

NUMBER THREE.

PART II.

There are three baptisms spoken of as related to God's dealings with men, that of water, of Spirit, and of fire. All are mentioned by John, "I indeed, baptize you with water... but He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire." Matt. 3:11.

This statement doubtless had reference, primarily, to the disposition made of the Jewish nation, at the end of their age, and is intimately related to the harvest work of Christ, mentioned in the next verse, which also has three elements, separation of wheat and chaff, gathering of wheat, and burning of chaff. This work covered a space of forty years, not being complete until the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Jesus was clearly the Lord of the harvest, and Himself the chief Reaper, though He had assistants under His control.

John baptized and addressed a mixed multitude, of which, when passed over to Christ, some were baptized with the Spirit and some with fire. It seems clear that the baptism of the Spirit agrees to the gathering of the wheat into the Gospel barn, and the baptism of fire to the burning of the chaff, or judgments on the rejected nation. Those who bore the fruit Christ was seeking, were counted worthy, and were filled with the Spirit as the sons of God; and those not bearing good fruit, were cut down, and cast into, or baptized with fire. Read the context and see if the "wrath to come," the baptism of fire, and the "unquenchable fire" are not identical.

It may be observed here, as has often been shown, that the harvest of the Gospel age, as mentioned by the Saviour, in the parable of tares and wheat, (Matt. 13) is parallel to the Jewish harvest, and also has its three elements, separation, gathering and burning. Then, it was the Jewish nominal church, wheat and chaff, that was disposed of;

now, it is the nominal Gospel church, wheat and tares, that is to be disposed of. The harvest here, according to the prophetic periods, [see "Day Dawn"] also covers a period of forty years, reaching to and including the year 1914.

The Saviour says: "The harvest is the end of the age," (verse 39) and in the next verse includes the burning of the tares in the closing work of the age; so let us not overlook the fact that in some sense the age, and therefore the harvest reaches to 1914. The tares are not to be burned after the end of the age, but in the end of the age.

According to the order of events, as the Saviour explains them, the shining forth as the sun is not due until after the tares are burned. We believe it must be "Day Dawn" until 1914. Of course the exaltation to glory precedes the shining forth in that glory.

The extension or prolonging of the Jewish age after A.D. 33, and of the Gospel age after A.D. 1878, is an expression of the long suffering of God to His defiled people; He is not willing that any [of them] should perish, but that they should come to repentance." 2 Pet. 3:9. His encouragement to the lukewarm church, is, "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten; be zealous, therefore, and repent." Rev. 3:19. And it seems from the Saviour's parable of the lost sheep, that he will not be content until He finds and brings in the lost one [of the sheep, not of the world.]

There is nothing in what is said above, on the extension of the harvest, to militate against the idea of the exaltation of the king and priest company immediately, if the Lord so wills; in fact, it has often been shown that the little flock are to share in the administration of the coming judgments, which will purify the defiled, or ripen the unripe wheat.

Returning from the seeming digression, we would say, that while the three baptisms had primary application to the Jewish nation, there

seems to be a sense in which they are applicable to each Christian. Water baptism is of course external, and has to do with external relationships; but it is important as an act of obedience, or expression of loyalty to the Saviour, and may appropriately be regarded, on account of the place given it by the Saviour in His commission, and by the apostles in their practices, as an incipient step in a life of loyalty. And we know that it is the obedient who can claim the promises attached. And as a symbol, we may safely say it represents all there is of Christianity, – its faith or foundation, in the death and resurrection of Christ; its life, in dying to sin and rising to walk in newness of life; its hope, in the death and resurrection of the saint.

The baptism of the Spirit, we understand is necessary, to enable the christian to carry out what was symbolized in the water baptism; in other words to enable him to keep his covenant. That to be baptized with the Spirit, is to be filled with the Spirit, seems clear by comparing the promise of Christ, (Acts 1:5,) and the fulfillment. Acts 2:4. He said, "Ye **[R199 : page 6]** shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence;" and when the day of Pentecost was fully come, "They were all filled with the Holy Spirit." Speaking of the same thing Jesus said, "After the Holy Spirit has come upon you." Acts 1:8.

While, as has been clearly shown by another, the company who received the Holy Spirit, on the day of Pentecost, represented the whole church; and it has remained with the church ever since; yet, there is of course, a time when each individual, passing from death unto life by faith, receives that same Spirit. So at the conversion of Cornelius and his family, "The Holy Spirit fell on all them who heard the word." Acts 10:44. And all with Peter were "astonished" ... "because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit," ver. 45. Peter said they "have received the Holy Spirit as well as we." ver. 47. And he afterward said, "And as I began to speak the Holy Spirit fell on them as on us at the beginning &c. Acts 11:15-17.

"The gift of the Holy Spirit is to all that obey the gospel," even as many as the Lord our God shall call. Acts 2:38-39. "And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Spirit." Acts 13:52. Paul exhorts the church at Ephesus to "be not drunk with wine...but [to] be filled with the Spirit." Eph. 5:18.

We understand the baptism of fire, in the individual is equivalent to the trials, chastisements, afflictions, and tribulations, through which we must pass in order to overcome and so reign with Christ. The baptism into death which the Saviour endured, and with which He said His disciples must also be baptized, is the very thing pledged in water baptism, but it has often been shown that it can only be carried out by the power of the indwelling Spirit of Christ. Rom. 8:13. The baptism of fire and of death seem to be identical, or rather different parts of the same thing, the former being the process and the latter the completion of the work. To be baptized into the Saviour's death means far more than to be baptized into water, though the former is represented by the latter.

It is doubtless true that much of our chastisement and affliction comes by our own natural conditions, and the Apostle tells us that, "Whom the Lord loveth He chastiseth... that we might be partakers of His holiness." Heb. 12:6-10.

As judgments and troubles are represented by fire in the Scriptures, so the Christian's trials are called "fiery trials." 1 Pet. 4:12. Some of these trials come from the enemies without, but the Christian's greatest enemy is his old self, or carnal nature, against which the Spirit within, or new nature wars. Rom. 7:15-25.

It is one of the great mistakes of the nominal church that it is considered so easy to be a christian; as if we might sail to Paradise by balmy breezes, and rest on flowery beds. The road the Master went, was a thorny road, and He said, "Follow me." The way of the cross is the way to the crown. The cross is a symbol of death by crucifixion.

The word teaches that through much tribulation (fire) we must enter the kingdom of God. Acts 14:22.

The Lord is represented as a refiner of silver, watching His children in the fire, and thus He will purify the sons of Levi. Mal. 3:3. These trials are often severe, but they have their attending joys. Jesus said to His disciples, "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but in me ye shall have peace." John 16:23. Paul says, "We glory in tribulations also," because of the good effects on character. Rom. 5:3-6. None of these things can separate us from the love of God in Christ. Rom. 8:35-39.

It seems that the fiery baptism whether it be of a nation, church or an individual is permitted in mercy, as a purifying process, without which the final good is not attainable.

We understand the baptism of fire is for the destruction of the flesh – the old nature; that as a means to that end we need the baptism of the Spirit; but the Spirit has the double work of killing, and of making alive with a new and immortal life; and we believe that both are represented by the baptism of water – which is a symbolic death and resurrection.

J. H. P.
