

The Adamic Covenant

Two Estates

There are two basic types of covenants. One concerns our obligations while we live; the other concerns our obligations when we die. Although Greek and Hebrew use the same word for both types,¹ English uses two words to distinguish them: contract and will. In the Bible, the words *covenant* and *testament* are used instead. Both types of covenant concern our “estate.” Contracts concern its accumulation during our lifetime. Wills concern its distribution after our death. Adam had a contract with God, under which he accumulated an estate during his lifetime. That contract is called the Covenant of Works or *the Law*.² Christ also had a contract with God, and an estate that he accumulated during his lifetime. His contract is called the Redemptive Covenant, or *the Gospel*.³ We are beneficiaries of both estates: the Law and the Gospel.

The estate we inherit from Adam under the Law is death, because death is the penalty for violating the Law. As Adam’s seed, his sin and guilt are imputed to us, or considered to be our own, as are his obligations under the Law.⁴ Imputed sin is also known as “original sin.”

The estate we inherit from Christ under the Gospel is the promise of eternal life, because eternal life is the reward for perfectly fulfilling the Law.⁵ As Abraham’s seed,⁶ Christ’s righteousness and reward are imputed to us, or considered to be our own.⁷ We are also forgiven of our sin, because Christ paid sin’s debt on the cross, a ransom paid to redeem his people.⁸

Our Inheritance Through Faith

Between these two estates stands *faith*. By declaring our faith in Christ alone, and repenting of our sin,⁹ we acknowledge and accept Christ as our surety.¹⁰ A surety is someone who performs the duties of another, or pays the debts of another, on that person’s behalf. They guarantee performance on a contract. Christ performed our duties, under Adam’s contract, on our

¹ OT:1285 *be'reeth*; NT:1242 *diatheke*.

² Gen 2:16-17 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it **you shall surely die**." Luke 10:25-28 "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?" So he answered and said, "'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,' and 'your neighbor as yourself.'" And He said to him, "You have answered rightly; **do this and you will live**."

³ John 17:4 I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.

⁴ Rom 5:12-13 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned — for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. ESV

⁵ Rom 5:15 But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many.

⁶ Gal 3:29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

⁷ Rom 4:22-24 "it was accounted to him for righteousness." Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead,

⁸ Matt 20:28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

⁹ Mark 1:15 "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

¹⁰ Heb 7:22 by so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant.

behalf.¹¹ We are forgiven the debt incurred by our original and our ongoing sin, because it has all been paid by Christ on the cross.¹² That is the benefit of his *death*. Beyond that, his righteousness is considered to be our own. That is the benefit of his *life*.¹³ These benefits are applied to us, or distributed to us, through faith.¹⁴ This removal of sin, and application of righteousness, is called *Justification*. We are justified, declared righteous, through faith in Jesus Christ. Accordingly, our estate in Christ replaces our estate in Adam.¹⁵ Without the debt of our sin, the curse of death is lifted from us. There is no longer any condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.¹⁶ We receive the Holy Spirit as a pledge of God's fulfillment of the promise.¹⁷ We are adopted as God's children.¹⁸ Thus, what we receive in the New Covenant of Christ's blood is the right to an inheritance in the kingdom.¹⁹ We are co-heirs with Christ.²⁰

Between our declaration of faith, and the inheritance I just described, is the life we live in Christ, which is a life lived under a Covenant of Grace.²¹ This entire course is devoted to learning how to live that life. We begin by recognizing who we are without Christ.

The Fall

The Fall is the moment in which Eve, and then Adam, ate of the forbidden fruit. It describes our condition apart from Christ. It reveals the impact of sin on us individually, but as importantly, on everything around us. Sin altered Adam's relationship with God forever. But in God's grace, that relationship was not destroyed. It was preserved under a Covenant of Grace.

¹¹ Rom 8:3-4 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

¹² Gal 3:13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us. Titus 2:14 4 who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people...

¹³ It is not enough to be forgiven of wrong-doing so as to avoid the penalty. We must also perform the required duties to inherit the kingdom.

¹⁴ Eph 1:11-12 In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.

¹⁵ 1 Cor 15:22 2 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. Rom 5:18 Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.

¹⁶ Rom 8:1-2 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. NIV

¹⁷ 2 Cor 1:21-22 Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. NIV Eph 1:13-14 Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory. NIV

¹⁸ Gal 4:4-6 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!"

