

He gave them the Word of God and it went forth from Zion and spread out through Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost parts of the earth. Do you think that's what vv.1 and 2 describe? Whll it could fit that couldn't it very nicely. On the other hand they would fit equally well with a time after the return of Christ, when Christ would set up His throne there and he would reign from Jerusalem and people from all over this earth would be anxious to come to Jerusalem to learn what His law and purposes were for them.. Verses 1 and 2 don't show which of these three views are involved.

But the passage doesn't end there. We go on and learn something more about it. Verse 3 says: "And he shall judge among many people and rebuke strong nations afar off." Is that what has happend as a result of the Gospel going forth? You can take it figuratively to some extent and say that it has, but it does not seem to fit near so well as it fits an idea that this refers to a time when Christ reigns there and rebukes strong nations and judges the people. But thus far you cannot decide. But then it goes on: "And they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruninghooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more"

Now it so happens that just about the time when Jesus was on the earth the Roman empire was rounding out its conquests and a considerable part of Europe and Asia was under control of the Roman Empire so that what had been separate countries so that you couldnot pass from one to the other without a passport and considerable difficulty was now under the iron heel of Rome, and Rome established a condition where people could travel freely and easily throughout that big area. In the providence of God that occurred so that Paul and the other Apostles could travel from one part of the Roman empire to another part and carry the Gospel. That came just about the time when Jesus came to this earth. So while during the next two or three centuries there were some wars on the borders of the Roman empire, an occasional civil war with Rome, yet there were comparatively few. There was a period of peace upon this earth greater than the world had ever seen. Andnd there were Christian preachers during that period who said, Here is the prophecy of Micah fulfilled. They said the gospel extended its influence backward as well as forward. So they said that from the very time of Christ peace has come upon the earth. And we have this widespread universal peace, this is marvellously fulfilled, this is a proof that the Bible is true!

I think that is rather weak thinking! Because it says this is going to come because he who reigns in Jerusalem will rebuke strong nations and judge among many people. And the peace they had was because a Roman emperor at Rome, and often a very cruel brutal sort of fellow at that, was establishing a control throughout that area that maintained a very large measure of peace. But there were Christian preachers who presented that as an argument for Christianity during that period of two or three hundred years. Then that period came to an end. Civil war broke out in the Roman empire and they had many fightings within the empire. Then the barbarians broke into the empire from outside and great hordes went across it from one side to the other and the Middle Ages began with wars and fightings all over. Then the pagans said, Oh, you Christians said that this peace showed Chirstianity was true, but now look there is no more peace. Does that mean Christianity isn't true any more? Peace has come to an end. There is war and fighting all the time. You know I think there is a warning in that for us. Whenyou see conditions that seem to fit with a prophecy of Scripture, unless it's absolutely clear that that's what the Scripture refers to, let's not say, Look what Russia and Germany have done!