



## Acts of Jesus – part 18

--Do you recognize this place?  This building was used to counterfeit American nickels at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

--May have been a good scam at the time, but the price of inflation would put you out of business today. “Officer, a guy just came in here with a wheelbarrow full of nickels. Should I be suspicious?”

Nations have used counterfeiting as a means of warfare. The idea is to overflow the enemy's economy with fake bank notes, so that the real value of the money plummets. **Great Britain** did this during the **Revolutionary War** to reduce the value of the **Continental Dollar**. Although this tactic was also employed by the **United States** during the **American Civil War**, the fake **Confederate** currency it produced was of superior quality to the real thing. During **World War II**, the **Nazis** attempted to do a similar thing to the **Allies** with **Operation Bernhard**. The Nazis took **Jewish** artists in the **Sachsenhausen concentration camp** and forced them to forge British pounds and American dollars. The quality of the counterfeiting was very good, and it was almost impossible to distinguish between the real and fake bills. The Germans could not put their plan into action, and were forced to dump the counterfeit bills into a lake, which were not recovered until the **1950s**. Over **one billion American dollars were forged**, and economists estimate that that would have seriously damaged the American war effort.

Here's a pic of some counterfeit money 

--Is this really a counterfeit?

--Probably wouldn't be arrested for trying to use these except for maybe public stupidity.

--Why isn't this classed as a counterfeit? Because it is so far from the real thing.

Here's another counterfeit  Or is it? How would you know?

--With a really good counterfeit, it takes some expertise.

**Not just money that is counterfeited, but documents, stamps**, clothing, pharmaceuticals, anything that is in demand or is necessary.

--Actually, the oldest thing ever counterfeited was true religion counterfeits were the stumbling blocks for the Jews throughout the O.T.

--In the N.T., the apostles and writers were constantly having to steer believers around that which was false.

What constitutes a counterfeit religion?

Some religions today: “...blow themselves up or are sleeping with all their adherents wives and are building a compound and arming themselves with 50 cal. machine guns or they've been in a hypnotic trance for the past 3 years and are asking their followers to drink poison so they can catch a space ship that is hidden in the tail of a comet. Are these counterfeits?” **Not much discernment required in these cases.**

--Like counterfeit money, real counterfeits are those that come very close to the real thing, so close that they can fool you unless you are paying careful attention.

--If I was the devil, I'd make sure that my real counterfeits carried the same morals, used the same words/names, use, to a certain degree, the same Bible.

--I'd be real careful to make sure that people missed heaven, but not by much!

**1. In our text this morning we're going to see a guy who is going to give us example of a fake and from him we are going to learn how to better spot a counterfeit.**

--**Acts 8:4-11** – Simon is a counterfeit – one that the Samaritans have been accepting for legal tender for a long time.

**1. Notice first of all that he exalted himself V. 9c** – this is a mark of a counterfeit.

--Counterfeit Christianity exalts personalities and makes much over people.

--I get an uneasy feeling when I drive down the highway and see a billboard advertising some church and it has the picture of their pastor or preacher up there with a toothy grin and underneath it says “**Come and get a message from Pastor Jim Bob**”

--There are legitimate churches who are doing this and I don't mean to give them an unfair judgment, but they are coming close to losing focus, in my opinion.

--Do you think that for even one second if the apostles were alive today that they would allow their faces to be put up on some billboard?

--Paul speaking on behalf of other apostles and Christian leaders of his day said, **II Cor. 4:5!!**

2. Counterfeits seek to put a mediator between a person and God. **V. 10c** -- "the Great power of God"

"Come to me to get to God"

Pastor Ray Stedman tells the story of time in which he attended the service of a famous faith healer of our day just to hear what he was saying in person. He said that he began with what sounded like a good sound gospel message taking his text from the Bible, he developed his message well. He said, "I began to change my mind about this guy...thought he had been too quick to judge." But when he got to the conclusion and invitation he said that his new found trust went the other way. When he made the call for those who wanted Jesus as their Savior he said, "**if you want Jesus as your Savior, then you come forward and I'll pray for you. Believe that my prayers will lead you to God.**"

--Do you see what he did? He asked them to put their faith in him instead of in Jesus.

--That is one of the blackest forms of wickedness there is --bringing people right up to heaven and then leaving them one inch short.

3. Counterfeits claim to have a special touch with God or word from God that no one else has.

Simon "I'm somebody great"

--Joseph Smith who founded the Mormons was almost a reincarnation of Simon the sorcerer in that he was magician who claimed to be able to find treasure with the special stones.

--He later claimed that through those special stones he received another book called the book of Mormon that supposedly was an addendum to the Bible that no apostle or leader was privy to it until him.

4. Counterfeits often wield real power. Simon was not amazing the crowd with sleight of hand stuff here.

--When God sent Moses to deliver the people of Israel from bondage, one of the signs God gave him was that if he threw down his staff it would turn into a snake. But the sorcerers of Pharaoh did the same thing. How did they do? With demonic power.

--Don't be wowed by supernatural stuff -- be wowed by the truth.

--Satan would love to give you a shortcut to wonderland.

5. Really good counterfeits are a part of or at least start out as a part of our churches.

**VV. 12-23**

--Sounds like Simon is really saved but there are some indications here that he might not have been.

--**V. 20** -- "perish" = "Apollyon" in the Greek = same word that Jesus used in **Mt. 7:13**

--So what is Peter saying here? "**May your money go to Hell with You**"

--**VV. 21a, 23** --Are believers in the bond of iniquity?

--Early church fathers tell us that Simon indeed demonstrated that he was a counterfeit later on by founding a very dangerous cult that dogged the heels Christianity for a period of time.

Joseph Smith with the Mormons, Charles Russell who founded the Jehovah's Witnesses, Mary Baker Eddy who founded the Church of the Christian Science, Jim Jones and the People's Temple, David Koresh and the Branch Davidians---all got their start while a part of churches.

6. Counterfeits will claim to be able to manipulate God. They won't do this outright, but a part of the belief system will be God manipulation.

--Simon was a sorcerer/magician --- Sorcery by definition is a manipulation of the supernatural to get what you desire.

--In Christianity it is the exact opposite --- The supernatural manipulates us.

--Sorcery says if you do these certain things, the supernatural will be at your bidding.

--Counterfeit Christianity says if you'll do these certain things...pray in this certain way...**believe** long and hard enough === God will do what you want.

--There are true Christians who believe this, which doesn't make them counterfeit, but their theology is counterfeit!

God owes us nothing – we have no claim on Him

**We are His servants**

Have we forgotten that?