

Samaritans Reject Jesus

The time of the year is September or October in the year A.D. 32. Jesus' brothers and, probably His sisters, had already started traveling to Jerusalem to attend the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles. At the end of our last study, we were told that Jesus had started His trip to Jerusalem later. He delayed His trip because His brothers wanted Him to expose Himself to the crowds, including the religious leaders. That would have been dangerous. At the beginning of His ministry, Jesus was very popular. The people were amazed at His teaching, miracles and wonders, and they sought Him for selfish reasons. Many had become His disciples; but just before the trip to the feast, we discovered in John 6:66-71 that many of Jesus' disciples left Him. Then His brothers ridiculed Him because they did not believe in Him. We will discover in our next study that the religious leaders in Judea want to kill Him and just about everyone knows it. The rejection of Jesus was growing. This study is about Jesus' trip up to Jerusalem. What do you think happened along the way?

REJECTION IN SAMARIA. One would think that the trip of 4 to 7 days (121 miles or 160 Km) from Capernaum to Jerusalem would have been peaceful, relaxing and without conflict. It should have been a relief from the crowds and religious leaders in Galilee. The landscape was beautiful and the ride would have been enjoyable. But Luke 9:51-62 reveals that was not true. Instead, Jesus was going to experience more rejection. The crescendo of rejection was building. Jesus' popularity was decaying and He knew it.

In our last study, (John 7:1-10) Jesus had told His brothers that He would not go up with them, and then He left shortly after they left. We wondered why He waited to leave until after they had left. Surprisingly, Luke 9:51 helps us answer the question.

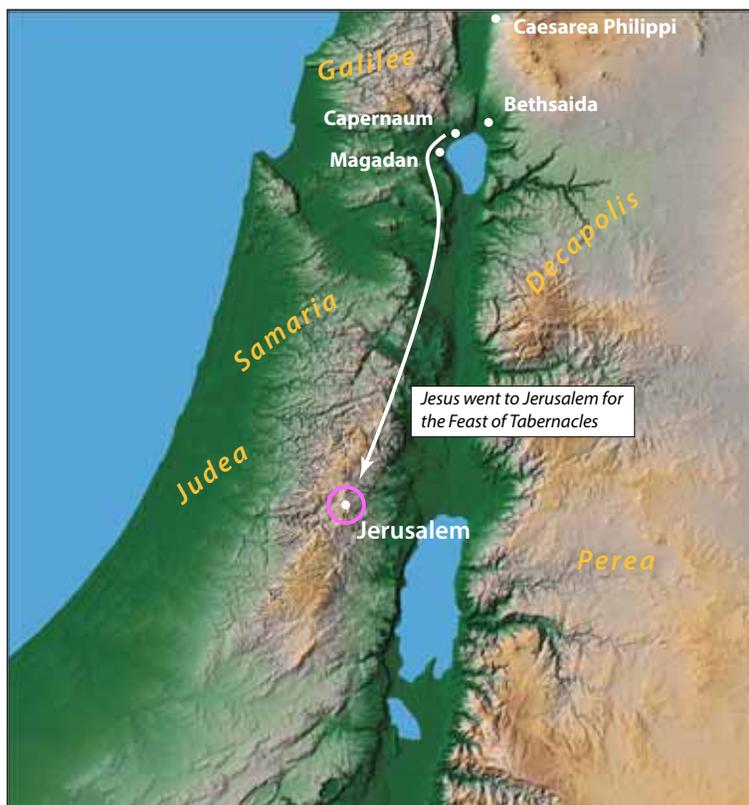
determined to go to Jerusalem . . . Luke 9:51 (NASB)

This verse reveals that Jesus had planned to travel to Jerusalem all along even before His brothers had left. Apparent-

ly, something negative would have occurred had he left with them. The timing must have been wrong. Either His brothers or something else would have endangered the plan of Christ to die on the cross. Luke 9:51 states that He went up because His ascension was approaching. That is He was going to die and then return home to heaven.

