

## "SIN LIETH AT THE DOOR"

– GENESIS 4:3-15. – JANUARY 27. –

**Golden Text:** – "Whoever hateth his brother is a murderer."  
– 1 John 3:15.

THE STORY of Cain and Abel itself is a sharp contradiction of the Evolution theory. Had Adam been but a slight remove above the monkey, and lower than the lowest type of man today, his children would have been little if any better. But our lesson shows us two sons of Adam, clothed and in their right minds, the one a tiller of the soil, the other a shepherd and herdsman. Do apes exhibit such dispositions at the present time? Assuredly not. Furthermore, these two men of noble character esteemed it a duty and privilege to acknowledge God with their substance. They did not worship idols, nor sun nor moon nor stars, but the living God, the Creator. Surely neither apes nor the lowest forms of man exhibit such tendencies today. And even after Cain had become a murderer, his reverence for the Almighty and his appreciation of his crime marked him as not only higher than the brute creation, but very much [R3927 : page 26] higher than many of his race today who have little regard for life, fearing chiefly the penalty.

At what particular time our lesson dates we may not surely know, the chapter in which it occurs passing over centuries of time. In the first verse it tells of the birth of Cain, in the next verse he is a full-grown man and has a full-grown brother Abel, and quite probably they both had large families, though through neither one is Adam's genealogy reckoned, and Abel's children, if he had any, are not mentioned at all. The third verse, with which our lesson opens, intimates a considerable period of time after Abel was a keeper of sheep and Cain a tiller of the ground, saying, "And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain

brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord, and Abel an offering of the firstlings of his flock."

## **THE RESPECTED OFFERING**

Nothing either good or bad is recorded of either of these men, Cain and Abel, up to the time of this lesson and their presentation of their respective offerings before the Lord. It was but natural, and we might say proper, that each should present to the Lord an offering representing his own industries, and the Lord's acceptance of Abel's offering and failure to accept Cain's should not be considered as any slight upon the latter, but rather as a lesson of instruction, a leading of divine providence, indicating the character of offering that would be most acceptable and pleasing to the Lord. The reason for the acceptance of Abel's offering is apparent – God desired that all offerings from his creatures should recognize original sin and the necessity for a great sin-offering, the sacrifice of the life of the Redeemer. Thus early did God begin the lesson of instruction emphasized by the Apostle that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins. – Heb. 9:22.

So near to perfection, the first-born son of the perfect Adam, Cain had undoubtedly inherited a fine human organization, **[R3928 : page 26]** nearly perfect in all of its parts, comparatively well balanced; but as Adam, who was perfect, could allow love for his wife to misguide him into disobedience of his Creator, so Cain allowed the wrong view of matters to enter his mind, to have control and ultimately to bring forth its evil fruit, murder. We can sympathize with him in his grief that his sacrifice was not acceptable to the Lord: we can appreciate his surprise that the offering of his younger brother, a blood offering, should be more acceptable. But here we who have the new mind, begotten of the holy Spirit, can see that he took the wrong course in allowing envious, angry feelings against his

brother, whereas he should have gone to the Lord in supplication to know why his sacrifice was not acceptable. Had he done so the Lord would undoubtedly have told him that his desire to worship and serve were appreciated, but that it must be a divine regulation amongst men that all sacrifices, to be acceptable to the Lord, must be those which would typify the death of a ransom and atoner for sin.

Here we see the fine, subtle, entering wedge of sin, and who that has had experience may not trace analogies in his own experience and note when and where the wrong thought was permitted to have control of his mind and the proper thought was not entertained? Many of us can perhaps see by how narrow a margin we have escaped a wrong course, it may be, on various occasions. It is in such respects that the New Creatures in Christ have much advantage every way over natural men, however well disposed they may be; for, as the Apostle explains, as New Creatures we have the "spirit of a sound mind," which enables us to think calmly, dispassionately, temperately of our own experiences and those of others, and leads us to look to the Lord for the wisdom from on high as a guide in the interpretation of our daily experiences. Whoever learns to look to the Lord in all his sorrows and disappointments, as well as in his joys, has learned a valuable lesson, which Cain had not yet learned, and which he never learned, because none were begotten of the holy Spirit or permitted to receive the new mind of Christ until after the real atonement had been made and Pentecost came as a result of the acceptance of that atonement on our behalf by the heavenly Father.

