

Mark 8:28

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets.

Analysis

John the Baptist: but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets—The disciples report popular speculation about Jesus's identity, revealing partial recognition without full comprehension. Ιōannēn ton Baptistēn (Ιωάννην τὸν Βαπτιστήν) was suggested by Herod Antipas himself (Mark 6:14-16), perhaps from guilty conscience. Ἐλιαν (Ηλίαν, 'Elijah') reflected Malachi 4:5's promise of the forerunner, though John was actually the Elijah figure (Matthew 11:14).

The phrase *hena tōn prophētōn* (ἐνα τῶν προφητῶν, 'one of the prophets')—perhaps Jeremiah (Matthew 16:14) or another—shows people recognized Jesus's prophetic authority but not His unique status as God's Son. All three categories (Baptist, Elijah, prophet) place Jesus within known frameworks rather than recognizing Him as the unprecedented Messiah. This mirrors the blind man's partial sight in verses 22-25—they 'see' something but lack clarity. The stage is set for Peter's confession (verse 29), which advances beyond public opinion to divine revelation (Matthew 16:17).

Historical Context

Jewish messianic expectations in the first century were diverse but generally anticipated a Davidic king who would liberate Israel politically. Prophetic figures were respected but not equated with the Messiah. The suggestion of Elijah's return was rooted in Malachi's prophecy, while John the Baptist's execution by Herod created speculation about prophetic succession.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. What popular but inadequate categories do people today use to explain Jesus (good teacher, moral example, prophet)?
2. How does partial recognition of Jesus differ from saving faith? Where might you hold inadequate views of Christ?
3. Why is it significant that human speculation about Jesus's identity is consistently inadequate until divine revelation occurs?

Interlinear Text

οἱ	δὲ	ἀπεκρίθησαν,	Ἰωάννην	τὸν	βαπτιστήν	καὶ	ἄλλοι
G3588	And	they answered	John	G3588	the Baptist	and	others
G1161		G611	G2491		G910	G2532	G243
 'Ηλίαν ἄλλοι δὲ ἔνα τῶν προφητῶν							
say Elias	others	And	One	G3588	of the prophets		
G2243	G243	G1161	G1520		G4396		

Additional Cross-References

John 1:21 (Prophecy): And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No.

Matthew 14:2 (References John): And said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him.

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

