

Week #: 4 Text: Genesis 4:1-26 Title: Call vs Covenant; Cain and Abel
Songs: God of Wonders

Videos:

Adamic Call:

- the mandate, or directive, to have dominion.
 - the Adamic Call (innocence) (found in Genesis 1:26-30; 2:16-17)
 - Mankind (male and female) created in God's image
 - Mankind's dominion (rule) over the animal kingdom
 - Divine directive for mankind to reproduce and inhabit the entire Earth
 - Mankind to be vegetarian (eating of meat established in the Noahic covenant: Genesis 9:3)
 - Eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil forbidden (with death as the stated penalty)

Adamic Covenant:

- It then becomes known as the Adamic Covenant when God sheds blood for sin.
 - the Adamic Covenant (grace) (found in Genesis 3:16-19). As the result of Adam's sin, the following curses were pronounced:
 - Enmity between Satan and Eve and her descendants
 - Painful childbirth for women.
 - Marital strife.
 - The soil cursed.
 - Introduction of thorns and thistles.
 - Survival to be a struggle.
 - Death introduced.
 - Death will be the inescapable fate of all living things.
 - Although these curses are severe and inescapable, a wonderful promise of grace was also included in the Adamic Covenant.
 - Genesis 3:15 is often referred to as the "Proto-Gospel" or "First Gospel."
 - Speaking to Satan, God says, "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."
 - Here God promises that one born of a woman would be wounded in the process of destroying Satan. The "seed" of the woman who would crush the Serpent's head is none other than Jesus Christ (see Galatians 4:4 and 1 John 3:8). Even in the midst of the curse, God's gracious provision of salvation shines through.
 - Examples of stories in the Bible where Satan is crushed:
 - Pharaoh's heart is hardened, and God's power is shown in the plagues
 - David kills Goliath
 - Jael kills Sisera

God created human beings with the ability, even the deep need, to be in relationship with Him. When Adam and Eve sinned, they broke the friendship between God and his creatures. So God developed a plan of salvation that would restore His children to Himself. To help them understand the depth of His love and commitment, God chose to seal the relationship with a familiar cultural form: the covenant.

A COVENANT IS A RELATIONSHIP

Covenants act as the skeleton upon which the entire redemptive story is built. They are like the backbone of the Bible. From Genesis on, God enters into one formal relationship after another (i.e., covenants) with various humans in order to rescue his world. These divine-human relationships push that narrative forward until it reaches its climax in Jesus. Thus, to tell the story of God redeeming his people through Jesus is to tell the story of God's covenantal relationship with his people.

The people of the Bible understood covenants well. In fact, they made covenants daily to define and describe their relationships with each other.

- Abraham made a covenant with the Philistine king Abimelech to resolve their conflict over a water source (Genesis 21:22-34).
- David and Jonathan made a covenant that established their everlasting friendship and that affirmed David's right to the throne of Israel (1 Samuel 18:3 and 23:18).
- Jacob and Laban, his father-in-law, made a covenant in which each promised never to harm the other and Jacob promised to provide for Laban's daughters (Genesis 31:43-53).

The fundamental difference between covenants and other agreements is the relationship established between the covenant makers.

- Each party made specific promises and could expect certain benefits (and penalties, if the promises were broken) based on the terms of the covenant.
- This relationship went far beyond legal concepts. Covenanted parties viewed each other as friends who were bound together permanently.
 - Abraham's covenant with Abimelech allowed these two very different men to live peaceably in the same area (Gen. 21:34).
 - The covenant between David and Jonathan was one of mutual loyalty and love (1 Sam. 18:3).
- The legal obligations of a covenant relationship were based on the friendship established by the covenant itself. To be in covenant was to be in relationship.

Covenants were made before witnesses

- Witnesses were sometimes things (Gen. 31:52), sometimes God himself (Gen. 31:53).
- Often, symbols were used to remind the parties of the obligations and benefits established by the covenants.
 - Jacob erected standing stones as a reminder of his relationship with Laban (Gen. 31:45-46,52).
 - God sealed his covenant (his promise to never destroy the earth with another flood) with Noah by placing a rainbow in the sky for everyone to see.

