

## Osaka International Church

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Series: Beginnings #11

Title: God Clothed Them

Scripture: Genesis 3:16-24

### I. Introduction

Good morning! Take a look at this picture. What do you see? A courtyard? Or a veranda? It depends on where you focus your eyes. If you focus on the top half, you will see a veranda high above you. If you focus on the bottom half, you will see a courtyard below you. How we look at things makes a difference in what we see.



When we look in the mirror, what do we see? A sinner? Or a saint? If we focus on our self, then we may see only the sinner. But if we focus on our relationship with Jesus, then we can begin to see the saint in the mirror. We are all sinners; but the Bible calls us saints, because when we trust in Jesus we are declared righteous. Both realities are important parts of the picture, but when we focus on our identity as saints, then we find peace. A few minutes ago, Rebecca shared a mime set to a song that asks, "Who am I?" The heart of faith answers, "I am the Lord's. I belong to Him. I am His adopted child."

How we look at things makes a difference in what we see. This also applies to how we read our Bibles. Some people see only stories of sin and judgment in the Old Testament. But if we have eyes to see, every page reveals God's grace and love. Today's Scripture is known as the story of God's judgment of Adam and Eve. But let's look closer, and we will see God's mercy, grace, and love revealed. Let's read Genesis 3:16-24.

### II. Scripture Genesis 3:16-24 (NIV)

[16] To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." [17] To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' 'Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. [18] It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. [19] By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return." [20] Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living. [21] The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. [22] And the Lord God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." [23] So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. [24] After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

### III. Teaching

In Genesis 3, the devil appears in the form of a snake and tempts Eve. Eve believes the devil's lies and eats from the forbidden fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. She then gives some to Adam also and he eats. After that God judges the devil, Eve, and Adam, and they are expelled from Eden.



In His judgment of Eve, God increases her pain in childbearing. And in His judgment of Adam, God says the ground will be cursed and that it will bring forth thorns and thistles. These judgments are representative of all of the pain and sorrow of human life, but they are also very specific. This encourages us to ask whether these judgments might have some



deeper meaning beyond simple punishment.

I believe that these judgments are actually acts of mercy that point the way to salvation. Last week we spent some time looking at the verse that comes right before today's passage. Genesis 3:15, **"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."** When we studied this verse, we saw that it is a prophecy that speaks of how the Messiah will come and destroy the devil. But the Messiah will also suffer, the snake will strike His heel.

Salvation will come through the offspring of the woman, but the joy of salvation will not be achieved without pain. Is it a coincidence that God's judgment on Eve is the terrible pain of childbirth? Is it possible that this pain is meant to foreshadow the agony of the cross that the offspring of the woman will endure?



The pain of childbirth is terrible, but the joy of a newborn child is greater than the pain of birth. When a mother holds her baby in her arms, the pain of childbirth fades into a memory and the joy of new life fills her heart. Is it possible that this joy is meant to foreshadow the joy of the resurrection of Jesus? I am convinced that when God brings judgment that He does so with the loving objective of leading people to salvation. And I think that the pain of childbirth must have helped to lead Eve to faith in the Messiah who was to come from among her own offspring.



What about Adam? What might Adam have learned from the judgment that brought hard labor? In the Garden of Eden food was freely available and labor was a joy. Outside the Garden, food was to be obtained only through hard labor and even then nothing was certain. Even if Adam labored with all of his strength, he might receive a crop of thorns and thistles. Or a storm might come and destroy his crop before it was ready for harvest.



What does a man learn when the hard labor of planting a crop yields little or nothing? I grew up on a farm and I can tell you that crop failures cause people to search for God. In the city, there are many atheists, because in the city a man can imagine that he is in control of his own destiny. But if you go and talk to farmers, you find that there are few atheist farmers, because a farming man knows that many things are not under his control. A Japanese rice farmer may believe in many gods, and an American corn farmer may believe in only one God, but atheist farmers are very rare.



