

Biblical Thugs & Gangbangers: The Samaritans

If you know the story of the "Good Samaritan" I bet you're surprised at my title for today's study time. But when you get the whole story (a good bit more of it anyway) I bet you'll understand.

Today I'd like to delve into some Biblical villains. Just as it tells us the stories of numerous heroes, the God's Word also talks a great deal about its villains. Since we were talking about Nehemiah yesterday, and some of the things he had to overcome, including enemy attacks, to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, I thought maybe we could take a look at one or two of those enemies in order to put some of it into context. There were around four of them (the Samaritans, the Ammonites, the Arabs, and the Phillistines), but I'll just delve into the Samaritans.

I consider these guys (some from all four sects) Biblical gang-bangers and/or gang-banger wannabes. I know that's a provocative title, but I think it helps people realize that every last thing that's going on in our society today has also already happened in Biblical times, and is very clearly illustrated in the Word, including how to deal with it all.

Now the Samaritans were not all bad. In fact, there's a lot written about them in the Bible that's very good (the "good Samaritan", the Samaritan "woman at the well", etc). But they were a "standoffish" race of people for the most part, who tried to embrace, very unsuccessfully, some very mixed philosophies, and unlike some of the other sects, they were a very mixed-race (a little bit culturally, but a great deal philosophically). Generally they were considered half-pagan (idol worshipers)/ half-Jews.

One commentary puts it like this:

1. "The Samaritans were a pagan sect that grew out of the tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim after their deportation in 722 BC into Assyria by Shalmaneser."

Another says:

2. "The Samaritans embraced a religion that was a mixture of Judaism and idolatry. While Nehemiah was engaged in building the walls of Jerusalem, the Samaritans vigorously attempted to halt the undertaking"; then
3. "Samaria became a place of refuge for all the outlaws of Judea"; then
4. "The Samaritans willingly received Jewish criminals and refugees from justice"; and finally
5. "The Samaritans received only the five books of Moses and rejected the writings of the prophets and all the Jewish traditions."

Jack-Note: I guess some people might say that the Samaritans probably believed whatever they wanted to believe in, whatever "felt" good to them at the time (having some good people by their own standards, but just not all that Christ-centered, which is a very different standard).

"From these causes arose an irreconcilable difference between them, so that the Jews regarded the Samaritans as the worst of the human race and wouldn't, therefore, have any dealings with them; And In spite of the hatred between the Jews and the Samaritans, Jesus broke down the barriers between them, preaching the gospel of peace to all the Samaritans who would listen."

So, as a people the Samaritans were a conglomeration of good and evil. They were a paradox, probably very much like we as a nation are today. And I guess the evil ones probably got a lot more "press-time" than the good ones did, which is true just about everywhere.

This is probably enough for now. As you can see, the Bible has some very colorful, shady and complicated characters that are extremely analagous to many of the ones found in our society today. There are also some stories that would easily rival "Scandal" and "How to Get Away with Murder", two of my favorites, especially some of the escapades of King David, but they can wait.

I kind of wanted to talk about the Phillistines today too, but that would take too long, so we'll save it for another time.

I hope you have an amazing day!! :-)

- Jack

2 Kings 17:7-24 (NASB)

Why Israel Fell

⁷ Now this came about because the sons of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up from the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and they had feared other gods ⁸ and walked in the customs of the nations whom the LORD had driven out before the sons of Israel, and in the customs of the kings of Israel which they had introduced. ⁹ The sons of Israel did things secretly which were not right against the LORD their God. Moreover, they built for themselves high places in all their towns, from watchtower to fortified city. ¹⁰ They set for themselves sacred pillars and Asherim on every high hill and under every green tree, ¹¹ and there they burned incense on all the high places as the nations did which the LORD had carried away to exile before them; and they did evil things provoking the LORD. ¹² They served idols, concerning which the LORD had said to them, "You shall not do this thing." ¹³ Yet the LORD warned Israel and Judah through all His prophets and every seer, saying, "Turn from your evil ways and keep My commandments, My statutes according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you through My servants the prophets." ¹⁴ However, they did not listen, but stiffened their neck like their fathers, who did not believe in the LORD their God. ¹⁵ They rejected His statutes and His covenant which He made with their fathers and His warnings with which He warned them. And they followed vanity and became vain, and went after the nations which surrounded them, concerning which the LORD had commanded them not to do like them. ¹⁶ They forsook all the commandments of the LORD their God and made for themselves molten images, even two calves, and made an Asherah and worshiped all the host of heaven and served Baal. ¹⁷ Then they made their sons and their daughters pass through the fire, and practiced divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him. ¹⁸ So the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them from His sight; none was left except the tribe of Judah. ¹⁹ Also Judah did not keep the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the customs which Israel had introduced. ²⁰ The LORD rejected all the descendants of Israel and afflicted them and gave them into the hand of plunderers, until He had cast them out of His sight. ²¹ When He had torn Israel from the house of David, they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king. Then Jeroboam drove Israel away from following the LORD and made them commit a great sin.

²² The sons of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they did not depart from them ²³ until the LORD removed Israel from His sight, as He spoke through all His servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away into exile from their own land to Assyria until this day.

Cities of Israel Filled with Strangers

²⁴ The king of Assyria brought men from Babylon and from Cuthah and from Avva and from Hamath and Sephar-vaim, and settled them in the cities of Samaria in place of the sons of Israel. So they possessed Samaria and lived in its cities.