Covenant: **בְּרִית** / **ברית** / *b'riyt*

- The Hebrew language is a root oriented language, meaning that every Hebrew word is derived from a root word and that root word is the foundation to other Hebrew words. Each word derived from one root will be closely related in meaning to all the other words derived from the same root.

In the case of the word ברית (*b'riyt*) we found that it was derived from the root verb ברה (*B.R.H*), but also derived from this verbal root are the nouns ברות (*barut*, Strong's #1267) meaning "choice meat" and בריה (*bir'yah*, Strong's #1274) meaning "fattened." Livestock that will be slaughtered are fed special grains to make them fat and thereby making the meat of the fattened livestock the choicest.

So how is fattened choice meat related to the word for "covenant?" The phrase "make a covenant," appears eighty times in the Hebrew Bible and in every instance it is the Hebrew phrase ברית כרת (*karat b'riyt*), which literally means "cut a covenant."

A covenant was instituted by the two parties of the covenant who would take a fattened animal, the best of the flock or herd, and "cut" it into two pieces. Then the two parties of the covenant would pass through the pieces symbolizing their dedication to the covenant and by this action are saying, "If I do not hold to the agreements of this covenant, you can do to me what we did to this animal." This methodology of "making" a covenant is clearly recorded in Jeremiah 34:18-20.

A COVENANT IS "CUT," NOT MADE

- Though our biblical translations refer to people "making" a covenant, the Hebrews described the establishment of this type of relationship as "cutting" a covenant.
- The cutting, symbolized by the slaughter of animals (Ex. 24:5,8), indicated that each person in the covenant promised to give his or her own life to keep its terms.
- To break a covenant was to invite one's own death as a penalty. There are no more serious relationships than those that are a commitment of life itself.
- Thus God's use of covenants to describe his relationship with his people (Gen. 15; Heb. 13:20-21) is striking for several reasons.
 - It shows that God wanted to bond eternally with a people who persistently rejected him.
 - It shows that God was willing to prove his devotion to the relationship by offering his own life.
 - Finally, and probably most stunning of all, it shows that God not only was willing to offer his own life to keep the covenant, but he also was willing to pay the price for any covenant failure on the part of the human beings with whom he was in relationship. This promise certainly exceeded the limits of human covenant-making practices.

UNEQUAL COVENANTS

- Many of the human covenants in the Bible are between equals. Marriage is such a relationship (Mal. 2:14).
- In the culture of the ancient Near East, there were also covenants between unequal parties. These relationships were defined and established by the superior party and could not be changed by the lesser party, such as when great kings made treaties with conquered kings who became vassals. The lesser party could either accept the offer of relationship or reject it and exist in conflict with the greater party.

COVENANT FORMS

- Ancient Near Eastern covenants, especially those between unequal parties, were complex relationships. There were many factors that had to be considered.
 - the right of the greater party to make the covenant
 - the obligations of each party
 - the penalties and benefits of the relationship
 - the history of the relationship.
- Because of the large number of issues involved, covenant documents were usually quite long.

- God's covenant with Israel through Moses is recorded in the Torah, the first five books of the Bible
- God's covenant with us in Jesus is described in all 66 books of the Bible.
- Because of the length of covenants, a certain pattern was followed so that people could make sense of them.
 - This pattern governed the material contained in a covenant, including its content and form.
 - A summary document representing the entirety of the relationship and following the accepted form of a covenant document was also provided.
 - If the Torah is God's covenant with Israel, the Ten Commandments, inscribed on stone tablets, are a summary document.
- We must be careful to recognize that there are many covenant forms and that God does not always use existing practices (which He caused to develop anyway) in dealing with His people. But once we understand what a covenant relationship meant and how it was established, we will realize the extent of God's love for us and his desire to restore the relationship sin destroyed. Keeping in mind that God cut covenants as the superior party so he alone determined their content, let's briefly review the components of the covenant God made with the Hebrews.

