

public or private, by the voice or by the pen. Of course we here understand *prophecy* to mean the teaching of the things of God, not of necessary predictions. Your old men shall dream dreams. Probably this means that God would in some way reveal His will, as He had formerly revealed it. In other times it was often by dreams. In the new dispensation, a clearer revelation was given. There were two instances of significant dreams in the New Testament—Joseph's dream in Matt. 2 and the dream of Pilate's wife Matt. 27: 19.

See visions. Another way of communicating the will of God. Visions occurred either during sleep or in the waking hours, and were distinct appearances presented to the soul by supernatural agency. We are not told of literal visions on the day of Pentecost; but visions did not cease until the full revelation of God's word was given forth. After that, they were superseded by the clear light of that word.

V. 29. Upon the servants. This seems to imply that the lowest classes of society would be reached in the outpouring of the Spirit. This of course is true, but it is not implied in Peter's rendering of the passage in Acts 2: 18. He says: "On my servants," that is, on the servants of God. The Septuagint and the Latin vulgate so render it. Upon God's servants and handmaids, in the last days, the Spirit would be richly bestowed. They would have in a great degree the means and the ability to tell the truths of God to the world.

V. 30. Wonders in the heavens and in the earth. The fulfilment of the prophecy in our lesson begins on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2, but its complete fulfilment extends throughout the last days. The words of 30 and 31, seem to apply to the close of the dispensation. Some suppose they refer to the destruction of Jerusalem, but, although that may be included, the prophecy seems to contain suggestions of mightier convulsions, and more terrible desolations. These convulsions may extend to the physical world, and even beyond our world, but we are sure that there will be fearful commotions in the political world. Blood and fire and pillars of smoke, all emblems of the terrors that attend the burning of cities and towns.

V. 31. According to Barnes. "The day of the Lord is the day when God shall manifest Himself in a peculiar manner; a day when He shall be so strikingly seen in His wonders and judgments, that it may be called *His day*. Thus it is applied to the day of judgment, as the *day of the Son of Man*, the day in which He will be the great attractive object, as will be perfectly glorified. Phil. 1: 6; 1 Thess. 5: 2; 2 Pet. 3: 12." "The frightful carnage, sacking and burning of Jerusalem, but faintly illustrated that more fearful day of the Lord, when the Lord Himself shall come to judge the world."—Pierce. We know that before the judgment day, there shall be perilous times on the earth. The powers of evil shall make their last grand rally, and the long struggle of ages between good and evil shall reach its awful climax. The sun shall be turned into darkness. It is not necessary to take this literally. The darkening or withdrawing of the sun is used in many passages as an emblem of calamity. Jer. 15: 9; Ezek. 32: 7; Amos 8: 9; Rev. 6: 12 etc. It sometimes represents the calamities of war, "when the smoke of burning cities rises to heaven and obscures the light."

And the moon into blood. The word *blood* here refers to that obscure sanguinary colour, which the moon has, when the atmosphere is filled with smoke and vapor, and especially the lurid and alarming appearance which it assumes when smoke and flames are thrown up, by earthquakes and fiery eruptions. See Rev. 6: 12; 8: 8. The figures used are indicative of wars, and conflagrations, and unusual prodigies of earthquakes.—Barnes. Before the judgment day these signs shall occur; Josephus assures us that such signs preceded the destruction of Jerusalem, a fiery

sword, and also a comet, were seen suspended in the heavens above the devoted city for a year before its destruction. A marvellous light shone upon the temple in the night. The heavy gates which required the strength of twenty men to open them, suddenly opened of themselves, and a mysterious voice was heard saying, "Let us go hence." The Jews were in constant warfare some time before the siege of Titus. The Christians understood these tokens, and fled from the city to Albania, and so escaped the general destruction. We may expect solemn portents of the great and terrible day of the Lord.

V. 32. This verse comes in as a bright relief, the dark predictions of the preceding verses. Even in the midst of the troublous times, in the last days at the end of time even then—

Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered. Every one that hears this promise may find himself included in that wide *whosoever*. Whatever the trouble that may assail us, to call upon the Lord is to find ultimate deliverance. But alas for him who

will not call upon the Lord! God's offer of deliverance is so good, so free, so easy to accept, that he who scorn it, deserves the fate his rejection brings. There is no promise of deliverance for him. This verse is quoted by Paul in Romans 10: 13, and is by him applied to Christ. We may be sure that Peter intended the same application of *whosoever*. "I Joel," the word translated *Lo* is Jehovah, the incommunicable and peculiar name of God; and the use of the passage before us in the New Testament shows how the apostles regarded the Lord Jesus Christ; and proves that they had no hesitation in applying to him the names and attributes which belong only to God.—Barnes. In Mount Zion and in Jerusalem. This was the place where our salvation was wrought out. From Jerusalem went forth to all quarters of the earth, the story of the *Redeemer*. In the *Redeemer*, Pellet says, "It means the first of those who had the piety to return from their exile, and build up again Jerusalem, the temple, and its worship; who thus became the type of the true Israel of God." It extends to the called of God throughout the last time. They are God's agents to carry His offers of salvation to needy souls.

