

## Cities of the Bible – Samaria

### INTRODUCTION:

1. Today I would like to return to our study of the cities of the Bible, looking particularly at Samaria.
  - A. Biblically, Samaria refers to the city which served as the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel and to its surrounding area with its cities.
  - B. Samaria was one of the few cities that was not already built when Israel entered the Promised Land, but instead was built on a hill by King Omri of Israel and named after the man who had owned the land (1 Kings 16:23-24).
2. As is true of all the cities we have looked at, there are interesting things to consider about this city, seeing it played a big role in Israel's history and in the life of Jesus and the early church.
3. To do this, I want to look at the history of Samaria in the context of the Old and New Testaments, while making some observations that I hope will be of value to us as members of God's church.

### BODY:

#### **I. Samaria in the Old Testament:**

- A. Ahab, Omri's son, made Samaria a haven for idolatry in the Northern kingdom (1 Kings 16:30-33 – "Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord more than all who were before him.<sup>31</sup> It came about, as though it had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he married Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went to serve Baal and worshiped him.<sup>32</sup> So he erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal which he built in Samaria.<sup>33</sup> Ahab also made the Asherah. Thus Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel than all the kings of Israel who were before him.").

  1. Though the Northern kingdom began with Jeroboam instituting an idolatrous form of worship to keep the people from returning to Jerusalem, in Samaria Ahab took it to a whole new level!
  2. His marriage to Jezebel of the Sidonians led to him instituting Baal and Asherah worship, and even building a temple to Baal upon the soil of God's Promised Land.

- B. With Ahab's sin came God's response of sending the prophet Elijah whose work in Samaria resulted in punishment, deliverance, and loss for Ahab and his family.
  1. Elijah's work began with bringing **punishment** from God by a three-year drought upon Samaria (1 Kings 17:1 – "Now Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the settlers of Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the Lord, the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, surely there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word.").
    - a. Only after three years was Elijah sent to end the severe drought (1 Kgs. 18:1-2 – "Now it happened after many days that the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year, saying, "Go, show yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the face of the earth."<sup>2</sup> So Elijah went to show himself to Ahab. Now the famine was **severe in Samaria**.").
    - b. Just as the announcement of punishment had come through Elijah, God brought **deliverance** for Samaria and Ahab through him beginning with his contest with the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel (1 Kgs. 18).
      - i. Here God again offered salvation to all Israel if they would believe and obey Him as the one true God that he again *showed himself to be* on that day.
      - ii. God's power was so strongly displayed that Elijah could confidently order the execution of the 400 prophets of Baal, helping deliver Israel from their evil.
    - c. Despite the rain returning just as Elijah said, Ahab allowed Jezebel to seek Elijah's life because of this contest, causing him to flee into the wilderness.
2. Ahab's and Samaria's sin continued despite God's grace seen in His deliverance.
  - a. For in 1 Kings 20 God chose to *promise* victory to this weak and wicked king and then *provided* victory over Ben-hadad and the Arameans on two separate occasions.
    - i. God wanted them to know that He was providing the victory that they might believe!
  - b. Ahab, however, repaid God's grace by disobeying Him and sparing Ben-hadad's life, bringing God's judgment upon him (1 Kgs. 20:42 – "Thus says the Lord, 'Because you

