

### 3.29.21 - Interpretations of God's "Coats"

We would like to show that there are many ways to interpret a popular passage and the dangers in taking a passage to mean what you want it to say instead of taking a passage in the context of the rest of scripture. The passage is **Gen 3:21 Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.** The verse is a popular “go to” passage for anyone trying to defend their “must be clothed at all times today” position. Naturists tend to view this verse in line with the many other verses that mention the commonplace of nonsexual nudity and that these coats were provided as a means of protection from the coming harsh elements. They do not see this as a condemnation of nakedness, but rather as a sign of a loving God and that even though the coats are there for protection that this in no way teaches that nakedness is not approved by God. Our view is that we need to interpret this verse to match what the Bible says elsewhere which is not the case with “clothes always” interpretations.

Let’s start with a textile interpretation. In order to stay consistent with their naked is bad viewpoint they say that before the fall, Adam and Eve were clothed with a righteous glow like a glowing cloud or halo over the whole body. This glow disappeared when they ate the fruit and suddenly, they saw that they were naked. In their shame over the nakedness they sewed fig leaves together to replace the righteous glow. Since God knew the leaves would not be much of a match for thorns or cold weather, He made them coats of skins. Today, since we cannot return to the sinless state and righteous glow of the pre-fall world, we all need to wear clothing to cover our sin and shame.

Now let’s look a little deeper at this one. First...the righteous glow is added to scripture in order to justify clothing. This “glow” is not mentioned in this verse, in the creation story or anywhere else in scripture that we were able to find. Why would it be needed and what purpose would it serve? This viewpoint comes from a person with an incorrect view of the body. Rather than seeing the body as a special creation of God, made in the Creator’s own image, the pinnacle of His handiwork and made with His very own hands, they see the body as shameful and dirty and in need of covering. This glow as we see it, is not needed for any reason that we know about. God knew before He created Adam and Eve when they would sin. The glow isn’t there for God's benefit, He isn’t embarrassed by seeing them naked any more than a parent is of their young child. He knew if they were obeying His command and Adam and Eve knew if they ate of the fruit or not, so the glow wasn’t needed for “proof” of their obedience...it was not needed to tell them they were righteous. No one else was there to impress with announcing that

Adam and Eve were righteous. If there was no righteous glow, then there is no need to replace it with clothing. There are no verses that explain that now that their glow is gone, they need clothing to replace the glow...that idea was added to scripture in pastor's sermons just like the righteous glow is. Well, my Bible says that adding to or removing from scripture is not pleasing to God. There are clear verses on this.

Second, there is nowhere in the creation account that states that Adam or Eve was now ashamed and so they had to cover their bodies to hide their shame. This idea is also added to the account by well-meaning pastors. The Bible tells us they covered and hid in "fear", not shame. Well, tell me what child does not hide in fear when they are aware of the fact that they disobeyed their parent and the parent is now looking for them or would be soon. Rather than shame being the motivating factor as many teach, when you see this as fear you understand that the sewing of the fig leaves to hide among the vegetation of the garden you see that the leaves were more camouflage to help them hide rather than shame suits. PS – the camouflage did not hide them from God, He sees us naked and exposed at all times whether we are "clothed" or not. As an additional note, nowhere in this account did God condemn their nakedness, He did however ask the question "who told thee" indicating that someone told them to cover or camouflage, but that idea did not come from Him. Indicating that the idea to cover was NOT His idea. He created them "naked and not ashamed", so you might say that the idea to cover was "ungodly" since it was not from Him.

Some teach that the Hebrew word translated "aprons" could be translated "loin cloth". They also teach that Adam and Eve apparently only covered the genitals with their fig leaf outfit, but God made them "coats" which obviously covers much more. So, they conclude that God must want more covered than just the genitals. It is an interpretation of what is in the verses, but it does not fit with the rest of scripture...that makes it a misinterpretation. For Pete's sake, we don't even know what these "coats" looked like. They could have been designed like a robe to be wrapped for warmth and protection but could also have been worn open in the front on slightly warmer days or removed entirely for hot days. To speak like we have authority on what they looked like would be adding to scripture again just like before.

The verse says that the coats were made of skins. We believe that an innocent animal had to die to get those skins. We believe that God was the first to "provide Himself a lamb" for Adam and Eve as a symbolic covering of their sin. That Adam and Eve then wore that covering for protection when needed and that the

covering served as a reminder of the sacrifice for their sake. When God taught Adam and Eve that they would surely die when they ate the forbidden fruit, He meant it. We believe that His next lesson was that the animal would die in their place that day just as Christ would someday die in our place. Now, that's our opinion, but it's not the only reasonable idea. For humans, the only way to get real skins of animals is that the animal had to die. But the Bible does not say that the coats were made of "animal" skins or that God killed animals to get these skins. God can do anything...and He had just created the entire world with the spoken word so there is no reason not to think that He could not have simply spoken the word and suddenly there were skins. Yes, we remember the verse at the end of John's gospel that says **And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.** Which means all the detail of what happened in every account is not included in order to keep the volume of words in the Bible manageable. It would be right to assume they were animal skins, but let's not take God's sovereignty out of the equation. We can go a lot of different ways from here. We will try a few.

If they were animal skins, did God take the animals that Adam and Eve made pets of to make the coats? Well, that is what He did at the Passover in Egypt as He had them bring the lamb into their homes for a while so they could observe it to know that there was no spot or blemish in it, but that is not to say that He had to do it that way. The truth is that God is not trying to punish us, and He wasn't trying to punish Adam and Eve. He is trying to train us and to disciple us to be all that He put into us when we were formed. Given what we know of human nature today and how easily they departed from God's rule, we see the need for a reminder of the cost for sin and having to wear the coats of their pets would certainly serve as a reminder of that cost. God is definitely big on reminders...just look at all of the observations of Holy days and Sabbaths. Well, if the skins were the animal skins of animals from the garden that would have been so much of a reminder that they would not have wanted to wear them often. This certainly makes a case for the continuation of the acceptance of nakedness not a departure from it. Again, God could easily have made coats of animal skins without killing any animals if He wanted to...after all He turned water into wine without crushing a single grape! He fed thousands with only enough bread and fished to feed one or two people, and He put a coin in a fish's mouth for taxes. So...nothing is impossible for God!

