

COVENANT OF ANIMAL SACRIFICE

SUMMARY

The Serpent had tricked Eve, and Adam along with her, into forsaking the Covenant of Adam (see our paper on that topic for a full description) and entering into the Covenant of the Serpent (that has its own paper too). When Adam and Eve fell by sinning they became conscious of sin and fearful of judgment. They lost the glory God had clothed them with and found themselves naked, without any covering of protection. They hid themselves in the Garden from God. The Serpent promised their eyes would be opened but now they found themselves cowering in the darkness of trees. The Serpent promised they would become like God but now they were behaving like animals. Now they knew first two of the Serpent's sayings were lies, they dreaded the possibility his third saying "You will surely not die" was also untrue.

THE KEY IDEA

A covenant is NOT a contract (as we normally think).

A contract is an agreement between identified parties. A contract is a transaction.

A covenant is an agreement that changes the identity of the parties. A covenant is a transformation.

The concept of transforming one's identity is novel to some. Western thinking has moved to the principle of inalienable human rights from birth regardless of age, gender or station in life. This has not always been the case. The foundation of Western civilization is Judeo-Christian belief as taught in the Bible. In the Bible rights and privileges are not the same for all people and vary depending on age, gender, and many other criteria. As we will see, the Bible shows it is possible to change one's identity through covenant. As would be expected, changing one's identity changes one's rights, privileges, and station in life.

THE COVENANT OF ANIMAL SACRIFICE

When Adam and Eve sinned they came under the sentence of death. They sewed fig leaves and hid in the Garden but the LORD found them. The sweet friend Adam had walked with in the Garden in the cool of the day transformed into the impersonal judge of all the earth: a fearsome Master with whom to deal.

The LORD offered Adam and Eve the covenant of animal sacrifice. Instead of immediately dying for their sin, Adam and Eve's transgression would be covered. God would look at the blood of the sacrificial animal and would not see the sin of Adam and Eve. Importantly – the sin would still be there, it would not be removed - it would only be covered. This would permit Adam and Eve to live in their physical skin for a while longer on Earth but they would eventually die for their sin.

As it is written:

“...it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin.” (Hebrews 10:4)

The covenant of animal sacrifice did not set aside the covenant of Adam and Eve with the Serpent. That remained in force. The covenant of animal sacrifice merely dealt in a partial way with the broken relationship of Adam and Eve to God.

By grace, not conditional upon the faithfulness of Adam and Eve to offer animal sacrifices or any merit of theirs, **God promised the coming of a Seed of the Woman who would crush the head of the Serpent. The death of the Serpent would terminate the covenant with the Serpent.** The crushing of the head of the Serpent would set aside the covenant with the Serpent but it would not restore the blessings of the Garden of Eden. However, it opened the possibility that God would offer another covenant, which we now know to be the New Covenant in Jesus Christ, by which the relationship of man to God could be restored and man could hope to eat of the tree of life and live forever. The animal sacrifice system did not offer that – only a temporary covering of sin.



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The covenant transformation:

from the immediate sentence of death (for sin) **to confession of sin and animal sacrifice** (sin covered for a time)

Signs of the covenant:

shedding of blood (animal sacrifice)
changing clothes (wearing animal skins)
monument (altar of stones)

¹ Source of image: www.answersingenesis.org

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| The new authority / role: | <u>priest</u> (intercessor to God; one who offers sacrifices) |
| The new responsibility: | <u>continual confession and animal sacrifice</u> (to cover sin) |
| The new privileges / rights: | <u>life of faith</u> (waiting for the promised Seed of the Woman to come and crush the Serpent; hoping God would offer a New Covenant to restore the opportunity to eat from the Tree of Life and live forever) |
| The new destiny: | <u>death</u> (the destiny of man under the covenant with the Serpent is unchanged by animal sacrifice) |