- have let go out of your hand the man whom I had devoted to destruction, therefore your life shall go for his life, and your people for his people.”)
3. But even God’s judgement did not stop Ahab’s sinful ways in Samaria.
    - a. Ahab allowed Jezebel to kill Naboth the Jezreelite so he could take his vineyard for himself, bringing further condemnation (1 Kgs. 21:17-19 – “Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, <sup>18</sup> “Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who is in **Samaria**; behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth where he has gone down to take possession of it. <sup>19</sup> You shall speak to him, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord, “Have you murdered and also taken possession?”’ And you shall speak to him, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord, “In the place where the dogs licked up the blood of Naboth the dogs will lick up your blood, even yours.”’)
    - b. In addition to this, Elijah’s condemnation spoke of the end of Ahab’s house, as well as the death of Jezebel (1 Kings 21:21-24 – “Behold, I will bring evil upon you, and will utterly sweep you away, and will cut off from Ahab every male, both bond and free in Israel; <sup>22</sup> and I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, because of the provocation with which you have provoked Me to anger, and because you **have made Israel sin**. <sup>23</sup> Of Jezebel also has the Lord spoken, saying, ‘The dogs will eat Jezebel in the district of Jezreel.’ <sup>24</sup> The one belonging to Ahab, who dies in the city, the dogs will eat, and the one who dies in the field the birds of heaven will eat.”).
    - c. Not surprising is the fact that Samaria was the place of the fulfillment of these words.
      - i. For 1 Kings 22:37-38 says, “So the king died and was brought to Samaria, and they buried the king in Samaria. <sup>38</sup> They washed the chariot by the pool of Samaria, and the dogs licked up his blood ...according to the word of the Lord which He spoke.”
      - ii. Also, Samaria was where Jehu executed Ahab’s seventy sons along with the rest of Ahab’s family (2 Kgs. 10:1-11).
- C. Yet, God’s wondrous grace continued as He delivered this city despite its evil kings and people.
1. Ben-hadad, who should have been killed by Ahab, returned to besiege Samaria resulting in severe famine and suffering (2 Kings 6:24-25 – “Now it came about after this, that Ben-hadad king of Aram gathered all his army and went up and besieged Samaria. <sup>25</sup> There was a great famine in Samaria; and behold, they besieged it, until a donkey’s head was sold for eighty shekels of silver, and a fourth of a kab of dove’s dung for five shekels of silver.”).
    - a. The text goes on to talk about how conditions became so dire that women were willing to kill and eat their own babies.
    - b. Yet, as was the case with his father Ahab, king Joram/Jehoram refused to accept that his sin had caused all this and instead blamed Elisha and sought to kill him! (2 Kgs. 6:31).
  2. Yet, God’s response was to show mercy and grace upon Jehoram and Samaria.
    - a. For, immediately following this threat, God sent Elisha (2 Kings 7:1 – “Then Elisha said, “Listen to the word of the Lord; thus says the Lord, “Tomorrow about this time a measure of fine flour will be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria.””).
    - b. We know from 2 Kings 7:3ff that God brought this deliverance by causing Ben-hadad’s army to hear the sound of a great army coming upon them resulting in their fleeing and leaving all their food/supplies behind so that the besieged city could eat and live.
- D. Samaria’s sin would lead to its destruction.
1. God’s great works of grace, mercy, and deliverance were lost upon Samaria, seeing they refused to repent and continued in idolatry and rebellion against God.
  2. For, as was said during the days of Jehoahaz, son of Jehu, king of Israel (2 Kings 13:6 – “Nevertheless they did not turn away from the sins of the house of Jeroboam, with which he made Israel sin, but walked in them; and the Asherah also remained standing in Samaria.”).
  3. Despite God’s warning, these sins continued for another 100 years resulting in destruction by the Assyrians.

- a. The prophets were not silent (Hosea 13:16 – “Samaria will be held guilty, for she has rebelled against her God. They will fall by the sword, their little ones will be dashed in pieces, and their pregnant women will be ripped open.”).
  - b. So, when God could suffer it no longer, He brought Assyria against king Hoshea and Samaria, and carried the northern kingdom of Israel into exile (2 Kings 17:6 – “In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria and carried Israel away into exile to Assyria, and settled them in Halah and Habor, on the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.”).
4. Following this Assyria’s king filled Samaria and its cities with foreigners (2 Kgs. 17:24).
- a. This was done to defeat any form of nationalism that would encourage revolt.
  - b. This resettlement to Samaria resulted in much suffering (2 Kgs. 17:25 – “At the beginning of their living there, they did not fear the Lord; therefore the Lord sent lions among them which killed some of them.”).
  - c. When they complained to Assyria’s king, a priest from among the Israelite captives was sent to teach them of God and how to fear him, but the results were as expected.
    - i. For, like Israel of old they did not give up their idols (2 Kgs. 17:29 – “But every nation still made gods of its own and put them in the houses of the high places which the people of Samaria had made, every nation in their cities in which they lived.”).
    - ii. And they did not obey (2 Kgs. 17:32-35 – “They also feared the Lord and appointed **from among themselves priests** of the high places, who acted for them in the houses of the high places. <sup>33</sup> They feared the Lord and served their own gods according to the custom of the nations from among whom they had been carried away into exile. <sup>34</sup> To this day they do according to the earlier customs: **they do not fear the Lord**, nor do they follow their statutes or their ordinances or the law, or the commandments which the Lord commanded the sons of Jacob, whom He named Israel; <sup>35</sup> with whom the Lord made a covenant and commanded them, saying, “You shall not fear other gods, nor bow down yourselves to them nor serve them nor sacrifice to them.”).
    - iii. They acted like Samaria had always acted.
- E. What O.T. Samaria shows us:
1. It was a land whose people, whether Jew or the despised Samaritan, “feared the Lord,” but only as they chose to do so.
    - a. They willingly mixed their worship of God with idolatry, continually causing God much grief and anger resulting in punishment and suffering for them.
    - b. Yet, we see God grace continually bestowed upon them in hopes of bringing about their repentance, which did not happen!
    - c. But even though Israel was destroyed, the prophets spoke of God in His grace restoring them, which we know would come through the Messiah (Jer. 31:5; Ezek. 16:53ff.).
  2. You see the *foundation* upon which the *Jewish prejudice against the Samaritans*, so prominently displayed in Jesus’ day, *was built*.
    - a. There was never a time Samaria was faithful to God and gave Him the devotion He demanded. Instead, their worship and service were always infused with idolatry.
    - b. The settlement of idolatrous Gentiles into Samaria who further perverted the worship of God just added insult to injury.
      - i. Jewish prejudice and hatred for Samaritans was so great that to call a fellow Jew a Samaritan was a great insult (Jn. 8:48 – “The Jews answered and said to Him, “Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?”).
      - ii. Of course, like Judah of old that faced destruction and captivity for its sins, the Jews of Jesus’ day were in no better state before God than were the Samaritans.
      - iii. Their sins were just as real, just as many, and just as condemning as those of the Samaritans. But they, like Judah of old, refused to see it and would not repent!

