

## THE MARK OF CAIN

– JANUARY 26. – GENESIS 4:1-15. –

**"Whoso hateth his brother is a murderer." – 1 John 3:15.**

THE first tragedy of Earth was disobedience to God – the eating of the forbidden fruit. The next generation saw the image of God so marred that murder resulted from a fit of jealousy. Since the Bible teaches that our first parents were perfect, in the image of their Creator, the question arises, How could such noble parentage bring forth a son of Cain's evil disposition? As we look back for six thousand years and consider the reign of Sin and Death for so long a period, we do not wonder that we see so low and groveling samples of human depravity – some fallen more particularly in one direction and some in another. Some we class as almost entirely devoid of every trace of the Divine character, and these we designate "degenerates."

It is not necessary for us to suppose that Cain was "degenerate" in the present day acceptance of that word. Undoubtedly, with so noble a parentage, he must have been a great man in many ways. But he was birthmarked, as we all are, with selfishness. It was after the tragedy of Eden, after their expulsion from Paradise to the unfit earth, after they were cut off from access to the life-sustaining fruits of Eden, after they began to toil with sweat of face in battling with the thorns and thistles of the earth – it was then that Cain was born. The period of his gestation was surely one of much mental distress to his mother. As she murmured respecting the loss of her Eden home and selfishly coveted it, she doubtless marked her child with discontent and selfishness also.

By the time Abel was born, doubtless our first parents had become more reconciled to their fate and more accustomed to their surroundings. Hence it is fair to suppose that Abel was born under more favorable conditions than Cain. We are not by this argument justifying murder, but we are getting our minds to take a sympathetic

view [R5150 : page 392] of the murderer's case, corresponding to the view God took of it, as expressed in today's study. God reprobated and condemned the sinner, and arranged for his special punishment; but none of His messages to the murderer indicate bitterness or hatred on the part of the Great Judge.

So parents, while correcting their children with necessary severity, should allow no sentiment to have control of their hearts contrary to love or the best interests and highest welfare of their children. So the laws of men, in dealing with all forms of vice and crime, including murder, should be as swift as righteous judgment will permit and as severe as seems necessary in the interests of society; but those laws should never be vengeful. They should always recognize the fact that all mankind were born in sin, misshapen in iniquity – in sin did our mothers conceive us. Hence, "There is none righteous, no, not one." There is none in whom the original glory of the Divine character-likeness persists. The vengeance of the law against the criminal should, therefore, be sympathetically enforced, with a view to warning others against evil-doing, and, so far as reasonably possible, for the reclamation of the culprit.

It is with great satisfaction that we note that in our day this humane spirit is more and more prevalent. Our prisons more and more are being turned into great reformatories, in sharp contrast with the treatment accorded to the vicious in a darker past. The charges of judges in pronouncing sentence against criminals, especially against murderers, are often fatherly and tender. There is even a danger of too much leniency. The feeling that a terrible responsibility is associated with the taking of human life, even in a judicial way, is right; but this feeling – a certain weakness, in fact – is manifesting itself in opposition to capital punishment. This, we believe, is generally the result of misunderstanding the Divine Word.

True, in the case of Cain, God did not require an execution of the criminal, but specially prohibited it. Nevertheless, the Divine Law, as

given through Moses, stands: "He that sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." The careful observance of this law, yet with a spirit of kindness and sympathy, and in the least painful manner, but with proper ignominy, seems necessary to the preservation of law and order. Weakness in this respect encourages criminality and also furnishes an excuse for mob law and mob violence – defiance of every principle of righteousness.

Undoubtedly the general misapprehension of the Divine Character and Plan has led up to the weakness we mention, which opposes capital punishment. This wrong view, which Bible students are gradually finding is not supported by God's Word, led us to believe that the murderer, as one of the non-elect, would at death pass into horrible and endless tortures. Naturally and properly, with that thought in mind, we would hesitate to plunge a fellow-creature into such misery. Bible students now are learning **[R5151 : page 392]** that we all labored for a time under a delusion, that this delusion came from the Dark Ages of the inquisition, the block, the stake. Our forefathers, imagining God to be worse than themselves, twisted the Scriptures to support their errors.