In general, ancient Near Eastern covenants had five sections:

- **Form** - In order to make sense of covenants, people followed a certain pattern that governed the content and form of a covenant.
 - A summary document representing the entirety of the relationship was usually provided.
 - As the superior party, God alone determined the content of the covenant he made with Israel.
 - In giving the Ten Commandments and the Torah laws, he followed the traditional covenant form of the time.
- **The Preamble** - This part of the covenant identified the two covenant parties.
 - In the Torah (first five books of the Bible), God established the identity of the parties in the creation story. He was the creator, and Israel was his creation.
 - In the covenant summary (the Ten Commandments), he said simply, "I am the Lord your God" (Ex. 20:2).
- **The Historical Prologue** - The history leading to the creating of the covenant was recited to prove the right of the superior party to make it.
 - In the Ten Commandments, the summary is simply "who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery" (Ex. 20:2).
 - In the Torah, the history of the covenant is laid out in the books of Genesis and Exodus.
- **Requirements** - The Torah contains 613 requirements God placed on his people.
 - He placed even more obligations on himself by promising to pay the consequences if either party failed to keep the covenant.
 - In summarizing the law, these requirements were simplified to ten commandments (Ex. 20:3-17).
 - Some scholars have noted that Jesus reduced this summary to just two obligations (Matt. 22:37-40).
- **Blessings and Curses** - Keeping a covenant brought specific rewards, and breaking it brought specific penalties.
 - In the Ten Commandments document, God promised to punish children to the third and fourth generation for disobedience.
 - He also promised to show love to a thousand generations for those who followed his law (Ex. 20:5).
 - The Torah contains additional blessings and curses.
- **The Summary Document** - The short summary document, which could be easily read and stored, summarized the entire covenant and so represented the total relationship between the parties.

- When God gave the Ten Commandments to Moses, they provided the summary document of God's covenant with Israel.
- **Storing the Documents** - Normally, two summary documents were made; each party kept one in a sacred place.
 - It seems clear that each tablet of the Ten Commandments contained all of the commandments. One copy was God's, and the other belonged to the people of Israel.
 - Because he wanted to draw near to his people, God asked Moses to take both copies, symbolically saying that his sacred place would be with his people.

Five Old Testament covenants:

- Adamic
 - Genesis 3:15 – rescuing man from sin through the seed of woman
- Noahic
 - Genesis 9:12-17
 - God enters a formal relationship with Noah and all living creatures promising that despite humanity's evil he will never again destroy them. Rather, he will preserve the world as he works towards fulfilling the promise of Genesis 3:15
 - **Situation:** After Adam and Eve's expulsion from Eden, the narrative is pretty grim. In Genesis 4, Cain sides with the Serpent, killing his brother in cold blood, and a man named Lamech brags about his murderous, chauvinistic ways. Genesis 5 repeats the refrain "and he died" eight times revealing how death reigned over humanity. Then there's this weird story in Genesis 6 that's meant to show the rapid advancement of evil. Sin has enveloped the whole world. So God sends a destroying flood upon the earth to purge it of wickedness, making way for a restored creation that will begin with Noah and his family.
 - **Stipulation(s):** None. It's an unconditional covenant grounded in the promise of God to never again destroy the world until redemption is fully accomplished.
 - **Sign:** Rainbow
- Abrahamic
 - Genesis 12, 15, 17
 - The Abrahamic Covenant is a personal and family covenant that forms the historical foundation for God's dealings with mankind. Through this covenant God promises Abraham and his descendants land, seed, and blessing. The Abrahamic Covenant delineates the unique role that Abraham's seed will have in God's plan for the world and paves the way for Israel's prominent role in that plan.
 - **Situation:** The covenant with Noah provided the circumstances in which redemption could come, but wasn't redemptive in and of itself. Evil continued to reign over the world. Genesis 9-11 traces the downward spiral of mankind, peaking in the story of the tower of Babel. There, humans tried to overthrow God's authority by building a new world center to exalt themselves above God. It was humanity's way of giving God the finger, revealing the nature of the human heart. God scatters the nations in judgment and we're left to wonder, "How in the world will humanity be saved?" But, in a stunning act of grace, God selects Abraham and calls him into a covenantal relationship.
 - **Stipulation(s):** Abraham is to leave his land and follow God wherever he leads, walking blamelessly before God and training his family to do what is right and just, and keeping circumcision in every generation. This is both a conditional and unconditional covenant. God and man each have a part to play, but ultimately these promises will be fulfilled because God will see to it that they come to pass.
 - **Sign:** Circumcision. A symbol setting this family apart to God, showing that their fertility and future lay in God's hands.
- Mosaic

