



Genesis 3:21; 4:4

The First Sacrifice

The tragic story of man's disobedience is told in Genesis chapter three. Adam and Eve were warned out of the loving heart of the LORD God. Immediately after they disobeyed God's command they both realized they were guilty. Adam and Eve tried to cover their guilt and shame from God, but they chose a poor cover up. Man made solutions for sin and guilt never work. Fig leaves of religious works will never cover the guilty sinner and make him right with God.

God, however, chose skins to cover Adam and Eve (3:21). "And the Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them."

Throughout the Scriptures, garments are symbols of righteousness; either God's all sufficient righteousness or man's self-made righteousness. The prophet Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 61:10,

I will rejoice greatly in the Lord,
My soul will exult in my God;
For He has clothed me with garments of salvation,
He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness,
As a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,
And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

The prophet also speaks of self righteousness in the following statement. "For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; And all of us wither like a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away" (Isaiah 64:6). "I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; My justice was like a robe and a turban" (Job 29:14).

The coats of skin with which the Lord clothed Adam and Eve represent righteousness provided by Him in which they could stand in His holy presence. These coats of skin are a type of what God provided for us in the imputation of His righteousness through Jesus Christ. Behind those garments, that God made for Adam and Eve has been sacrifice and death. No doubt, God had given instructions of some kind about sacrifice. We do not have any exact word regarding this instruction; however, from the context of chapters three and four in comparison with the book of Hebrews I think we can accept here an incipient idea of the sacrifices which will follow in the Hebrew Scriptures. Since a life had to be sacrificed before Adam and Eve could have been clothed with "coats of sins", there was a substitutionary

death. God must always provide adequate covering for man to stand before Him clothed in righteousness. Only in Christ is man ever properly clothed.

God laid the foundation for animal sacrifices by providing the garments of skin. In this passage we see the pattern for all salvation history. God took a sacrificial animal (probably a lamb), slew it before the eyes of Adam and Eve and wrapped the skins about their naked bodies. No doubt, at that time, God gave them instructions about sacrifice and covering of sins. God laid down an eternal, divine principle from which there is no deviation.

Salvation is of grace. The animal was God's gift and not the work of man. The Lord furnished the skins to cover Adam and Eve. They did nothing, absolutely nothing to satisfactorily cover themselves. The only sacrifice God will accept will be His work and His gift. "The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them." God did it all! That is the way grace operates.

The animal would be an innocent substitute. It was an innocent victim. God could not obtain the skins of the substitute without putting it to death and shedding its blood. The Hebrew word for "garments" or coats of skins signifies a complete covering from head to foot. The same word is used for the high priestly robe, which covered the whole body. Adam's leaf covering was sufficient only to cover his loins. God's provision was sufficient to cover his whole body.

In the fullness of time, God provided His own perfect sacrifice to cover our sins and provide us His righteousness. As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are clothed with His perfect righteousness. How tragic that we go around trusting in inadequate coverings for our sins, when only the perfect all sufficient sacrifice of Jesus Christ will do.

Genesis 4:4 describes the first worship service and God's acceptance of a sacrifice in worship. Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and for his offering" (Genesis 4:4). God is to be worshipped through sacrifice.

The theme of the lamb begins in this passage and is developed throughout the Scriptures until the grand climax in Revelation. The great crimson thread is woven throughout the following passages: Genesis 22:8; Exodus 12; Leviticus 16; Isaiah 53; John 1:29, 36; Acts 8:26ff; I Peter 1:18-20; Revelation 5:9, 12; 6:15-17; 7:9-17; 17:14; 19:11-21; 21:7-9, 22, to name just a few.

The ultimate fulfillment is found in the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). Abel's offering involved the sacrifice of a lamb and with it the shedding of its blood. Jesus Christ was the just dying for the unjust. He was the innocent Lamb dying for the guilty sinner.

God accepted Abel's offering. He rejected Cain's.

Abel brought his offering "of firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions." It was a sacrificial lamb. Cain's offering was far more attractive than Abel's was, but Abel's was what God wanted. Cain offered sacrifices

offering was far more attractive than Abel's was, but Abel's was what God wanted. Cain offered sacrifices that were the labor of his own hands. Abel's offering anticipated the coming of the Lamb of God. There is only one way for a sinner to approach a holy God and that is through shed blood. "Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins" (Hebrews 9:22). It is an echo of Leviticus 17:11. "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls: for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement." If you have a problem with Abel's sacrifice read what the same Jewish writer says a little later, ". . . Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than *the blood* of Abel" (12:24). While the blood of Abel was prophetic and pointed forward to that which was to be, the blood of Jesus, on the other hand, declares the whole work of salvation is finished. The blood of Abel asked for atonement to be made, the blood of Jesus declared that the atonement had been made (Genesis 4:9-10). Abel's testimony is recorded for us in Hebrews 11:4. It says, "By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks."

In the fullness of time, the LORD God sent His Son Jesus Christ to make atonement for sin once for all. What begins as a small ray of light in Genesis shines forth in full noonday sun in the Gospels. Jesus died for our sins, yours and mine. God made Him sin for us in order that we might become the righteous in God's sight (1 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 1:18-21).

It was Jesus Christ whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:25-26).

How did Abel know about animal sacrifices? God made Adam and Eve "coats of skin" (3:21). We cannot read that without seeing behind those coats there had been sacrifice and death. In addition, behind that fact some instruction had been given, some method declared some way indicated by which they were told to worship Him. Worship demands the approach based upon sacrifice. We can never come to God to worship save by way of the Cross. God accepted Christ's offering of Himself for our sins. There is no other way for us to come to God. Are you clothed in the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ?

The only offering God will accept is that which He provides by the offering of His own Son. God provided the perfect sacrifice in His Lamb, but man must appropriate it by faith. "By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks" (Hebrews 11:4). What will you do with the Lamb of God? By faith Abel presented His sacrifice. Saving faith is believing God's Word and acting on it. My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. "

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