

# FAITH AND ATONEMENT (1)

## *A Meditation on Genesis 3:20-21*

Genesis 3:7a describes the immediate results of Adam and Eve's sin: "Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked." R. C. Sproul is correct in saying, "The Bible uses the word naked, not only to capture the physical, but also the emotional, the physiological and the spiritual." So Adam and Eve's sudden realization of being naked is much more than a physical observation that they have no clothes on. Their eyes are opened and now they feel guilt...now they're overwhelmed by a sense of shame... now the weight of their sin is pressing down upon them. All this is expressed by an awareness of being naked.

Adam and Eve had been naked their whole lives—however long that was—and it never bothered them before, but now it does, so they do what any of us would have done in their situation, they look for the nearest thing they can find to cover themselves with. There are no clothes lying around—they don't even know what clothes are yet—so they sew fig leaves together in a desperate attempt to cover themselves: "And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths" (vs. 7b). Don't overlook the deeper, spiritual meaning of the fig leaves. Adam and Eve are not merely trying to cover their physical bodies; they are also trying to cover their guilt, shame and sin. It didn't work.

When Adam and Eve hear the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, they run and hide. God says, "Adam, where are you?" "And he said, 'I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.' He said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?'" (vv. 10-11). God connects Adam's awareness of being naked with his sin. Adam is afraid and hiding, because he is naked—physically, emotionally and spiritually. And the fig leaves did not suffice to rectify the situation. They still can't stand before God without being overcome by terror. Which is precisely how unbelievers will feel on the day of judgment. "And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account" (Heb. 4:13).

Man's fig leaves, man's good works, are never an adequate covering. On the Day of Judgment, unbelievers will say, "But I worked hard my whole life."

"Fig leaves," God will say.

The moralist will insist, "I cleaned up my life. I used to be a drunkard and a druggie, but now I'm clean and sober."

"Fig leaves," God says.

"I read my Bible and went to church," the religious will say.

Again, God will respond, "Fig leaves,"

The liberal will point out his volunteer service with the Red Cross or with the United Way.

"Fig leaves."

The philanthropists will boast of giving millions to charity.

"Fig Leaves," God says, "These are all fig leaves. And none of them deals adequately with your sin" (James M. Boice, *Genesis*, p. 237).

The Emperor has no clothes on. Much of the world is strutting around spiritually naked and they're not even aware of it. The Laodiceans were like that. Jesus wrote to them, "I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of you nakedness may not be seen" (Rev. 3:15-18a).

When Adam and Eve are confronted by God and forced to give an account for their behavior, they don't own up to it or confess it, rather they play the blame game. Adam blames Eve *and God*: "the woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate." Eve in turn blames the serpent. This is so typical, isn't it? "Well, Joe gave me the marijuana." "Jane stole some items from the department store too." God doesn't accept these lame excuses; we're all responsible for our thoughts, words and deeds.

As a result of their actions, God curses the serpent, Eve and finally Adam. And the curse ends with God saying, "for you are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Gen. 3:19b). Adam is sentenced to death. This is the bad news, but there is good news right around the corner.

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# FAITH AND ATONEMENT (2)

## *A Meditation on Genesis 3:20-21*

On the heels of this unequivocal pronouncement of death comes verse 20: “The man called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.” It’s common to talk about Adam and Eve—I’ve been doing it throughout this book—but up to this point there was no name Eve, it was Adam and his wife, or, if you like, Mr. and Mrs. Adam.

Genesis 5:1-2 comments on the name that God gave to Adam and his wife, when He created them: “This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man (or *Adam* in Hebrew) when they were created.” The two together are called Adam, which is still reflected in our culture today when a couple gets married and the wife takes her husband’s last name. After the covenantal vows and rings have been exchanged the minister will then have the couple turn to the congregation and he will say something like, “It is my privilege to present to you for the first time Mr. and Mrs....” So we could look at it this way: Eve would be her first name and Adam her last name.

But why does Adam name his wife Eve? Eve or *havvah* in He-brew means living or life-giver. Adam names his wife “life-giver” because “she was the mother of all living” (Gen. 3:20b). In the vernacular of the day Eve means mother—one who gives life. Now how could Adam call his wife “mother” when she didn’t have any children, and she wasn’t even pregnant? The answer is that Adam did it by faith in the promise of Genesis 3:15 (“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel”). Naming his wife Eve was an act of faith in God’s Word; it was faith in the Messiah who would fulfill the promise some day. Again, this is why Genesis 3:15 is called the Proto Evangel—the first gospel.

In Genesis 3:20 we have the first response of faith to the gospel, and in Genesis 3:21 we have the first symbol of atonement (i.e. covering). “And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.” To appreciate the splendor of this verse, we need to put ourselves in Adam and Eve’s shoes (I know, shoes weren’t invented yet either). Their guilt has been exposed, they feel over-whelmed by their shame, and they know they justly deserve to be executed on the spot. Or, God could have stripped away their fig leaves, and said, “You should feel ashamed, you’ve messed up the whole world, now you will wander around the world naked and humiliated.” This is, incidentally, precisely how God treats His enemies: “Behold, I am against you, declares the LORD of hosts, and will lift up your skirts over your face; and I will make nations look at your nakedness and kingdoms at your shame” (Nah. 3:5; cf. Amos 2:13-16; Isa. 47:3).

While God’s enemies are stripped naked, His beloved are covered with radiant garments. In Ezekiel 16:8, God says, “When I passed by you again and saw you, behold, you were at the age for love, and I spread the corner of my garment over you and covered your nakedness; I made my vow to you and entered into a covenant with you, declares the Lord GOD, and you became mine.” R. C. Sproul noted that “to the Greek mind hell is a place of torment, and this torment is increased by being sent there naked—totally exposed with no covering, not even fig leaves.” Heaven, on the other hand, is where the saints will spend eternity. And they will not be naked; they will be clothed with white robes (Rev. 7:13). White symbolizes purity, which is why brides wear white. However, these robes need to be *made* white. “They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (vs. 14).

To clothe Adam and Eve, God killed animals—He shed blood—so He could then use their skins. Adam and Eve had never experienced the death of anything before. But sin brings death, and if Adam and his wife are going to live something or someone must die in their place. We’re not told, but if I had to guess, I would think the animals were lambs. These lambs would then be a type of the ultimate Lamb of God, whom John the Baptist declared “would take away the sin of the world” (Jn. 1:29). What an act of grace! God covers the naked bodies and Adam and Eve, which was not just a physical covering, but also a spiritual covering—God covers their shame, guilt and sin. “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness” (Isa. 61:10a; 2 Cor. 5:21). Now that Adam and Eve are properly dressed, they are prepared to stand before God.

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Website: [www.foxlakechurch.org](http://www.foxlakechurch.org) Email: [wchristensen@foxlakechurch.org](mailto:wchristensen@foxlakechurch.org)

847-587-1331