

## **BBC-HBS 11/03/24-AM – “Is There Still Hope for America?” – Luke 9:51-56 Samaria**

After Israel's 3<sup>rd</sup> King Solomon, the nation of Israel split (*North*=Israel & *South*=Judah). Judah's capitol was Jerusalem, and Israel's capitol was Samaria. In 722 BC Israel was taken captive by Assyria. In 586 BC Judah was taken captive by Babylon. After their return from exile a hateful rift developed between the Jews of Jerusalem (Judah), and those within the northern territory known as “Samaria.” During the exile, the northern territory became completely inhabited by foreign settlers. When the Israelites returned, they intermarried & assimilated with them. The Jews in the south kept themselves more ethnically pure and despised the “Samaritans” who were looked upon as unworthy ‘half-breeds.’ Samaria shares several similarities with modern America. The USA, a nation of many nationalities, was originally settled by those seeking religious freedom, founding its government on Judeo-Christian principles. However, over time, like the Samaritans did, we've become more secular, godless, and now increasingly adopting a culture of ‘anti-Christianity.’ Many in conservative Christian churches have withdrawn from society, viewing our nation as lost - beyond repair. *But is there still any hope?*

**Discussion:** 1) What social/spiritual issues are so sharply & deeply dividing Americans these days?  
2) How have some conservative Christians become cold, judgmental, and disengaged?

**John 4:4-43** – Much to the disciples' chagrin, Jesus not only led his reluctant disciples right through Samaria, but He was then found by them in deep conversation with a shunned Samaritan woman! Jesus ministered to the woman who then led the whole city out to Jesus. They gladly received Him!

**Discussion:** 1) Why did Jesus make it a point to lead his disciples out to this anticipated encounter?  
2) Did the disciples get the message that the Samaritans were worthy of ministry?

**Luke 9:51-56** – As a time-saving shortcut to Jerusalem, Jesus again leads the disciples through Samaria. The Samaritans didn't accommodate Jesus' delegation sent to secure overnight lodging. The annoyed disciples asked Jesus if they could pray fire down from heaven, as Elijah did (**2 Kings 1**)

**Discussion:** 1) Did the Samaritans refuse lodging from insult, that Jesus was hurrying past them?  
2) Any similarity to the disciples' sentiments & the conservative Church's world-attitude?

**Luke 10:25-37** – To emphasize the idea that Samaritans might be even more neighborly than some self-righteous Jews, Jesus taught the parable of a wounded man who was passed over by a religious priest and a Levite, but then generously aided by a compassionate outcast Samaritan.

**Luke 17:11-19** – Perhaps because the disciples still didn't get it, Jesus once more led his disciples through Samaria on their way to Jerusalem. Upon entering a Samaritan village, they encounter ten lepers who called out to Jesus for mercy. As Jesus sent them off to be examined by priests, they were healed (**Leviticus 13**). But only one returned to Jesus to give thanks, and he was a Samaritan.

**Discussion:** 1) Why did Jesus make so many attempts to show the disciples the value of lost souls?  
2) Why is it so easy for us Christian believers to write some people off as beyond hope?

**Acts 1:8** – At His ascension, Jesus once more emphasized “Samaria” in his Great Commission.

**Acts 8:5-25** – As persecution scattered the disciples from Jerusalem, ‘Deacon’ Philip decided to go preach the Gospel of Christ in Samaria. The total response of faith was so overwhelming that the ministry there was marked by amazing miracles, healings, deliverances, conversions, and great joy! Jerusalem's Elders even dispatched Peter & John to add the “power of Pentecost” to the ministry.

**Discussion:** 1) After all of Jesus' patient efforts, did the disciples/Apostles finally get the message?  
2) How can we find the balance of not ‘casting our pearls before swine’ (**Matthew 7:6**), while also being diligent to carry the Gospel message to all who will hear it?  
3) Is there any hope for America? Should we write it off to judgment, or pray for revival?  
4) Is it possible that the greatest revival is yet to be seen in America's least likely cities?  
5) How can we as individual believers, and as a Church, find the will of God in this?