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. 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.

COATS SYMBOLIC OF ATONEMENT

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" [*Strong's Bible Concordance*, #3801]. The root word for "atonement" also means "to cover" [*Strong's*, #3722]. Thus the garments provided Adam and

Eve were the earliest indicators of a meaningful truth. God had foreseen a way by which the transgressions of mankind could be expiated without violating the exacting demands of his Divine justice. The transgressions of Adam and Eve could, by a yet undisclosed means, be 'covered.'

The coats were symbolic of our first parents need to be covered, as a result of their sin and the Divine 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 the Divine law. 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, "When Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies)." (Exod. 32:25) "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."—vs. 30

Unless Adam's transgression could somehow be covered, or otherwise hidden, Divine justice would not allow him nor his posterity any hope of returning to covenant relationship with God. Because of their disobedience they were condemned, and 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 at Mount Sinai, and the atonement and covering for sin served as a type, or illustration, of a future grand fulfillment. This is

seen in the words of the psalmist, who wrote, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." (Ps. 32:1) "Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people; thou hast covered all their sin."—Ps. 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 Divine justice—the immutable principle which governs the very foundation of the Heavenly Father's throne as revealed in his Word. "Justice and judgment are the habitation [establishment, *Marginal Translation*] of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face."—Ps. 89:14

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

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) Paul says that everything that occurred ceremonially at Mount Sinai served as patterns, or types, of the true. Therefore, the sin that was figuratively covered by sacrificial blood in the type will be literally removed by the sacrificial blood in the antitype.

JUSTICE TYPICALLY SATISFIED

The blood of animals used at Mount Sinai typified 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 in the Gospel Age. The subsequent sprinkling of 'the people' illustrated the cleansing, restoring and reconciling of mankind to God in the coming Millennial Age. In all, the typical 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.

TYPICAL ATONEMENT

The typical arrangement between God and Israel was established at Mount Sinai, but it was breached

by Israel thereby severing the state of atonement. Foreknowing Israel's inability to keep the Law, God introduced an annual Day of Atonement, the particulars of which are recounted in Exodus, chapters 25-31. God's role and purpose states, "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 reestablished annually between God and Israel on each Day of Atonement. Israel's prior transgressions were thus typically 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 typical 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 ATONEMENT

Later, the Apostle Paul declared that the antitype to which the 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 was Jesus made a surety

of a better testament [covenant]." (Heb. 7:22) The apostle then explained, "This man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." (vss. 24,25) 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' is completed, it will include all who have come to God through Jesus Christ—the antitypical High Priest of a better covenant than was provided under Israel's Law.

FORESHADOWINGS

The Law Covenant was intended to provide illustrations and types 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 typical 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.

In the atonement type, it was not sufficient that a sacrificial death merely occur. For it to be efficacious, 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. The antitype was fulfilled by the sacrificial death of the

perfect man Jesus, and was entirely sufficient in value at Calvary as an offset for Adam's transgression. It would free mankind from its Adamic condemnation. 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."—chap. 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 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." (chap. 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 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 not without an oath he was made priest: (For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:) By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament. And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."—Heb 7:20-25

Just as the promise to Abraham 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 the future High Priest to which the Prophet Isaiah wrote, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: 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 GRAND PRIVILEGE

The Prophet Isaiah compares sin to the color red, and this word has been translated from the

Hebrew word Adam [*Strong's Bible Concordance*, #119]. 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, those who would seek God will be rewarded if they find him through Christ Jesus. All who come to God through Jesus will be saved from their prior condemnation in Adam. 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 future kingdom to bless all the families of the earth.

THE FEW

By the end of this 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 Gospel Age 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 MANY

God will not directly interact with mankind during the thousand years of Christ's kingdom in the Millennial Age, 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. In that 'day,' the Lord Jesus and his resurrected church will constitute that 'prophet' about whom Moses spoke. (Deut. 18:15) "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

Under the benevolent rule of that prophet, the fallen and degraded human family will learn the laws, principles, and purposes of the kingdom—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

CONSUMED BY PRIDE

Through the disobedience of Adam, the human family was condemned to death, furthering Lucifer's pride and his selfish agenda. "He was a murderer from the beginning." (John 8:44) Fascinated by his own brilliance, we read of Lucifer, "Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness." (Ezek. 28:17) Consumed with pride in his own genius, he dared to challenge God. "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High."—Isa. 14:13,14

Lucifer, thinking it impossible for God to remain just and yet be the justifier of any who transgressed his laws, confronted him with the ruined man and woman whom he had so recently enticed into sin. However, Lucifer's challenge was met at Calvary, thereby sealing his doom. The Apostle Paul explained, "God hath set forth [Jesus] to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."—Rom. 3:25,26

The resurrected Lord Jesus Christ will be Almighty God's eternal bright flame ever illuminating Lucifer's grave miscalculation in Eden. (Gen. 3:15) In the end, death will be his only companion, and the grave his possession. Satan's end is seen in the prophetic words of Ezekiel, who wrote, "Thine

heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee." (Ezek. 28:17) "I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee."—vs. 18

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. 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 ■