## II. Samaria in the New Testament:

- A. Jesus and the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well (Jn. 4).

1. This, of course, is the most known biblical account concerning Samaria and Jesus and was covered recently in the adult bible class. But I still want to mention a few things.
  2. Note that Jesus *had to* pass through Samaria, which was not the norm for the Jews (4:4).
    - a. I believe Jesus did this because:
      - i. There were prophecies about restoring Samaria! Do you remember those we mentioned just a few minutes ago? Well, that process was begun by Jesus!
      - ii. There was a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well who needed to know Him so that she and her fellow Samaritans might be saved.
    - b. Jesus did this despite the reality of Jewish prejudice (4:7-9, 27 – “There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, “Give Me a drink.”<sup>8</sup> For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.<sup>9</sup> Therefore the Samaritan woman said to Him, “How is it that You, being a **Jew**, ask me for a drink since I am a **Samaritan** woman?” (**For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans...**<sup>27</sup> At this point His disciples came, and they were **amazed that He had been speaking with a woman**, yet no one said, “What do You seek?” or, “Why do You speak with her?”).
  3. Jesus turned the conversation to living water He could give, and she believed and brought other Samaritans who heard and believed (4:28-30, 39-42 – “So the woman left her waterpot, and went into the city and said to the men,<sup>29</sup> “Come, see a man who told me all the things that I have done; this is not the Christ, is it?”<sup>30</sup> They went out of the city, and were coming to Him...<sup>39</sup> From that city **many of the Samaritans believed** in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, “He told me all the things that I have done.”<sup>40</sup> So when the Samaritans came to Jesus, they were asking Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days.<sup>41</sup> **Many more believed** because of His word;<sup>42</sup> and they were saying to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world.”).
  4. So, the despised, rejected, half-breed, idolatrous Samaritans were visited by God's Son bringing grace and salvation, and **they** gladly received Him.
    - a. For, this sinful woman heard Jesus and invited others from Samaria to hear him, which Jesus' own disciples who had also been in that city and knew Jesus was the Messiah did not do.
    - b. And we see the contrast with their Jewish relatives who were also visited by God's Son but would soon reject him, persecute him, and ultimately crucify Him to their own destruction.
    - c. How true is it that those who know their sin the most are the ones who more clearly see the wonder of God's grace!
- B. Jesus and the ten lepers (Lk. 7:11-19 – “While He was on the way to Jerusalem, He was passing between Samaria and Galilee.<sup>12</sup> As He entered a village, ten leprous men who stood at a distance met Him;<sup>13</sup> and they raised their voices, saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!”<sup>14</sup> When He saw them, He said to them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” And as they were going, they were cleansed.<sup>15</sup> Now **one** of them, when he saw that he had been healed, turned back, **glorifying God with a loud voice**,<sup>16</sup> and he fell on his face at His feet, giving thanks to Him. And he was a **Samaritan**.<sup>17</sup> Then Jesus answered and said, “Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine—where are they?<sup>18</sup> **Was no one found who returned to give glory to God**, except this **foreigner?**”<sup>19</sup> And He said to him, “Stand up and go; **your faith has made you well.**”).
1. Here Jesus healed 10 lepers, outcasts, men separated from their people by a disease they did not ask for nor could have likely prevented.
    - a. Within this group was at least one Samaritan whose stigma may have been lost among this group, who themselves were rejected by society.
    - b. Or could it be that this man was an outcast among outcasts? I do not know.
  2. But I know that the great power of God's Son was bestowed on them.
    - a. The results were indicative of the results of Jesus' work and power shown among the Jews and Samaritans.