Earlier Jesus had told the world that He had come down from heaven (John 6:41, 51, and 58). Now He is looking for-

ward to going home - the ascension. This was all part of the great plan of salvation.

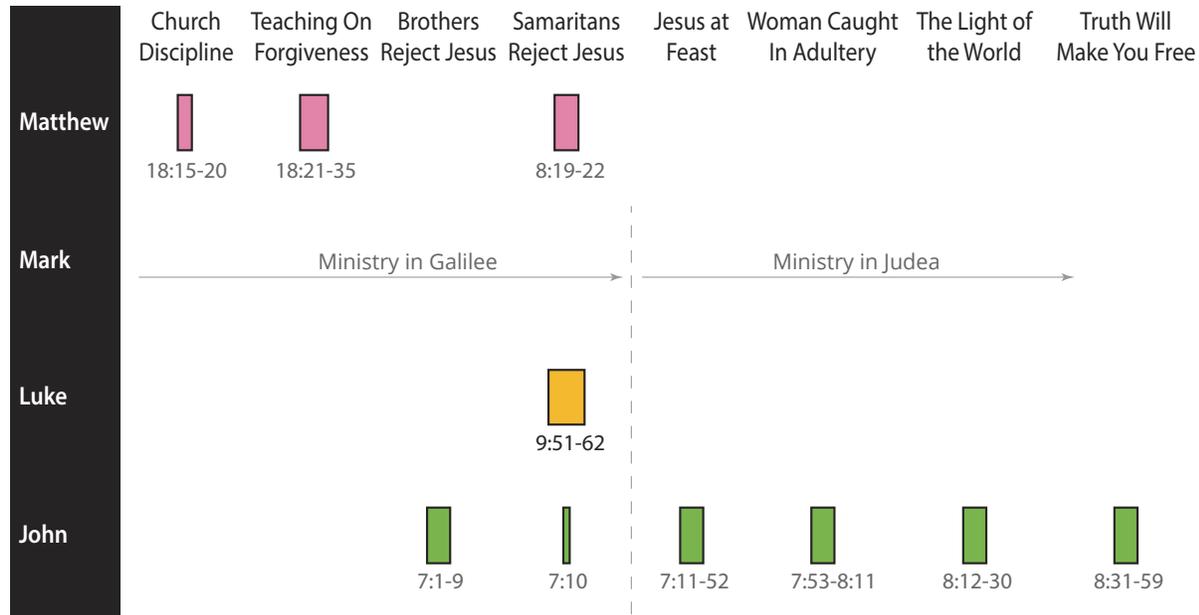


When the days were approaching for His ascension, He was

Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man

Life and Heart of Jesus

Ministry In Galilee - Late A.D. 32



attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know - this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power. Acts 2:22-24 (NASB)

The time is the Fall of A.D. 32 and Jesus will die in about six months on Friday, April 3, A.D. 33. It is incredible to realize that we are not even half way through Mark, Luke and John and there are only six months remaining before Jesus will die, be resurrected and then return home. Maybe Jesus went to Jerusalem in order to carefully increase the religious leaders' already existing hatred of Him. We are not sure since scripture does not tell us, but He did not want to go with His brothers. When Luke says that Jesus was "determined" to go, the Greek text actually says "strengthened His face." That is He strengthened Himself to go up to Jerusalem. The implication is that He was not eager to go but He did. He

knew He must in order to carry out the plan.

TRAVEL TO SAMARIA. One would think that the journey to Samaria would have been wonderful. The landscape today is gorgeous. The hills, the valleys and gorges are fantastic. Their walk was probably quiet, except for the conversation with the disciples. It is possible that they might have encountered other travellers along the way to Jerusalem for the Feast of Booths. The feast was one of three major Jewish feasts that every male was supposed to attend, if he could.

