

appointed way of salvation. In accordance with this view the seventh verse is understood to mean, "If thou offerest not the appointed sacrifice, a sin offering lies at hand, present it, and thy rights as an elder brother shall be restored and secured. Abel will look up to thee and thy authority shall be unquestioned." It is necessary to choose between conflicting views of a very difficult passage but it seems to us that the word for "offering" cannot here have its technical meaning of a "bloodless offering." If this narrative is, as is not improbable, an extract from a primitive document, the general sense of the word may have been the only one known to the times of the writer. The fundamental principles of all worship are here emphasized—the state of the heart determines acceptability; and persistent wrong-doing terminates in spiritual death, the religious faculty itself is atrophied. **8. Talked with**—We are not told what they talked about. Some translate it "told it to Abel his brother" and connect it with the preceding verse. Others suppose that their conversation was about the whole subject of the rejected sacrifices and that Cain's temper was aroused by the discussion. Notice how often the word "brother" occurs. (Matt. 23: 35; 1 John 3: 12, 15; Jude 11).

III. SUFFERING. 9. Brother's keeper—An insolent answer, both in form and substance. What is required, and what is forbidden in the sixth commandment? Every man is his brother's keeper as far as regards his influence for good or evil. **10. Crieth unto me**—Heinous crimes are figuratively said to "cry to heaven." Compare ch. 18: 20; 19: 13; Ex. 3: 9; also ch. 8: 5; and read Ps. 116: 15; Heb. 11: 4; Jas. 5: 4; Rev. 6: 9, 10; Isa. 26: 21; Ezek. 24: 7; Job. 16: 18. The blood of Christ cries louder for mercy than Abel's did for vengeance. (Heb. 12: 24). **11. Cursed from the earth**—The very ground curses thee and refuses to yield thee subsistence or a home." Compare Lev. 18: 25, 28; 20: 22; also Deut. 18: 15-20. The race of Cain abandoned agriculture and founded cities, inventing arts and music. Here again the curse carried a blessing latent in it. **12. Lashed by the stings of a remorseful conscience**, he could no longer endure the reproachful eyes of men. **13. My punishment**—Marg. "My iniquity is greater than can be forgiven." Either way there is no real penitence. He expresses no regret for the crime, utters no cry for pardon. He realizes his hard lot and dreads just vengeance from man when the protecting care of God is withdrawn. In reply God sets a mark upon him and guarantees that his life shall be preserved. He is given time for repentance and is constantly reminded of the divine mercy in sparing him.

SUMMARY AND REVIEW.

Call for the title of the lesson (C. A.) and the lesson plan (S. S. S.). How did the practice of offering sacrifice originate? What made men think of such a thing? How would they know what to offer? Show that this must have been revealed. Good men with kind hearts, never would have imagined, of themselves, that killing and burning a lamb would please God. Why did God institute sacrifice? That men might express properly certain feelings and beliefs. Thankfulness, including acknowledgement of dependence upon his bounty for life and all temporal blessings. By questions bring out this idea in the offerings of Cain and Abel. Penitence, confession of sin must accompany every approach into God's holy presence. Perhaps the whole human family were accustomed to assemble at the closed gate of Eden and there Adam led the service. How impressive such a scene would be! The sacrifice contained also a promise of pardon, since it pointed to Christ, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Cain's conduct does not exhibit any repentance or desire for pardon. It may be that he intentionally refrained from offering a lamb. His sin began before he came to the festival. It lay in a proud and unrepentant heart. He was perhaps neither much better nor much worse than others as far as men could see. But God looks upon the heart (1 Sam. 16: 7) and so He rejected him. In what spirit should we take reproof? God reasoned with Cain. Illustrate by Jonah (4: 9-11). How does he reason with sinners still? But reproof only hardened Cain. He was angry with his brother because he was a better man. Instead of trying to imitate him, he hated him. The Cain-like spirit is not dead yet. Quote here 1 Jn. 3: 15; Matt. 5: 21, 22. Make vivid, by questions and comments, the dreadful end. The crouching wild beast at the door had captured him.

Suffering follows sin as closely as your shadow follows you on a sunny day. Conscience awakens remorse. Sometimes wickedness may prosper, but misfortune, which is another name for the withdrawal of God's blessing, generally comes in some shape or another, and perdition or final loss of soul and body, must be the doom of those who continue impenitent to the end. Yet God is very merciful and spares Cain