

## **NUMBER THREE.**

### **PART I.**

We have found in the past that the number seven is a fruitful and interesting topic; and that on this sacred number many things in God's plan are based. The investigation of the Tabernacle with its three apartments has suggested that number three is also a sacred and important number. We are convinced that three is fundamental in Heaven and Earth, as to God and man, in the structure of the universe, in the plan of the ages, and in the process of Christian development or of coming to God. For these reasons and in harmony with the Spirit and method of prophecy, we think a glimpse of God's plan was the basis of the pattern which the Lord showed Moses in the mount, from which pattern the tabernacle and all its arrangements were made. No part can fail.

In seeing these underlying principles in the construction of the word, we have additional evidence that the Bible reveals a science, and is God's truth. As men can be made to see these things, it will be like taking the vail of unbelief from their minds, which will let in a flood of God's light and love. One motive in our writing is the desire to guard some against the overspreading wave of unbelief.

The number three is surprisingly prominent, as the subject opens before us. We may not, in every case, see its significance – sometimes little, perhaps, but often much. Others may enlarge on thoughts suggested. Our hope is that all who read may love the word more and more, as the rich treasure house of its great Author.

We would first call attention to the Divine Three – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – often mentioned in the Bible. This is fundamental, as shown by the commission of Christ, (Matt. 28:19) and is related to

our faith in the Creator, Redeemer and Regenerator, and suggests the three steps in bringing men into the Divine image.

Man, in his composition, is spoken of by Paul as having three elements – "spirit and soul and body," which he prays may be sanctified wholly, and preserved blameless unto the coming (presence) of our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Thess. 5:23.

The Divine Spirit is the Sanctifier, and the word of truth is the instrument. 2 Thess. 2:13 and Jno. 17:17.

Man's spirit, in the above passage, which needs sanctifying, should not be confounded with the indwelling Spirit of God, by which we are sanctified. The distinction is observed by the apostle when he says: "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." Rom. 8:16.

We would now call attention to

### **THE THREE WITNESSES.**

There are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit and the water and the blood: "and these three agree in one." 1 John 5:8. The three witnesses agree in one testimony. What is their testimony? It is God's testimony concerning His Son. It must be important. "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater." vs. 9. As the Son is the great expression or revelation of the Father, we should expect this important testimony of the three witnesses to have reference to the revelation of God's love for the world. "God is Love," and He wants us to believe it. Let Paul speak: "Because the love of God is shed abroad [made known] in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, which is given unto us." Rom. 5:5. Here is one of the three witnesses telling us of God's love for us while we were yet sinners. How are we to know that love? What is the Spirit's testimony – the record that God gives concerning His Son? Listen – "For when we were yet without strength

in due time CHRIST DIED FOR THE UNGODLY." Verse 6. The death of Christ must, then, be an important event in God's plan.

By reference to Daniel 9:26 the "due time" – the time appointed – will be seen. "After the threescore and two weeks, Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself" – it was for sinners. This shows that the death could not have been from His birth, nor all the period of His earthly life as some maintain. The weeks mark the time of His baptism, after which He should pour out His soul (life) unto death. He came to His death by the way of water and blood. His baptism in water was a symbol of His baptism into death, and because it was a symbol it became a pledge that He would die, in obedience to the Father's will. It was His consecration to the cross. For this reason if for no other, it could truly be said: "This is He that came by water and blood – even the anointed Saviour; not by water only, but by water and blood." 1 Jno. 5:6. The coming, or manifestation of the Messiah, taken as a whole, was to make known the love of God to the world, and the manifestation included the death.

But is the death of Christ, after the weeks, an expression of God's love? Listen to Paul again: "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: [that would be a great stretch of love] yet possibly for a good man some would even dare to die. But [wondrous beyond measure] God commendeth His love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Rom. 5:7-8. The death of Christ, according to verse 10 and onward, secures reconciliation in the sense that it reverses the curse that came on all by the first Adam; and because of this removal of the encumbrance, it opens the way for the impartation of the Spirit to the obedient, and so for the gift of eternal life. Hence it is written that "If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son; much more being reconciled, we shall be saved [the higher and spiritual form of salvation] by His life." Christ is thus shown to be

both the Restorer of the old, and Giver of the higher life – the second Adam.

