

# The Sunday School Lesson

by Bessie Wilbon

## God Gave Them Up

By J. L. Little

Here in Romans 1, Paul sets forth very clearly why God gave them up: "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, (1) And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible, man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. (2) Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. (4) Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: (5) for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, (6) . . . And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, (7) God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, HATERS OF GOD . . ." Read all the first chapter of Romans and weep.

What a vivid description of the total depravity of man! Oh, the tragedy of being given up by God. The only thing God has to do for you to go to Hell is just give you up or leave you alone. The beloved Apostle Paul here was writing to the saints at Rome, but what a clear description of our church folks today. Every description here applies to our church folks. You are religious but you are all the apostle described here. The greatest trouble I have ever had has come from religious folks. You hate the Lord. When God gives a soul up, there's no use to pray for them. When God gives a nation up, there's no use to pray for that nation. May the God of all grace awaken you to the fact you are a lost sinner! Pray for the discovery of your soul. Pray that the Lord will not give you up. If He gives you up, you are gone, there is no hope for you. My Lord is coming soon. If you are left behind that is evidence He gave you up.

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**INTRODUCTION:**  
The period of the judges began somewhere between 1400 and 1200 B.C. and lasted until around 1060 B.C. we do not know when Israel's decline began after Joshua, but it seems to have been distressingly soon after his death. In any case, it became a lengthy period covering scores of years. This was a dark and ugly period but one in which shafts of faith and mercy penetrated the gloom like searchlights. It was indeed an era when "sin abounded" but when, in spite of everything sometimes "grace did much more abound."

**THE LESSON:**  
Then the people of Israel sinned against the Lord and began to serve the Baals. They stopped worshipping the Lord; the God of their ancestors, the God who had brought them out of Egypt, and they began to worship other gods, the gods of the peoples around them. They bowed down to them and made the Lord angry. They stopped worshipping the Lord and served the Baals and the Astartes. And so the Lord became furious with Israel and let raiders attack and rob them. He let the enemies all around overpower them, and the Israelites could no longer protect themselves. Everytime they would go into battle, the Lord was against them just as he had said he would be. They were in great distress. Then the Lord gave the Israelites leaders who saved them from the raiders. But the Israelites paid no attention to their leaders. Israel was unfaithful to the Lord and worshipped other gods. Their fathers had obeyed the Lord's commands, but this new generation soon stopped doing so. Whenever the Lord gave Israel a leader, the Lord would help him and would save the people from their enemies as long as that leader lived. The Lord would have mercy on them because they groaned under their suffering and oppression. But when the leader died, the people would return to the old ways and behave worse than the previous generation. They would serve and worship other gods, and stubbornly continue their own evil ways. (Judges 2: 11-19)

The Israelites did evil in that they ceased to follow the faith and worship of the living God and began to worship the gods of the Canaanite peoples. Perhaps what they did was not wrong in the eyes of the people who surrounded them. The gods whose worship the Israelite adopted were those exalted by their neighbors, so they doubtless considered that the Hebrews finally were becoming sensible in their devotional exercises. It is likely the Israelites felt that they were becoming sensible in their devotional exercises. It is likely the Israelites felt that they were doing the right thing in adopting more "acceptable modes of worship." However, what they were doing was evil in God's sight. They should have known this from the clear teachings of His commandments. Joshua, just before his death, urgently urged his hearers not to forget the Lord God. In fact, all the people vowed solemnly to be true to His way. But they failed to teach and exalt; the way of the true God before their children, for it is said that there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord.

"Baal" is a word that means "lord" or "master." Most often the word refers to the deities worshiped by the people who lived in and around Canaan. Each locality had a presiding deity and he was known as "Baal." Although each area had its own Baal, there was much similarity in the worship of these idols.

The Ashtaroth (Astartes) were female deities though of as the wives or consorts of the Baals. It was believed that these gods controlled the forces of nations and were responsible for the processes of seed-time and harvest, festivity and reproduction. They believed that these gods would favorably affect the prosperity of those who honored and exalted them. The ceremonies by which they were worshiped was degrading and cruel. In times of peril the worshippers sacrificed their own sons and daughters to the idols. (Read Psalm 106: 35-38). Obviously, if Israel chose to worship such gods as these, they would have to forsake the Lord. They could not worship both. The same choice is ours, we may serve the gods of our own age and suffer the consequences, or we may serve the Lord. As we view the grass paganism around us today, it is clear that forsaking God is still the greatest peril our country faces.

Lord, may we know surrender instead of stubbornness, purity instead of stain, truth in the face of falsehood, and peace amid restlessness. Through Christ Jesus our Lord we pray. Amen.

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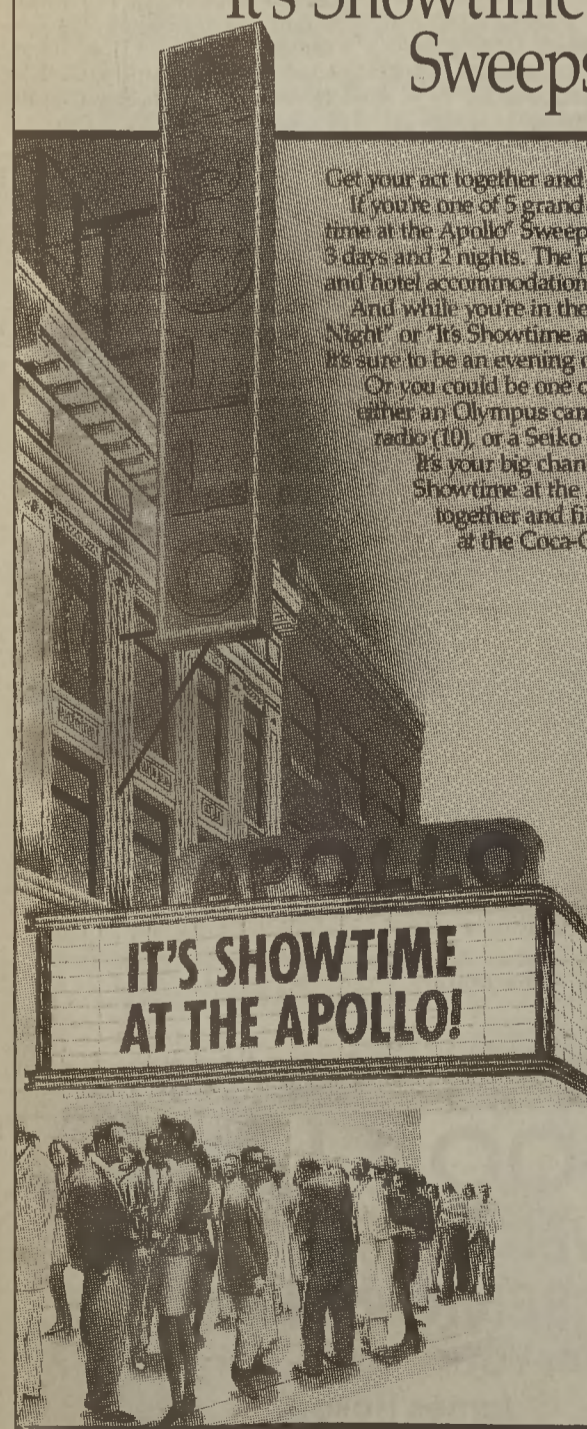
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