### **"WHY ART THOU WROTH?"**

The power to be angry, the power to be wroth, is not a result of the fall nor an evidence that Cain was bestial. The Lord uses these same words in reference to his own attitude of mind at

times, declaring that he was wroth under certain conditions and that he is angry with the wicked every day. (Psa. 7:11.) The force of character which permits of anger is the very same force which otherwise directed signifies intensity of love: the inability to be angry under proper cause would imply imperfection, blemishes, just as inability to love strongly would imply similar defects of character. To be perfect implies a full-rounded capacity in every direction. The perfectly shaped head would not be a bumpy one representing some of the organs large and others small, but would be a well-rounded head in all particulars. In such a perfect organization, while every power would be there, the higher powers of veneration for God, spirituality, conscience, etc., should be in control and indicate when combativeness, destructiveness, should and when it should not be exercised. It is a mistake to suppose that a perfect being would be deficient in combativeness: on the contrary, every Christian must have this quality of mind, otherwise how could he become an "overcomer"? how could he "fight the good fight"? The desirable thing is that every organ of our heads should be perfect, and that these all shall be under the perfect control and regulation of the higher reasoning faculties.

Cain was not rightly exercised by his experiences. He went about sullenly for a time, brooding over the fact that God had not recognized his offering and had recognized Abel's. He was angry – it seemed to him an injustice on God's part: he had been as faithful in his department as Abel had been in his.

God did not leave him to himself, but considering the fact of his inexperience and that there were none others to give him proper counsel, the Lord admonished him with the query, "Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well sin lieth at the door." This suggestion should have been sufficient. Cain should at once have appealed to the Lord, and having

learned God's will, should have prepared himself to offer such a sacrifice to the **[R3928 : page 27]** Lord as would be pleasing to him. The inference that he was not now doing well, not now pleasing the Lord in his wrath and sullen attitude, was a reprimand; and the suggestion that sin was lying at the door, or (revised version) "crouching at his door," should have suggested to him the danger of a misstep. Nothing is intimated of a wrong condition prior to this sacrifice, and the sacrifice itself was not wrong – it was merely that Cain was ignorant. The wrong began when he became angry and sullen instead of applying himself to learn the lesson of the Lord's providences. Sin was now crouching at his door like a wild beast, ready to spring upon him and devour him. And, alas for him! he failed to heed the Lord's warning and allowed the crouching enemy, sin, to enter into his heart and to make of him a murderer. It was the spirit of Satan that entered into him, taking the place of the spirit or disposition of the Lord, which was his originally as one closely in the likeness of God, not greatly marred as yet by the fall. This the Apostle intimates, saying that he was "of that wicked one" – he partook of Satan's disposition, spirit. (1 John 3:12.) And as Satan was a murderer from the beginning, so his spirit in Cain was a murderous spirit. – John 8:44.

### **ALL HATERS ARE MURDERERS**

Here we have the vital point of this lesson as respects the household of faith, especially the New Creation. We who have been begotten of the holy Spirit and who thus have the "mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16), have the mind or disposition that is loving, generous, kind, forgiving toward our fellows and that is reverential and obedient toward God. This is the spirit or disposition that is of the Father and of the Son: the opposite disposition or spirit is of the Adversary. The two spirits or dispositions are so opposite that we cannot have both at once – we cannot serve God and Mammon, Christ and Belial.

The Lord lays down his regulations in this matter in most positive terms, telling us in the Golden Text of this lesson that "he that hateth his brother is a murderer" – telling us also that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him, and assuring us that the spirit or disposition of murder is the spirit or disposition of the Adversary, who was the first murderer. If we resist the devil he will flee from us, but if we allow anger and a souring disposition to take possession of our minds, the Adversary comes closer and closer until he crouches at the door of our hearts, ready to leap in and have possession at a favorable opportunity. In Cain's case, he was not counted as having sinned at the time he thought of his brother in angry mood – his sin was in the outcome of that angry mood – murder itself.

