

Genesis 3:20–24

“Redemption Promised and Prefigured”

April 26, 2020

²⁰ The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. ²¹ And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them. ²² Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever-- " ²³ therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴ He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

After Adam and Eve's fall into sin, God revealed his plan to redeem them and to redeem some of their children—the elect. And his plan of redemption was revealed in two ways: it was promised (v. 15) and prefigured (v. 21).

The promise of redemption was expressed in terms of sending a new Adam to wage war against the serpent and defeat him. And in the process of gaining victory over Satan, his heel would be bruised. Scripture later tells us what that means. He would be pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities, and by his wounds we would be healed (Isa 53:5; 1 Pet 2:24). He would give his life for us to redeem us (Tit 2:14). It was through death that Christ destroyed the devil and delivered us from slavery to sin and death (Heb 2:14–15). Christ purchased our redemption with his own blood (Acts 20:28; Heb 9:12; Eph 1:7; 1 Pet 1:18–19; Rev 5:9). Jesus gave his life as a ransom for many (Matt 20:28), namely, for those who were chosen in him before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4).

God promised redemption in Gen 3:15 and prefigured it in Gen 3:21 by clothing Adam and Eve with garments of skin. In Scripture, God often confirms his promises by means of visible signs or symbols. For example, God promised Noah that he would never again destroy the earth with a flood and confirmed that promise by means of a visible sign, the rainbow (Gen 9:11–17). God made a promise and appended to it a visible, confirming sign. God did the same thing in Gen 3. After promising to redeem sinners, he attached to that promise a visible sign that conformed it. God promised to redeem Adam and Eve (v. 15) and, then, clothed them with garments of skins to symbolize their redemption (v. 21). The divine covering of the guilty pair foreshadowed the fulfilment of God's promise to redeem them.

Their clothing had a symbolic purpose and meaning not simply a practical one. It symbolized their redemption. We ordinary do not attribute symbolic meaning to clothing except

for uniforms (e.g. doctors, nurses, policemen, military, etc.), but in the ancient world, that notion was prominent. For example, in the Ancient Near East, if a father publicly disrobed his son, that symbolized his disinheritance. Remember, when the prodigal son returned home, his father said, “Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet” (Luke 15:22), by which the father symbolized his reinstatement as a son. The prodigal requested to be made a servant in his father’s house, but the father reinstated him as his son, granting him the full rights and privileges of sonship. And that status of sonship was symbolized by his clothing.

Likewise, by clothing Adam and Eve, God redemptively reinstated them into his family as his children and, therefore, his heirs—heirs of an imperishable inheritance reserved for them in heaven (1 Pet 1:4). The divine covering of Adam and Eve prefigured their promised redemption.

Before their fall into sin, Adam and Eve were unclothed; “the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed” (Gen 2:25). That verse implies a causal link between nakedness and shame. Nakedness would ordinarily produce shame, but Adam and Eve, though naked, were not ashamed. Why not? They did not know that they were naked. They only became aware of that fact after they sinned. It was only when they ate the forbidden fruit that their eyes “were opened, and they knew that they were naked” (Gen 3:7). Their nakedness before the fall and their becoming aware of it afterwards explains the symbolic meaning of their being covered by God with garments of skin in Gen 3:21.

Before the fall, God supernaturally prevented them from seeing their nakedness because, metaphorically speaking, they were clothed in the likeness of God. God made them in his own image, after his own likeness. And that image endowment included a moral nature like the moral nature of God; they morally good, righteous, and holy. When they sinned, however, they were stripped of that moral goodness, which left them unclothed in the sight of God. By the fall, they were stripped of their moral likeness to God and took on the likeness of the devil. They were left naked in the sight of God and exposed to his wrath and fury.

To cover their sin-induced shameful nakedness, hoping to escape God’s judgment, they proceeded to cover themselves with fig leaves (Gen 3:7), endeavoring to hide the evidence of their guilt and avoid the penalty of, death (Gen 2:17), the curse sanction of the covenant of works. In his mercy, God did not judge Adam and Eve according to strict justice. Had he done so, he would have consigned them then and there to hell. But he had another plan for them—a plan to redeem them. To make room for the accomplishment of that plan in history, he delayed the execution of his final judgment against the wicked.