But in order to go to Jerusalem from Capernaum they had to pass through Samaria, or journey east into the Decapolis. But Luke 9:52 tells us that they wanted go through Samaria. It was a shorter route. So messengers were sent on ahead in order to secure reservations for the night.

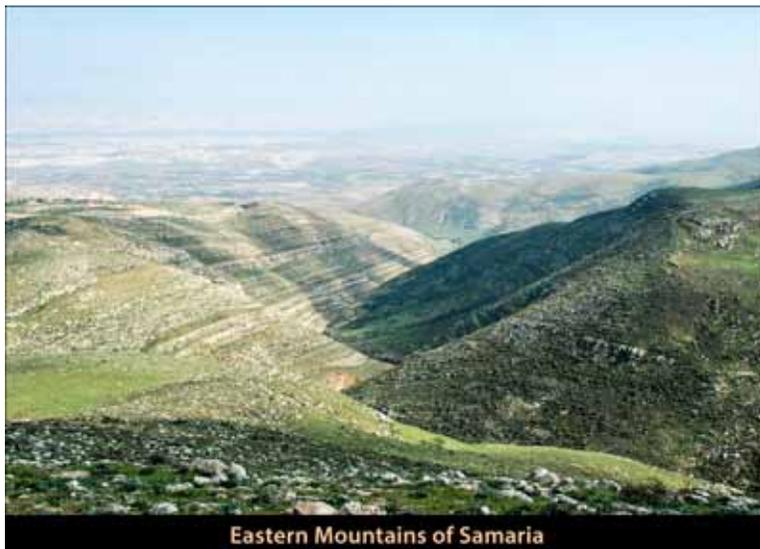
... and He sent messengers on ahead of Him, and they went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for Him. Luke 9:52 (NASB)

Apparently, Jesus was traveling with a number of people.

How many were traveling with Jesus? Were there more people traveling with Jesus than just the disciples? An earlier passage, Luke 8:1-3, suggests that it is possible some women were also traveling with Jesus. But there were enough people that it was necessary to send messengers to prepare for their arrival.

Some *Prosperity Gospel* teachers have taught that Jesus was wealthy with “big money.” They say that Jesus had to have had a big organization since the treasurer, Judas, was constantly stealing (John 12:6).¹ But such claims are used only to support the lifestyle of those teachers. The gospels reveal that Jesus and the disciples had enough money to support their ministry and travels. Nothing in the gospels supports the concept that Jesus had “big money.”

For example, Mark 6:33 is the account of the feeding of the five thousand. In this account we are told that one of the disciples asked if he should take 200 denarii and buy food for the five thousand plus people. The *Prosperity Gospel* teachers want us to believe that there was a lot more money in the bag because the disciple



said, “Shall we go and spend 200 denarii . . . ?” That is, they were proposing taking some of the money, not all. Now a denarius was what an average laborer would earn in one day. Therefore, 200 denarii would be about six months worth of income. Therefore, the *Prosperity Gospel* teachers claim that Jesus was very wealthy - half-year of wages in the money bag, *at least*. But John 6:7, another account of the feeding of the five thousand, reveals that 200 denarii was all that they had since Philip says it was not enough, implying that 200 denarii was all that they had. Philip was ready to give it up

1. For example, Dr. John Avanzini has said, “Jesus was handling big money because that treasurer He had was a thief. Now you can’t tell me that a ministry with a treasurer that’s a thief can operate on a few pennies. It took big money to operate that ministry because Judas was stealing out of that bag.” (Praise the Lord, Trinity Broadcast Network. Sept. 15, 1988.)

for the hungry people. Now 200 denarii for Jesus plus twelve disciples is not very much money. It would only have lasted them for 15 days. That is not big money. But God the Father did provide enough for Jesus’ ministry.

Luke 9:52 says that the messengers went ahead into Samaria to make reservations.