REMARKS.

1. The Christian has made preparation for every possible calamity by putting his trust in God. Even the terrors of the last days shall not move him from his strong foundation. But for what has the sinner prepared?

2. Where the Holy Spirit is richly bestowed, there is exalted and happy religious life. We should pray for the Spirit, and then not oppose His entrance into our hearts by cherishing sins. "Our common dreams have not the least prophetic character belonging to them. It is well to show young people this. Our dreams may indeed indicate the state of health, or habit of mind of the dreamer, but nothing more. If God should choose to reveal something important in a dream, He would also leave the dreamer in no doubt as to the prophetic intention of the dream. But such dreams scarcely occur at all in Gospel times."

PRIMARY LESSONS.

Prepared by Mrs. J. C. Yale.

May 4th.—The Suffering Saviour.—Lesson, Isaiah 53: 1-12.

GOLDEN TEXT.—1st Pet. 2: 24.

REMARKS.

For the *when, where, etc.*, of this lesson, teachers and scholars are referred to that of last Sabbath.

It is not likely that the time of the two chapters is quite the same; but as it is impossible to give to either a precise and certain date, the time of the former may be deemed sufficiently near for all practical purposes.

This prophecy, like that of the former lesson, is a prophecy of Christ; that, referring specially to His character and work; and this, to His humiliation and suffering. Both, as, of the nature of *vision*—that is, things in the distant future are treated as present; and actually transpiring. In that, reference is made to Christ as God's *servant*, His *elect*, His *delight*; and also to Christ's life of beneficence and love. In this, we see Him despised and rejected, stricken, smitten, and afflicted, and finally cut off out of the land of the living. Had the prophet stood by His side through all the shame and sorrow of the closing scenes of our Lord's earthly existence, he could hardly have painted them in more vivid coloring, and this, too more than 700 years before those events transpired.

LESSON TALK.

In this lesson we are shown:

- 1st. How God, and how men regarded (still regard) Jesus.—Verse 2.
- 2nd. What Christ's enemies did to him.—Verses 3, 5, 7, 8, 9.
- 3rd. What His friends did to Him.—Verses 3, 4, 5, 9.
- 4th. What His Father did to Him.—Verses 10, 6.
- 5th. How Jesus bore it all.—Verse 7.
- 6th. What His reward shall be.—Verses 10, 11, 12.

(The first verse (1) of this lesson, while it really affirms nothing, like many of our Lord's interrogatories, implies a great deal. The stupendous import of the *answer* may be inferred from the fact that no answer is attempted. Who *hath believed* our (the prophets') report? *Who?* Very few comparatively. The great mass of men are, and have always been unbelievers. *Arm of the Lord—Christ.* *Revealed*—made known so as to be seen as He is. *To whom?* Only to such as are born again.)

1ST. HOW GOD AND HOW MEN REGARDED

(STILL REGARD) JESUS.

(2.) In God's sight, He was (is) as a *tender plant*, very precious, greatly prized, the only one of the kind in the universe of God; Ezekiel 34: 29; Rev. 6: 12, 13. In man's sight, He was (is) as a *root out of a dry ground*—without form or comeliness. Every one knows how a root taken from every day ground looks; unsightly, crooked, unattractive. Thus the Jews, and all men *naturally*, see no beauty in Christ or His words—do not desire Him until God opens their eyes. *Then He is the chief among ten thousand, the ONE altogether lovely!*

2ND. WHAT HIS ENEMIES DID TO HIM.

(3.) They *despised*—scorned, scoffed at Him. *Rejected*—thrust Him away from them—Luke 9: 14; 20: 15—caused Him to be more than ever before a *man of sorrows* and acquainted with *grief*. He was *despised*—treated with extreme contempt. *How?* By being spit upon; struck in the face; smitten with the palms of men's hands; buffeted, that is, struck with clenched fists; mocked, ridiculed.

(5.) *He was counted*. How? With the *thorns*, the *nails*, the *spine*, *bruised*. How? With the rods with which He was scourged, and with cruel blows. He received *chastisement* (whipping) and *stripes*—marks left upon His flesh by the rods with which it was inflicted. Ps. 22: 17. *Oppressed*—they did not show Him the justice afforded to the vilest criminals. *Afflicted*—grieved with false accusations and the basest ingratitude. *Brought to the slaughter*—that is crucified.

(9.) *After His grace with the wicked*; or as otherwise translated, *His grace was appointed with the wicked*. "According to Jewish custom His grace was to have been with the vilest criminal."