

“The Beginning of Christ’s Mediation”
(Genesis 3)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

1. Last week, we opened the topic of the History of Redemption, beginning with a definition of exactly what we are going to study.
 - a. We’re considering the time frame between the Fall of man – when redemption was first applied – to the time when the last of God’s elect is gathered in at the end of the world.
 - b. We saw this work began earlier in eternity with the covenant of redemption: the covenant between the Father, Son and Spirit, where the Father would send the Son; the Son would submit, come into the world as a man, and work out our redemption through His perfect life and atoning death; and the Spirit would apply what the Son earned to the hearts of the elect – the return of the Spirit Himself into the soul.
 - c. We also saw that this work will continue after, at least the fruits of redemption, to all eternity.
 - d. We’re considering the things God did in history to bring this about: the things He did to prepare for the coming of His Son, that coming itself, and then the work that continues after it to the end of the world.

2. We also considered the reasons behind the Lord’s doing this: if we know at the outset what the Lord is doing, we’ll better be able to understand His work (much like knowing what a construction crew is building will make each step easier to understand).
 - a. God intends through this work to glorify Himself by subduing His enemies who originally tried to overthrow His work.
 - b. He intends to glorify Himself by redeeming and restoring the creation from the curse sin brought.
 - c. He intends to glorify Himself by gathering His elect to Himself and perfecting and glorifying them.
 - d. And He intends in the way He does this work to glorify each member of the Godhead:
 - (i) The Father, for paying an infinite price for our redemption.
 - (ii) The Son, for being that infinite price for our redemption.
 - (iii) And the Spirit, for being the infinitely valuable gift that the Father purchased through His Son.

B. Preview.

1. This morning, we’re going to look at the beginning of that work.
 - a. The first time frame we’ll consider is from the Fall of man to the Incarnation of Christ.
 - (i) This is a time of preparation – of forerunners, of types and shadows.

- (ii) This is similar to the work the Lord did in bringing about the Reformation – He didn't do it all at once, but prepared the church and the world for that blessing through a series of men, movements and events.
 - (iii) The Lord doesn't bring blessing or judgment without a time of preparation.
 - (iv) How much more when He is preparing the world to receive the greatest blessing He would ever send.
- b. The things the Lord did from the time of the Fall to the coming of Christ were to point to that coming, to show us who the Messiah would be and what He would do.
- (i) This was what His many lesser salvations and deliverances for His church were pointing toward.
 - (ii) This is what His revelations were pointing towards: The Lord was beginning to shine the light of the Gospel.
 - (iii) But they were only forerunners to the One who would be the light of the world.
 - (a) Like the light of the moon and stars shining at night, waiting for the dawning of the day when Jesus would come (2 Cor. 3:10).
 - (b) The church at this time was like an underage heir, under tutors and governors until the time appointed by the father (Gal. 4:1-3).
 - (iv) The Lord saved some during this time, but relatively few compared to those after Christ came.
 - (v) And even those He saved, in one respect, were in anticipation of those He would save after Christ came.
2. So let's begin by looking at the first time frame in this first epoch of Redemptive History, that of the Fall to the Flood. This morning, we'll consider the Fall: the beginning of Christ's mediation.
- a. Time wise, this is the period farthest from Christ's incarnation, but this is where the work begins that won't be finished until the end of the world.
 - b. We'll see three things:
 - (i) The beginning of Christ's prophetic work as He prophesies of His coming through the curse on the serpent.
 - (ii) The beginning of Christ's priestly work, as He institutes sacrifice.
 - (iii) The beginning of Christ's kingly work, as His fight against Satan begins, and He rescues two souls from his power.

II. Sermon.

- A. First, let's consider the beginning of Christ's prophetic work as He prophesies of His coming through the curse on the serpent.
 - 1. As soon as man fell, Christ began His work as Mediator.
 - a. He had already been chosen for this work, but He didn't actually begin it until man fell away from God.
 - b. As soon as the Fall took place, Christ assumed His role of Mediator and presented Himself before the Father.
 - (i) He took His stand between God in His infinitely holy and offended Majesty, and man who had offended God.