But they did not receive Him, because He was traveling toward Jerusalem. Luke 9:53 (NASB)

They could not make reservations for Jesus and whoever was traveling with Him because the Samaritans refused to help. Why did they reject Him? John 4:9 reveals part of the reason for the rejection. These Samaritans had a heart problem.

Their heart problem existed when the apocryphal book Ecclesiasticus (190 and 170 BC) was written. Chapter 50:24-26 reveals that the Jews hated Samaritans at least 200 years before Jesus started His ministry.² The book of John reveals that the Samaritans and Jews avoided each other during Jesus’ time.

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.) John 4:9 (NASB)

The Samaritans and Jews hated one another. Therefore the fickle Samaritans refused to care for a whole group of Jews simply because they were traveling to Jerusalem. That was enough to deny this group of Jews lodging for the night. I am sure that the messengers must have told the Samaritans that Jesus was among the group. Most likely they knew about Jesus, because news about Him had traveled every-

2. Ecclesiasticus. The Apocrypha. American Bible Society. 50.25-26

where (Matt. 4:24-27; 9:26, 31; John 4:39), but they did not care.

HEART FOR REVENGE. When the messengers returned and shared the bad news, I wonder how Jesus felt - another rejection in a series of rejections. Well, the disciples were angry when they heard this bad news. Were they feeling offended or did they have righteous indignation? Listen to what they wanted to do to these Samaritans.

When His disciples James and John saw this, they said, “Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?” Luke 9:54 (NASB)

They wanted revenge.

Mark 3:17 tells us that these two men, James and John, were known as the Sons of Thunder. They were given to anger, and they responded quickly with anger and revenge. It seemed justified to them since the village had rejected Christ. What could be more justified and honorable than defending Jesus? We can be confident that they thought their idea was

great since they made this proposal to Jesus. Apparently, they thought that Jesus would give them the power to destroy the Samaritans. We wonder if they about the inequity of their proposal? The Samaritans only denied them lodging for the night, but James and John want to destroy them. Such is the root problem of anger. Unjust anger is always out of balance and the response is unfair. Unrighteous anger seeks to hurt. The disciples struggled with anger too!

DEALING WITH PUBLIC SIN. Obviously, Jesus saw their sin and we are told that He rebuked them.

But He turned and rebuked them, [and said, “You do not know

what kind of spirit you are of; for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.”] And they went on to another village. Luke 9:55–56 (NASB)

This is another important example of how to deal with sin. Earlier in Matthew 18:15-17 we were told that if we saw another Christian sin, we should to go them in private in an attempt to rescue them from their sin. But how should we respond to public sin that others saw or heard? The sin of James and John was public. What did Jesus do? Jesus rebuked them publicly and not in private. Jesus did this on other occasions when the sin was known to everyone. For example, consider Jesus eight “Woes” in Matthew 23:13-33 that were pronounced on the scribes and Pharisees. Or, how about

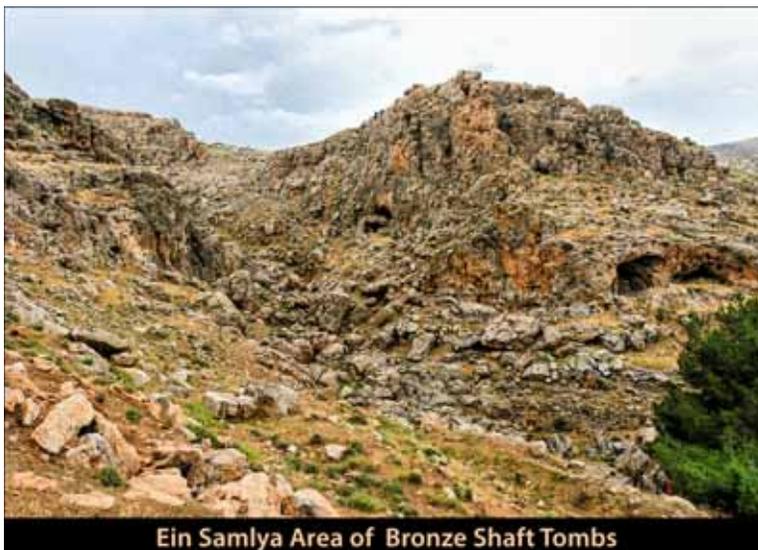
John the Baptist rebuking the Pharisees and Sadducees who came to Jesus. Checkout Jesus’ rebuke of Peter in John 21:18-22 or Paul’s rebuke of entire church in 1 Corinthians 5.

