

The Covering Garments

*“Unto Adam also
and to his wife did
the LORD God
make coats of
skins, and clothed
them.”*

—*Genesis 3:21*

THIS LESSON'S FEATURED

Scripture speaks of the garments that the Heavenly Father provided for our first parents, Adam and Eve. They had transgressed his divine law and had thus brought

upon themselves and their unborn progeny the forewarned condemnation and sentence of death. (Gen. 2:16,17; 3:16-19) This was a seeming state of eternal hopelessness for the human creation, and rescue from their plight seemed impossible. A faint hint, however, points to the fact that rescue was a possibility, and that hint came in the form of the coats which God provided the condemned pair.

The coats of skins were related to the divine concept of atonement. In the Hebrew language in which this Old Testament scripture was written, the root word for “coats” means “to cover.” The root word for “atonement” also means “to cover.” Thus the garments provided Adam and Eve were the earliest indicators of a meaningful truth. God

had planned a way by which the transgressions of mankind could be expiated without violating the exacting demands of his divine justice. That is, the sin of Adam and Eve could, by a yet undisclosed means, be “covered.”

The coats provided by God were merely symbolic of our first parents’ need to be covered as a result of their sin and the penalty which demanded their death. “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” (Heb. 10:31) Adam and Eve realized their nakedness after their disobedience to God’s law. (Gen. 3:7) This is in the same sense that the Israelites would later be characterized as being naked following their transgression when they made the golden calf at Mount Sinai. The scriptural account reads, “Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies:) ... It came to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the LORD; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin.”—Exod. 32:25,30

Unless Adam’s transgression could somehow be covered, or otherwise expiated, divine justice would not allow him nor his posterity any hope of returning to covenant relationship with God. Because of their disobedience they had been justly condemned, and they would be held in the prison house of death in perpetuity. It was the atoning blood of Jesus’ sacrifice to which the coats ultimately pointed. Israel entered into covenant relationship with God at Mount Sinai, and their atonement and covering for sin served as a further illustration, or type, of the same future grand fulfillment through Jesus. This divine principle of

atonement is seen in the words of the psalmist, who wrote, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." "Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people; thou hast covered all their sin."—Ps. 32:1; 85:2

RECONCILIATION IMPLIED

Many centuries after Adam's fall into sin and death, God gave his promise to Abraham, saying, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice." (Gen. 22:16-18) In that promise is the prospect of full reconciliation between God and man, the implication being that the penalty of death wrought upon the human family by Adam's transgression would, in due time, be reversed. These prophetic words point to reconciliation for the entire human family in due time, and relate to the requirements of God's justice, the immutable principle which governs the very foundation of his throne as revealed in his Word. "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of thy throne; steadfast love and faithfulness go before thee."—Ps. 89:14, *Revised Standard Version*

FIGURES OF THE TRUE

Divine justice was illustrated at Mount Sinai when Moses presided over the ceremonies that established the Law Covenant between God and Israel. The Apostle Paul recounts the occasion, saying, "When Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, Saying, This is the blood of the testament [Hebrew: covenant] which God hath enjoined unto you.

Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.”—Heb. 9:19-24

In the above passage the apostle says that everything which occurred ceremonially at Mount Sinai served as patterns, or types, of the true. Therefore, the sin that was figuratively covered by sacrificial blood in Moses’ day will be actually removed by the sacrificial blood of Christ—the true, or antitypical, atonement.

TYPICAL ATONEMENT

The blood of animals used at Mount Sinai pointed forward to the blood of Jesus, which would be shed many centuries later for the whole world. The sprinkling of “the book” prefigured Christ’s shed blood satisfying divine justice. The subsequent sprinkling of “the people” illustrated the cleansing, restoring and reconciling of mankind to God. In all, the arrangements at Mount Sinai illustrated that God and man will be reconciled only after Adamic condemnation, human imperfection, and estrangement from God are not merely covered, but entirely removed.