- (ii) And the Father accepted Him: Christ prevented Him from pouring out the full extent of His wrath.
 - c. How do we know this is true?
 - (i) It's because God began to show His mercy toward man immediately, and He doesn't show mercy except through a mediator.
 - (a) God didn't destroy man, as He did the angels when they had fallen.
 - (b) Furthermore, if the Lord had not immediately restrained Satan, he would have destroyed Adam and Eve.
 - (c) But Christ began His work as the captain of the armies of the Lord and came to their defense.
 - (d) From that day forward, Christ began to minister to His church in all of His offices – to teach them His truth as prophet, to intercede for them as priest, and to subdue, defend and rule them – as well as to rule and overrule the world for their good – as king.
 - (ii) As soon as Satan overthrew man as God's vicegerent, Christ began to resist him.
 - (a) He was appointed as the Captain of the Lord's hosts, the captain of their salvation.
 - (b) The concerns of this world became His when man sinned.
 - (iii) God the Father would no longer be immediately involved with those who had rebelled against Him and apostatized, but only through the mediator, in teaching, governing or giving them any benefits.
 - (a) And so when we see in Scripture that God revealed Himself from time to time and communicated with His people, it was through the second person of the Trinity, the Son of God.
 - (b) When He would appear to them, it was usually, if not exclusively, the second person of the Godhead.
 - (c) John writes in his Gospel, "No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained *Him*" (1:18).
 - (d) Paul tells us that Christ is the image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15).
 - d. Christ not only took the care of the world on Himself, but the whole universe, including the angels to send them to help His people.
 - e. It was at the Fall that Christ's work as Mediator began.
2. Christ began His prophetic work at the Fall, as we see through the promise the Lord implied in His curse on the serpent.
- a. It was because He took up the office of prophet that the Gospel was first preached in the curse placed upon the serpent, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel" (Gen. 3:15).
 - (i) Here, the Lord begins to reveal the fact that He would provide another surety for man – another guarantor of the covenant – after the first had failed.

- (ii) “This was the first revelation of the covenant of grace. This was the first dawning of the light of the gospel on earth.”
 - b. The Fall had plunged the world into darkness, when before it had been filled with the light of the blessing of God.
 - (i) It was darker now than it had been at the beginning of the world. At the beginning there was physical darkness, but now the darkness was moral.
 - (ii) We see just how dark it was when Adam and Eve saw their nakedness, tried to cover it with fig leaves, and ran and hid when they heard the voice of God walking in the garden.
 - (iii) When God said, “What is this you have done?” and “Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” they were afraid the Lord was going to destroy them.
 - c. But when God pronounced the curse on the serpent, He gave the first glimmer of the light of the Gospel, the first ray of hope.
 - (i) It wasn’t very clear, and it wasn’t even spoken directly to Adam and Eve.
 - (ii) But it was comprehensive: a Seed would come from the woman who would crush the head of this one who had brought about the Fall of man and of all creation.
 - (iv) The Lord revealed His mercy even before He pronounced judgment on Adam and Eve, perhaps to strengthen them and give them hope, so they wouldn’t be crushed by the weight of their condemnation.
 - d. Here we see one of the greatest things the Lord was intending to do through the work of redemption – to subdue His enemies under the feet of His Son.
 - (i) Satan had triumphed in bringing about the fall of man, but God was telling him very plainly that he would not completely nor finally triumph, but that the seed of the woman would have a complete and final triumph over him.
 - (ii) Satan had failed to overthrow God when God revealed His plan to the angels.
 - (iii) He did succeed in overthrowing man temporarily, but only temporarily, because of Christ.
 - e. The first thing Christ did as prophet was to reveal the Gospel.
- B. Second, let’s consider the beginning of Christ’s priestly work, as He institutes sacrifice.
1. Soon after the Fall, the Lord appointed animal sacrifice as a type of the sacrifice Christ would make when He came to offer Himself to God.
 - a. Animal sacrifices didn’t begin with Moses.
 - (i) They were a part of the worship God instituted long before then, even from the beginning of the church.
 - (ii) Abraham, Isaac and Jacob all offered sacrifices; Noah before them, and Abel before him.
 - (iii) This wasn’t something they discovered through nature, since God doesn’t tell us in nature whether this would be pleasing to Him or not.