- Exodus 19-24
- God rescues Israel from slavery in Egypt and promises to make them his own treasured possession, a holy, set apart nation. He will personally dwell in their midst and bring them into the promise land. He (Yahweh) will be their God and they (Israel) will be his people. Moreover, they will be a kingdom of priests that mediate his goodness and glory to all the nations. An epic role in redemptive history.
- This covenant represents the constitution for the nation of Israel that grew out of Abraham's descendants, a development envisioned by the Abrahamic Covenant. In this covenant, God offered cursing for disobedience and blessing for obedience. God's basic demand was that Israel would love Him exclusively. (Deuteronomy 6:4-5)
- **Situation:** Exodus opens with Abraham's offspring multiplying rapidly in Egypt. It's like a really big family now, which threatens the new Pharaoh's ego. He forces God's people to become slave-laborers in his building campaigns. They cry out to God and God hears them, sending Moses to be his instrument of divine power to lead them out of Egypt towards the promise land. When they reach the foot of Mt. Sinai God shows up in a big way (like huge!) to revisit his promises made to Abraham and enter a formal relationship with Israel.
- **Stipulation(s):** This was a conditional covenant of grace. Israel was to obey the terms embodied in all the laws given at Mt. Sinai (summarized in the Ten Commandments). God promised to bring blessings if they followed his commands, but curses if they disobeyed, most notably exile into foreign lands.
- **Sign:** Sabbath. A sign that God sanctified and set apart Israel to be holy unto him.
- Davidic
 - 2 Samuel 7
 - God establishes David as king over Israel and promises to make his name great. He'll give David a royal kingdom in which the promises made to Abraham and Israel will be fulfilled through his lineage. God will raise up a Davidic descendant who will build a house for the Lord and his throne and kingdom will last forever. God's steadfast love will never depart from him.
 - **Situation:** God's people enter Canaan and eventually demand a king so they could be like the other nations. Saul from the tribe of Benjamin is anointed, but fails to obey God so he's rejected as king. God then chooses David, the son of Jesse, from the tribe of Judah. (This should peak your interest. Wasn't there supposed to be a messianic ruler from the line of Judah?) David becomes a successful leader, overcoming Israel's enemies and restoring the presence of God to the city of David. When there's national rest, he decides to build a house for God. But God has other plans. He will build an everlasting kingdom and throne for David, not the other way around.
 - **Stipulation(s):** David and his descendants must remain faithful to God, walk in covenantal faithfulness, and lead Israel in obedience to the covenantal laws. However, there are conditional and unconditional elements to the covenant. Despite the kings' failures, God guaranteed a faithful future Davidic king on the throne.
 - **Sign:** None.
- New Covenant:
 - Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:22-32
 - The new covenant is the culmination of God's saving work in his people. He promises to make an everlasting covenant with his people in which he will write his law on their hearts, bring complete forgiveness of sin, put his Spirit in them to empower them to love and obey his commands, raise up

a faithful Davidic king to rule over them, bring them back into the land to reunify them into one people of God, and cause them to be a light to the nations. Wow!

