

## HOSTILE HEARTS

A great turning point occurs in the gospel of Luke at chapter 9 verse 51: "*when the days drew near for Him to be taken up, Jesus set His face to go to Jerusalem.*" Jesus now moves His ministry toward the holy city, where a destiny of suffering and death await Him.

The next 10 chapters recount His accomplishment of this next phase of His mission. But He encountered resistance in a village of the Samaritans, noted in verses 52-56. They were religious adversaries, and refused to provide food and lodging for Jesus and His disciples.

**UN-RECEPTIVE** - Samaria is the region lying between Galilee and Judea, where Jesus was headed to the capital city Jerusalem. Jews and Samaritans didn't get along, for good reason.

It's a complicated history. The region of Samaria was full of hostile rivalries before the time of Moses, 1,400 years before Christ. Then 700 years later the Jews were exiled (2Kings 17:24), and those who remained in the land intermarried with pagan colonists imported from Assyria, despite God's warnings. Over time they developed their own religious beliefs, which polluted God's written Word. Jews considered Samaritans perpetually unclean.

"Samaritans were half-breeds both biologically and theologically, and a great hostility emerged between them and the Jews," notes RC Sproul. But in their minds, Samaritans were the true keepers of the faith. They had their own version of the Pentateuch (first five books of the Bible) and rejected the rest of the Old Testament in favor of their own version of history.

**REVISIONISTS** - Abraham and Jacob had built altars in Samaria, and Joshua pronounced blessings (Deuteronomy 11:27) on Mt. Gerizim, where the Samaritans later built a temple, which was destroyed by the Jews. The Samaritans also had their own Messianic views (John 4) .

Some 200 years before Christ, the Samaritans refused to help Jews against the ruling tyrant Antiochus Epiphanes. Samaritans added Greek worship services to their own half-pagan rites.

This mutual distrust and even hatred between Samaritans and Jews was behind their refusal to help Jesus. He was the Christ, the Savior from sin. But He was going to the holy city of Jerusalem. Scholars say this could be seen by Samaritans as a slap in the face.

**RETALIATION** - Verse 54 says that when the disciples James and John saw it, they said, "*Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?*" Why would they retaliate like this? In Luke 9:50 Jesus said, "*the one who is not against you is for you*"

Clearly these Samaritans were against Jesus. Disciples were sure He was going to Jerusalem to usher in His kingdom and set things right with all the enemies of God. Jesus had just been on the mount of transfiguration talking with Elijah about His mission. Early on, Jesus had called James and John "sons of thunder" (Mark 3:17). Their temper and righteous indignation shows.

They knew the story in 1Kings 1:9-12 of how Elijah as the prophet of God had called down fire against the troops arrayed against him by the wicked King Ahab. James and John must have reasoned that if these Samaritans were likewise against Christ and God, then they should be properly judged. Are you like them, judging first and asking questions later?

**REBUKING** - Verse 55 says, "*But Jesus turned and rebuked them.*" Some manuscripts add that the Son of Man came not to destroy people's lives but to save them. James and John did not meet with approval that day. We too are prone to condemn those who are clearly wrong.

You know John 3:16, "*for God so loved the world, that He gave His one Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.*" And 17 says, "*For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him.*"

**REASON** - Salvation first, then judgment. Verse 18 warns, "*whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.*" And 19 says, "*And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.*"

"The day of woe will indeed come," notes Sproul, "but God is slow to anger, patient and long suffering, while the disciples were quick to anger, impatient and short suffering." Are you? ☐