

Spotlight on the Samaritans

Session One: Samaritan's Curse?

Luke 9:51-56

“If sinners be damned, at least let them leap to Hell over our dead bodies. And if they perish, let them perish with our arms wrapped about their knees, imploring them to stay.”

Charles Spurgeon

I. Introduction to the Series

A. *Who are the Samaritans?*

1. Initially, in the Bible, the Samaritans were simply Israelites from a certain northern region.¹
2. From the time of the Babylonian exile (722 BC), the term “Samaritans” came to mean “a people of mixed origin, composed of the peoples brought by the conqueror from Babylon and elsewhere to take the places of the expatriated Israelites and those who were left in the land.”²

B. *Why are they worth a look?*

1. Because they were the rivals of the Jews in the time of Jesus.
2. Because they were hated by the Jews in the time of Jesus.
3. Because they hated the Jews in the time of Jesus.

C. *Why did the Samaritans and the Jews hate each other?*

1. They disagreed about the text of the Bible itself.
2. They disagreed about what constituted a true descendant of Abraham.
3. They disagree about where the proper place of worship was.
4. They were so close to each other (geographically) that these differences often caused friction.

D. *What are we hoping to accomplish?*

1. We are hoping to marvel at the compassion Jesus shows for this hated group of people.
2. We are hoping to motivate ourselves toward the compassionate action Jesus commends.

¹ “The name “Samaritans” in 2 Ki 17:29 clearly applies to the Israelite inhabitants of the Northern Kingdom.”
ISBE

² ISBE (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia).

3. We are hoping to come to grips with these attitudes in ourselves, which keep us from making a great impact on Hanover and all over the world.

II. Introduction to the Session—Samaritan’s Curse?

A. *Why not let them go to Hell?*

1. After all, they are SAMARITANS!
2. After all, they were hostile to Jesus’ messengers and message.

B. *Should we desire the destruction of the wicked?*

1. **2 Peter 3:9** The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

III. Exposition of the Scripture—Luke 9:51-56

A. *He set His face to Jerusalem. (v. 51)*

1. Why include this?
 - a. For stylistic reasons
 - i. Luke seems to structure his entire narrative as one long journey to Jerusalem.
 - ii. This, then, would be moving the plot of the account along in a most beautiful manner.
 - b. For emotional/dramatic/didactic reasons
 - i. Jesus was determined to go where He knows He will be murdered.
 - ii. This reminds us that Jesus was on a mission of mercy, not of condemnation.
 - iii. This ties in beautifully with what is said in vv. 55-56.
2. Notice the allusion to His ascension.
 - a. Why is this important?

B. *He was preparing to STAY in Samaria. (vv. 52-53)*

1. He was on His way to Jerusalem.
 - a. This is very important.
 - b. This gives us some inkling as to why the Samaritans were so closed to Jesus’ messengers.
 - i. The Samaritans hated the worship of the Jews, and vice-versa.
 - ii. In light of this, the last thing that the Samaritans wanted to do was to encourage the Jews in (what they thought to be) false worship.

2. He sent messengers ahead of Him.
 - a. To prepare—meals, lodging, etc.
 - b. To proclaim—like Elijah?
3. They did NOT receive Him.

C. *Do you want us to call down fire? (v. 54)*

1. What were they thinking?
 - a. Probably about 2 Kings 1:9-16
 - b. Possibly also about 1 Kings 18
2. Why the strong reaction?
 - a. Because they hated the Samaritans.
 - b. Because they knew WHY the Samaritans hated them!

D. *Notice how Jesus responds. (vv. 55-56)*

1. The textual problem
2. Jesus' response
 - a. You don't know what kind of spirit you are of.
 - i. This means that James and John thought they were standing up for truth, when in reality they were really just interested in seeing their enemies burn.
 - ii. We can learn a lot from this. It is easy to assume that we have the right motives, when in reality we are just as sinful as the thing that offended us in the first place.

E. *They all left (vv. 56)*

1. This is simply the end of the story...or is it?

IV. A Wonderful Salvation—Acts 8

A. *A basic observation*

1. Time precludes us from going into any detail here.
2. Simply notice that the Samaritans, these great rivals and enemies of Israel, were saved!

B. *What's the point?*

1. If Jesus would have allowed James and John to call down fire from Heaven, the wonderful truth of this chapter would have been affected.
2. Jesus was patient with a people who hated Him, because He had an amazing plan for their future.

V. Conclusions

- A. *Who would you like to see burned up?*

1. Should we want that?
2. How can we deal with the prejudices that remain within us?
3. How can we even see our enemies as our mission field?

B. Why are we so quick to write people off? What must we remember?

1. We must remember that we were hostile once, too. See Ephesians 2:12