

“Messianic Samaritans!”

1. Intro:

- 1.1. **Illus:** During the reign of **Oliver Cromwell**, the British government began to run low on **silver** for coins. **Lord Cromwell** sent his men on an investigation of the local cathedral to see if they could find any precious metal there. After investigating, they reported, "The only silver we could find is in **the statues of the saints** standing in the corners." To which the radical soldier and statesman of England replied, "Good! We'll melt down the saints and put them into circulation!"
- 1.2. The **1st church wide persecution** (believers in general, not just a designated few) following the death of Stephen, led to the scattering of Jerusalem Christians; & thus the **1st evangelistic tour**; with Philip as the **1st evangelist**; resulting in the **1st mass evangelism**.
- 1.3. **Exit** the churches 1st martyr...Stephen; **Enter** Saul of Tarsus.

2. MESSIANIC SAMARITANS! (1-8)

- 2.1. **SAUL'S HOLY CRUSADES!** (1-3)
- 2.2. **Read** vs.7:58 *“laid down their clothes at Saul's feet”*. I wonder if Stephen's mantle were there? [He didn't pick it up right away, but he sure did later!¹]
 - 2.2.1. Stephen's witness made a **tremendous impression** on Saul as we read later in **Acts 22:20**.
 - 2.2.2. The death of Stephen *seemed* to be a **defeat** for the church, **but** it resulted in some **great victories** for the Lord.
 - 2.2.2.1. “Never give up when the enemy seems to be winning. It may be your **finest hour of victory!**”²
- 2.3. It even seems just before one gets saved the devil points his whole arsenal at the individual.
 - 2.3.1. And the response is often that individual venting all his **fears & frustrations**, either trying to run from it **or** attack strong against it.
 - 2.3.2. His desire to **stamp out** the movement only helped to **advance it!**
- 2.4. I wonder if Augustine was correct when he said, “**If Stephen had not prayed, Paul had not preached.**” (i.e. 7:60)
- 2.5. (3) The picture is one of *“midnight raids, good people poorly treated, & human rights disregarded in the name of religion...for the sake of God!”*³
 - 2.5.1. Wow, sounds like most of **Africa** today!

¹ Spurgeon At His Best; Acts 7:58; pg.311

² Warren Wiersbe; With the word; pg.712

³ Shepherd's Notes; pg.29

- 2.6. For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. (Gal.1:13)
- 2.7. Saul the persecutor, “entering every house” as Satan’s instrument; Later... Paul, the pastor, teaching “from house to house” as Christ’s servant. (20:20)
- 2.8. **MESSIANIC SAMARITANS!** (4-8)
- 2.9. (4) And... “the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church!”
- 2.9.1. (Swindoll) Such persecution could have smothered the flame of Christ. **Instead**, like pouring gasoline on a burning match, the suffering **fueled a fire** that exploded into even greater evangelism!⁴
- 2.10. (5) Went down to Samaria – a **Test of Sympathy** because of Jewish attitude towards Samaritans.
- 2.11. (5b) Philip...preached Christ!
- 2.11.1. Not a creed, not a church, but Christ!
- 2.11.2. Wasn’t negative, i.e. denouncing Samaritan error.
- 2.11.3. Simply that he is the Christ, *the Messiah!*
- 2.12. (6) Some think the success of Philip in Samaria was largely due to the influence of his **Master** there not many years before. [woman at well, & men from city]
- 2.12.1. How’d you like Jesus going before you in your missionary or evangelist efforts? {Jesus...your front man...paving the way}
- 2.12.1.1. Well, He is, & always does!
- 2.13. **Persecution** is *like a storm* that scattered the seed of the Word, & dispersed the sowers & reapers over many fields.
- 2.13.1. This is God’s way of: [1] Extending His kingdom; [2] Bringing good out of evil; & [3] Making the wrath of man to praise him!
- 2.13.2. “There is one who scatters, yet increases more!” (Prov. 11:24)
- 2.13.2.1. So, the **Huguenots** were driven from France (French Calvinist by R.C.); & the **Protestants** from Spain; & the **Puritans** from England.
- 2.14. We may not see the *physical miracles*, but we may look confidently for *spiritual miracles* in transformed lives & these are equally strong proofs of true evangelism!
- 2.15. **Great Joy in that city** – Joy from Christ’s perfect **pardon**, persuasive **power**, & prized **preciousness!**
- 2.16. **SORCERER’S FOR THE SAVIOR!** (9-13)
- 2.17. (9-11) Magic was a significant form of religious expression in the ancient world.
- 2.17.1. Evidently he was no trickster, but used some satanic arts.
- 2.17.2. Like *spiritism* today, it is a mixture of **fraud & demonic power** under the guise of *religion*.