¹⁹ Luke 22:20 Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you. Heb 9:15 And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

²⁰ Rom 8:16-17 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs — heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ;

²¹ Gal 2:20-21 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!" NIV

Prior to the Fall in the Garden of Eden, Adam was told what he might and might not do there. He was to tend the Garden. He might live freely, eating of any tree in the Garden except one. These instructions were given to him directly by God *for his benefit and protection*, not to limit his freedom. Violation of this “law” would result in death. “On the day you eat of the tree of good and evil, you will surely die.”²² This is the penalty for any and all violations of God’s law.²³

We may assume that Adam had free will at the time. He could choose to do what God had asked, and avoid what God prohibited. He was intelligent and responsible: he named all the creatures; he was given charge of the Garden. But we have to believe that he wasn’t wise, at least not in the sense of being able to distinguish right from wrong, or good from evil. After all, he hadn’t eaten of that particular tree. He was naïve and innocent; he had not yet experienced evil. He was expected to trust God’s judgment in the matter, without exercising his untested free will, or self-rule (i.e. his autonomy). And here is the crux of the matter: he would either trust God’s rule, or he would be self-ruled.

Trust is always dependent on the object of our trust. Could Adam determine if God was trustworthy? We are told that he was in the direct presence of God.²⁴ He experienced God face to face. He understood that God was his Creator. He understood that his sustenance was given to him by God. He had been in complete safety in the presence of all the animals of the earth. He knew that God provided Eve to him because no other being on earth was comparable to him in order to support and comfort him. In all of these things, God’s love and provision for him were evident. There was no event, no condition, that would suggest that God could not be trusted.

On the other hand, there was no event, no condition, under which God would *have* to be trusted by Adam – until the serpent arrives. What was going on prior to the serpent’s arrival? What brought about the evil desire in their hearts?²⁵ Eve was Adam’s constant companion, perhaps more so than God. Did Adam come to rely more on Eve than on God? Her purpose was to “support” or “succor” Adam so that he would not be lonely or uncomforted. She was not only his companion but his confidant, someone he could talk to on his own level – above the animals, and below God. This is where communication with God begins to break down. I suspect that Adam pursued his horizontal relationship with Eve at the expense of his vertical relationship with God. In other words, his loyalty was split. He was content to have someone other than God as the object of his attention and affection, someone other than God to approve of him. So too with Eve. God’s jealousy is aroused against those who seek the approval of men more than they seek the approval of God.²⁶ Adam is now in a precarious position, joined to his wife as one flesh,

²² Gen. 2:17

²³ Rom 6:23 For the wages of sin is death , but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. James 2:10 For whoever shall keep the whole law , and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.

²⁴ Gen. 2:19; 3:8,10

²⁵ James 1:13-14 Let no one say when he is tempted , "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.

²⁶ John 12:43 for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

but apparently not joined to God as one Spirit.²⁷ This is the main reason we need SOLITUDE. We must have balance in our vertical and horizontal relationships. We need FELLOWSHIP, but we must not be other-dependent when it comes to our self-worth. We must not see ourselves only in the eyes of others, always worrying about what they think of us, always trying to please them at the expense of our integrity. And yet we must not live in isolation either: *balance*.

And this is where the serpent comes into play, to upset the balance. He asks Eve, “Did God say you shall not eat of every tree of the Garden?” He wants to know if Eve knows about, and can distinguish, the one tree that she is not allowed to eat from. What she cannot have will be what she wants, just because it is an unknown entity. We must know something about what we want in order to choose or reject it. The fruit of the tree of good and evil would give her such knowledge, but God has sought to *protect* Adam and Eve from such knowledge. That is the purpose of the law, to protect us. Now Eve is being asked the very question that evokes her desire to know. Her answer is interesting. She lists more than what God prohibited Adam from doing. God told Adam not to eat of the tree. But Eve says, “...of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, *nor shall you touch it*, lest you die.'”²⁸

There are a number of possibilities here to explain this modification to the covenant:

1. Eve sensed her own desire and feared that if she touched it, she would eat of it;
2. Eve added it to be a rule-giver like God, thus elevating herself in Adam’s eyes;
3. Adam added it when he taught it to Eve, thus elevating himself in Eve’s eyes;
4. God added it to provide further protection for Adam, now that Eve had arrived;

Number 4 doesn’t make any sense. God would have known that from the start. Number 1 doesn’t make any sense, because she hasn’t experienced sin and its consequences (there is no cause for fear). I rather like number 3, but I suspect it was a joint effort. Adam is right there with Eve as the serpent tempts her, silently watching and listening, but taking no action, and making no objections. He watches passively. The serpent doesn’t ask Adam anything. He asks Eve, the talkative one, *dividing* them, though both are his audience.

