



## ***Addendum to Genesis Four - The Mark of Cain***

When you read Genesis, Chapter Four, verse 15, you realize a significant biblical event took place when God marked Cain. What was the mark? We do not know what it looked like but we do know it involved some sort of identifiable mark that he was under divine protection. It is interesting that the mark that saved him from being murdered was the lifelong sign of his shame for killing his brother.

The Hebrew word “owth,” pronounced OTH, is the word translated “mark” in Genesis 4:15. It is the word “sign” and as you follow this word throughout scripture you find that “sign” is its primary translation. In Genesis 1:14, we see it first used to distinguish between day and night. “And God said, ‘Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years.’” (NIV) In the original, the word “mark” does not occur but is placed in the text for clarity. It actually reads, “...and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years.” In other words, when it is light out, it is the “sign” for day. When it snows, it is the “sign” for winter. In each season, the day and year is clearly understood by its appearance.

Can the “mark” or “sign” be something other than a physical mark? Yes, it could be an appearance of someone who stands out from those around him. One could argue that a physical sign would make more sense so that a stranger could somehow tell, without knowing Cain, he should leave him alone. On the other hand reading Gen 4:14, “Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.” (NIV), we find that Cain is forced to be a “restless wanderer”, and in an agrarian (stable) society, a restless wanderer would stand out as a marked man. A modern example might be if someone picked up a homeless man from Skid Row and dropped him off to wander around Rodeo Drive. He would be a marked man, someone who wasn't part of that community.

The sad part of this account of Cain is the way he separated himself from the love of God. God may have preferred Abel's sacrifice over Cain's but God gave Cain a chance to make his next sacrifice acceptable (Gen. 4:7), but Cain got angry instead. After Cain killed Abel, he tried lying to God about it which caused further separation. Finally, with the ground cursed and Cain unable to raise crops, he became a marked man, forced by his choices to wander farther and farther from Eden and “ So Cain went out from the Lord's presence” (Gen 4:16). This was all due to his poor choices and sinful pride.

The question we need to ask ourselves is what sort of “mark” are we showing to those around us? Is it one of a close, saving relationship with our loving God, or one of stubborn, sinful pride?