

“THE MARK OF CAIN”

GENESIS 4:11-15

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INTRODUCTION

We have a loving and longsuffering God that we know and serve. Let us thank Him and praise Him; He is worthy!

YOU MUST ACCEPT THE CONSEQUENCES OF YOUR SIN AND TURN TO GOD FOR MERCY AND FORGIVENESS.

I. CAIN’S PUNISHMENT (11-12)

- “Cursed”—Evil and injury comes upon him from God; God is the source of a curse.
- All of this indicates the seriousness of sin and **God’s hatred of sin**.

A. In relation to the Land

- This aspect of his punishment hit him *where it hurt him the most—his occupation*.
- This was his chosen way of approach that he took to God—now **God shuts the door in his face!**

1. Driven from Eden, and other easily cultivated areas : “Cursed from the ground”—

- “Ground” here refers especially to “tillable soil,” suitable for agriculture.
- Here, especially Eden, the place of God’s favor around the entrance to Paradise.
- But, implied is that other such favorable regions would be inaccessible to Cain also.
- Note that in v. 14 Cain associates God’s presence with Eden.
- Also, the Eden region is shown by its description as the place where Abel’s blood was spilled on this “ground.”
- The connection of v. 14 favors the explanation described above.
- The earth had swallowed Abel’s blood, as later it swallowed Korah and his company (Num. 16)—“opened its mouth” in order to swallow this blood; i.e., the blood was absorbed by the ground & it drank the blood.
- Thereby the ground was “stained” with innocent blood (cf. Lev. 18:28—land will spew you out if you defile it—like it did the Canaanites; Num. 35:33—polluting the land with bloodshed requires their blood to be shed). **God drives them out**.
- The soil was in no way considered an accomplice to the crime.
- **Human life cannot be so lightly regarded!**

2. The Ground refuses its produce

- Retaliation because of the crime of Cain
- Even though driven out of Eden, Cain still “tills the soil—literally “serves the soil.”
- But, the soil will not “give again”—yield—“its strength,” i.e. its produce.
- Cain in the future would derive only a “bare pittance” from the soil, and only after **the hardest struggle**.

B. In Relation to His Home—“fugitive and vagabond” (KJV) or “vagrant and a wanderer”

1. A “shiftless” person—i.e. one who totters [see notes], being faint and uncertain

2. A “wanderer”—straying person.

- In Hebrew these words are alliterated: “**shiftless and straying**”
- This punishment was meant to evidence the enormity of the sin of murder, and
- **The sanctity of human life**.
- People not only *heard* about Cain; he was also *seen* by most of them as he wanders.

So, has Cain now learned his lesson given him by a just and holy, yet loving and gracious God? NO!

II. CAIN’S COMPLAINT (13-14)

A. My Punishment is Too Severe! (13)

- The word “punishment” often means “sin, iniquity.” Sometimes also the “guilt” of such sin, And then to the guilt as “God’s punishment.”
 - The sentence could mean: “My sin is too great to forgive.”—but he does not say that!
 - Cain evidences no sorrow concerning sin; only sorrow of **the consequences of his sin**.
 - But, his use of these words does at least show that he admits that he has brought such a fate on his own head: “*My guilt is too great to bear*”—i.e. *to endure its punishment*.
 - Here his *bold impudence* has now become *hopeless despair*, “*whining fear and complaint*.”
 - “My sin/guilt/punishment is great from bearing.”
- B. My Situation is Terrible (14)
- “Behold”—shows Cain’s agitation; like our “Look!” “See!”
1. Driven forth off [from upon] the ground’s face—this day you have done such!
 - “Face of the ground”=“off its surface”
 - Driven out of the Eden area where God’s presence was manifested in a special way, and which was undoubtedly quite fertile.
 2. Hidden from God’s face—i.e. His presence
 - Lest God fully execute His curse, Cain in fear must hide [imperfect tense=necessity]
 - Cain did not really desire *communion with God*; he only wanted the good things which result from God’s presence!
 - He also recognizes that to be barred from God’s presence is a **grievous punishment**.
 - Compare II Thes. 1:9—the lost are **forever banished from God’s presence**.
 - All this is not a deficient view of God’s omnipresence; v. 15 makes that clear.
 3. Shiftless and Straying
 - He knows that he cannot avoid this penalty.
 - Another motive for his wandering *may be his constant fear of reprisal*.
 4. Threat of Reprisal—“Whoever finds me will kill me.”
 - Such is the psychology of the murderer: “everyone who finds me will murder me.”
 - His fear is not completely unfounded.
 - The principle was evidently understood universally that **shed-blood demands shed-blood**.
 - This principle has been written in the heart of man.
 - “Whoever finds”—implies that possibly in the present, certainly in the future, the population was expanding.
 - Also, those he encountered would be close relatives of Abel and would desire retribution; they certainly would know of his crime.

CAPTIAL PUNISHMENT IS THE PROPER WAY, AND THE BEST WAY—God says so!

How would a just, holy, wise, compassionate God respond to such a whining and unrepentant sinner?

III. GOD’S COMPASSION (15)

Notice the use of Yahweh—the covenant keeping God who is faithful—throughout this passage.

- A. His Decree: “therefore”—since Cain’s complaint was true
1. Anyone who kills Cain—conditional, if someone does so
 2. Vengeance will be executed—upon such a person who commits the crime.
 - Sevenfold—i.e. seven times as heavy as Cain had merited.
 - Cain surely was never slain. This word of God would have become known
- B. His Sign—appointed for Cain; the meaning of the word
- A “Mark” was not put on Cain.
 - The sign “was appointed” or “given” **for** Cain—i.e. for his advantage [see notes for prep. I.]

The “sign” was either:

1. A sign appearing to Cain for his reassurance—a sign or guarantee. Or:
2. A pledge or token which was given for his protection.
 - This seems most likely, since the ‘sign’ actually had the result of preventing his murder—being smitten.
 - God thus became Cain’s protector; this is almost a kind of covenant.
 - This “sign” evidences God’s **ultimate mercy** for Cain; the best God could do in this situation.
 - Yet, mercy is not the main purpose—so that no one would kill him.

Now we must answer the question: “Does God’s action here contradict Genesis 9:6? Obviously **No!** Then how explain?”

A. Weaker Reasons

1. Banishment from God was the worst possible punishment
 - Later, murderers were executed.
 - There seems to be a bit of mercy here.
2. The Human Race’s development had to be guaranteed.
 - At this point there were few people on Earth.
 - However, later God destroyed all but 8 persons!
3. God gave Cain an opportunity for Repentance.
 - God knew Cain’s hardened condition of heart.
 - Cain evidenced no signs of repentance.
 - His ancestors continued to show his true condition and attitudes.

B. Stronger Reasons

1. God reserved for Himself the right to determine when and where and if life is to be terminated. He did not yet place this authority into man’s hands.
2. For a time He permitted the tares and the wheat to grow together.
3. He allowed sin to run a “free course” and to develop fully in order to make manifest the real nature of evil.
4. Cain’s presence as the tragic vagabond served as a powerful warning to others of the results of sin.

CONCLUSION

The Bible speaks of “the Way of Cain”—Jude 11.

- Cain’s empty worship—through formalism; human good works.
- Cain’s envy of godly behavior of his brother and his happier relationship with God; anger at real religion.
- Cain’s rejection of being a mere debtor to Grace.
- Cain’s persecution of the righteous.

Notice the **tragic results of sin!**

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