Now we see that the Bible teaches that the whole world, good and bad, fall asleep in death and will know no awakening, no joy, no sorrow, until their awakening at the Second Coming of Messiah, when He will establish His Kingdom. "Where the tree falleth, there shall it be." Ah, how much truth and common sense is in the Bible statement that all, good and bad, "sleep with their fathers," gathered to their fathers in death! They are gone to the one great slumber-house, the tomb – Sheol, Hades – the prison-house of death. From that prison none can break forth, but all the prisoners there are "prisoners of hope."

Messiah so loved the world that He gave His life as a Man for the redemption of Adam and his race. As a result, as soon as He shall have selected His faithful Bride class, He will establish His glorious Kingdom. Its mission is to open the prison doors and set at liberty the captives. It will bring all to an accurate knowledge of the Truth. Every

wilful transgressor against light and knowledge will then receive stripes. But all evil-doers, as members of the one race, were redeemed by the precious blood, and all must have a full opportunity for deciding willingly, either for harmony with God and everlasting life, or for harmony with sin, and for its penalty – Second Death.

### **"SIN CROUCHETH AT THE DOOR"**

Before the murder was committed, Cain was vexed, angry, jealous, soured, because God had manifested His favor toward his brother Abel's offering of an animal sacrifice, while rejecting Cain's offering of vegetables. Cain should have rejoiced with Abel, and should have brought a similar sacrifice himself and had Divine acceptance. God warned him that his spirit of selfish jealousy was sin, and that it like a wild beast crouched before the door of his heart, ready to spring upon him and overwhelm his better sentiments.

God forewarned him that he should conquer this beastly spirit of selfishness and jealousy, and rule over it. How much we all need to learn this lesson! Through the fall we all have baser sentiments which war against the nobler ones. As a beast of prey they would seek to devour us. The will must be exercised in overcoming the beast, and Divine aid is needed. The Christian has this Divine aid in his access to God through his Great Advocate, the Redeemer.

Cain heeded not God's warning. He ruled not the beast. He was overcome by it. His brother's blood cried, figuratively, to God. In other words, all injustice cries out to the God of Justice, and sooner or later the Divine penalty will be meted out. But as we have seen, the judgments of the Lord are "just and righteous altogether." His judgments are left for the Great Mediator of the New Covenant to execute in sympathy and in kindness, during the Millennial Age. That will be the World's Judgment Day. Only accepted believers in Christ, begotten of the Holy Spirit, are now on trial for life eternal or death eternal.

## **BROTHER-HATERS ARE MURDERERS**

The Great Teacher, addressing, not the world, but the Church, declares that brother-haters are murderers in God's sight. In other words, a spirit of hatred is a spirit of murder. Alas, how many have vicious, wicked, hateful dispositions, merely controlled by their fear of the law! Yet it is not the world, but only the Church, that is being specially dealt with thus far. But alas! how many of the professed followers of Jesus occasionally harbor a spirit of hatred, and sometimes manifest it in anger, malice, envy, strife, works of the flesh and the devil!

Christians are accounted as New Creatures because begotten of the Holy Spirit. These are to fight a good warfare against their own flesh and its imperfections. Sin crouches before the door ready to devour them as New Creatures. They must watch and pray and strive against the fallen nature. They must cultivate the fruits and graces of the Holy Spirit – meekness, gentleness, patience, brotherly-kindness, love. If they do not do so, if, on the contrary, they are brother-haters and manifest the murder spirit, they have the warning that they will lose the great Prize – joint-heirship in the Kingdom.

The Scriptural assurance is, "We know that no murderer **[R5151 : page 393]** hath eternal life abiding in him." (I John 3:15.) Whatever elements of the spirit of murder may still lurk in our flesh must be determinedly warred against, and, proportionately, we must become copies of our Heavenly Father and of our Lord Jesus. Thus we shall ultimately share with our Lord in His great Kingdom, which is shortly to be set up, and to bless the world with the light and the knowledge of the glory of God.

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