- **Situation:** The new covenant is (explicitly) introduced by the prophets in the context of total failure. The kings, the people, and even the religious leaders failed to keep God's commands. It turns out that God's covenantal people were nothing but covenant-breakers! The curses of the covenant came upon them as they were exiled to Babylon. But, there, the prophets give us hope—God would one day bring about a new covenant. The anticipation of this covenant pushes the story forward into the pages of the New Testament where we are introduced to Jesus, the one who will fulfill all the prophetic promises and bring about blessing for all peoples.
- **Stipulation(s):** There are no stipulations to this unconditional covenant of grace. God both gives the promises and brings them about through the work of his faithful Son Jesus.
- **Sign:** in Matthew 26:26-29 and Luke 22:19-22, Jesus connects his death to the new exodus/new covenant themes highlighted in Isaiah and Jeremiah. While Pentecost activates new covenant themes from Ezekiel 36 and Jeremiah 31. So the death and resurrection of Jesus and the outpouring of the Spirit can be seen as signs of the new covenant.

Genesis 4 Complete Jewish Bible (CJB)

4 The man had sexual relations with Havah his wife; she conceived, gave birth to Kayin [acquisition] and said, “I have acquired a man from *ADONAI*.”² In addition she gave birth to his brother Hevel. Hevel kept sheep, while Kayin worked the soil.³ In the course of time Kayin brought an offering to *ADONAI* from the produce of the soil;⁴ and Hevel too brought from the firstborn of his sheep, including their fat. *ADONAI* accepted Hevel and his offering⁵ but did not accept Kayin and his offering. Kayin was very angry, and his face fell.⁶ *ADONAI* said to Kayin, “Why are you angry? Why so downcast?⁷ If you are doing what is good, shouldn’t you hold your head high? And if you don’t do what is good, sin is crouching at the door — it wants you, but you can rule over it.”⁸ Kayin had words with Hevel his brother; then one time, when they were in the field, Kayin turned on Hevel his brother and killed him.

⁹ *ADONAI* said to Kayin, “Where is Hevel your brother?” And he replied, “I don’t know; am I my brother’s guardian?”¹⁰ He said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood is crying out to me from the ground!”¹¹ Now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood at your hands.¹² When you farm the ground it will no longer yield its strength to you. You will be a fugitive, wandering the earth.”¹³ Kayin said to *ADONAI*, “My punishment is greater than I can bear.¹⁴ You are banning me today from the land and from your presence. I will be a fugitive wandering the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.”¹⁵ *ADONAI* answered him, “Therefore, whoever kills Kayin will receive vengeance sevenfold,” and *ADONAI* put a sign on Kayin, so that no one who found him would kill him.¹⁶ So Kayin left the presence of *ADONAI* and lived in the land of Nod [wandering], east of ‘Eden.

¹⁷ Kayin had sexual relations with his wife; she conceived and gave birth to Hanokh. Kayin built a city and named the city after his son Hanokh.¹⁸ To Hanokh was born ‘Irada. ‘Irada fathered Mechuya’el, Mechuya’el fathered Metusha’el, and Metusha’el fathered Lemekh.

(S: v)¹⁹ Lemekh took himself two wives; the name of the one was ‘Adah, while the name of the other was Tzilah.²⁰ ‘Adah gave birth to Yuval; he was the ancestor of those who live in tents and have cattle.²¹ His brother’s name was Yuval; and he was the ancestor of all who play lyre and flute.²² Tzilah gave birth to Tuval-Kayin, who forged all kinds of tools from brass and iron; the sister of Tuval-Kayin was Na’amah.²³ Lemekh said to his wives,

“‘Adah and Tzilah, listen to me;
wives of Lemekh, hear what I say:
I killed a man for wounding me,
a young man who injured me.
²⁴ If Kayin will be avenged sevenfold,
then Lemekh seventy-sevenfold!”

²⁵ Adam again had sexual relations with his wife, and she gave birth to a son whom she named Shet [granted], “For God has granted me another seed in place of Hevel, since Kayin killed him.”²⁶ To Shet too was born a son, whom he called Enosh. That is when people began to call on the name of *ADONAI*.