

example the initial rite of the Gospel dispensation which is yet to save from sin and its effects, the seekers after truth, and finally to bless all the existing nations of the earth.

It would appear that the Baptism of Jesus was accompanied by an extraordinary natural phenomenon, such as takes place in Oriental countries, especially in the early springtime; such as a sudden overclouding of the heavens, a violent downpour of rain, accompanied with terrific thunder and vivid lightning, in which the electric element seemed to flash along and mingle itself with the waters beneath. At such times the soul of the seeker after God, conscious of its innocence, feels as though it were in the near presence of Deity, and to be in communion with its Creator. Amid such scenes the Hebrew seers felt the inspiring influence of their God, and ever regarded the display of heaven's fireworks as a manifestation of His presence, and at such moments, from certain mysterious sounds conveyed to their enraptured minds, interpreted messages of importance unrevealed to other mortals. According to the reading of our English versions of Matthew's Gospel, as soon as Jesus ascended from his baptismal bath, the heavens opened and he saw the spirit of God as a dove coming upon him and heard a voice from heaven saying, "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased." But Jerome, quoting from the Hebrew Gospel, gives the following account of the occurrence: "It came to pass when the Lord (Jesus) ascended from the water, the whole

fountain of the Holy Spirit descended and rested upon him, and said to him, "My son, among (or during all the time of) all the Prophets, I was waiting for thy coming, that I might rest upon thee; for thou art my rest, thou art my first begotten son, who shall reign to everlasting ages." It will be noticed that the descending spirit *in dove like form*, is not mentioned in this account, yet how the spirit was manifested is not here intimated, but Justin Martyr, evidently referring to this gospel account, says, that at the baptism of Jesus a fire was kindled in the Jordan, and Epiphanius, in a lengthy account of this event, in which he claims to be quoting the Nazarene gospel, says that at the descent of the spirit and the voice from heaven, a great light suddenly shone around the place; and we have historic testimony that this was the belief of the early Nazarenes, who exclusively used the Hebrew Gospel, and among the Hebrews the presence of Jehovah was always supposed to be manifested in the element of fire. It will also be noticed that it was at that moment that the spirit of God claimed to have begotten Jesus as his first begotten son, and there is abundant evidence, both in scripture and early ecclesiastical history, that this was also an article of the faith of the early disciples of Jesus, who supported their faith by Matthew's Hebrew gospel, and the words of the spirit—as quoted above—"among (or during all the time of) all the prophets, I was waiting for thy coming," seems to be supported as the true reading by the statement of John in the Revelation, that the Testimony of Jesus is the spirit of Prophecy.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)