The arrangement between God and Israel established at Mount Sinai was breached by Israel, thereby

severing their position of atonement. Foreknowing Israel's inability to keep the Law, God introduced an annual Day of Atonement in conjunction with the nation's Tabernacle arrangement, many particulars of which are recounted in Exodus, chapters 25-31 and Leviticus chapter 16. God's role and purpose state: "This shall be a statute for ever unto you: that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, ye shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether it be one of your own country, or a stranger that sojourneth among you: For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the LORD."—Lev. 16:29,30

Typical reconciliation was made annually between God and Israel on each Day of Atonement. Israel's transgressions were thus reckoned as covered by the blood of animal sacrifices as offered by Israel's high priest. The freshly reconciled condition made possible the continuation for another year of the covenant relationship between God and Israel. For many centuries, the atonement day sacrifices were Israel's only hope. They alone stood interposed between that nation and divine justice. "It shall be, if thou do at all forget the LORD thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish."—Deut. 8:19

ANTITYPICAL, TRUE ATONEMENT

Later, the Apostle Paul declared that the antitype to which Israel's atonement day provision had been pointing had arrived with the earthly ministry, sacrificial death, and resurrection of our Lord

Jesus. He says, “By so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant.” (Heb. 7:22, *New King James Version*) The apostle then explains, “But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, seeing He always lives to make intercession for them.”—vss. 24,25, *NKJV*

The old Law Covenant permitted the Jews alone to have access to God through the atonement day rituals. These were presided over by a long succession of priests from the lineage of Aaron. When the Christ class is completed, it will bring all mankind back to God through Jesus—the greater High Priest of a better covenant than was provided under Israel’s Law.

FORESHADOWINGS

The Law Covenant was intended to provide illustrations and foregleams of that new and better covenant. Aaron, who was anointed as high priest, functioned under the Law Covenant. He offered the sacrificial blood of bulls and goats in the sanctuary of Israel’s Tabernacle. That priesthood and those various ceremonial practices collectively foreshadowed the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus. These illustrated the better means by which a future New Covenant will be established for all of earth’s people—Jews and Gentiles.—Isa. 42:6,7; 49:6; Luke 2:30-32

On Israel’s annual Day of Atonement, it was not sufficient that a sacrificial death merely occur. For it to be effective, the evidence of sacrificial death, the blood, had to be taken into the Most Holy

compartment of the Tabernacle, and sprinkled on the mercy seat by the high priest as an offering to God on Israel's behalf. (Lev. 16:14-17) The antitype was fulfilled by the sacrificial death of the perfect man Jesus. His blood, shed at Calvary, was entirely sufficient in value as an offset for Adam's transgression. It would free mankind from its Adamic condemnation.—John 1:29; Rom. 5:18,19; I Cor. 15:21,22; I John 1:7

The liberating benefit of that value would have never reached mankind had there been no high priest qualified to take that value into heaven itself and there to figuratively sprinkle it before God. The qualified priest is the resurrected Lord, Christ Jesus. Paul wrote, "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession." (Heb. 4:14) Again the apostle said, "Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens."—Heb. 8:1

Christ's earthly ministry accomplished a major step in the Heavenly Father's ultimate purpose to restore the sin-sick and dying human family. In his letter to the Hebrew brethren, the Apostle Paul further wrote, "Though he [Jesus] were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." (Heb. 5:8,9) The ransoming value of Jesus' sacrifice at Calvary was first applied on behalf of the members of the church during the present Gospel Age. Upon the church's completion, the value of Christ's death will be applied to benefit the remainder of

mankind. “He is the propitiation [Greek: atonement] for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”—I John 2:2

JESUS A SURETY

Israel’s priests inherited their position generation by generation, their authority being derived from their predecessors. Beginning with Aaron, the installation ceremonies of these are recounted in Leviticus, chapter 8. Christ was made High Priest of an order superior to that of Aaron by divine declaration. “Inasmuch as He was not made priest without an oath (for they have become priests without an oath, but He with an oath by Him who said to Him: The Lord has sworn and will not relent, You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek), by so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant. Also there were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing. But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood.”—Heb. 7:20-24, *NKJV*

