

Matthew 11:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

Analysis

Jesus quotes Scripture to identify John: 'For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.' This combines Malachi 3:1 with Exodus 23:20, applied directly to John the Baptist. The phrase 'before thy face' (πρὸ προσώπου σου/pro prosōpou sou) indicates John went immediately before Jesus, the final herald announcing the King's arrival. The verb 'prepare' (κατασκευάσει/kataskeuasei) means to make ready, to construct or repair—like preparing a road for royal procession. John's ministry prepared hearts through preaching repentance, exposing self-righteousness, and pointing to Christ. Reformed theology emphasizes this preparatory work of the law and conviction of sin precedes gospel reception. John represents this pattern: he proclaimed God's holiness, human sinfulness, coming judgment, and the need for a Savior. His baptism symbolized cleansing from sin, creating longing for the One who would baptize 'with the Holy Ghost, and with fire' (Matthew 3:11). That 'thy way' refers to Jesus demonstrates His deity—John prepared the way for Yahweh Himself.

Historical Context

Malachi 3:1, written approximately 450 BC, was the last prophetic book of the Old Testament. It predicted a messenger who would 'prepare the way before me,' looking forward to God's coming to His temple in judgment and purification. Jewish interpreters debated whether this messenger was Elijah returned (Malachi

4:5-6), an angelic being, or another prophet. Jesus identifies John as this prophesied forerunner, and elsewhere confirms John came 'in the spirit and power of Elijah' (Luke 1:17, Matthew 11:14). The dual citation—merging Malachi 3:1 with language from Exodus 23:20 (where God promised an angel to lead Israel)—emphasizes John's divine commission. By applying Malachi's 'prepare the way before me' (Yahweh speaking) to preparation for Jesus, the text implicitly affirms Jesus's deity. Early Christians used this verse extensively in evangelism to Jews, demonstrating Jesus's messianic credentials from Scripture.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does the 'preparing the way' pattern in John's ministry apply to evangelism today—what prepares hearts to receive the gospel?
2. What does Jesus's identification as the One for whom Malachi predicted a forerunner reveal about His divine identity?
3. In what ways does John's ministry demonstrate that genuine Christianity begins with conviction of sin rather than positive-thinking?

Interlinear Text

οὗτός γὰρ ἔστιν περὶ ὃς γέγραπται, Ἰδού, ἐγὼ¹
this For is he of which it is written Behold I
G3778 G1063 G2076 G4012 G3739 G1125 G2400 G1473

ἀποστέλλω τὸν ἄγγελόν μου πρὸ προσώπου σου ὃς
send messenger my before face thee which
G649 G3588 G32 G3450 G4253 G4383 G4675 G3739

κατασκευάσει τὴν ὁδόν σου ἔμπροσθέν σου
shall prepare way thee before thee
G2680 G3588 G3598 G4675 G1715 G4675

Additional Cross-References

Malachi 3:1 (Parallel theme): 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.

Isaiah 40:3 (Parallel theme): The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Mark 1:2 (Parallel theme): As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

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

John 1:23 (Parallel theme): He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.

Matthew 3:3 (Parallel theme): For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

