Why wear that?

"Now John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey." Matthew 3:4

Why would God tell us what John the Baptist wore?

The Gospels tell us remarkably little about the physical appearance of the people whose lives they record. We do not know how tall Peter was, what color Paul's hair was, or what Matthew looked like. Even Jesus is never physically described. Yet Matthew specifically tells us that John the Baptist wore a garment made of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist.

Why wear that? More importantly, why tell us?

The answer may have been immediately apparent to someone who knew the Old Testament Scriptures. Centuries earlier, messengers had described a man to King Ahaziah:

"He wore a garment of hair, with a belt of leather about his waist." 2 Kings 1:8

The king needed no name.

"It is Elijah the Tishbite." 2 Kings 1:8

Elijah could apparently be identified by his clothing. A garment of hair and a leather belt were enough.

Then the Old Testament closes with an extraordinary promise:

"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes." Malachi 4:5

Centuries passed. Prophets no longer spoke in Israel. Then a man appeared in the wilderness preaching repentance. What was he wearing? A garment of camel's hair and a leather belt.

That was not an insignificant fashion choice.

Before John was born, the angel Gabriel had said that he would go before the Lord *"in the spirit and power of Elijah"* (Luke 1:17). Jesus later said of John, *"he is Elijah who is to come"* (Matthew 11:14). John was not Elijah reincarnated, nor was he pretending to be Elijah. He came in Elijah's prophetic role and power, fulfilling what God had promised.

Did John deliberately choose his clothing because he understood that calling? Scripture does not tell us. He certainly could have known how Elijah dressed. But whether John consciously selected the garment or simply dressed as he did, God's providence stands behind it. John wore the clothes, and God ordained the man, the ministry, and the unmistakable connection.

There is another remarkable fact. God ordained not only that John would wear those clothes but that Matthew would tell us about them.

We know almost nothing about John's appearance. Scripture does not describe his face, height, hair, or eyes. Yet God preserved forever the information that John wore camel's hair and a leather belt.

The detail mattered.

God had promised that a messenger would come. He had promised an Elijah who would prepare the way. Then, after centuries of silence, a voice cried out in the wilderness. Before John ever pointed to Jesus and declared Him to be the Lamb of God, even his clothing testified that God was keeping His Word.

Sometimes we hurry past the smallest details of Scripture because they appear unimportant. But Scripture wastes no words. A garment and a belt can reach backward through centuries of promise and point forward to the arrival of Christ.

Why wear that?

Because God was telling Israel to pay attention.

The promised messenger had arrived.

And the Lord was coming after him.

Just a thought.

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