The New American Standard indicates that the words “and said, ‘You do not know what kind of spirit you are of; for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s

lives, but to save them’” probably should not be included in our Bibles. These words appear in very few Greek manuscripts and when they do appear the wording is inconsistent, which is a sign of an addition.³

GO WHERE YOU GO. Having been rejected by those in the last village, Jesus and the others started walking to the next village.

And they went on to another village. As they were going along the road, someone said to Him, “I will follow You wherever You go.”



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3. I Howard Marshall. New International Greek Testament Commentary. Eerdmans Publishing. 1978. p. 407.

Luke 9:56–57 (NASB)

Somewhere along the way to the next city a scribe (Matt. 8:19) offered to follow Jesus wherever He went. A scribe in Jesus' day was a professional religious leader. He was like a modern day attorney who specialized in interpreting the Mosaic law and provided guidance as how to apply it in various situations. Both the Pharisees (Mark 2:16) and Sadducees had scribes. Therefore, this was a significant offer, "I will go wherever . . ." He was willing to stop being a prestigious leader - a scribe. He would have been a convert from among the Pharisees or Sadducees - the "enemy."

But Jesus knew the man was not really serious. Maybe the scribe responded from emotion after listening to Jesus teach as he walked beside Him. Just imagine the joy and excitement of the disciples as they listened to this man offer to follow Jesus. I wonder if Peter or others were thinking about him sharing his conversion story with other Pharisees and Sadducees. Perhaps they might even convert too! That would be our modern approach. But Jesus was not impressed. He was looking at the heart. We can only look at a person on the outside and hear his words, but Jesus knew the scribe was not truly serious. Therefore, Jesus challenged him to think about the real consequences because most people are not really serious about following Jesus. They are looking for Santa Claus.

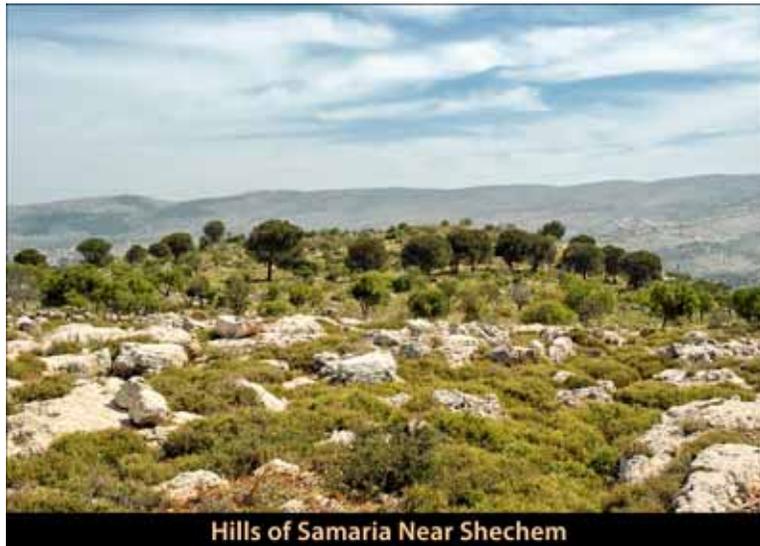
And Jesus said to him, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."
Luke 9:58

What did Jesus mean that he did not have anywhere to lay His head? Capernaum was His hometown. It appears

that Jesus is saying He is constantly on the move and did not have a regular place to stay. R. Kent Hughes captures Jesus' message with these words,

So what did Jesus mean by His strong assertion? He meant that at times those who follow Him would literally be homeless, that they would undergo immense discomfort.⁴

Jesus and the disciples were constantly travelling and always looking for a new place to lay their head. The last city had just rejected them. They were not able to lay their head down in that city. Apparently, this scribe wanted the comforts of home while he followed for Jesus. The comforts of life were more important.