No one who can appreciate the Spirit's testimony can ignore or belittle the death of Christ. He not only came to His death by the way of water and blood, as the Spirit hath borne witness, but the water and blood that flowed from His side when He was [R198 : page 5] pierced add their testimony to that of the Spirit that He was dead, and also that it was a voluntary death. He poured out His soul unto death.

The statement of John concerning the testimony of the three witnesses, finds its foundation in the gospel written by him: "But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith there came out blood and water. And he that saw it bear record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe." Jno. 19:34-35. The Spirit says, "Christ died for our sins" and that "He gave his life a ransom." The separation of the watery portion of the blood, gave proof that He was already dead, and had been dead for some time; for had He not been dead, the flow would have been red blood.

We offer this as evidence that His death was not the direct result of crucifixion. The record is that He lived only six hours on the cross, from the third hour until the ninth hour of their day, (Mark 15:25-34) while men who were crucified usually lived much longer, even for days. The case of Jesus was so exceptional that when Joseph, the counsellor, asked Pilate for the body of Jesus, "Pilate marvelled if he were already dead, and would not believe it until he had called the centurion and knew it from him. Mark 15:43-45.

The Jews had no thought of the possibility of His being dead so soon, when they "besought Pilate that their legs might be broken." The soldiers on account of finding Him dead, made an exception of His case, and so "brake not his legs: But one of the soldiers pierced His side." Thus a prophecy was fulfilled: "A bone of him shall not be broken." A type too was fulfilled, no bone of the passover lamb was

to be broken. Num. 9:12. And in the piercing of His side, the foundation was laid for the fulfillment of another scripture in reference to the nation of Israel, when at His second coming He appears for their deliverance, viz: "They shall look on him whom they pierced." Zech. 12:9-10. It was therefore, for all these reasons, necessary that He should die sooner than crucifixion by men would secure.

We are led to believe that Christ's death was a voluntary act in the Divine administration. This is in harmony with the idea which was shown sometime since, in our paper, that Christ was both human and Divine, and thus became the antitype of both priest and sacrifice – Aaron and the beast. Not the life of the Priest, but the lower nature, as represented by the beast, was required as a sacrifice. The Divine is the priest power both in Jesus and all His true followers. A body was prepared for Him and He offered it. Heb. 10:5-10. We are to sacrifice our bodies. Rom. 12:1. The power by which we do this is the indwelling Divine Spirit. Rom. 8:13. Christ said He had received power or authority of His Father to lay down His life." "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me [this could have no force if it referred to His pre-existent life. No one thought of taking that. The force of the statement is sure in that while men might seem to take His life by crucifying Him, yet they were mistaken;] in reality "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself." I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment [authority or power] have I received of my Father." Jno. 10:15-18. And when speaking of the temple of His body, (which is equally true of His own person and of His body, the church, for it is Christ that raises all the dead, i.e. God in Christ, or Christ as a Divine Person) He said: "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." Jno. 2:19-22. "I will raise them up at the last day;" Which when applied to the church, is the seventh thousand from the first Adam and the third thousand from the second Adam.

Now we can see that the real crucifying power is also the saving power, and therefore that the only way of salvation is by following Christ. As the Divine is the Priest power, so when the Humanity of Christ was forsaken of that Divinity which held the human in His hands, it was (the writer thinks) the antitype of Aaron killing the beast; so Jesus immediately bowed His head and died.

It seems certain that the sacrifice was a special preparation of God and in the act of sacrifice was a voluntary offering. In this fact as well as in the ransom thus provided, we may well see the Father's love commended, "in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." And as God has given us the combined testimony of three witnesses to the truth, let us believe in the truth, and thanking Him for it, **[R198 : page 6]** may we be able to see also the value of Christ's example, and so follow the Lord in sacrifice. If we are made conformable to His death we shall share in His glory.

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