

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1880.

THIRD QUARTER.

Lesson II.—JULY 18.

CAIN AND ABEL.

Gen. iv. 3-15.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 8-15.

After the expulsion from Eden, Cain was born. Eve seems to have thought him the "seed" whom God had promised, hence his name signifying "gotten or acquired;" concerning Abel she seems to have had no special hope as his name means "vanity."

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer."—1 John iii. 15.

DAILY HOME READINGS.

- M. Cain and Abel, Genesis iv. 3-15.
T. Acceptable Service, Psalm l. 1-23.
W. Unacceptable Service, Isaiah i. 11-20.
T. Pharisee and Publican, Luke xviii. 9-14.
F. Loving our Brethren, 1 John iii. 7-24.
S. Serving in Faith, Hebrews xi. 1-10.
S. Access by the Blood, Hebrews ix. 11-26.

PARALLEL TEXTS.

- With vs. 3: Num. xviii. 12.
With vs. 4: Num. xviii. 17.
With vs. 5: Gen. xxxi. 2.
With vs. 8: Matt. xxiii. 35.
With vs. 9: Psalm ix. 12; John viii. 44.
With vs. 10: Heb. xii. 24; Rev. vi. 10.
With vs. 14: Job xv. 20-24; Psalm li. 11; Gen. ix. 6; Num. xxxv. 19, 21, 27.
With vs. 15: Ps. lxxix. 12; Ezra ix. 4, 6.

THE BELIEVER AND THE UNBELIEVER.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. At Worship, Vss. 3-5. II. In Daily Life, Vss. 6-8. III. Before the Judge, Vss. 9-15.

QUESTIONS.—I. Vss. 3-5.—Whose attempts at worship are here named? What were the occupations of these men? (Vs. 2.) What did each bring as his offering? When were these offerings brought? How were they received? How was the Lord's respect probably shown? How did this expression affect Cain? Unto what did the Lord have respect? (Vs. 4.) Why unto Abel rather than Cain? Why unto his offering rather than Cain's? Read Heb. xi. 4, and tell by what Abel met this success. Wherein did Cain's worship fail? Did Abel's spirit alone make his sacrifice "more excellent"?

II. Vss. 6-8.—Of what, according to Heb. xi. 4, did Abel obtain witness from God? What further evidence is there on this point? (Matt. xxiii. 35; 1 John iii. 12.) God asked Cain three questions—what are they? What do they mean? He also made three statements—what are they? What do they mean? What does John call Cain? (1 John iii. 12.) Why so wicked? What does John say of Cain's works also? (Jude v. 11.)

III. Vss. 9-15.—Who called Cain to account for his sin? How did Cain try to evade God? Why did he speak as in vs. 13, 14?

In these two men we see the representatives of the only two classes known—the righteous and the wicked. Cain, the man of the world, the rationalist, trusting in his own righteousness. Abel, the man of faith, the simple-hearted believer. Their characters are brought out in their offerings. Doubtless, they had been taught by Adam concerning the promise and sacrifices.

Cain's offering. "The fruits of the ground." Reason would call flowers and fruits more acceptable than a lamb's dead body.

Abel's offering. "The firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof." That is, the very best portion. (Numb. xviii. 17; Lev. ix. 19, 20.)

The Lord's verdict. He rejected Cain's offering, and accepted Abel's. The token of acceptance may have been, as in 1 Kings xviii. 38, fire to consume it. Why this difference? (1) Abel presented what God commanded. Sacrifices seem to have been instituted immediately upon the Fall. (2) His offering was a confession of sin, and of the need of expiation; whereas Cain offered the fruit of a sin-cursed earth, as a symbol of his own righteousness.

Sin cannot be concealed (Numb. xxxii. 23.) Though Cain may have hidden the

crime from man, God knows it, and calls him to account (Gen. xvi. 13.) One sin leads to another: Murder requires lying to cover it. We are all our brother's keepers.

EXPLANATORY NOTES.—Verse 3.—In process of time. Literally, "at the end of the days." The sense is, "after a considerable time." Some have supposed that it was a Sabbath-day's service of worship that the brothers were performing. Cain was a tiller of the soil, and of the fruit of his labor he brought an offering to Jehovah. The word "brought" seems to imply that there was a recognized place of offering. It probably was not the first occasion of man's offering.