Hills of Samaria Near Shechem

BURY MY FATHER.

As Jesus continued walking He had a conversation with a man. During that conversation He challenged the man to follow Him.

And He said to another, "Follow Me." But he said, "Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father." Luke 9:59 (NASB)

The Greek word that is translated as "to go" is *aperchomai* and it has the nuance of "to go away from a point." That is, the man wanted to leave Jesus. The next verse reveals that Jesus knew why the man asked to leave.

But He said to him, "Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God."
Luke 9:60 (NASB)

What did Jesus mean by this cryptic comment? Obviously, physically dead people cannot bury anyone or anything because they cannot speak, walk or talk. Jesus was referring

4. R. Kent Hughes. Luke. Vol. 1, Crossway Books. 1998, p. 372.

to spiritually dead people burying the physically dead. Jesus was serious!

The man had his priorities upside down. Jesus challenged him to choose - his father or Jesus. The desire to bury his father revealed that Jesus was not his first priority. In fact, the man's response is extraordinary since burying his father would mean becoming unclean, and Jews were warned against becoming unclean (Lev. 11:31; Matt. 23:27). Becoming unclean was a great concern to the Jews. Yet, he would rather become unclean than follow Jesus. Jesus was down low on this man's priority list. He wasn't serious about following Him. He had wrong priorities. One would think that he would have wanted to follow Jesus rather than become unclean. This reveals his heart.

Earlier Jesus said that we must love Him more than father, mother, brother or sister - any family member.

He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. Matt. 10:37 (NASB)

That is, God must be first on our list of priorities and then family. Unfortunately, some Christians do not even have the family or Jesus first. Some Christians have put themselves first; the family is second and Jesus is third, fourth, fifth or even lower. They just added Jesus to their list of priorities. They are not serious followers of Christ. They want the promise of eternal life but then want to live as they desire.

SAY GOODBYE, FIRST. Matthew ignores the next encounter that Jesus had with another man as He walked, but Luke doesn't. Luke states that the next man made an excuse also when Jesus asked him to follow.

Another also said, "I will follow You, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home." Luke 9:61 (NASB)

Now doesn't that seem reasonable? At least show courtesy to your family before you leave town? But Jesus did not think that was a good response.

But Jesus said to him, "No one, after putting his hand to the

plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." Luke 9:62 (NASB)

Jesus told the man that he was not fit for the kingdom of God - eternal life. The Greek word, *euthetos*, that is translated as "fit" in this verse has the idea of being useful for some purpose. Luke 14:35 reveals the meaning of the word when it says "useless."

It is useless either for the soil or for the manure pile; it is thrown out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear." Luke 14:35 (NASB)

Jesus point is very clear. If He is not first in your life, then you are not very useful to Him. How can He direct someone who is more interested in themselves and other people than God?

CONCLUSION. The entire journey from Galilee was one of rejection. Rejection has been the pattern recently, and the rejection has continued along the journey up to Jerusalem. Apparently, even those who showed some interest in following Jesus were not seriously interested. None of them were willing to place Jesus above themselves or their families. The scribe wanted a nice place to sleep at night. One would rather become unclean, something that a good Jew would seek to avoid, and the last man wanted to wait before making his commitment.

Let me conclude by asking you, "Are you a serious follower of Jesus Christ, our God?" Or, do you have some excuse - just like one of these men? What is God speaking into your heart as you read this study? Or, are you going to reject Him too?