It is possible that God added something to Adam and Eve's skin in order to survive the environment outside of the garden. Something changed at the time of the flood that made eating animal products necessary for good health. Vegetarians today are

unable to get some of the B vitamins that come from animals and suffer the ailments that result from this lack. Before the flood, people did not eat animals. Something changed. There could have been something similar about the garden that was not present outside the garden which could be corrected by a skin change. This however does not seem very likely as it isn't a "coat" that could be removed, but it fits better than adding something like a righteous glowing cloud or halo.

If you adhere to the strict view that since God made them coats we have to now be clothed, we need to ask the question that since God made the coats out of skins and Adam and Eve made their aprons out of plants...does that mean that God wants us to only use animal skins for coats or clothing and not plant material like cotton? It does not seem any different than saying the coats mean that we must be covered at all times.

If God did kill the animals as an illustration of substitutionary death...the animal died in place of Adam and Eve for their disobedience. It would serve as a perfect illustration of the work on the cross that paid our sin debt. It even illustrates Adam's and Eve's inability to pay for their own crimes. As an offering for sin, Adam and Eve didn't own the animals...God did. Just as we cannot pay our sin debt...Jesus had to do it for us. Adam and Eve could not pay their sin debt so God would have had to provide Himself a lamb. Just like salvation costs us nothing, this sacrifice cost Adam and Eve nothing. To use this account to teach that we must wear clothes at all times, misses the entire point of the account. This account...so vital to the lesson on sin, sacrifice, repentance, forgiveness and restoration is now used to teach such a petty thing like you should cover in shame is in itself the real shame. God provided us with the perfect foretelling of our situation and what He would do for us one day. We have sinned and come short of the glory of God. We needed our sin forgiven and without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. We are unable to pay our sin debt and we need someone else to provide the sacrifice for us. Jesus, the sacrificial lamb is provided and by His shed blood our sins are covered. God provides us with the protection we need to walk through this world filled with thorns and elements that are out to hurt us, but He provides our protection...He provides our covering. Now...no other covering is needed! We have nothing to be ashamed of, nothing even to be afraid of. His grace (unmerited favor) has been provided...we need only to accept it as we cannot afford it ourselves. King David refused to make a sacrifice that he couldn't pay for, but here in Adam and Eve's case as in our case...we could not afford the cost as we had nothing to present that would be acceptable, so God had to pay it for us! Praise the Lord for His lovingkindness, for His mercy and for His grace!

Now we will back up a little in the verse and talk about the coats. How much did they cover? It is very easy to answer that question with your church's dress code. Neck to knee or longer if you're really spiritual. Of course, when God provides a coat then it's going to be really "modest". God covers all our sin, so obviously God's coat covered all their body. Obviously, Adam and Eve's plant-based clothing of loin cloth aprons didn't cover enough so God had to step in. Only when you look to the rest of scripture and see the many illustrations of social nudity at God's direction and without His condemnation this hard line approach of what the coats were really "leaves" us with no standard at all. The fossil record indicates the whole earth had a tropical climate before the flood. The flood was a long time after the departure from Eden. Logic tells us that if the coats of skins were completely covering the body, neck to knee at least and that God now required Adam and Eve to wear them full time, then Adam and Eve would have quickly suffered from heat exhaustion and/or heat stroke and died before having any offspring and there would be no you and me. Add to that the fact that these humans were accustomed to being naked and you would probably not call them coats as we use the term today.

There are no instructions on when these coats needed to be worn. Did they need to wear them all the time or just for special occasions? If the lesson was that we now require a covering, then they would need to be worn all of the time. This does not seem likely since even textile believers allow husband and wife to be naked when alone with each other and there was no one else on the planet at the time so this does not fit with reality. Again, it is not likely that they wore anything like our modern-day image of a coat all the time because they had no one to offend with their nakedness and it was warm enough that any clothing would be very uncomfortable. If Adam and Eve, who were the only two people on the planet now needed to cover at all times, then husbands and wives today cannot see each other naked...if you're going to stay consistent with your doctrine.

Were the coats similar to the priest's garments and only used for approaching God? Could they have been "work clothing" that was used with thorns? This does not seem very likely since Adam was smart enough to design and make aprons. He could solve the problem of dealing with thorns with only a few encounters. Were they like a cross on a chain that they wore all the time to remind themselves that God did not kill them like they deserved? The bottom line is that we are not told!!! Assuming an answer because it fits your religious ideas is nothing more than adding to scripture.

We are not trying to say this or that is the right interpretation. We want to show that there are many options for this one verse and suggest there are things that we just do not know. Apparently, God did not think that we needed to know all the details. We also need to give the freedom under grace to allow others to have their interpretations of what we "know" is true (humor intended). We could find that we were wrong...not likely, but it's possible.

The truth is that the church is in sin by adding to scripture and then forcing members to think alike simply to protect some well-intentioned, but unbiblical doctrine like the righteous glow to justify clothing and the modern modest apparel movement. A doctrine that is in direct conflict with the intent with which the Holy Spirit through the apostle Paul gave it to us. It was meant to teach humility in our attire and today we teach our Sunday Best creating a pride situation rather than a humble spirit. May we all maintain our humility while being confident in the Truth of God's Word.