Verses 4, 5.—Abel, a keeper of flocks, selected from the "firstlings," that is, the first-born young of these. And of the fat thereof. The process of selection was, perhaps, three-fold: First, he chose firstlings; secondly, of the firstlings he chose the best specimens; thirdly, he chose the fat ones among these. And the Lord had respect. Some have held that Jehovah's sign of acceptance for Abel's offering, was fire from heaven to consume it, in some manner intelligible to the brothers, God disclosed his sentiment as to their several offerings.

It is to Abel and his offering that God had respect, and God's respect is withheld, not from Cain's offering alone, but from Cain and his offering. We must look, therefore, quite as much to the character of the two men respectively, as to the character of their offerings, to solve the problem of God's contrasted attitude toward them. In this we are sustained, too, by Heb. xi. 4, where we are told that it was by faith that Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain. Still, faith in Abel, and the absence of faith in Cain, may have led them to choose offerings that were in themselves differently adapted to be acceptable to God. Cain, apparently, took no pains to offer what was choice; Abel took great pains. It may also be that Cain's offering indicated his unwillingness to confess his need of forgiveness through life laid down for life, while Abel's testified to God his sense of a sinfulness that could be atoned for only by blood. It is safest, however, to be satisfied with the inspired account, that it was faith in Abel, with the implied want of faith in Cain, that made the difference. We must believe God, or we cannot please him. Very Wrath. "Exceedingly angry." His countenance fell. A natural gesture for sullen, resentful, brooding thought. Cain's hot anger, and his rebellious musing, indicated, of course, a very evil heart. But his heart was just as evil before, while he was offering his fruits. And this was God's reason for not accepting him.

Verses 6, 7.—Jehovah expostulates with Cain, like a father dealing with a wilful, wicked child. Shall thou not be accepted? More literally, "Is there not a lifting up?" That is, of the countenance. Whereas Cain's countenance was cast down, would he not instinctively lift it up, if he had done well? God appeals to Cain's own heart, to convince him of his sin. Sin lieth at the door. Some expositors, too fancifully, make this mean that an animal suitable for a sin-offering, was at hand for Cain to use. A better way is, to understand that sin is represented as a crouching, lurking wild beast, desiring to make Cain his prey. Thou shalt rule over him. This is to be taken rather as an encouraging imperative: "Do thou rule over him."

Verse 8.—Talked. We had better leave this word thus indefinite, and refrain from guessing what it was that Cain said. Some guess the sayings of God to him; some, an invitation to his brother to go out with him into the field, etc. What fresh provocation to his murder Cain contrived to find, or whether any, we need not try to conjecture. Perhaps his anger against God sought vent in violence toward his brother. 1 John iii. 12 tells us why Cain murdered Abel: "Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." It is of the nature of the bad to hate the good.

Verses 9, 10, 11.—From the earth. "From the ground." The same Hebrew word. To speak of the blood as crying with a voice, and of the ground as drinking the blood, is equally intelligible and striking. "Cursed from the ground" means perhaps, "The face of the ground shall reject thee, yielding thee

no longer a safe resting-place." Perhaps, "The heart of the ground shall no longer give its strength to feed thee." Perhaps both of these things, as indicated in the two-fold statement of vs. 12.

Verse 13.—My punishment. Rather, perhaps, "My iniquity." Than I can bear. "Than can be borne." Cain meant either that he could not bear the punishment which his guilt deserved, or else that his guilt was greater than could be forgiven. In either case, his sentiment was not that of penitence, but of remorse and despair rather.

Verse 14.—From the face of the earth. Perhaps it is meant by this that Eden (not the garden in Eden) was forbidden to Cain. In Eden there seems to have been a place, after man was driven out of the garden, where God revealed himself to worshippers. The wide outside world would be his future place of wandering. Here he felt that he would be exposed, on every hand, to the stroke of vengeance from his fellows. The indication is that already, at this time, the earth was somewhat numerously peopled.

Verse 15.—Mark upon Cain. "Sign for Cain." The spirit in which God intervenes for Cain is not that of vengeance, but that of kindness and forbearance. It was not, we may presume, to punish Cain, that God secured his wretched life, but rather to give him space for repentance. We have no reason to suppose that Cain made good use of God's grace.

