

God will lead them; and they will never again be afraid of His wrath, for they will know that Jesus has washed away all their sins in His own blood. The mountains and hills shall all seem smiling and full of pleasant music; and even the trees will seem to flutter their leaves in gladness; and by and by God will make this earth all new for them, more beautiful and glorious than ever it was before. Read 2d Pet. 3: 13 and Rev. 21: 1-5.

The Saviour's Kingdom.

May 18. Lesson, Micah 4: 1-8. Golden Text, Micah 4: 2.

REMARKS.

Little is known of the prophet Micah except that he lived in the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah; and was contemporary with Isaiah, Hosea, and Amos. He is called the Morabite, probably from the name of his native place. Nothing is known with certainty in regard to his death. There is an account that he died by violence, which is not unlikely.—See Acts 7: 52.

Some of his prophecies, such as 1: 6; 3: 12, and 5: 4, have had a most literal fulfillment; and this, though not positive proof of the literal fulfillment of those which point to a time yet future, undoubtedly furnish an argument in its favor.

The when and where of many of Isaiah's prophecies must apply very nearly to those of Micah; since those prophets lived and prophesied during the same period of time, and some of their utterances are either identical, or so nearly so, as to make it a matter of doubt to which of the two they originally belonged. The present lesson is a prophecy concerning Christ's kingdom; and a portion of it seems evidently to apply to a time yet in the future, when the Gospel triumphs will be complete, and Christ's kingdom shall be supreme in the world.

LESSON TALK.

In the last days,—the time subsequent to Christ's coming in human flesh; probably embracing the whole period of the Gospel dispensation. *It shall come to pass*,—the things the prophet is about to make known. These are:—

- 1st. The establishment of Christ's kingdom. Verses 1, 2.
- 2nd. Effects immediate and remote. Verses 3, 4, 5.
- 3rd. The restoration of Israel. Verses 6, 7.
- 4th. The Kingdom everlasting. Verses 7, 8.

1ST. THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST.

(1, 2.) *The mountain of the Lord's house . . . in the top of the mountains . . . above the hills.* This language is in harmony with that of Daniel 2: 35—"the stone that smote the image became a great mountain and filled the whole Earth." The plain sense seems to be, that Christ's kingdom will ultimately be highest,—the dominant or controlling one in the whole earth. *The people shall flow into it*—many nations shall come. This is a prophetic announcement of the ingathering of the Gentiles to the Church. *Shall say come*,—referring doubtless to the eagerness with which the Gentiles would receive the Gospel, and their readiness to help others to learn about Christ. *He—the God of Jacob will teach us of His ways, &c.* The Gentile nations were very ignorant of God's ways. They were all idolaters before they received the Gospel; but God taught them by His Spirit and through His word concerning His ways, and a very great number soon learned to walk in His path. *For the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.* This was literally fulfilled. The Gospel was first publicly preached at Jerusalem, (Zion), and thence went forth to the surrounding nations.

2ND. EFFECTS.

(3.) *He shall judge and rebuke.* Before Christ came, God revealed His will and authority, more especially to the Israelites; after that, His laws were sent forth to all men. Mark 16: 15. No one, since that time, who has had the Bible, could say I do not know Christ's law—I do not know my danger. God has ever since been judging and rebuking men continually; and He will continue to do so in the future. *Strong nations afar off* (from Jerusalem), have learned His judgments, and felt His rebukes; and nations who have received the Gospel are sending it on to other nations, so that all men everywhere may learn of God and His laws. These are some of the immediate effects of the setting up of Christ's kingdom; now follow some that are remote,—that is, yet future.

(4.) *Every one shall beat their swords and their spears* (implements of warfare) *into ploughshares and pruning-hooks* (implements of husbandry). *Nation shall not lift up a sword* (proclaim war) *against nation; neither shall they learn war* (military science) *any more.* (5.) *Every one shall sit under* (have sure and peaceful possession of) *his own vine and fig tree*, (sources of bodily nourishment), and none shall make him afraid. There will be nothing to fear; for Satan shall be bound.—Rev. 20: 3,—and men will be at peace with each other. See again verse 3. This prophecy is sure to be realized on the earth for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

(6.) *For all people will—that is, for a very long time—walk every one in the name of his God.* The prophet foresees that idolatry would live long and die hard; but that it will surely die, read Zeph. 2: 11. *We* (God's own people) *will walk in the name of the Lord our God.* How long? A few years? Nay; but forever and ever!

3RD. RESTORATION OF ISRAEL.