With us the matter is different, because the Lord is not dealing with us according to the flesh but according to the spirit, the will, the intention. Our flesh is reckoned as degenerated, hopelessly dead, and we are accepted of the Lord purely on the basis of our new minds, our faith in Christ, and our consecration to walk in his steps. For all such New Creatures murder would be an impossibility. How could one who has the Spirit of the Lord commit murder? It would be impossible for him to desire or commit murder under any conditions. It would imply that he had lost the Spirit of the Lord entirely; and since under the Lord's Covenant he would not be permitted to do this ignorantly and without reproof, it would imply a wilfulness in the sin. Still stronger is the statement that hatred would be murder for the New Creation. The angry thought might be suggested through the imperfect, fallen brain, but the mind, the will, must be so loyal to God and so well instructed respecting his will that it would repulse such a suggestion as that of hate. The New Creature, the New Will, the New Intention, cannot deliberately entertain a feeling of hatred toward a brother – it would mean the spirit or disposition of murder, and thus the reverse of the Lord's Spirit.

## **WORKS OF THE FLESH AND OF THE DEVIL**

Another Apostle, in cautioning the Church, assures us that the works of the fallen flesh and of the devil are manifestly different from the works or operation of the Spirit of the Lord in his people. The latter he tells us brings forth the reverse, or the fruitage of gentleness, meekness, patience, long suffering, brotherly kindness, love, etc.; the former, the spirit of the fallen nature, the Adversary – anger, malice, envy, hatred, strife, backbiting and slander.

It is only as we get this matter well before our mental vision that we have the proper conception of the Spirit of the Lord in contrast with the spirit of error, the spirit of the Adversary, the disposition of sin. Whoever gets such an opening of the eyes of his understanding will be assisted, quickened thereby to fresh zeal in his opposition to sin in its every form. And the wider the eyes of his understanding open to a discernment of God's character and the beauties of his law of love and justice, the more vigilant will he be in his opposition to the downward tendencies of his own [R3929 : page 27] flesh – the more on guard lest he should be overtaken in such faults.

## **DESIRE CONCEIVES SIN**

We read, "Lust [desire] when it has conceived bringeth forth sin, and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death." (Jas. 1:15.) Here we have a suggestion of the insidious character of sin; it does not stalk about openly in its horrible aspect, rather it starts in desire: it is prompted by selfishness of some kind, either in envy as in Cain's case or in ambition as in Satan's case. Small, refined, insidious are the beginnings of such desires, with no suggestion whatever of disloyalty to God or murder of our fellows. It is when these selfish desires and envyings, being unrepulsed, have gradually grown stronger and stronger, that, as the Apostle suggests, they conceive and bring forth to fruition,

where they have life actually. Then the course is longer or shorter according to the individual or the circumstances, but the tendency of a desire that has conceived is to bring forth – to have the desire, the ambition, the envy, reach a consummation, and such a consummation is always sin. Such sin continued in, unrepented of, cherished, would surely lead on to death – the Second Death. How important, then, it is that we keep a close watch upon the desires of our hearts, and remember that out of the heart, out of the desires, proceed not only the good, kind, loving, generous sentiments, conceiving and bringing forth good deeds, kind words and proper conduct, but also out of the heart desires proceed the envyings and wrong and selfish ambitions which lead farther and farther away from the Lord and nearer and **[R3929 : page 28]** nearer to that condition which he would ultimately declare worthy of the Second Death. How appropriate the words of the poet: –

"I want a principle within  
Of jealous, godly fear;  
A sensibility of sin,  
A pain to feel it near;  
I want the first approach to feel  
Of pride or fond desire;  
To catch the wandering of my will,  
And quench the kindling fire."

### **"THOU SHALT RULE OVER HIM"**

After cautioning Cain that sin crouched at the door of his heart, the Lord added, "Unto thee shall be his desire and thou shalt rule over him;" that is to say, Satan desired to have Cain, but the latter's proper course would be to resist the devil, to rule over him by keeping his heart in tune with the Lord and the recognized spirit of righteousness, justice, love. St. Peter found the Adversary desiring to have him, to sift him as wheat, to get



him out of the discipleship of which he was one of the strongest characters and leader. We have all seen how nearly the Adversary succeeded in Peter's case as he entirely succeeded in Cain's. Peter had the advantage of the Lord's prayers and of his contact with him and of the lessons he had learned as his disciple, and in his case a victory resulted, even though for a time he was overcome.

