

NUMBER THREE.

PART III.

Many of our readers are familiar with the outline of God's plan as embodied in three worlds, – The world that was before the flood, the world that now is, and the world to come. This is a striking example of the fundamental character of number three in the structure of the Bible plan of revelation and salvation. Each of these worlds, or orders, is spoken of in succession as having its own "heavens and earth." 2 Pet. 3. Here we have the foundation of the idea of the third heaven. The third earth and the third heaven are the final and perfect, wherein "the tabernacle of God is with men," (Rev. 21:3) and "wherein dwelleth righteousness." 2 Pet. 3:13.

Be it observed there are heavens, as well as an earth in each order. They seem to exist in relation to each other as cause and effect, the outer, lower and visible as an expression of the inner, higher and invisible. The heavens rule and the earth is subject. This is at least clearly so of the second and third orders. In the second, called "This present evil world," the "powers of heaven," (by permission and with limitations of course, as no creature can outwit the Creator) are "wicked spirits," all embodied as Satan, their head and Prince. Eph. 6:12 and 2:2. His kingdom is invisible, but under invisible [R210 : page 5] control, uses men and nations as visible agencies, and produces visible results of the most baneful and atrocious character. The earth is in harmony with the heavens; and we would suggest that it may be that all evil physical conditions, including wars, storms, diseases, pains and death are but the pulsations, so to speak, of the powers of darkness. We see an intimation that this is so, in the fact that the earth was cursed for man's sake when he sinned. It was for man's sake, or on account of man, perhaps, in two senses, first, it was a consequence of man's

yielding to evil, and second, it was for man's good, as pain by fire is to teach us to avoid the fire.

In view of the facts and promises we hail with joy the near change from the second to the third world. The day dawn, or transition period we believe has come. In the third world the power of heaven will be the "spirits of just men made perfect," or "raised a spiritual body," and all embodied as Christ, their Head and Prince – "The King of kings and Lord of lords." His kingdom, having supplanted Satan's and taken its place, will also be invisible to mortals, only when for special reasons miraculously manifested; (John 3:3-8 and Luke 17:20,) but it too shall act through visible agencies, and produce visible results, not baneful and atrocious, but grand and glorious. For all nations shall serve and obey **[R211 : page 5]** Him, and in Him be blessed. Dan. 7:14-27 and Gen. 22:18.

Let me ask the reader to which he aspires, – a place in the new earth, or a place in the new heaven? – to be a subject of God's kingdom, and so enjoy its blessing, or to be a royal priest and reign with Him? He and His royal associates will rule to bless. Let us aim high, – at "the mark for the prize of the high [heavenly] calling of God in Christ Jesus." Phil. 3:14.

This present or the second world has its three ages – Patriarchal, Jewish and Gospel. These are three progressive steps from the lower to the higher in the plan of revelation.

There are three kingdom ages, – Jewish, Gospel and Millennial. There is no kingdom of God, mentioned in the Bible, as in any sense related to the Patriarchal or One Man age. In the three ages mentioned, the work is represented as being done by a "Woman" – the church; and the progression may be characterized as from the Jewish typical to the Gospel mystical or hidden, and then to the Millennial glorious – "the manifestation of the sons of God," by which the groaning creation is to

be "delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." Rom. 8:19-21.

This work of progression and glorious success, seems to be illustrated by the Saviour's parable, in which He compares the kingdom of heaven to leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal until the whole was leavened. Matt. 13:33. A very plausible and we will add, forcible objection to this application of the parable, is based on the fact that leaven of bread and of doctrine are spoken of in the Bible as elements of impurity and of corruption. Would the Saviour represent the kingdom of heaven by an element and process of corruption? We understand the Saviour here uses one feature of the leaven only, in His illustration, that is its permeating power. It does not cease until the work is done, so God's kingdom will not cease its operations until the curse is removed.

Another example in which the Saviour uses only one feature of a thing to illustrate a point, may be seen in Luke 17:37, or Matt. 24:28, when in speaking of the "gathering together unto Him," He says: "Wheresoever the carcass [dead body] is, thither will the eagles be gathered together." "How could the Saviour," we have been asked, "compare himself to a dead body?" The attraction is the point of the illustration: as the eagles are, by an unerring instinct, sure to find the carcass, so that the Divine Spirit in the saints will surely bring them to Him whom their soul loveth.

The Saviour seems to use the idea of progression in three steps in reference to the development of the Gospel age ending with the harvest, in His illustration of, "First the blade, then the ear, and after that the full corn in the ear." Mark 4:26-29. This may be regarded as true also in reference to individual growth in grace and in the knowledge of Christ.

When the Lord sets out to do anything He means to make a success of it. Let us imbibe His spirit and follow His example.

J. H. P.