Now that Eve’s attention is focused on the tree, the serpent gives her a half-truth, “You will *not* surely die.” Well, not today anyway. And up pops the issue of trust. God said they would surely die. The serpent said they would not. Who are they going to trust? The one who created them, and provided for them, and gave them to each other? Or this stranger? Naturally, they take the stranger’s advice. Why? *Because he is saying what they want to hear*. They want that fruit. And as Adam leans forward, and Eve moves toward the tree, the serpent closes the sale with this: “For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and **you will be like God**, knowing good and evil.”²⁹ ***There it is***. That’s the bait, unabashed and bold-faced.

²⁷ 1 Cor 6:16-17 For “the two,” He says, “shall become one flesh.” But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. See also 1Cor. 6:17; 1Cor. 12:13; Eph. 2:18; 4:4; Until Pentecost, there could be no unity of the Spirit in Christ. The whole of Scripture points to it. The promise of God at the coming of Messiah is that he would put his spirit in us (Ezek. 36:27; 37:14). When God breathed life into Adam (Gen.2:7) it could not have been the same as giving him his Spirit, or there would be little need of the promise in Ezekiel, or of the baptism at Pentecost.

²⁸ Gen 3:3

²⁹ Gen. 3:5

“So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree **desirable to make one wise**, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.”³⁰ We’re told that it *appeared* to be good for food, but she may not have been hungry – it was attractive, but that doesn’t mean beneficial – and lastly, it was *desirable*. Why? To make one wise. Wise is knowing right from wrong, benefit from disaster. And she *wanted* that knowledge. And still Adam remained silent. Why? Because he wanted it as well. These were two peas in a pod. They both wanted to *be like God*. They wanted to be rule-makers, judges, creators, whether overtly, passively, or in concert. With this kind of knowledge, there was no limit to the kind of world they could create for themselves (as their offspring would prove at the Tower of Babel – Gen. 11:9). The moment she bit into the fruit, Adam envied her. Then she offered it to him, and he *took* it, gladly, thankfully. And they died there that day. As their seed, we died there with them: enemies of God.³¹

THE GREAT COVER-UP

Man’s Covering - Now comes the problem: the cat’s out of the bag. How will they hide this act from God? Their conscience, now containing the knowledge of right and wrong, begins to speak to them:

Cover it up. Cover what up? **Cover up the shame.** What if God asks? **Blame Eve.** What if she blames me? **She’ll blame the serpent.** What’ll I cover my shame with? **Whatever’s handy.** Here are some leaves. **Good, put ‘em on – no, you idiot! Those are fig leaves, from the fig tree, the one you got the fruit from!!**³² Shhhh! Here he comes! Maybe he won’t notice...

Adam hides his shame, and then he hides himself from God. Why? “I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.” Why is he afraid? Because he was “naked” and had no covering. He has broken the law, leaving himself exposed to punishment. “Did you eat of the tree which I commanded you that you should not eat?” Adam has the opportunity to admit his responsibility, and to treat Eve as one flesh with him. He doesn’t do that. He blames Eve, trying to deflect the guilt. More was lost through the Fall than paradise. Man’s very nature was corrupted.³³ His freedom was lost. He must now live by his own hand in hardship,³⁴ ignorance, and fear.³⁵

³⁰ Gen. 3:6

³¹ James 4:4 Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God (adultery here refers to our infidelity to God).

³² Jewish commentaries say the tree of life was a fig tree – it’s Jewish humor. Ginzberg, Louis, *Legends of the Bible* (JPS, Phila. 1975) p. 40.

³³ 1 Cor 15:42-44 The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

³⁴ Gen 3:17-19 "Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you are, And to dust you shall return."