(6.) *In that day*,—that is, sometime during those last days.—*See Verse 1.—I will assemble her that halteth*, (walks limping),—that is, the Jews, at that time shifting frequently from the worship of God to the worship of idols, and back again to that of God when some vigorous ruler became their leader,—*and I will gather her that is driven out*—scattered abroad—that is, Israel, (the ten tribes), then but recently carried into captivity, (2d Kings 17: 6). *And her that I have afflicted*,—that is, the whole Israelitish nation.

(7.) *I will make her that halteth* (the Jews) *a remnant*,—that is, a remnant whom God would sometime call into the kingdom of His grace, Joel 2: 32. Rom. 11: 5,—*and her that was cast off a strong nation.* Ezekiel 37: 19-22. Rom. 11: 26.

4TH. AN EVERLASTING KINGDOM.

(7, 8.) *And the Lord shall reign over them.* Where? In mount Zion. How long? From henceforth, EVEN FOREVER. *And thou, O tower of the flock, &c.* Jerusalem, including the fortified hill, Zion, was literally the stronghold of the daughter (lineage, posterity) of Zion. *Unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion.* The first dominion of Israel was a Divine Theocracy—God was King. This dominion ceased when Israel, tired of being a peculiar people, demanded a king from Samuel; thus rejecting God from ruling (in a secular sense) over them. Here it is plainly foretold that the Divine Theocracy (first dominion) shall be re-established. *The kingdom shall come to the daughter of Zion.*

The Holy Spirit Promised.

May 25. Lesson, Joel 2: 28-32. Golden Text, Acts 1: 8.

REMARKS.

The precise time in which Joel lived and prophesied has been the subject of much controversy.

However, a number of critics and commentators agree in placing it in the reign of Uzziah, and not far from 800 years before Christ. Of his history nothing certain is known. Judging from his writings his mission was to Judah; and it is likely he was one of the first, possibly the first, who was sent specially to the heath. The prophetic survey which he takes is a very large one, sweeping on from the near events referred to in the first chapter, condensing the religious history of centuries into a few glowing sentences, and scattering gleams of light along the pathway of the ages down to the very time of the end.

LESSON TALK.

It shall come to pass,—that is, after the judgments, the deliverances and the gracious blessings before spoken of—that *I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh.* We need be in no doubt about the right interpretation of this prophecy; for the Apostle Peter, speaking under the power of the Holy Ghost, applied the whole scripture contained in this lesson, except the last clause of the 32d verse, to the great outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost,—see Acts 2: 16-21. This simplifies our lesson down to one topic, namely:—

THE PROPHECY VIEWED IN THE LIGHT OF ITS FULFILLMENT.

(28.) *Upon all flesh*,—that is, upon some of all nations, or the representatives of all nations of the (then) known world. This will be seen by referring to the list of nationalities enumerated.—Acts 2: 9, 11,—where we learn that all heard, each in his own language, the tidings of the Gospel. *And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy* (teach). *This gift of teaching*, is one of the special gifts of the Holy Ghost, bestowed, in greater or less degree, upon all who are regenerated; and, unlike some other gifts of Apostolic times, has remained in the Church and will remain through all time. Christians should see to it, then, that they be not guilty of burying their Lord's money.

Your old men shall dream dreams—your young men shall see visions. Dreams and visions were among the special mediums through which God revealed His will in the early history of the Church. But as the Church gained strength, these gradually became less frequent, and possibly, they are no longer given. Persons, however, who assert that they are no longer sent for the same purpose as at first, should be careful to know they are right.

(29.) *Also upon the servants and handmaids, &c.* The gift of the Spirit should be free to all ranks. Men and women of every grade, from the lowest to the highest, and even little children, might be partakers of this blessed gift; and through Him might touch others the precious lesson of salvation through Jesus Christ.

(30.) This prophecy is supposed by many to refer to the various signs and portents that are said to have occurred shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem; and before the Christian religion was firmly established in the Roman Empire.

(31.) *The darkening of the sun and the turning of the moon into blood* are supposed to refer to the effects of political and religious destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans; and the great and terrible day of the Lord, to the taking of the city and the sacking of the temple. This may be true; yet these verses, when carefully compared with other scriptures, seem clearly to have a broader meaning, and to shadow forth events yet in the future. If this is true, their ever being satisfactorily explained, except in the light of their fulfillment, seems doubtful.

(32.) *Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord*, Peter applied this prophetic promise to the time in which he was speaking; and in fulfillment of it, about 3000 persons were saved and added to the church.