God promised redemption in Gen 3:15 through the messianic, champion seed of the woman, who would conquer the serpent. In the process of destroying the devil, the Messiah’s heel would be bruised, referring to his sacrificial death by which he atones for sin. By the

pouring out of his blood, he secures our redemption. That notion is expressed in the promise in Gen 3:15 and prefigured, symbolically, in the clothing of Adam and Eve in Gen 3:21.

There are three things that we need to note to understand the symbolism of that event. First, it represents a change in status from a state of sin to a state of salvation. Second, it represents the sacrificial death of Jesus by which he atones for sin. Third, it represents our conformity to image of Christ.

First, it symbolically represents Adam and Eve's transition from a state of sin to a state of salvation. In the fall, they went from a state of innocence to a state of sin, but in verse 21, they are brought from a state of sin into a state of salvation, symbolically represented by their change in clothing. Their clothing in verse 21 was not their first set of clothing. Their first clothes were made by their own hands (Gen 3:7). Their man-made garments of fig leaves were removed and replaced with garments made without human hands. Their self-made clothing represented the state of sin into which they fell. Their new clothing, made and graciously bestowed by God, represented the state of salvation into which he brought them. The divinely made clothing symbolized their new status as God's redeemed people.

In this change of clothing, they put off their old identity as fallen covenant breakers and put on their new identity through the promised covenant keeper, the new Adam, the Redeemer. Symbolically speaking, they put off the old man and put on the new man. Paul says in Colossians 3:9–10, "Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator." Believers have put off the old self. Like removing an old garment, we have put off our fallen identity in Adam, just as Adam and Eve put off their man-made clothing. And we have put on the new self. We have put on our new identity in Christ, just as Adam and Eve were clothed with their new garments, symbolizing their transition from a state of sin to a state of salvation. With their new divinely made and given clothes, they were identified with God's new creation.

Secondly, their clothing represents the sacrificial death of Christ by which he atones for sin. The garments (tunics) were made of animal skins, which had to be procured through the death of an animal. A sacrificed animal provided the skins by which the sin-induced shameful nakedness of Adam and Eve was covered. God deprived an animal of its life so that their shame might be covered. The remedy for their sins would come only by means of a sacrificial death. Redemption was *promised* through the bruising of the woman's offspring and *prefigured* through the slaying of the animal. Atonement for sin could only be obtained by the death of a sacrifice offered on behalf of and in the place of sinners. God was teaching Adam and Eve that without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sin (Heb 9:22).

Symbolically speaking, the victim that died in Gen 3:21 bore the penalty of Adam and Eve's sin. Their sins were imputed to the victim that died in their place, and its atoning blood was the basis of their transition from a state of sin to a state of salvation. The animal's blood in

Gen 3:21 could not actually redeem Adam and Eve, but it pointed forward to and prefigured the blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God who take away the sin of the world. It pointed forward to the vicarious suffering and atoning death of the seed of the woman whose heel would be bruised for our redemption. Only at the cost of the bruising of his heel would he trample the head of the serpent.

The slain victim in Gen 3:21 died a substitutionary death in the place of Adam and Eve. It bore the wrath of God, his righteous judgment against sin. It's death was substitutionary and penal; it was the legal punishment for sin. It bore their sins and, therefore, suffered the penalty for their sins. It's life was given as a ransom for theirs. God accepted its life as a substitute payment. Adam and Eve were redeemed from the curse sanction of the covenant of works because the victim that died in their place bore the curse for them. As noted above, I am speaking symbolically here because the only sacrificial victim that *truly* does that is the Lord Jesus Christ. But what happened to the animal sacrifices in the Old Testament foreshadowed what would happen to Christ. The substitutionary death in Gen 3:21 prefigured the fulfillment of God's plan of redemption.

Finally, Adam and Eve's clothing symbolically represented their conformity to the image of Jesus Christ. By putting on these animal's skin, they were (symbolically speaking) putting on the Lord Jesus Christ and bearing his image. They now bore the image of the one who died in their place. They were conformed to the image of the one who took away their sins. Conformity to the image of Christ is the end-goal of our redemption (Rom 8:29). God gave Adam and Eve a typological foretaste of that end-goal. He not only revealed to them the means by which he would accomplish their redemption—the blood of a sacrifice—but the final outcome of their redemption—conformity to the image of the victorious, messianic seed of the woman. Ultimately what that means is that the redeemed will share in the glorious victory of the new Adam. When Christ returns at the end of the world, we will be fully and finally conformed to his image as raised in glory and power and honor. That's how redemption is promised in prefigured in Genesis 3.