

Mark 1:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey;

Analysis

Mark describes John's appearance and diet, echoing Elijah's description in 2 Kings 1:8. John 'was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of skin about his loins' (ἢν δεδυμένος τρίχας καμήλου καὶ ζώνην δερματίνην)—the rough garment signaled prophetic identity and separation from society's comforts. His diet of 'locusts and wild honey' (ἀκρίδας καὶ μέλι ἄγριον) indicated ascetic lifestyle and independence from human provision. Locusts were permitted food (Leviticus 11:22) but symbolized wilderness survival, not abundance. This austere lifestyle authenticated John's prophetic calling and contrasted with religious leaders' comfort. John embodied his message—repentance requires turning from worldly comfort and security to radical dependence on God. His lifestyle fulfilled Malachi 4:5's promise of Elijah's return before the Day of the Lord.

Historical Context

Elijah wore 'a garment of haircloth, with a girdle of leather' (2 Kings 1:8)—John's attire deliberately evoked this comparison. First-century Jews expected Elijah's literal return before the Messiah (based on Malachi 4:5-6). Jesus later identified John as the prophetic fulfillment (Matthew 11:14; 17:10-13), though John himself denied being Elijah reincarnated (John 1:21). The Judean wilderness where John ministered was harsh terrain requiring hardy survival. His ascetic lifestyle contrasted sharply with Jerusalem's temple priests who enjoyed tithes and offerings, and with the Herodian court's luxury. This visible contrast authenticated John's prophetic authority.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does John's austere lifestyle challenge contemporary Christian comfort and materialism?
2. What does John's deliberate identification with Elijah teach about the continuity of God's prophetic word across generations?

Interlinear Text

ἦν δὲ Ἰωάννης ἐνδεδυμένος τρίχας καμήλου καὶ
was And John clothed hair with camel's and
G2258 G1161 G2491 G1746 G2359 G2574 G2532

ζώνην δερματίνην περὶ τὴν ὁσφὺν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐσθίων
with a girdle of a skin about loins and he did eat
G2223 G1193 G4012 G3588 G3751 G846 G2532 G2068

ἀκρίδας καὶ μέλι ἄγριον
locusts and honey wild
G200 G2532 G3192 G66

Additional Cross-References

2 Kings 1:8 (Parallel theme): And they answered him, He was an hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins. And he said, It is Elijah the Tishbite.

Leviticus 11:22 (Parallel theme): Even these of them ye may eat; the locust after his kind, and the bald locust after his kind, and the beetle after his kind, and the grasshopper after his kind.

Zechariah 13:4 (Parallel theme): And it shall come to pass in that day, that the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he hath prophesied; neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive:

Matthew 3:4 (References John): And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.

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