- b. For nine of the Jews who were sent to the Priests that they might re-enter Jewish society, the temple, and the good graces of their countrymen, expressed no thanks to God!
- c. But this lowly *outcast among outcasts* saw the grace and wonder of Christ's power and returned glorifying God and falling at Jesus' feet to thank Him!
- d. So, from among the Samaritans who *sickened* the Jews by their idolatry was found the one whose faith Jesus said "has made you well."
- e. If we would open our eyes, how many outcasts around us, who ourselves were outcasts before God because of our sin, would have faith that would make them well if we would take the gospel to them?

C. Jesus and one's neighbor (Lk. 10:30-37).

- 1. Here Jesus replied to a lawyer's question of "who is my neighbor" by telling a story of compassion that is often called a parable, although it seems to me that it may have been true.
- 2. Luke 10:30-37 – "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went away leaving him half dead. <sup>31</sup> And by chance a priest was going down on that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. <sup>32</sup> Likewise a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. <sup>33</sup> But a **Samaritan**, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, **he felt compassion**, <sup>34</sup> and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him. <sup>35</sup> On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return I will repay you.' <sup>36</sup> Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' hands?" <sup>37</sup> And he said, "The one who showed mercy toward him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do the same."
- 3. Note the intended contrast:
  - a. The priest of the Jews and a Levite showed no compassion for the wounded man.
  - b. But, a Samaritan, someone from that despised city ignored by the Jews, showed this man, most likely a Jew, the love and kindness indicative of the God the Jews claimed to serve.
- 4. Could we find ourselves in the same boat as these Jews when we consider our attitude toward sinners around us who are messing things up and ruining our country!
  - a. Do we really know them? Could it be that some have the heart of this good Samaritan and are willing to be our neighbors?
  - b. Could it be that the gospel is what they have been wanting and waiting for, but we have "pre-judged" them unworthy and/or unwilling to hear and obey?

D. Samaria and the early church.

- 1. With what we know about Jesus, it is not surprising that His commission to the apostles specifically required preaching to Samaria (Acts 1:8 – "but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and **Samaria**, and even to the remotest part of the earth.>").
- 2. With what we know Samaria and the Jews is also not surprising that the apostles and other Jewish Christians did not immediately go into Samaria.
  - a. Certain disciples only went there after being pushed by Saul's persecution (Acts 8:1 – "Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him [Stephen] to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.>").
  - b. Those who were scattered went about preaching Jesus to the Samaritans (Acts 8:4-8, 12-13 – "Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word. <sup>5</sup> Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began proclaiming Christ to them. <sup>6</sup> The crowds with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing. <sup>7</sup> For in the case of many who had unclean spirits, they were coming out of them shouting with a loud voice; and many who had been paralyzed and lame were healed. <sup>8</sup> So there was much rejoicing in that city...<sup>12</sup> But when

- they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike. <sup>13</sup> Even Simon himself believed; and after being baptized, he continued on with Philip, and as he observed signs and great miracles taking place, he was constantly amazed.”).
- i. Like the Samaritans at Jacob’s well, the response to the gospel was great!
  - ii. Even Simon, a sorcerer among them, believed and with the other Samaritans was baptized into Christ, causing the apostles to finally take notice, and come to them that they might impart spiritual gifts on their new brethren in Christ (Acts 8:14-17).
3. Finally, we see the power of the gospel in that there were churches in Samaria among the faithful of Christ (Acts 9:31 – “So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.”).
- a. There is irony here in that Saul’s conversion is what brought peace after it was Saul’s disruption of the peace by persecution that brought the gospel of peace to Samaria.
  - b. The God of grace is truly the **God of reversals**, and we need to be willing to trust Him and listen to and obey Him even when things seem so contrary to what they ought to be.

#### CONCLUSION:

1. No matter who you are, what your past might look like, how many sins you may have committed, what others may think or have said about you, God wants to know you and for you to know Him, His grace, and His salvation in Christ.
2. If you have sinned and are hearing this gospel message today, you have been blessed just as were the Samaritans. For, as the scripture said that was read before the lesson, “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” (Rom. 5:8)
3. What will you do with this blessing, with His grace, with His Son Jesus, with all that God has done to bring the message and hope of salvation to you? Will you trust and obey Jesus?