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THE Teachers' Preparation Leaflet

LESSON 3.

JANUARY 21st, 1894.

1ST QUARTER.

Cain and Abel. - Gen. 4: 3-18.

GOLDEN TEXT: "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." - Heb. 11: 4.

INTRODUCTORY DRILL—THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE PENTATEUCH.

The first five books of the Bible are called the *Pentateuch*, a name derived from two Greek words, *pentos* "five" and *teuchos* "a book." This latter word originally and commonly means "an implement" or "weapon, and the change is very significant. With books, especially the Bible and particularly with the fundamental truths contained in this portion of it, not with swords, is the battle of human progress to be won. The author was **Moses**, the great Hebrew lawgiver, and we have them substantially as they came from his pen. (For a recent defence of their Mosaic authorship see "The Pentateuch, its Age and Authorship," by Rev. John Kennedy, D. D. London S. S. Union. Price 1s. 6d.) In the composition of these books he received many facts by direct revelation, as e. g. the account of the creation, and was infallibly guided in the selection and use of his material so as to produce a work historically accurate. Moreover, traditions were easily handed down to his time seeing but two links were necessary to connect Adam with Isaac.

The art of writing was known long before Moses, so that he may have drawn from authentic written documents. In some sections of the books the Divine Being is termed "God" simply (Heb. "*Elohim*"), and in others "Lord" (Heb. "*Jehovah*"). Any rigid theory founded on this will refute itself, yet there is a share of truth in each of the two leading explanations which are given. (1) "The names set forth a twofold aspect of divine revelation, viz. to the world at large and to the covenant people in particular,

Elohim being used with regard to the former, and *Jehovah* with regard to the latter." This is generally the case, although some passages seem inconsistent with it. (2) "These names betray different documents or authors. The whole Pentateuch is a composite production of several writers pieced together and re-edited several times." The minute subdivisions which the extreme advocates of this view have made, and their failure to agree among themselves, show that, although it doubtless has some ground of truth, it may be pressed so far as to make the "Books of Moses" the most unnatural conglomeration ever palmed upon credulous piety. We may safely acknowledge that Moses did incorporate older narratives and family records whether we are now able to disentangle them from the body of the narrative or not. If he did so, he sets the seal of historical truth upon them.

MOSES.

Revelation

Tradition

Documents

Elohim

Jehovah

Transcribers

Errors and explanatory additions have been made by transcribers.

The following diagram illustrates the ease with which verbal accounts might have been transmitted by tradition. The length of the lines indicates the age. Adam was 627 years old when Methuselah was born; M. 869 when Shem was born; and Isaac was four years old when S. died.

Adam.	627		930	
			Methuselah.	869
				969
(Gen. chaps. 5, 11 and 21 vs. 5)			Shem.	496
				500
			Isaac.	180

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

When Cain was born his mother exclaimed "I have gotten a man from the Lord," a fitting word to fall from the lips of her who first pressed a babe to her bosom. Other meanings than the obvious one have been given to the words. The R. V. reads "I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord," a pathetic hint of the sufferings she had just endured, and a reminder to all her daughters of the source from which strength to bear such trials comes. Others translate the words "I have gotten the man, Jehovah," and understand her to refer to the promised Messiah, whom she believed even now to have come. But it is unlikely that she would have been left to make such an awful blunder as to think that Cain was Christ; and besides, this would indicate a fuller knowledge of the constitution of the Redeemer's person than we have any evidence was possessed at an early stage of human history.

In the name ("breath" "vanity") and brief career of Abel we have a truth embalmed which it was most needful should be early impressed upon the human consciousness, and which finds its noblest expression in the XC Psalm. Eden was a home, but the world is not, nor shall the heart of man repose itself again until it rests in the bosom of God in a new Paradise under the shade of the Tree of Life.

LESSON PLAN. I. Sacrifice. vs. 3-5. II. Sin. vs. 6-8. III. Suffering. vs. 9-13.