³⁵ Heb 2:14-15 that He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through *fear of death* were all their lifetime subject to **bondage**. 1 Cor 2:14 But the **natural** man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

The penalty could not be undone. Eve said she knew exactly what the penalty would be. Yet she and Adam seem shocked that they triggered it. Don't we all? When we violate a covenant, when we sin, there is always the sense of being trapped. We feel like we have been caught in a snare, unable to escape. We wait helplessly for the hunter to retrieve his prize.³⁶ Panic sets in. We clutch at anything to help us escape the snare that hold us. We want desperately to hide, to cover ourselves before we are found out.³⁷ Bondage – captivity – indebtedness – and death. These are the images of sin's consequence, the inevitable effects of a broken covenant. We react with fear and shame. We put on a mask to cover our guilt. We hide from others and from God. We shift the blame, and hope we won't be found out. That is not God's way at all. God covers us. He restores us and reconciles us to himself.

God's Covering – God doesn't want us to hide things, nor does he hide his promises from us.

- **God asks them to confess:** Gen 3:11, "Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?" He asks Eve, v. 13, "What have you done?"
- **God believes them** – he doesn't ask Adam or Eve for proof. He doesn't ask the serpent for an explanation. God knows all things. It is futile to lie to him. He knows our heart.³⁸
- **God pronounces judgment** – he pronounces it on the serpent, on Adam, and on Eve. He specifies the living punishment, the tangible consequence of sin, and not just the ultimate effect of death. Even when we confess and are forgiven, the consequences still flow from it.³⁹
- **God makes a promise** – In the declaration of judgment on the serpent, God also makes a pledge to Adam and Eve, that a Defender and Advocate will arise to set right the wrong that has been done this day (Gen. 3:15).
- **God makes provision** – God sheds the blood of an innocent animal to make coverings of skin for Adam and Eve, hiding their shame, and atoning for their sin. A blood sacrifice, the cost of a life, is always the price for sin, because the penalty for sin is death. An exchange of life for death must be made to recover the life. It is the very reason that Christ had to go to the cross. Without blood, there is no atonement.⁴⁰ And when it comes to the covenant of obedience that we are exploring, laying down our life for another is the hallmark of the Christian walk.⁴¹

³⁶ 2 Tim 2:26 that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.

³⁷ Hos 10:8 They shall say to the mountains, "Cover us!" And to the hills, "Fall on us!"

³⁸ Jer 17:9-10 "The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings.

³⁹ Ezek 16:58-60 You will bear the consequences of your lewdness and your detestable practices, declares the LORD. "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will deal with you as you deserve, because you have despised my oath by breaking the covenant. Yet I will remember the covenant I made with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you. NIV

⁴⁰ Lev 17:11 For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.' John 10:11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep..."

⁴¹ Matt 16:25 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. John 15:13 Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. 1 John 3:16 By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

- **God excludes them from his presence** – The worst and final punishment, is their separation from God. Adam and Eve were sent from the Garden into the outer world to live under the grace of God’s providence in the world, instead of his immediate provision in the Garden.

There is no Private Sin

Sin, as we see with Adam, is not a private matter, but inevitably affects others. Adam’s silence and complicity hurt Eve. He failed to protect her from the serpent. Eve’s desire for knowledge and acceptance, led her to tempt Adam. Their seed would not enjoy the comforts of the Garden, but would inherit their corrupted estate and life of hardship. Our sin causes God’s name to be blasphemed among the heathen, and hurts those closest to us. David’s sin with Bathsheba cost the life of their child.⁴² Cain’s sin widened until it led to the death of his brother. The bible says that the earth itself is cursed for our sin.⁴³ In the case of Achan at Ai,⁴⁴ we see the effect of personal, hidden sin on the nation – a battle is lost, and the entire community must come before the Lord to confess, and to purge the sin from among them.⁴⁵ Envy, greed, and covetousness – pride – can lead to strife even within the community of the church.⁴⁶

What Should We Do About Our Sin?

Adam and Eve’s response to God reflects our response as well:

- They confessed their sin
- They received God’s judgment
- They believed his promise of redemption
- They were clothed in his provision
- They were given a mediated relationship (through altar and sacrifice)
- They began to call upon the name of the Lord in worship⁴⁷

THIS IS THE GOSPEL. The only thing that changes between Genesis and the NT is the revelation of Christ, who fulfills our obligations under the Covenant of Works. The final two bullets above, dealing with drawing near to God, are what drive our communion with God and

⁴² Rom 2:23-24 You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law? For "the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you," as it is written. (Isa. 52:5; Ezek. 36:22). 2 Sam 12:14 because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also who is born to you shall surely die."