⁴ Chuch Swindoll, Acts, pg.126

- 2.18. (12) They place their trust in Omnipotence.
- 2.18.1. Yet Great power is met by Greater power!
- 2.18.2. Like Lk.11:21,22 “When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace. But when a **stronger than he** comes upon him and overcomes him, he takes from him all his armor in which he trusted, and divides his spoils.”
- 2.19. Both men & women were baptized – indicating **new allegiance**.
- 2.19.1. Simon’s influence was evidently **weakened & neutralized** by preaching of the Gospel.
- 2.19.1.1. This gives **great hope** for places where they are very superstitious, or have strong demonic influences.
- 2.20. (13) Simon **believed** & was **baptized**.
- 2.20.1. I can see Simon sporting his new “**Sorcerer’s for the Savior**” Tee shirt!
- 2.21. **BABY’S 1ST STEPS!** (14-25)
- 2.22. **FIRE FROM HEAVEN!** (14-17)
- 2.23. No one had yet told them of the H.S.
- 2.23.1. Peter informs them of this great possibility & they eagerly open the *windows to their souls* to receive God’s gift of the Holy Spirit.
- 2.24. **Thinking point:** What was going through John the son of thunder’s mind returning to the place where previously he had asked Jesus if he should call down fire from heaven?
- 2.24.1. He now returns to this place with reports of **men’s lives being saved!**
- 2.24.2. **See Luke 9:51-56** [This must have been a long walk, the kind where God talks, & you just listen!]
- 2.24.3. **But, I guess John finally got to call down *fire from heaven*(H.S. fire)! ☺**
- 2.24.3.1. John, you were only off by “**what kind** of fire to call down” & “**when** to call it”!
- 2.25. **They received the Holy Spirit** – a special acknowledgment of God working in Samaria, recognizing them as part of the universal church.
- 2.26. **STUMBLE, OR NEVER SAVED?** (18-25)
- 2.27. Tradition gives him a permanent place as a **heretic**.
- 2.27.1. We even get our word “**Simony**” from this man [Encarta: *the buying or selling of sacred or spiritual things*]
- 2.27.2. **But, was Simon a heretic?** (somebody who holds to a belief that contradicts established religious teaching); **or was he a hypocrite?** (somebody who gives a false appearance of having admirable principles, beliefs, or feelings); **or was he a backslider?** (a believer who relapses into a bad behavior)? [I believe the 3rd]

- 2.27.3. Vs.13 said, “**he believed & was baptized**”. [same 2 words used in vs.12]
 2.27.3.1. **So why do we read in falsity, insincerity, or hypocrisy?**
 2.27.3.2. **Also, he continued with Philip.**
 2.27.3.3. **No mention yet of anything wrong.**
- 2.28. (18,19) Simon learns an important lesson for a new believer!
 2.28.1. I believe Simon is suddenly tempted along old lines.
- 2.29. (21) **In this matter – What matter?** Salvation? **No**, the matter of being able to have this power the apostles had.
- 2.30. **Your heart is not right** - i.e. not straight, not upright.
- 2.31. (22) **Repent... & pray – Would this be said to the **unconverted**, with *no mention of faith in Christ’s saving power?***
 2.31.1. The counsel of Peter is more appropriate to a **backslider** than to a **hypocrite**.
 2.31.2. Look at the **stern language** Paul uses to another sorcerer who really was a scoundrel in **Acts 13:8-12**. (esp.10)
- 2.32. **The thought** – this one singular thought of which Simon was guilty.
 2.32.1. **Did he not *slide back* into his old mode of life, or into applying his **old standards** to his **new life**?**
 2.32.1.1. **What **old way** did you fall back into when you 1st were saved?**
 2.32.2. Often old temptations resurface. Old habits are often powerful!
 2.32.2.1. i.e. **converted drunkards; homosexuals or fornicators; liars; lust for power; longing for popularity; etc.**
 2.32.3. **Regeneration is not necessarily renovation** – A young Christian is a babe in Christ, & needs growth in grace in order to withstand temptations.
 2.32.3.1. Gal. 6:1 **“Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual **restore such a one** in a spirit of **gentleness**, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.”**
 2.32.4. **Story:** A Christian father had a daughter w/an uncontrollable temper, & when asked for her hand in marriage he told the young man she was not worthy of him. **“But,”** he asked in surprise, **“she is a Christian, is she not?”** **“Yes,”** was the reply, **“she is a Christian, but the grace of God can live with some people with whom no one else could ever live**
- 2.33. **If perhaps** – The adverb **perhaps** does not mean **God** is reluctant to forgive sin. The question was whether Simon would **repent of** his heart’s intention.
 2.33.1. Peter hopes to strike a **healthy fear & dawning desire** for better things!

- 2.34. (24) Good response.
 2.34.1. **Share:** Gods sweet forgiveness; liberating grace; 2nd chances! 😊
- 2.35. **How do I keep from backsliding? Allow...**
 2.35.1. **The Spirit of Truth** to instruct you;
The Spirit of Holiness make sensitive your conscience;
The Spirit of Power triumph over your old nature;
The Spirit of Love expel everything else from your heart!⁵
- 2.36. (25) So when they had taught “*verse by verse*” (oh no) **when they had testified...**
 2.36.1. **Peter & John telling their own stories of their Christian experience.**
 2.36.1.1. This is always helpful to follow up work with new converts.
- 2.37. And **preaching the word** – The new Messianic Samaritans ready for **Bible study & instruction** in their new faith.
- 2.38. And so, the linkage of the apostles in Jerusalem & the new believers in Samaria...& the **ancient division is healed!**
 2.38.1. **Remember, the way to turn enemies into friends is to make them brothers & sisters in Christ!** [Try that with your next enemy!]
 2.38.2. **Illust:** A reporter was interviewing an old man on his 100th birthday.
 “What are you most proud of?” he asked.
 “Well,” said the man, “I don’t have an enemy in the world.”
 “What a beautiful thought! How inspirational!” said the reporter.
 “Yep,” added the centenarian, “outlived every last one of them.” 😊
- 2.39. **A holy man** was engaged in his morning meditation under a tree whose roots stretched out over the riverbank. During his meditation he noticed that the river was rising, and **a scorpion** caught in the roots was about to drown. He crawled out on the roots and reached down to free the scorpion, but every time he did so, the scorpion struck back at him.
 An observer came along and said to the holy man, “Don’t you know that’s a scorpion, and it’s in the nature of a scorpion to **want to sting?**”
 To which the holy man replied, “That may well be, but it is my nature to **save**, and must I change my nature because the scorpion does not change its nature?”

⁵ Griffith Thomas; pg.149