Farming teaches a man his limits. Farming teaches a man that his own efforts are never enough; mercy from heaven is essential. Farming teaches a man to pray. But even if you are not a farmer, if you take the time to notice how many things at work and school are beyond your control, then you can learn the same lessons. Proud men imagine that everything is under their own control, but men and women with eyes to see know that their efforts will succeed only if God adds grace.



Because of God's judgment, the woman is continually reminded that the Messiah will come and bring great joy, but only after terrible suffering. Because of God's judgment the man is continually reminded that he is not god, and so the man learns to cry to heaven for mercy and grace. God's judgments teach the way of salvation. Does Adam learn? Are Adam and Eve saved? I think the answer is yes. When they sinned, at first they showed no signs of repentance, but from now on we will begin to see signs of faith.



There is a hint of Adam's growing faith in Genesis 3:20, **"Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living."** Eve is first named here, after God has announced the gospel and the judgments. Do you know what the name, "Eve," means? It means, "life." Adam and Eve don't have any children yet, so I think this name is a declaration of Adam's new faith in

God's promises and God's love. Adam believes that Eve will bring forth the Savior who will restore true spiritual life.

Next, Genesis 3:21 tells us, **“The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.”** God clothed them. The coverings of leaves that Adam and Eve made after they sinned were inadequate. But now God gives them new garments. I think this shows God's acceptance of Adam's new faith. At the same time, the use of an animal's skin speaks prophetically about the cross by teaching that the forgiveness of sins requires the shedding of blood. Many people assume that God killed the animal, but the verse does not actually say that. And I wonder whether perhaps the Lord had Adam sacrifice the animal as an expression of his faith. If so, then that would explain why animal sacrifice is already considered the proper sacrifice in the story of Cain and Abel in Genesis chapter 4.



**Genesis 3:22, “And the Lord God said, “The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.”**” For Christians, God's use of the plural here is easy to understand because we believe that the Bible teaches that God is a Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But what does the Scripture mean when it says that God knows good and evil? Theologians have not come to a final answer to this question. But we learned before that, “knowing,” in the Bible involves experience. Adam sinned and experienced the pain and suffering that came from sin. God does not sin, but God does experience the pain and suffering of our sins. We see this most dramatically at the cross of Christ when Jesus takes upon Himself the sins of the world. But I think that God actually experiences pain and sorrow every time we sin. Our sins grieve the heart of God.

After they sinned, Adam and Eve also knew the joy of good and the pain and sorrow of evil. It became part of their daily lives. And today, it is also part of our experience. But God loves us and He does not want us to experience the pain and suffering that come from sin forever. So the Lord God said concerning man, **“He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.”** Apparently, even after they sinned, it was still possible for Adam and Eve to live forever. If they had eaten from the tree of life, they would have lived forever in their sinful and fallen state.

Can you imagine how terrible that would be? What a horrible thing it would have been if Adam and Eve had lived forever as fallen people and had to look forever upon the suffering and pain of the world knowing that it all began with their own sin. Make no mistake, when God drove Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden and closed the way to the Tree of Life, God did it out of love and mercy. Instead of living forever in the mess of the fallen world, how much better it is to go home to heaven at the right time. Death is an enemy and one day death will be destroyed. But in this time God uses even death for our good, because departing this fallen world and going home to the Lord at the right time is mercy and grace.

#### IV. Closing

If we have eyes to see, we can find the Good News of God's love, mercy, and grace on every page of the Scriptures. In today's scripture, we read of judgment, death, cursing, and pain. Yet, when we focused our eyes on the Lord, we saw that everything that He did flowed from His love and prepared the way of salvation for Adam and Eve and also for us. God was not surprised when Adam and Eve sinned. Before He created the world, God knew they would sin and that He would have to judge them. But ultimately, it was a judgment that led to new and even more wonderful life.

In the heavenly Jerusalem that God has promised, **(Revelation 21:4), “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”** Heaven will be far more wonderful than we can imagine, far more wonderful even than the Garden of Eden. And the joy that we will know there together with Jesus will be truly amazing. Let's pray



#### V. Closing Prayer