

Naphtali were on the heathen frontier, exposed to debasement and invasion. *Afterward did more grievously afflict.* "But in the latter time (again the Revised Version) *hath he made it glorious.*" Their disgrace was exchanged for exaltation.

V. 2. *The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light.* Phrases are accumulated to express the condition of impenetrable gloom resting upon the nation. What the *great light* is is presently to appear, ch. 60: 1. Very similar was the condition of the world at the coming of Christ, a condition of ignorance, which will give way to one of spiritual illumination, when the Light of the World shall have come.

V. 3. *Thou hast multiplied the nation.* In the bestowment of light God would both honor the despised people and fill them with joy. He will enlarge the remnant of the nation. *Thou hast increased their joy* (Rev. Ver.). Their joy is to be great, like the joy in the harvest. This anticipates the 'angels' message (Luke 2: 10).

V. 4. *For*; introducing the cause of the exaltation. *Thou hast broken the yoke . . . staff . . . rod*; all symbols of bondage. The coming of the Messiah will bring emancipation, not in the temporal sense, as the Jews in His own day expected; but in spiritual release from the thralldom of sin. *As in the day of Midian.* This may refer to the day

when Gideon routed the Midianites by divine aid, and freed the land from their oppression (Judges 7).

V. 5. The Revised Version disentangles this puzzling verse thus: "For all the armour of the armed man in the tumult, and the garments rolled in blood, shall even be for 'burning and fuel of fire.'" All the weapons of warfare shall be consumed. War shall cease. The oppressors shall pass away and peace be established by the Messiah's reign (Luke 2: 14).

V. 6. *Unto us a child is born.* Attention is now directed to the person of the deliverer. This prophecy gave new interest and hope to the birth of every male child in Israel ever afterwards. The verse proceeds to bring His character into view. He will possess divine attributes and do the work of God.

V. 7. *Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.* His peaceful rule shall be universal. *Upon the throne of David.* The family lineage of Messiah is shown (Micah 5: 2-4). *From henceforth even forever.* His sway will be eternal as well as universal. *The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.* The word here translated "zeal" signifies "not only God's intense love for His people, but His jealousy on their behalf." This is the guarantee that God Himself gave His people of the accomplishment of these exceeding great and precious promises.

#### FOR TEACHERS OF THE LITTLE ONES

The charm of the lesson is in the announcement of v. 6—"A child is born"; for the birth of a new baby brother or sister is a perpetual and perennial source of delight to the little ones.

Tell the story of how God's people had sinned and sinned and sinned, in spite of all the warnings God had given them and all His punishments, as well as all His pleadings, and that now they were to be led away into captivity; but that, by and by, a child was to be born who would deliver them from their oppressors and again make them free and happy; and of how Isaiah is sent to cheer them with this promise.

It will be only a step to the "little town of Bethlehem," of Luke 2, and to the shep-

herds, and the glory that shone about them in the night, and the wonderful words the angels spake about the babe that had been born, and the glorious song of peace and goodwill that the angels sang.

What a wonderful child the deliverer was to be! v. 6, of lesson. And so the hymn declares:

"There came a little Child to earth  
Long ago;

And the angels of God proclaimed His  
birth,—

High and low.

Out on the night, so calm and still,  
Their song was heard;

For they knew that the Child on Bethle-  
hem's hill

Was Christ the Lord."