Is it not the same with all the Lord's true followers? Is not Satan desiring to have us to sift us – to hinder us from being garnered amongst those who shortly will shine forth as the Sun in the Kingdom of the Father. (Matt. 13:43.) Assuredly this is the case, and our experiences today are in full accord with the testimony of the Scriptures that we are now in a very trying time – subject to the special temptations of the Adversary, but succored of the Lord in a special manner through his Word, through the brethren, through the various helpful instrumentalities which the Lord has provided for this harvest time for those who look to him for assistance and who are willing and glad to accept those aids which he proffers them. Yea, we see that we are living in that particular time which the Scriptures designate the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all them that dwell upon the face of the whole earth. – Rev. 3:10.

Temptations, trials, there must needs be: without these there would be no such thing as demonstrating or perfecting character, and the Lord proposes that only overcomers shall be joint-heirs with his Son in the Kingdom. Instead, therefore, of temptations being a sign of divine displeasure they should be regarded by us as evidences of the Lord's favor – that he still considers us worthy of being further proven; that he still has us in hand with a view to our preparation, chiseling, polishing, making ready for places in his glorious heavenly Temple. Let us learn, therefore, to rejoice in tribulation and, as the Apostle urges, let us also fear. (2 Cor. 7:4; Heb. 4:1.) Thus between the rejoicing and the fear,

and carefulness and watchfulness and prayerfulness, we shall be in that attitude which will assist us in the knowing and doing of the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

### **"MY BROTHER'S KEEPER"**

How long Cain brooded over his trouble, how long it took for his wrong desire, his envy, to conceive and bring forth the sin of murder we are not told – merely the fact is stated that this was the bitter fruit. The Lord did not hinder the murder, and even dealt most generously with the murderer, to whose attention the matter is called by the inquiry, "Where is Abel, thy brother?" As the question implied ignorance on the Lord's part, Cain may have wondered to what extent the Almighty was omniscient, all-seeing, and his answer was in line with this. "I know not: am I my brother's keeper?" This question continually recurs, not only amongst the members of Adam's natural family but also amongst the brethren of the Lord's family, the New Creation. To what extent is one his brother's keeper? how far does our responsibility go?

Let us look first at the spiritual family: Its members are declared to be bounden or holden one to another by the cords of love, by membership in the body of Christ, so that if one member suffer all the members suffer with it, and if one member be honored all the members are honored. (1 Cor. 12:26.) The Apostle, expatiating on the importance of the various members of the body, declares that even the humblest is necessary – that the hand may not say to the foot, I have no need of thee; and that as in our natural bodies we take the greatest care of those members which are least pleasing, so in the spiritual family those which are least attractive of themselves need our attention and sympathy and covering with the garment of charity more than do others. The new commandment which the Lord gave to his disciples was, "That ye love one another as I have loved you."

We cannot love the world with that deep, intensive love – it is not incumbent upon us to sacrifice our own interests for the world; but it is made obligatory that we have the Lord's Spirit toward all the household of faith, so that, as he did, so shall we rejoice to lay down our lives for the brethren, serving them with our moments and our hours at the cost of our own self-denial.

### **"EVERY MEMBER IS NECESSARY"**

According to this, the law of our Head, the terms and conditions of membership in his body, we are our brothers' keepers: each one has a responsibility for his fellow – not to intrude upon him as a busybody, but to look out for his interests, his welfare, and to do all for that brother that he would have that brother do for him – yea, more than this: that he would lay down his life for his brother, as Christ loved the Church and gave himself for her. If all the Lord's brethren could realize this to be the divine rule governing the New Creation, and realize that only those who do live up to this rule are making their calling and election sure, what an awakening of zeal amongst the brethren for the service one of another would result, and what a blessing would come to all of the Lord's dear flock! Let us take heed that no man take our crown – that we be found possessors of the Master's Spirit toward the fellow members, and thus be accounted worthy of a share in the Kingdom class.

As for the world: We are to remember that while there is a wide gulf between the natural man and the New Creature **[R3929 : page 29]** in Christ, nevertheless according to the flesh there is a brotherhood which we are not to disdain or overlook. The entire groaning creation are our brethren according to the flesh, and have claims upon us that the Lord would have us recognize. They are our "neighbors," and according even to the Jewish letter of the Law the neighbor must be loved as one's self – his interests are to be safeguarded as we would guard our own interests.

