

Enoch, Issachar, and the Separated Servant

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Enoch — Walking with God After Methuselah

Genesis 5:21–24 says that Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah. It would be wrong to conclude from that phrasing that he did not walk with God before — the note simply marks an increase of spiritual exercise. Something about having a child, and naming that child as he did, deepened Enoch's walk.

The name Methuselah means when he dies it shall come. What shall come? Jude 14–15 tells us: Enoch prophesied, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints to execute judgment. Enoch named his son after the judgment that was coming upon the ungodly world, and he prophesied that the Lord would come with His saints to execute it. He understood the times. He knew what was approaching. And he conducted his life accordingly.

What marked Enoch's walk? He was a family man — three hundred years of walking with God while raising a family, nothing deterring him from his course. He was devoted: a consistent man, not walking in a self-serving way, but devoted to the one with whom he walked. He was separated — separated from the growing ungodliness, corruption, and violence around him. He was a God-pleaser, not a man-pleaser: Romans 15:3 says of the Lord Jesus that He pleased not Himself, and Hebrews tells us that Enoch pleased God. He was instructed in the mind of God, as the naming of Methuselah shows. And he expected to be taken before the coming judgment — he did not expect his son to experience it either. That expectation shaped everything.

Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him. — Genesis 5:24

Issachar — From Business to Understanding

Jacob's blessing of Issachar in Genesis 49 is not flattering: Issachar is a strong ass, couching down between two burdens, and he saw that rest was good, and that the land was pleasant, and he bowed his shoulder to bear and became a servant unto tribute. The portrait is of a tribe absorbed in making itself comfortable — settling down, accepting the yoke of labour in exchange for a good patch of land, becoming a servant to circumstance. Occupied with business and with ease.

Yet 1 Chronicles 12:32 gives a completely different picture of the same tribe, centuries later: the children of Issachar, men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do. The grace of God had worked in them. Somewhere between Genesis 49 and 1 Chronicles 12 something changed. Men who had been occupied with cattle and commerce had become men who understood their times and knew what God's people ought to do. They did not merely know what was happening — they knew what to do about it. That requires more than news-watching. It requires communion with God, meditation on His word, a heart formed by His purposes.

And Zebulun, from the same context in 1 Chronicles, was described as fifty thousand who could keep rank, not of double heart. A united heart, a single eye, keeping rank in the things of God — rightly dividing the word of truth, as Paul told Timothy. The psalmist prayed: unite my heart to fear Thy name. The double-minded man is unstable in all his ways, James says. The opposite of double heart is that singleness of devotion that Enoch had — one object, Christ, everything else subordinate.

Three Servants and Their Recognisable Garments

Elijah, John the Baptist, and the two witnesses of Revelation 11 share something beyond their prophetic calling. The Spirit of God chose to describe how each was dressed, in contexts where it was not strictly necessary to do so. When the messengers described the man who had intercepted them to King Ahaziah, they said only that he wore a hairy garment with a leather girdle. And the king said immediately: that is Elijah the Tishbite. He knew who it was from that description alone. There was something so characteristic, so recognisably distinct from everything around him, that no further identification was needed.

Mark 1:6 does the same for John the Baptist: he was clothed in camel's hair and a leather girdle about his loins, and ate locusts and wild honey. The Spirit did not need to describe his clothing. He chose to. And the description places him immediately as the new Elijah — same garment, same girdle, same stark separation from the world around him. John 1:23 tells us what he called himself: the voice of one crying in the wilderness. A voice is not seen, only heard. He wanted to be nothing but what he cried.

Revelation 11:3 describes the two witnesses prophesying in sackcloth — rough, uncomfortable, everything the flesh rejects. Three different epochs of history. Three different men, or companies. Three descriptions of dress that the Spirit chose to include. The clothing was not the point — the point was what the clothing expressed about the whole character of each servant: total separation from the evil around them, making no attempt to fit in, recognisable from a distance as those who belonged to another order altogether.

Blending In — and What Is Asked Instead

There is a natural human tendency to want to blend in. To go unnoticed. To fit comfortably into the circles we inhabit — at work, in the neighbourhood, among friends. The discomfort of being different is real. And it is not the point that every believer should wear unusual clothing or cultivate eccentricity.

The point is that Ahaziah knew Elijah without being told his name, because Elijah's whole manner of life was so obviously distinct that a brief description was enough. Is my character known? Not as a curiosity or an oddity, but as someone who belongs to the Lord? Is there something about where I go and where I will not go, what I do and what I will not do, what I say and what I will not say, that speaks of faithfulness to God in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation?

2 Peter 3:11–14 presses this with urgency: all these things then being to be dissolved, what ought ye to be in holy conversation and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God? Wherefore, beloved, as you wait for these things, be diligent to be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The calling is not to be strange but to be holy — which in a world going the wrong direction will always look strange. Enoch walked with God. He did not blend into the world that God was about to judge by flood. Issachar learned, through the grace of God, to understand his times. The two witnesses prophesy in the worst period the world will ever see, and they prophesy in sackcloth to the end. May we be meat for the Master's use — recognisable not by our clothing but by our character, as those who walk with God in a world that does not.

Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and to the day of eternity. — 2 Peter 3:18