The meaning of your offering to God, in return for a part of his gift to you, is that all belongs to him, to be used by you for him.

Not all contributions to God's service are necessarily acceptable to him. True faith does not rest contented with itself, as in itself alone sufficient to please God, but makes choice offerings of its worldly best for his honor.

Self-righteousness needs only to have its self-complacency disturbed, to become very angry even against God.

How gently and kindly Jehovah deals with a murderer.

Such gentleness and kindness do not prevent the murderer's being punished. Conceive of sin as a beast of prey, crouching ever for a deadly spring at your throat, and master him for your life.

There is nothing so dumb in the universe, as not to have a voice for God's ear in witness against you, if you sin. Sin drives you from the face of God.

Sin makes you hate God, and that hating God makes you hate your brother. Hating is murder.

For the Teacher of the Primary Class.

Ask why Cain killed his brother. The answer will probably be that he was angry with him. Say that the Bible asks that same question and gives the answer. Read 1 John iii. 2.

"Cain, who was of that wicked one," hated his brother just because he was good! Show that bad people hate to see others who are good, by a few quick questions about Joseph and his brothers, Daniel and his three friends and the wicked princes, Jesus and the high priests. Let us see if we can find out what Cain's evil works and Abel's righteous works were, and why God accepted Abel's offering and not Cain's.

The promised Saviour did not come into the world for a great many years, but if any one believed that he was coming, the blood he was yet to shed would wash away their sins, the same as it will ours who know that he has come. But they had no Bible; nothing to write the promise on; and though Adam and Eve might never forget, their children might when they had no one to keep on telling them. So God kindly gave them an object lesson to remind them often of the precious promise.

Describe the altar, the wood, the lamb. Abel was sorry for his sins; believed God's promise; obeyed God's commands. But Cain was willing to thank God for giving him food, yet was too proud or unbelieving to say, "I am a sinner, and ought to die like this lamb, but I trust the promised Saviour." His corn or fruit had no blood in them to show that some one must die to wash sin away. God only gave one way to be saved; he don't let people choose their own way. God does not accept of offerings from

disobedient hearts. Teach what the offerings are with which God is pleased.

The evil works of Cain were disobedience, pride, unbelief, envy, hatred, anger, sullenness, (his countenance fell, vs. 5), lying, deceit, murder.

Cain was a murderer in heart before he struck a blow. Tell one or two simple anecdotes, showing to what anger leads. Teach that we are our brother's keeper.

Sin always leaves its mark. We don't know just what Cain's mark was, but it was something by which every one knew what he had done, and avoided him. angry feelings leave deep marks on the soul.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

Youths' Department.

Bible Enigma. No. 80.

Being asked how old he was, Harry replied: If you take the number of verses in Ps. cxix., subtract the whole number of Psalms, divide by the number of letters Paul wrote to Timothy, minus the number of times Joseph smote upon the ground at the command of Elisha, multiplied by the number of "ill-favored and lean-fleshed kine" Pharaoh saw in his dream, minus the number of shekels David paid for Arannah's threshing-floor, divided by the number of barley loaves with which Elisha satisfied one hundred men, plus the number of years old Azariah was when he began to reign, less the number of rows of hewed stones in the inner court of Solomon's Temple, multiplied by the number of candlesticks of pure gold on either one side before the oracle in Solomon's Temple, divided by the number of churches to whom John wrote, minus the number of times Paul says (to the Corinthians) he was beaten with rods, multiplied by the number of times he was shipwrecked, less the number of things we are told in the Proverbs "are very little upon the earth, but are exceeding wise," and the result will be one more than I am years old. How old was he?

—Selected.

CURIOS QUESTIONS.

No. 66. ANAGRAMS. Take the letters in "Girl Maggie" and make one word signifying a difficult journey.

In "Spare him not" and make the name of a hater of mankind.

In "The man" and make a sacred song.

In "Made in pint pots" and make a failure of hopes.

In "Man must see" and make a pastime.

No. 67. Make one month by taking a letter from four others—March, September, February and July, and adding a vowel.

Answer to Bible Enigma. No. 79.

- 1. S aul.....1 Samuel x.
2. I sh-boseth. 2 Samuel ii. 12.
3. N oah.....Genesis vi. 9.
4. A braham....2 Chron. xx. 7.
5. I saiah.....Isaiah ix. 6.