Hence, in the whole world of mankind, this question, "Am I my brother's keeper?" would properly be answered, Yes, each one should be on the lookout for the interests, the welfare of others as well as his own, and so doing would not be disposed to override or cheat his neighbor, but, according to the Golden Rule, to do unto others as he would have them do to him.

We cannot hope that the world, blinded by selfishness, and devoting all the energies of life along selfish lines and ambitious channels – we are not to expect the world to appreciate this high standard of the divine Law. But surely all who are New Creatures in Christ should appreciate it, and in their dealings with the world, therefore, should not only be just, but more – loving and generous and kind, unwilling to injure but willing to bless. Thus the Lord's people are to be peculiar people in that they unselfishly will seek to be their brother's keepers, looking out for the interests of others as well as for their own interests. Not necessarily [R3930 : page 29] laying down their lives for their neighbors, but ready to do good unto all men as they have opportunity, especially to the household of faith. – Gal. 6:10.

### **THE VOICE OF ABEL'S BLOOD**

Putting the matter in figurative language, the Lord declared to Cain that Abel's blood cried from the ground for vengeance. It was another way of telling Cain that the Lord was omniscient, knew everything that transpired, knew that his brother had died at his hand. In this figurative sense all sin cries for the punishment of the wrong-doer – it is the voice of justice. The Apostle Paul, referring to the death of our Lord, who similarly was murdered by his brethren, and whose blood might be expected to cry out against them, against the whole world of mankind, tells us that, instead of crying for vengeance, our Lord's blood – shed as a sacrifice on our behalf, as an atonement for our sins – cries out not for justice but for mercy! O, how

gracious that our dear Redeemer, laid not the sin to the charge of those who crucified him and despitefully used him, but that in his generosity he is willing to make an appropriation of his precious blood on behalf of the sinners, to effect their reconciliation to God by the blood of the cross – by his death on the cross.

The Apostle's words are that the blood of Jesus speaketh better things for us than the blood of Abel. (Heb. 12:24.) Let us not forget that blood stands for or represents something higher than itself – that when we speak of the blood of Christ we are not referring merely to that which coursed his veins and arteries and which flowed from his wounded side, but we are speaking of that which the blood represents, namely, the life: as the Lord said, "The life is the blood." Hence, whenever the shedding of blood is referred to, the giving up of life, the death, is the main thought – thus the passage, "We are not redeemed with corruptible things such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ," signifies that we are redeemed with the incorruptible life of Christ – the life which was not under penalty, not forfeited, not condemned, but approved, and which was yielded up as a sacrifice, a corresponding price, a ransom, for the forfeited life of Adam and his race.

The curse of God was upon Cain, the murderer – divine condemnation rested upon him; he was cut off from communion with God, previously enjoyed, and according to his own language felt his condemnation and outcast condition severely. The Lord declares through the Apostle that no murderer hath eternal life. This signifies that anyone having the spirit of murder in his heart is unfit for eternal life, could not, according to divine arrangement, be granted that great boon or blessing – he himself must die, because unfit for life. This does not mean that there will be no hope for Cain in the future: we know not to what extent he may have repented of his crime before he died. But we

are sure that he, as well as all mankind, not only will receive a just recompense or punishment for their sins, but also secure a measure of the blessing which God has provided for every member of the race through the dear Redeemer, who bought us with the precious blood.

On the other hand, for one of the Lord's consecrated ones, begotten of the Spirit, to commit murder intentionally, willingly, in the first degree, would undoubtedly mean his Second Death; because it would signify that the spirit of love, the Spirit of God, must have entirely perished in his heart ere such a deed could be deliberately and intentionally committed. We would have no hope for such an one. More than this, for wilful and deliberate hatred toward a brother to be engendered in the heart would seem to mean the perishing of the spirit of love there, and if so would mean the Second Death. However, because of the weaknesses of the flesh it would be very unsafe for any of us to attempt to judge closely upon this point. But it would be well indeed that we should be fearful along these lines, as the Apostle suggests, "Let us fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest any of us should seem to come short of it." (Heb. 4:1.) Let us fear, therefore, any approximation of a feeling of hatred, anger or malice against a brother in the Lord or against anybody. Let us strive more and more that the new mind shall control positively in our thoughts and intentions, and so far as possible in our outward deportment.

-----