

IV. *Bright Prospects*, vs. 16-18. The whole nation is not gone to the bad. There is a chosen remnant. Picture the beautiful scene of religious fellowship, v. 16. God is interested in such a scene as this, vs. 16, 17. It is a blind man who cannot discern between the righteous and the wicked.

Impress the Lesson of the Golden Text,—that the forsaking of sin and the faithful service of God are sure to win His favor.

For Teachers of the Boys and Girls

Bring out, by a few preliminary questions, the teaching of the unprinted portion of the Lesson regarding the messenger whom the Lord will send and his mission. Show the application of these verses to John the Baptist and his work. For the printed portion, the Lesson Plan may be followed.

I. THE LORD'S CHARGE, vs. 7-9. Help the scholars to see the vivid picture in the opening words of v. 7,—the whole Jewish nation "turned aside" (Rev. Ver.) from the path of obedience to God's commands. Dwell on the gracious invitation, "Return", etc., and the blindness, shown in the question that closes v. 7, of the people to their own sin.

Now (v. 8) comes a specific charge from God against His people. What is it? And what is their reply? How dull of conscience it shows them to be. The Lord must make His charge still more explicit,—He has been robbed in "tithes" and "offer-

ings". Have each of these terms explained.

II. THE LORD'S PROMISE, vs. 10-12. Is it not strange that the Lord should have a promise at all for people who had so sinned against Him. But that is always His way,—striving to bring sinners back to Himself by His gracious loving-kindness. But before God's people can enjoy His promise, there is something which they must do. Question out what this is, and follow out in its details the promise, making sure that all the terms used in it are understood.

III. THE LORD'S CHALLENGERS, vs. 13-15. The Lord has just promised blessing to those who do His will; but there are those who deny that serving God brings blessing. Follow out the "stout words" of those who thus challenge the Almighty.

IV. THE LORD'S SERVANTS, vs. 16-18. Over against the bold challengers of the Lord are placed His true and faithful servants. Bring out, by well directed questions, the character and conduct of these servants of the Lord and the promises made regarding them. Dwell on the Lord's words to unbelievers in v. 18, telling them that the days will come when they shall see the folly of their unbelief.

Emphasize the teaching of the Golden Text, that when we return to God by forsaking our sin and striving to do His will, He will return to us, by bestowing upon us His blessing and favor.

THE GEOGRAPHY LESSON

The Bible records do not locate the "house" where the Wise Men from the East found the Child of their hopes. It may possibly have been the rude shelter of the khan (inn) or its stable. It may have been the house of some kinsman or friend of Joseph, where room had been made after the crowd of pilgrims began to dwindle. But we can feel quite sure of one place in Bethlehem where such travelers as the Eastern seers would be certain to go asking for information. It is the public square and market-place. If you yourself go to Bethlehem and stand a few rods west of the medieval Church of the Nativity, facing towards it, you have directly before and around you an open space which has been used, as far back as either history

or tradition reach, for the town market. At the farther end of the square you see a confused and confusing mass of bare, un-beautiful stone buildings, with crosses surmounting several differently shaped roofs. Tradition says that a partly natural, partly artificial cavern down underneath one of those buildings was in existence over nineteen hundred years ago, used for a stable, and that Jesus there looked for the first time on our world, with the eyes of a new-born child.

You can see with your own eyes the old market square and the people of to-day, just as if you were there beside them, by using the stereograph entitled, Church of the Nativity, Built Where Jesus Was Born, Bethlehem of Judea.