Just as the promise to Abraham, quoted earlier from Genesis 22:16-18, was made with an oath, likewise Christ—the true seed to whom the Abrahamic promise was referring—was made a High Priest by an oath. Through the power and authority of that superior priestly office all the nations of the earth will be blessed. The High Priest is imbued with the ability to take sin and all of its effects entirely away. It is that ability of Christ, the better and greater High Priest, concerning which the Prophet Isaiah wrote, “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though

they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”—Isa. 1:18

JOHN’S PRONOUNCEMENT

The Prophet Isaiah compares sin to the color red, and this word has been translated from the Hebrew word “Adam.” The forgiveness of sin, in comparison, is related to the color white, as in snow or wool. The relationship of wool to the eradication of sin was declared by John the Baptist centuries later when he identified the Lord Jesus as a sacrificial lamb, and proclaimed, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”—John 1:29

Not until that pronouncement at the First Advent of Christ was the divine concept of forgiveness of sin expressed in this connection. It was to this truth that the garments provided by God to Adam and Eve symbolically pointed. From that time forward, salvation would be predicated upon faith in Christ to take sin away, and faith in his ability to render that which was “red” to become “as white as snow.” The Apostle Paul would become a most able and prolific expounder of that profound truth.

FAITH DEFINED

In the eleventh chapter of his epistle to the Hebrews, Paul defines faith, then cites several examples of its exercise by the elders of prior ages. He explains, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report.” (Heb. 11:1,2) The apostle then declares faith as the indispensable element in the forgiveness of sin. “Without faith it is impossible to please him [God]: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and

that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”—vs. 6

The divine promise to bless all the nations of the earth was predicated upon the faith of Abraham. There would have been no such promise given him if he had lacked a mature, crystallized faith. In this present Gospel Age, and during the next age, all mankind will be saved from their prior condemnation in Adam. In addition, those who seek God will be rewarded if they come to him through faith in Christ Jesus. The coverings provided Adam and Eve after their transgression in Eden were rudimentary illustrations of what Christ’s sacrifice will ultimately accomplish for all mankind under the administration of Christ’s kingdom to bless all the families of the earth.

THE “LITTLE FLOCK”

By the end of this present Gospel Age, a “little flock” of footstep followers of Christ, a very small minority of the human family in advance of the world, will have manifested faith sufficient to have pleased God. “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”—Luke 12:32

Those relative few will have proven acceptable to God for the single reason that by the various trials of the narrow way during this present life they will have manifested the same faith exemplified in Abraham and personified by Christ Jesus. “Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” (Matt. 7:14) To these faithful alone the promise now applies, “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on

such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”—Rev. 20:6

THE REMAINDER OF MANKIND

God will not directly interact with mankind during the thousand years of Christ’s kingdom, Christ being interposed between them as Mediator of the New Covenant. “He hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.” (Acts 17:31) The church, when completed, will join its “head” and master, the Lord Jesus Christ, as he assumes the role of Mediator between God and man. (Col. 1:18; I Tim. 2:5,6) In that day, the Lord Jesus and his resurrected church will constitute that “prophet” about whom Moses spoke. “Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.”—Acts 3:22; Deut. 18:15

Under the benevolent rule of that prophet, the fallen and degraded human family will learn the laws, principles, and purposes of the kingdom. They will be taught the life-giving benefits of righteousness, justice, and obedience. The human family will come to understand what the church is now privileged to know—the vital relationship of faith in Christ Jesus and reconciliation to God. “All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, ... To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not

imputing their trespasses unto them; ... For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”—II Cor. 5:18-21

PREFIGURED IN EDEN

As the garments provided Adam and Eve had prefigured, the atoning blood of Christ was mercifully provided as a wonderful means for mankind’s recovery and reconciliation to their Heavenly Father. “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.”—John 3:16,17

The Apostle Paul proclaims, “When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” (Rom. 5:6-8) Let us rejoice in the provision our loving Heavenly Father has made for the covering of Adamic sin, and let us be ever thankful for the opportunity which will result for all mankind to come back into harmony with their loving Creator. ■