- b. God instituted it Himself; He must have since we know He accepted it – God doesn't accept what He doesn't appoint.
 - (i) Nadab and Abihu, the two sons of Aaron, offered strange fire to the Lord – something He hadn't commanded them.
 - (ii) Not only did He not accept their sacrifice, He judged them on the spot: "Fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them."
 - (iii) Moses said to Aaron, "It is what the LORD spoke, saying, 'By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, and before all the people I will be honored'" (Lev. 10:1-3).
 - (iv) The Lord doesn't accept worship He hasn't instituted – He accepted sacrifice, and so He must have instituted it.
 - (v) Also worship that isn't commanded by God can't be offered in faith.
 - (a) Faith must act on a promise God makes; where there is no promise there can be no faith that it will be accepted.
 - (b) But without faith, we cannot please God (Heb. 11:6).
 - (c) What does this tell us about worship God has not commanded?

- 2. We see sacrifice taking place as early as Gen. 4:4, and that God accepted Abel's sacrifice of the firstlings of his flock (Heb. 11:4).
 - a. This was very likely instituted immediately after the Lord revealed the covenant of grace, through His own example of slaughtering the animals and taking the skins to cover the nakedness of Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:21), as a picture of the righteousness of Christ that would come through His sacrifice.
 - b. They had lost their original righteousness, the moral image of God, and without it, they felt naked and exposed.
 - (i) But the Lord covered their nakedness with a picture of that perfect righteousness that would cover over their sins.
 - (ii) Also, life would be sacrificed to bring this about. Remember, the Lord had not given them the animals for food. Even after the Fall, they still ate the plants of the field (Gen. 3:18). The first time He allowed them to eat the animals was after the Flood: "Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you; I give all to you, as *I gave* the green plant" (Gen. 9:3).
 - c. First, there is the word of promise – "He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel" – then a type to reinforce the promise – the sacrifice of animals.
 - (i) This was the beginning of Christ's priestly work. It was a reminder to them and to the church from then on that the wages of sin is death, and the only way to remove sin was through sacrifice – something or someone had to die for that sin; this was God's justice.
 - (ii) It was from this original institution that all the nations practiced the custom of sacrifice, which is another proof that all the nations descended from Adam.

- C. Finally, let's consider the beginning of Christ's kingly work, as His fight against Satan begins, and He rescues two from his power.

1. It was soon after the Fall that the Lord began to save men through Christ's redemption. Adam and Eve were the first fruits of that redemption.
 - a. The fact that their eyes were opened after the Fall is an indication that they were awakened to the sense of their guilt. They saw they were naked; they saw their shame and guilt and tried to cover their nakedness by sewing together some fig leaves. When men are convicted, they generally try to hide their guilt by doing works of their own.
 - b. They were further awakened when they heard the voice of God as He was coming to condemn them. The figs leaves were not enough: they ran and tried to hide themselves among the trees.
 - c. God's calling them to account awakened them even further.
 - d. But as they stood there before God with nothing between them and Him, God gave them hope by revealing something of His plan to save them through the Redeemer.
 - e. His pronouncing judgment on them must have made them even more afraid, but He encouraged them further by killing the animals and clothing them, again as a type of the redeemer who was already promised through the curse on Satan.

2. Adam and Eve embraced that promise.
 - a. The Lord said He would put enmity between the serpent and the woman – indicating that He was taking Eve back to Himself.
 - b. And He slew some animals, as a type of Christ, and clothed their nakedness, showing that He had provided a righteousness to cover the nakedness of their sin.

3. Christ began His kingly work then by defeating Satan and redeeming two captives out of his hands.
 - a. Satan thought he not only had Adam and Eve, but also their descendents. But Christ subdued him and delivered His people.
 - b. We have one further example of Christ redeeming one of their children, Abel.
 - (i) Abel was the first to go to heaven through Christ and to be glorified through His work.
 - (ii) He was also the first to have his soul conducted to heaven by the angels, and the first one the elect angels had the opportunity to see redeemed – to have lost paradise, only to gain a greater one now in heaven.
 - (iii) They saw the greatness and the glory of the work Christ's redemption would bring about.

4. And so we see the beginning of Christ's work as prophet, priest and king.
 - a. This is His work as Mediator that began after the Fall and will continue until the last of His sheep have been gathered in.
 - b. In closing, let me ask these three questions:
 - (i) Have you heard His truth?
 - (ii) Have you received His sacrifice to atone for your sins?
 - (iii) Has He subdued you to Himself, as evidenced by your submitting to Him?
 - (iv) Jesus is the only Mediator: listen to Him, receive Him, submit to Him, and you will be saved. Amen.