⁴³ Gen. 3:17; 4:10; 5:29; in Gen. 8:21 God promises never again to curse the earth -- he is not speaking of exempting the earth from the consequence of man’s sin, but promises not to wipe out all life on earth by flood (9:11) – the word in Hebrew is *qalal*, meaning to trifle with, or treat indifferently. We have confirmation of this in Rom. 8:20-22, which says creation was impacted by the Fall, and yearns for redemption and renewal just as we do. In Isa. 24:5-6 we are told that a curse on men defiles and devours the land they inhabit; Jer. 23:10 says that the land mourns because of a curse; Jer. 44:22 says the land is desolate because of a curse; even Mal. 4:6, the great promise to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and of the children to their fathers, contains a penalty clause: "Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse."

⁴⁴ Joshua 7th chapter

⁴⁵ This is a repeated command in the Book of the Law, and follows the reminder that the nation of Israel has made a covenant with God: Dt. 13:5; 17:7,12; 19:13,19; 21:19,21,22,24; 24:7; also Jdg. 20:13. If we fail to purge ourselves, God will purge us: Prov. 20:30; Isa. 1:25; Ezek. 20:36-38 – this passage makes specific reference to bringing them into the bond of the covenant.

⁴⁶ James 4:1-3 Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.

⁴⁷ Gen 4:26 Then men began to call on the name of the LORD. Ps 116:13 I will take up the cup of salvation, And call on the name of the LORD.

with each other in Christ. We now have a *mediated* relationship with God instead of *immediate* access to him. In the OT, God provided for altars and sacrifices to mediate our communion with him. In the NT, Christ is our only mediator.⁴⁸ The altar is the cross, and the final sacrifice is Jesus Christ himself. It is through Christ that we enjoy communion with God again. It seems clear that what happened with Adam and Eve was a *type* of what would happen through Christ:

- we continue to confess our sin (to be covered by the blood),⁴⁹
- we acknowledge God’s righteous judgment (the penalty that is our due),⁵⁰
- we express the hope of our redemption (eternal life through Christ),⁵¹ and
- we are grateful for God’s provision (being clothed in Christ),⁵²
- we come boldly before his throne (Heb. 4:16) having Christ as our Mediator
- we call upon the name of the Lord with confidence (Rom. 10:12-13; Eph. 3:12)

The System of Altar and Sacrifice

What we learn is that Adam and Eve, and their children, did not forget about God. Nor did God abandon Adam and Eve. They did not cease to know God, and God did not deny them his presence. Instead, God continued to atone for their sin. He allowed them to draw near to him through this system of altar and sacrifice. It was an integral part of their relationship with God, and of their relationship with one another. Indeed, it still is an integral part of our relationship with God.

From the time of Seth (Adam’s son), men have called upon the name of the Lord, offering sacrifices for their sin, and worshipping the one true God.⁵³ No sooner had Adam left the Garden, than he built the altar on which Cain and Abel made their sacrifices (Gen. 4:3,4); Noah built an altar (Gen. 8:3). Abram built an altar (Gen. 12:7). Isaac built an altar (Gen. 26:25). Jacob built an altar (Gen. 33:20). Moses built an altar (Ex. 17:15). However, beginning with Moses, God specified the kind of altar he wanted (Ex. 20:24-25). It was not to be designed by men, nor made with the tools of men. Otherwise we might take pride in it, or worship it, instead of taking pride in God and worshipping him alone (the 1st Commandment). The altar is not what saves us. We are saved by grace. The altar is how we acknowledge that fact.

In the next lesson, we will examine this system as the means of God’s grace, and how Christ’s sacrifice informs it with meaning.

⁴⁸ 1 Tim 2:5 For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus...

⁴⁹ 1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Ps 32:5 I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," And You forgave the iniquity of my sin.

⁵⁰ Ps 51:4 Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight — That You may be found just when You speak, And blameless when You judge. Matt 6:12 And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors.

⁵¹ 2 Cor 5:18 Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ

⁵² Gal 3:27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. NIV

⁵³ The word for “call upon” in Hebrew implies prayer and sacrifice: to worship. It is literally, “to call in the name.”