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THE PRINCE OF PEACE.

IV. QUAR., LESSON XII., DEC. 23, ISA. 9:2-7.

Golden Text – "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end." – Isa. 9:7.

The standpoint of the Prophet here is that of the dawn of the Millennial age, immediately after the setting up of the Kingdom of God in the earth – both its earthly and its heavenly phases.

Verse 2. "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light." The reference here is to the world of mankind, all of whom will at that time recognize the presence of the Lord and his Kingdom established; for it is written that "every eye shall see him." (Rev. 1:7.) The world that has walked in the darkness of ignorance and superstition for six thousand years will then begin to see the glorious light of truth and righteousness, and in the earthly phase of the Kingdom they will see the grand illustrations and rewards of righteousness.

"They that dwell in the land of the shadow of death [*i.e.*, fleshly Israel under the condemnation of their law covenant*], a light shineth brightly over them." Yes, the light will shine with special brilliancy upon fleshly Israel: then their blindness will be turned away and the favors of the new dispensation will again be – "to the Jew first, and also [afterward] to the Gentile;" and through the secondary instrumentality of the fleshly seed of Abraham shall all the nations of the world be blessed. The ancient worthies of that nation will be the visible rulers of the world, and their new work will begin at Jerusalem, bringing order out of confusion, peace out of discord and making Jerusalem a praise in the whole world. It was with reference to this that the Prophet wrote again, saying, "Arise, give light, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is shining forth [R1747 : page 395] over thee. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and a gross darkness the people; but over

thee the Lord will shine forth, and his glory will be seen over thee. And nations shall walk by thy light, and kings by thy brightness of thy shining....And the sons of the stranger shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee; for in my wrath did I smite thee, but in my favor have I had mercy on thee." – Isa. 60:1-3,10.

**See our issue of November 1 & 15, '94.*

Verse 3. "Thou hast multiplied the nation [Israel – a reference to their gathering together again as a nation after the long dispersion of nearly two thousand years as fugitives among all the nations; – and also to their reinforcement by the resurrection of their ancient worthies and heroes], made great their joy: they rejoice before thee as with the joy in harvest, as men are glad when they divide the spoil." Such indeed will be the joy of Israel when the blessings of their restoration to divine favor begin to be realized.

Verses 4,5. "For the yoke of their burden, and the staff on their shoulder, the rod of their oppressor [the heavy burdens of oppression imposed upon them and the persecutions inflicted by their Gentile enemies during the long period of their blindness and exile], hast thou broken, as on the day of Midian" – when a great victory was won for them by Gideon's small band of 300 under the Lord's direction, without bloodshed and without strife. (Judges 7:1-23.) Even so shall it be when the Lord shall again fight for Israel: it will not be by their own power that the victory of the final battle will be secured. – See Ezek. 38:11,15-23. Also compare verse 4 with Ezek. 39:8-15. **[R1747 : page 396]**

Verse 6. Why is all this return of divine favor to Israel? is it because of worthiness in them? Surely not; for to this day they are a stiff-necked people, and their blindness and hardness of heart continue although we are within only a score of years of the time when all these things shall be fulfilled. The reason for it is that the Lord hath remembered his covenant with their fathers (Lev. 26:42,45; Jer. 31:34), and that in fulfilment of that covenant a child has been born unto them who was destined to be a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of

Israel; and now (at the time indicated in the prophecy) "the government is placed upon his shoulders." Dimly this light of the world shone upon Israel at the first advent of Messiah; but when "the light shined in the darkness, the darkness comprehended it not." "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." It is only at the second advent that they recognize him as the promised seed of Abraham and their long-looked-for Messiah. They shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and shall mourn for him. – Zech. 12:10.

"And his name is called Wonderful [What a wonder indeed to Israel specially, that the despised Nazarene, the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, whom they hated and crucified and reviled, even to this day, was indeed their Messiah, and they knew him not. What a wonder, too, to them specially, will be the forgiving love that so meekly bore their reproaches and sacrificed even unto death to redeem them from the curse of the law, and that now returns to restore and bless them! Wonderful, wonderful love, wonderful condescension and grace, and wonderful exaltation and glory and power!], Counsellor [not counsellor of the mighty God, as some translators have rendered it; for Paul significantly inquires concerning Jehovah, "Who hath been his counsellor?" (Rom. 11:34.) He needed no counsellor, but poor fallen humanity does need such a wise counsellor, and he will teach them and they shall walk in his ways. – Isa. 2:3], The Mighty God ["a Savior and a great one" – Isa. 19:20], The Everlasting Father [the new life-giver to our dead race – the second Adam – 1 Cor. 15:45], The Prince of Peace [whose glorious reign shall be one of righteousness, bringing with it all the blessed fruits of righteousness – peace and joy and satisfaction and everlasting rest]."

Verse 7. His dominion shall increase until all things are subdued under him. It shall extend, not only to the ends of the earth, but eventually all things in heaven and in earth are to be united under his headship as the representative of Jehovah, who would have all men honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. – Psa. 72:7; Eph. 1:10; John 5:23.

"The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." Such is Jehovah's purpose, and thus he declares that it shall be accomplished; and our hearts leap for joy as we realize, not only the glorious import of this prophecy, but also the fact that the time is at hand, and that a score of years future will see the Kingdom established and its blessings beginning to be experienced.

The common interpretation of this prophecy regards it as fulfilled upon Israel at the first advent, and the Kingdom of God as established then in the Gospel Church; and the great increase in the numbers and power of the nominal Church of all denominations, Papal and Protestant, as the predicted increase of Christ's government. – Verse 7.

Such a fulfilment would not be worthy of the record. Christ does not reign in Christendom: its general character is antichristian. The only sense in which Christ's kingdom was begun at the first advent was in its embryo condition; and this, the only true Kingdom of Christ in the world, has, like the Lord, been unrecognized in the world, except, like him, to be despised and forsaken and to suffer violence. Its numbers have always been small and its circumstances humble; for not many rich and great, etc., are called. – 1 Cor. 1:26-29; Jas. 2:5.

Nor did the nation of Israel at the first advent see or comprehend the light of Christ, nor did he at that time break their yoke or deliver them from the rod of their oppressor; for in consequence of their failure to recognize the light when it began to shine upon them, they were blinded, the rod of the oppressor came upon them with increased force and they have never yet been relieved, nor will they be until their Messiah is recognized as having come again, a second time; this time without a sin-offering unto salvation. – Heb. 9:28.

Let us rejoice for them and for all mankind that the blessed day is nigh, even at the doors. Rightly viewed, this prophecy is full of rapturous inspiration. **page 396**

REVIEW.

IV. QUAR., LESSON XIII., DEC. 30.

Golden Text – "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever." – Heb. 13:8.

As we endeavor to review the life of Jesus how blessed is this assurance of the Apostle, that he is, and ever shall be, the same unchangeable friend and lover of humanity! The review of his life and teaching should be our constant meditation. He was the living example of God's law of Love; and in him all the graces of the spirit focused.
