, a priestly Messiah, and a kingly Messiah (Dead Sea Scrolls reflect this). The speculation about Jesus'

identity shows He didn't fit expected categories—His ministry combined prophetic authority, priestly compassion, and royal claims but in unexpected ways. The comparison to 'one of the prophets' acknowledged His legitimacy within Israel's prophetic tradition but failed to recognize His uniqueness as final revelation (Hebrews 1:1-2). Josephus records other first-century prophetic figures who gathered followings—John the Baptist, Theudas, the Egyptian prophet—showing popular hunger for prophetic leadership. Yet all these were merely human; Jesus alone was divine. Early church councils (Nicaea, Chalcedon) defended Christ's full deity against reductionist views that made Him merely a great man or inspired prophet.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How do modern attempts to honor Jesus as great teacher or moral example while denying His deity mirror the inadequate identifications in this verse?
2. What doctrinal and practical differences result from viewing Jesus as merely a prophet versus acknowledging Him as God the Son incarnate?

Interlinear Text

ἄλλοι	ἔλεγον	ὅτι	Ἡλίας	ἐστίν·	ἄλλοι	δὲ	ἔλεγον	ὅτι
Others	said	That	Elias	it is	Others	And	said	That
G243	G3004	G3754	G2243	G2076	G243	G1161	G3004	G3754
προφητῶν	ἐστίν·	ἢ	ὥς	εἰς	τῶν	προφητῶν		
a prophet	it is	or	as	one of	G3588	a prophet		
G4396	G2076	G2228	G5613	G1520		G4396		

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 21:11 (Prophecy): And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.

Mark 8:28 (Prophecy): And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets.

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.

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

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