- 6. C ornelius....Acts x.
7. A naniah.....Acts ix.
8. I azarus.....John xi.
9. V ine.....John xv. 1.
10. A pollos.....Acts xviii.
11. R evelation. Rev. i. 1.
12. Y outh.....Ecclesiastes xii. 1.

ANSWERS TO CURIOS QUESTIONS.

- No. 65.
(1) Rose.
(2) Leaves.
(3) stem.
(4) ribs.
(5) stalk.
(6) curve.
(7) pair.
(8) heart.
(9) strigs.
(10) edges.

The shortest and surest way to live with honor in the world is to be in reality what we would appear to be; and, if we observe, we shall find that all human virtues increase and strengthen themselves by the practice and experience of them.

We need not ask, "Will the true, pure, loving, holy man be saved?" for he is saved; he has heaven; it is in him now. He has a part of his inheritance now, and he is soon to possess the whole.

No sword eats so fiercely as an evil tongue.

Select Serial.

Florence Walton,

OR, A Question of Duty.

BY MAY F. MCKEAN.

CHAPTER XIX.—DR. RONSELLE'S RETURN.

How vain are human imaginings! how useless human skill and knowledge to extend the days of one's life, beyond the limit fixed by its Creator! Death comes alike to cottage and to hall; the icy touch of its fingers none may resist. The wealthy Robert Greyson, the uncle with whom Dr. Ronnelle had been travelling could find nothing in his vast possessions, his education, his talents, or morality to ward off its approach. In the year preceding their departure Mr. Greyson had a slight attack of paralysis, which left him somewhat enfeebled in health, and his travels had been largely for the purpose of regaining his former strength. When he had been gone two years a second attack, though not a very serious one had somewhat alarmed him. But, recovering from this, he had pursued his way unmindful of the warnings he had received.

Now, however, he had become weary of the excitement of travel, and had determined to return to his home, the city of which Westtown was a suburb. With this in view he had in company with his nephew arrived in Liverpool upon the very day when we found Ethel contemplating the cheerless autumn scene: Passage in one of the American-bound ships had already been engaged and every arrangement completed.

But the destroyer was in the advance. The fatal stroke of Paralysis came, and utterly unconscious, the old man sank into the arms of death. In vain Dr. Ronnelle tried all that medical skill and tenderest love could do. It was too late.

Mr. Greyson had been a "moralist." His whole life had been in the eyes of the world pure. "Surely," thought the doctor, "if a pure life, if good, noble, generous deeds, can enter heaven, my uncle must have merited it." And so he watched for some evidence that all was well; still, he found it not. Mr. Greyson had ever avoided the subject, even the thought of death, and now that it had come to him he knew it not.

Long before, while he was yet in his usual health, Mr. Greyson had exacted a promise that, should any accident occur, his nephew should take his body back to bury it next his wife's. In compliance with this promise now, when the ship bounded o'er the deep toward their native land it bore the coffin remains of the one guarded by the zealous care of the other.

They met with a prosperous voyage, and were but two days from home when, as evening came down around them, the moon and stars twinkling from the sky and reflected in the ocean, Dr. Ronnelle was leaning over the railing and watching the brilliant display, his thoughts busy with the past. He was going to the home of his early manhood; should he see Florence again? And if he did, should he find her married or single? Would she be much changed? Would she be glad to see him again? How well he remembered just how she looked in those dear old days! Scene after scene arose to his mind; again he almost felt her presence. He remembered her voice, her words, her movements.

But one scene to-night came clearer than any other. Distinctly as if it had been re-enacted, himself one of the performers, he remembered the scene in the church at Westtown. He saw the pews crowded with eager listeners. The venerable pastor in his place was breaking the bread of life to his children. His discourse had been one of encouragement to the child of God—reasons why they should not fear while God was upon their side. Then had followed a warning to sinners, who had everything to fear, with an entreaty for them to come to him who alone is able to say unto the weary soul, "Fear not."

The scene was changed. Homeward, over the crisp, snow-enwrapped earth, he was going, Florence by his side. Presently she spoke: "Dr. Ronnelle, I wish you were a Christian."

Perhaps it was only imagination recalling the past, perhaps it was a dream;