

5. Joshua and his household would serve God, even if all others turned away. *We* should be decided for God.

6. Let us often look on the Shechem stones we have erected, and renew our vows to God!

### TRUTHS.

No man can serve two masters.

Make good pledges and keep them.

They that seek the Lord shall find him.

A godly old age deserves respect.

Aug. 19, }  
1883. }

### ISRAEL FORSAKING GOD.

{ Judges 2 :  
6-16. }

**COLDEN TEXT.**—"And they forsook the Lord God of their fathers."—Judges 2 : 12.

**CENTRAL TRUTH.**—Forsaking God brings distress and sorrow.

**CONNECTION.**—The lesson gives a general view of the state of Israel for more than three hundred years—the period of the "Judges" or special rulers God raised up from time to time. Particulars are given in the following lessons.

**NOTES.**—Baal: a god of the Canaanites. He represented the sun. He was worshipped by the Midianites (Num. 22 : 41) in the wilderness. The children of Israel often turned away from the true God to serve the idol of Baal. Elijah met four hundred and fifty of the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. They cried in vain at that time for Baal to help them. But God heard Elijah (1 Kings 18 : 19-40). Ashtaroth: a goddess of the Canaanites or Sidonians. She represented the moon and stars. Even Solomon worshipped her idol (1 Kings 11 : 5) and built altars for her (2 Kings 23 : 13). Judges: a class of men raised for special emergencies. They were not rulers like kings, but at special times of trouble and war the people gathered about them and acknowledged their authority. They were the leaders in the history of Israel for about 350 to 450 years. There were fifteen in all, Othniel the first and Samson the last. But they did not rule in succession. Sometimes one judge ruled in one part of the land and another in another part at the same time. One was a brave and heroic woman, Deborah. The four greatest were Samuel, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson.

**1. SERVING GOD.**—Ver. 6.—To possess the Land: it would seem that though every family had been allotted a possession, some of the heathen had still to be driven out of possession. It is like driving sin out of the heart—a slow and difficult process.

**Ver. 7.**—All the days of Joshua: a godly man in authority has great influence. The elders that outlived Joshua: perhaps a period of twenty or thirty years. Seen all the great works of the Lord: as children in Egypt or as young men in the wilderness.

**Ver. 8, 9.**—Buried him .... in Timnath-heres: "Portion of the Sun," perhaps so named from Joshua commanding the sun to stand still (Joshua 10 : 12-14.) Supposed to be nine miles south of *Nablis* or Shechem. The oldest die at last; and they only die well who die in God. And they only have an assurance of dying in God who live with God.

**Ver. 10.**—Arose another generation: Godly parents are a great advantage; but there is no natural descent of godliness. Those who were born and brought up in Canaan, amid all the blessings of peace and plenty, forgot God. Does it not hint to us of the benefits of trials and hardships?

**SERVING BAAL.**—Ver. 11.—Served Baalim: plural of Baal; probably referring to various characters and offices supposed to be possessed by him. In serving Baal they indulged in impure sports, and revels, and dances (as among

the heathen now), and it was attractive to poor, debased, sinful, human nature led by Satan.

**Ver. 12.**—Forsook the God of their fathers: their fathers had good reasons for serving God. They should not have forsaken Him *unless they had better reasons for forsaking Him than their fathers had for serving Him.* Be sinners never reason; they merely follow their corrupt desires. Of the gods of the people: they imitated the heathen around them: fell into "the fashion of the day!"

**Ver. 13.**—Baal and Ashtaroth: (singular "Ashtaroth.") Baal means Lord or ruler. Ashtaroth seems to be from a Persian word; the great god and goddess of the heathen in those countries; represented by the sun and moon; afterwards connected with the planets Jupiter and Venus. Their worship was most immoral and impure.

**Ver. 14.**—The anger of the Lord was hot: God had indignation against their sin. Delivered them: to their heathen enemies gain victories over them. God withdrew from helping them. Spoilers: robbers, enemies who carried off and destroyed all their property.

**Ver. 15.**—As the Lord had said: God was "against them for evil," we are told. The Lord had given them many warnings—had told them of their misery if they forsook Him. So he tells us; and the punishment is sure to come, either in this life or the next—generally in both.

**Ver. 16.**—Nevertheless: an exception—hope is. They were not entirely cut off. Whenever the people repented, and cried to God for help, he *did* help them. As he will help us. Judges: not as with us, men who are appointed only to try cases, but warlike leaders and governors, who also judged causes and crimes: Othniel, Barak, Gideon, etc.

### PRACTICAL TEACHINGS.

1. How important is a good example! The people served God as long as any of the godly elders, who had come in with Joshua, lived.

2. Each generation in its turn has the responsibility upon it of moulding the principles and worship of the world (Ver. 10). Are we doing *our* duty?

3. The folly and sin of "doing what others do" is well shown here. Israel did like those around them. But they "do well?" They forsook God, and incurred His wrath.

4. God is ever merciful to the penitent. He sent His enemy to punish the unfaithful, and He sent "Judges" to deliver the penitent.

## FORSAKING GOD { TROUBLE SORROW.

Aug. 26, }  
1883. }

### GIDEON'S ARMY.

{ Judges  
6-8. }

**GOLDEN TEXT.**—"The sword of the Lord and Gideon."—Judges 7 : 20.

**CENTRAL TRUTH.**—The Lord can save by many or by few.

**CONNECTION.**—Two hundred years had passed away. Four times the people had run into idolatry, and four times they had been oppressed and evil-intreated by enemies sometimes for many years. Othniel, Ehud and Barak had been raised by God to deliver them. Under the fourth oppression (by the Midianites), when the people "cried to the Lord" (Judges 6 : 7) God raised up Gideon.

**NOTES.**—Gideon: a "mighty man of valour," "through faith turned to fight the armies of the allies" (Heb. 11 : 32, 34.) He governed in Israel forty years (Judges 8 : 28.) When called to rescue Israel from the Midianites he sent messengers to the tribes and blew