

shall fall down before our Lord, ye, all nations shall serve Him. Instead of sending to one another angry challenges to battle and bloodshed, the nations will invite and stimulate one another to the worship of God and to the acquisition of Godly knowledge. Let us go up. "It is up to goodness and heaven. It is down to sin and hell. But God's drawing upward is stronger than the natural inclination of fallen nature to go down. There is implied here also the principle that we must go with those we would invite to heaven. It is in vain for parent or teacher to say 'Go,' while he himself remains behind." *Peloubet.* He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths. God is at all times willing to instruct us, but we are not always willing and ready to obey. That will be a glorious time when the policy of nations shall be, to find out the paths God has made, and to walk in them,—knowledge of God's will followed instantly and unvaryingly by obedience to that will. What a happy state of things that would be! and to such a state the nations will aspire in those days. For out of Zion, the prophet's words, Jerusalem was the centre from which radiated the knowledge of Christ. The apostles began at Jerusalem. Barnes says that as Zion was the source of religious truth to the ancient world, so the Church is, and shall be, to the existing world.

V. 3. And He shall judge. Jehovah, the God of Jacob, by the Messiah. And shall rebuke. He shall judge, as an umpire, resolving the nations for their wicked passions and angry contentions. He shall settle all difficulties, and, as a result, they shall beat their swords into plough shares, etc. Barnes gives a quotation stating that the Syrian plough is of very light construction, and easily carried in one hand by a moderately strong man. "The ploughshare is a piece of iron, broad, but not large, which tips the end of the shaft, and much like it resemble the short sword used by the ancient warriors, that it may, with very little trouble be converted into that deadly weapon, and when the work of destruction is over, reduced again to its former shape, and applied to the purposes of agriculture." Their spears into pruning hooks,—or sickles, or scythes. The word used may mean any of these. The figures used here denote the return of settled peace after war. Such figures are often used by the prophets. In Joel 3: 10, we have the opposite figures denoting preparation for war: *Beat your plough shares into swords, and your pruning-hooks into spears. Nations shall not lift up.* A remarkable prediction of universal peace. This time has yet to come; but when the nations engage into the ways of the Lord and walk in His paths, they shall find that all His paths are peace. War is a terrible monster, swallowing millions of victims, and consuming the riches that might have been spent in pouring blessings into every needy spot on the face of the earth. It is calculated that \$40,000,000 are expended yearly by the six great powers of Europe in simply maintaining their standing armies in times of peace. And this is merely to be ready to begin war, should it come. Who can estimate the good that might be done by this money, that should be expended, when the Prince of Peace shall reign undisputed Lord of all the earth. Here the parallelism with Isaiah ends.

V. 4. But they shall sit every one under his vine and under his fig tree. A proverbial expression to denote peace and prosperity. The fig tree with its wide-spreading branches and large leaves affords a grateful shade. It is said that in Moorish court-yards the vine and fig tree are invariably found. None shall make them afraid. Each family shall then dwell securely, and the land shall be full of happy homes. And it will not be simply a fortunate day to be ended by any one of the thousand troubles that now shorten our peaceful moments, but it

shall be a time when the Lord of Hosts shall maintain peace, according to His own decree.

V. 5. For all people will walk every one in the name of his god. This is not a prediction of the Messiah's times. It is rather a statement of the tenacity with which heathen nations adhere to their false gods. Israel had not been so steadfast to the true God. See Jer. 2: 11-13. But in that good day the people of God purpose to walk for ever and ever in the name of the true God. God is worthy to be taken for our eternal portion. Only when we thus choose Him does He truly give Himself to us.

V. 6. Her that halteth. "At that time the Lord will gather to himself the halting, i. e., the lame, the smitten, the scathed, and long-rejected remnant of His people, and He will make them a strong nation." *Cassidy.* He will take. Jer. 34: 13-17. Her that is driven out. "The Lord gathereth together the outcasts of Israel." —Isa. 147: 2. "They shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mountain of Jerusalem." —Isa. 27: 13. Her that I have afflicted. "Behold I will gather them out of all countries whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God." —Jer. 32: 37-38.

