

Lesson IV.

THE STORY OF CAIN AND ABEL

January 27, 1907

BETWEEN THE LESSONS—God had pronounced a curse upon the serpent, and given the promise of a Saviour. Next, He sentences, first, the woman, and then the man, to punishment, for their disobedience ch. 3. 16, 17. The ground, too, is cursed, v. 18. The chief penalty of sin was death, vs. 19, 22, 24. God sends the transgressors forth from Eden, placing at the east of the garden winged creatures, called cherubim, and a flaming sword, to "keep the way of the tree of life," v. 24. After this, two sons were born to our first parents—Cain, who became a tiller of the soil, and Abel, who became a keeper of sheep.

GOLDEN TEXT—Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer.—1 John 3 : 15.

Memorize vs. 8-10.

THE LESSON PASSAGE—Gen. 4 : 3-15.

Study the chapter.

3 And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord.

4 And A'bel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto A'bel and to his offering :

5 But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.

6 And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth ? and why is thy countenance fallen ?

7 If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted ? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.

8 And Cain talked with A'bel his brother : and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against A'bel his brother, and slew him.

9 And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is A'bel thy brother ?
Revised Version—¹coucheth ; ²told ; ³cursed art thou from the ground ; ⁴wanderer ; ⁵ground ; ⁶who-soever findeth ; ⁷appointed a sign for ; ⁸smite.

Daily Readings—(Courtesy, I.B.R.A.)—M.—The story of Cain and Abel, Gen. 4 : 3-15. T.—The sin of hatred, 1 John 3 : 10-18. W.—Abel's faith, Heb. 11 : 1-6. Th.—Envy and strife, James 3 : 13-18. F.—Works of the flesh, Gal. 5 : 13-26. S.—Sacrifice rejected, Prov. 15 : 1-9. S.—Anger condemned, Matt. 5 : 17-24.

THE LESSON EXPLAINED

I. WORSHIP. 3-5. **In process of time** ; after Cain and Abel had become mature men. Cain was a farmer, and Abel a keeper of sheep, v. 2. Difference of occupation may have been partly the cause of the jealousy and strife between the two brothers, as it often is among men still. **Brought . . . an offering** ; a sacrifice, probably laid upon an altar. Whether God taught men at the first to worship Him in this way, or whether they began of their own accord thus to express their gratitude for His gifts, and their desire for His blessing, we cannot tell. **Firstlings** ; the firstborn, which God afterwards required, Ex. 22 : 29, 30. **Fat** ; fat pieces, highly prized portions of the animal, and therefore offered regularly on the altar (see Lev. 1 : 8 ; Num. 18 : 17). **Had respect unto** ; received with approval, expressed in some way not recorded. Why did God treat the offerings of the two worshipers so differently ? Two chief answers have been given : (1) There was some fault in Cain's heart and life, which rendered his gifts displeasing to God ; (2) God required a sacrifice of blood, as in subsequent times (see Heb. 9 : 22). The first seems the true answer. (See 1 John 3 : 12 ; Heb. 11 : 4 ; Jude, v. 11.) Cain was very wroth ; literally "it burned with Cain exceedingly"—anger is an ungoverned fire.

6, 7. **Sin coucheth**, etc. (Rev. Ver.). The sinful act is like a beast of prey crouching at Cain's door, waiting for him to step out and fall into its power. **Unto thee . . . his desire**. As this verse reads in the ordinary Version, "his" refers to Abel, and the

brother ? And he said, I know not. Am I my brother's keeper ?

10 And he said, What hast thou done ? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.

11 And now ¹art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand ;

12 When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength, a fugitive and a ¹vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.

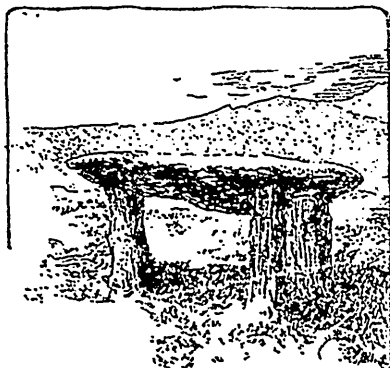
13 And Cain said unto the Lord, My punishment is greater than I can bear.

14 Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the ²earth ; and from thy face shall I be hid ; and I shall be a fugitive and a ¹vagabond in the earth ; and it shall come to pass, that ⁶every one that findeth me shall slay me.

15 And the Lord said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the Lord ⁷set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should ⁸kill him.

thou from the ground ; ⁴wanderer ; ⁵ground ; ⁶who-soever findeth ; ⁷appointed a sign for ; ⁸smite.

meaning is, that Cain has no reason to be jealous of Abel, for, if he behaves rightly, his younger brother will look up to him and obey him. The Rev. Ver.



AN ANCIENT ALTAR

The earliest altars for God's worship were built of rude stones. Beside the altar the worshipper slew a victim. The blood was either poured over the stone, or the stone was smeared with it. In this way the blood was offered to God.

Margin, however, changes the "his" to "its", which then refers to sin, and the meaning is, that Cain ought to master sin, before it becomes too strong for him.

II. MURDER.—8. The field ; the open country, perhaps as distinguished from the immediate neigh-