

How did God punish them? (Verses 14, 15.)

3. A Gracious God, v. 16.

How did God show himself gracious? (GOLDEN TEXT.)

What was the source of power to the judges? (Verse 18.)

What happened when the judge died? (Verse 19.)

Why were not all the Canaanites driven out? (Verses 21, 22.)

Teachings of the Lesson.

Where in this lesson are we shown—

1. That God always keeps his promises?
2. That disobedience to God brings evil?
3. That God shows mercy to those who forget him?

QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER SCHOLARS.

What kind of people lived in Canaan? **Idolaters.**

What did the Lord want the Israelites to do? **Drive them out of the land.**

What did they do after Joshua's death?

What ought they to have done?

Whom did the Lord send to reprove them?

What did he say the Lord would not do?

What were the heathen allowed to do?

What made the Israelites weep? **To hear that they must suffer.**

What should they have done? **Driven out their enemies.**

What did they do instead?

What awful sin were they soon led into?

What did the Lord send upon them?

What did they do?

Whom did he send to help them?

What does this lesson teach? **To keep away from sin.**

Remember—

That sin in the heart is sure to make trouble.
That the only safe way is to drive it out.

EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL NOTES.

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General Statement.

The war is ended. The aged conqueror has sought retirement. The new nation has started on its history, with God as its King and the priests and elders as his viceregents. Never did a people live among stranger conditions. They were removed by one generation from abject slavery. They were trying to conform to a law which touched every detail of their lives, and which was a novelty to them in many particulars. Without experience except as slaves, as shepherds, and of late years as warriors, they were to establish themselves in the rich plantations and cities of one of the wealthiest countries then known. Then their possession of this country was only partial. The mountain ranges were theirs, though even there exceptions must be made of notable fortresses like Jebus and Beth-el. In nearly every valley there still remained villages of the conquered peoples, worshipping false gods, indulging in vice, and ready to rise at any moment against their oppressors. Thorns in the sides of the nation indeed they were. From their heights the Jews could look down upon the Philistines of the southeastern plain, intrenched within their powerful cities, while the Jordan valley and the plain of Esdraelon and the valley of Sharon were still occupied by the Canaanites. These elements of peril were in their borders, while beyond them were Amalekites and Edomites on the south, Moabites, Ammonites, and Bashanites on the east. Israel stands alone amid the nations, and in equal danger from their enmity and their friendship. We begin to understand, when we realize the temptations around and the lusts within, how the people of God so soon forget their high vocation and their glorious history and sink into the embraces of sin. They long for a visible object of worship like the people about them; they are charmed with the splendid rites and are led astray by the seductive fascinations of idolatry. At last, after many half steps in the wrong, Israel turns from Jehovah and, like all sinners, suffers the consequences. No sooner did the chosen people bow the knee to Baal than enemies arose about them. Wave after wave of oppression sweeps over the land, each in turn rolled back by the deliverers whom God in mercy raises up. The history contained in the Book of Judges is, some of it, painful reading, but it is doubtful whether the history of mankind furnishes more instructive passages than these. Our lesson notes seven steps downward which Israel took, and which resulted at last in their enslavement. Let us be warned by the faithless people of God.

Verse 1. An angel of the Lord. Probably in this case a human messenger and prophet. We cannot speak with certainty, because the wisest scholars differ. Some commentators believe that this was the uncreated Angel of the

Covenant, the second person of the Trinity. The word translated "angel" is nearly always used in the Bible for a supernatural messenger. There are, however, notable exceptions to this usage, such as Hag. 1. 13; Judg. 11. 13; Isa. 42. 19;