V. 7. A remnant... A strong nation. The collecting of the enfeebled and dispersed Jewish captives from Babylon to Jerusalem, and their subsequent increase into a considerable remnant, and then into a strong nation, under the government of the Lord, formed but a faint shadow of the rapid increase of the Christian church amidst all her persecutions and afflictions in the first age after Christ; and this was only an earnest of the increasing, increasing, and ever-perpetuating of the church which we wait for, when the kingdom of the Lord shall be conspicuously set up, the Jews shall be re-admitted into the church and restored to their own land, and the fulness of the Gentiles converted; and this reign of Christ shall continue till it is succeeded by the everlasting kingdom of God. —*Scott.*

V. 8. And thou, O tower of the flock. Lorges or towers were built in vineyards and sometimes in the fields for the shelter of those who were watching the vines or the flocks. The tower here is supposed to be the symbol of the house of David. Scott says, "Mount Zion was the tower of the Lord's flock under the old dispensation, the centre of their union, and the special residence of their Protector; and the temple of the Lord's stronghold. Thither Christ, the Good Shepherd and Ruler of His people came and there first He set up His Kingdom. . . . The Son of David would come to Jerusalem and establish His Kingdom, and thence its influence would extend to other nations. And though the tower of Zion after be destroyed, yet the heavenly church, the spiritual Zion, would succeed to it, in which Christ reigns for the benefit of His people; and His cause must prevail even to the end of the world."

REMARKS.

1. A soul at peace with God, in harmony with His divine will, loving all His ways, is a fit subject of the Prince of Peace. But a soul full of jealousies and bitterness, hating God's ways, loving only its own ways, is a soul that must be changed and renewed before it can enter the Kingdom of God or find any happiness there.

2. When righteousness presides over the earth, happiness will prevail too. Goodness and happiness are indivisibly joined together. The children of God may and do find afflictions linked with His service here, but these are only the ebbs of the last wave of sorrow that shall ever

touch their spirits. The paths of righteousness lead straight to happiness, and, just as certainly, sin leads straight to sorrow.

3. The very things which are now used for the service of sin, shall be exalted into means of producing the happy state of things by-and-by. When our railroads and telegraphs and ships, when our statesmanship, our educational systems, our newspapers, are all employed in the service of God, what delightful results will follow, and they shall be so employed.

May 25.—The Holy Spirit Promised.—Joel 2: 28 32.

GOLDEN TEXT.

But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you. Acts 1: 8.

JOEL AND HIS BOOK.

Nothing is known of Joel save what may be gathered from his book. He probably belonged to Judah, as he speaks only of persons and things in that kingdom, making no mention of Israel. As he does not refer to the Babylonian, Assyrian, or even Syrian invasion, he probably lived before the earliest of them. The date of his prophecy has been variously surmised, most commentators placing it as early as B. C. 800, some as early as B. C. 600. Isaiah 13: 6 appears to be a quotation from Joel 1: 15. Joel foretells a terrible plague of locusts, perhaps typical of the Chaldean invasion. He exhorts to prayer and repentance with promises of restored prosperity. He then goes on to predict the glorious times of the gospel dispensation and the judgments of God upon His enemies. Commentators pronounce Joel's style to be very beautiful and exceedingly smooth and lucid, and combining in a remarkable degree the pathetic and the sublime. Read his wonderful description of the locusts, chapters 1 and 2, as a specimen of his style, and it will be seen that even in the translation, it retains great beauty and force. "There is not a more splendid piece of poetry extant." *Bishop Newcombe.*

EXPOSITION.

V. 28. And it shall come to pass afterward. Almost the whole of our lesson is quoted by Peter, Acts 2: 17-21 and applied by him to the occurrences in the midst of which he stood. The prophecy then began to be fulfilled. Peter says: and it shall come to pass in the last days. That is, in the last dispensation which had not long begun when he spoke. I will pour out. To pour out is to give freely, abundantly. My Spirit. The third person of the adorable Trinity. Christ had promised the Comforter, the Spirit to His people. We know that the people of God had not been without the Spirit until that day of Pentecost spoken of in Acts ii, but He was then poured out, as it were, upon them. A large measure of His influence was then communicated to them, and this influence was to continue with them, though not always conferring miraculous power. The general operation of the Spirit upon the heart is to convey to it all spiritual blessings. "Hence He renews the heart, John 3: 5, 6. He is the source of all proper feelings and principles in Christians, or He produces the Christian graces, Gal. 5: 22-25; Titus 3: 5-7. The spread and success of the gospel are attributed to Him, Isaiah 32: 15-16." —*Barnes.* Miraculous gifts are upon all flesh, all persons, or men, not Jews only, but Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor, masters and servants, all classes and conditions of men. Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. Women as well as men were to be qualified by the baptism of the Spirit for prophesying. They were also to say "come." They also are to cheer the testimony to the excellence of God's salvation. This does not provide for the way of prophesying, whether