I. SACRIFICE. 3. In process of time—lit. "at the end of days." The word implies a considerable lapse of time. In 1 Kings 17: 7 the same expression is rendered "after a while" (see margin), and in 2 Chr. 21: 19 it means two years. There may have been a united festal service of all the family of Adam on the occasion on which this occurred and in that case Cain would have felt publicly humiliated, and all the more deeply since he was the eldest son. **Offering**—the same word is used of Abel's sacrifice, so that we cannot emphasize the special sense which it afterwards bore of "a bloodless offering." The divine displeasure does not seem to have been directed so much against the gift as against the spirit in which it was presented. Cain's offering was one of those afterwards commanded. (Ex. 23: 19; Neh. 10: 35, 36;) and was in itself appropriate. 4-5. **Firstlings**—Ex. 13: 12; 34: 19; Lev. 27: 26; Num. 18: 15; Prov. 3: 9. **The fat thereof**—Either, the fat of the victim was consumed on the altar, or he offered the fatest and best in addition to the firstlings, according as we understand "thereof" to refer to "flock" or "firstlings." **The LORD had respect**—This may have been shown by fire from heaven as in 1 Kings 18: 38. See Lev. 9: 24; Judges 6: 21; 1 Chr. 21: 26; 2 Chr. 7: 1. The reason is given in Heb. 11: 14. The worshipper's state of heart makes all the difference. Compare what is said of Israel's offerings in Isa. 1: 11-18; Hos. 8: 13; Amos. 5: 21, 22, 26. **Very wrath**—lit. "it burned with Cain exceedingly." His pent up wrath showed itself in sullen, lowering looks. There is no humble penitence, self-examination, or prayer for instruction and pardon.

II. SIN. 6-7. In wonderful condescension, God reasons with him. He is the same forbearing and merciful God still, Isa. 1: 18; 43: 26; Ezek. 33: 11; 2 Pet. 3: 9. **Accepted**—lit. "is there not lifting up," either (1) of the guilt, i. e. the burden of sin removed, or (2) of the sacrifice i. e. it is accepted with God, or (3) of the dejected countenance. Acceptable service must spring from right motives and dispositions; but if these are unworthy or evil, "sin lieth at the door" crouching like a wild beast eager to devour its prey. "But thou shouldst rule over it," master the evil. (Rom. 6: 12; 8: 3; 13: 21; Col. 3: 5; Jas. 4: 7; 1: 14, 15). The majority of commentators find the essential difference between the sacrifice of Cain and that of Abel to lie in the absence of bloodshedding in the former thus revealing on Cain's part a wilful rejection of the divinity

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. 9: 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

that he may have time to repent. 2 Pet. 3: 9. Press upon the scholars God's right to expect their love and service.

C. A.		
S.	S.	S.
Thankfulness. Penitence. Pardon.	Rejected. Reasoned with. Hardened.	Remorse. Misfortune. Perdition.

"Let not the sun go down upon your wrath."

NORMAL DRILL

based on the text-book, "The Sabbath School Teacher's Handbook; or, The Principles and Practice of teaching, with special reference to the Sabbath School," prepared by Principal Kirkland of the Toronto Normal School.

THE QUALIFICATIONS OF THE IDEAL SABBATH SCHOOL TEACHER.

(Continued).

V. **A Sabbath School Teacher should always be a learner.**—As soon as a teacher ceases to be a systematic student, he ceases to be an effective teacher. Pupils should not be asked to drink from a stagnant pool but from a living fountain.

VI. **Patience and self-control are of prime importance in the Sabbath School Teacher.**—In order to control and influence others we must first be able to control ourselves.

VII. **A teacher must know the nature of childhood and be able and ready to sympathize with child-nature.**—A sabbath-school teacher should know the nature of the faculties which he is to develop and train, and the order in which these faculties are developed. The wisest training will be directed to these powers that are conspicuously active at the time.

VIII. **The Sabbath School Teacher should possess an agreeable manner and a cheerful disposition.**—To many a pupil his teacher is the representative and embodiment of what a Christian ought to be, and if that teacher is of a fault-finding, sad and whining disposition, the pupil will naturally think that Christianity is not that joyous and beautiful thing that it is represented to be.

IX. **Earnestness is a powerful factor in making a successful Sabbath School Teacher.**—If we wish to impress others, one of the first requisites is to be ourselves impressed. That which we know and greatly care about we very soon learn to impart, but that which we know and do not care about we will soon cease to know at all. We must feel deeply what we wish others to feel.

X. **And lastly Hopefulness is by no means the least important of the characteristics of the Sabbath School Teacher.**—The Teacher should remember that he is doing God's work, and that God has never proved unfaithful, but has always owned and blessed every work done for him. The blessing may not always come when and in the manner we expect, but that it will come there is no doubt.