

“The Beginning of Samaria”  
1 Kings 16:15-28  
(Preached at Trinity, May 16, 2021)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we've seen, the latter part of 1 Kings deals almost exclusively with the Northern Kingdom of Israel. It was plagued by strife and hostility. While the Southern Kingdom was enjoying the stable government of King Asa, the Northern Kingdom struggled through six successive wicked kings – Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, Tibni, and Omri, each being hardened progressively more and more, each leading Israel deeper and deeper into sin.
2. Some of their reigns were exceedingly brief. Zimri reigned for only seven days before he committed suicide. The reigns of Nadab and Elah each only reigned for two years before they were assassinated.
3. Israel was bent on self-destruction. Those described as “My people Israel” would soon provoke God to call them “not My people.”  
**Hosea 1:9 NAU** - "And the LORD said, "Name him Lo-ammi, for you are not My people and I am not your God."
4. The amazing fact remained, however. God's redemptive purpose continued unabated. He was preparing the way for the Savior. God continued to maintain His covenant and would not cut His people off entirely. He would maintain a remnant through which the Messiah would come.  
**Hosea 1:10 NAU** - "Yet the number of the sons of Israel Will be like the sand of the sea, Which cannot be measured or numbered; And in the place Where it is said to them, "You are not My people," It will be said to them, " *You are* the sons of the living God."  
**Romans 9:23-26 NAU** - "And *He did* so in order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, <sup>24</sup> *even* us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles. <sup>25</sup> As He says also in Hosea, "I will call those who were not My people, 'My people,' And her who was not beloved, 'beloved.'" <sup>26</sup> "And it shall be that in the place where it was said to them, 'you are not My people,' There they shall be called sons of the living God."  
**1 Peter 2:9-10 NAU** - "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for *God's* own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; <sup>10</sup> for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."

5. Not one of Israel's kings turned away from the sins of Jeroboam. Zimri only reigned for seven days yet we read of him,  
**1 Kings 16:18-19 NAU** - "When Zimri saw that the city was taken, he went into the citadel of the king's house and burned the king's house over him with fire, and died, <sup>19</sup> because of his sins which he sinned, doing evil in the sight of the LORD, walking in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin which he did, making Israel sin."
- A. Zimri reigned for seven days before he committed suicide. Seven days is ample time to show yourself evil in the sight of God. He first assassinated King Elah who was in a drunken stupor. Of course, Elah was also a wicked king. Instead of going alongside his troops in battle, he was consumed with the consumption of his favorite drink.
- B. As soon as Zimri killed Elah he struck down all possible heirs to the throne. He also killed all who held friendship with Elah, thus eliminating any possibility of revenge. This was according to the Word of the Lord – **Verses 12-13**  
**1 Kings 16:12-13 NAU** - "Thus Zimri destroyed all the household of Baasha, according to the word of the LORD, which He spoke against Baasha through Jehu the prophet, <sup>13</sup> for all the sins of Baasha and the sins of Elah his son, which they sinned and which they made Israel sin, provoking the LORD God of Israel to anger with their idols."  
 The word for "idols" literally means "breath, vapor – futility" Idols are nothing.
- C. Zimri's reign lasted but a week. It was a busy week full of bloodshed. He didn't build anything. He was a murderer and destroyer. Zimri's great blunder was not having the support of the military. Omri, the commander of the army besieged Tirzah. Zimri facing certain doom he took his own life. The lusts and pleasures of this life soon turn to ash – sometimes very quickly.  
 He died under the judgment of God. He died because of his sins, but this time we find that the agent God used in bringing about his death was Zimri himself!
6. After Zimri died there was a political struggle for the throne with half following Omri while the other half followed Tibni. This lasted almost four years. Finally, we read in **Verse 22**, "And Tibni died and Omri became king." We aren't told how Tibni died. Without specific reference we assume he died of natural causes, but with Israel one can never be sure.
7. We are given the introduction to Omri's reign in **Verse 23**  
**1 Kings 16:23 NAU** - "In the thirty-first year of Asa king of Judah, Omri became king over Israel *and reigned* twelve years; he reigned six years at Tirzah."
8. Unlike the kings immediately preceding him, Omri had a relatively stable reign. He was a strong leader and his reign lasted for twelve years.
- A. Unlike the two kings that preceded him, he did not seize the throne by conspiracy and murder. He was chosen by the popular will of the people. Well, at least half of the people chose him while the other half followed Tibni.
- B. Omri had many political accomplishments and became a powerful king but the author spares us all but the most important question. Was he faithful to God? The author does not leave us guessing.  
**1 Kings 16:25 NAU** - "Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD, and acted more wickedly than all who *were* before him."

- C. Sin is continuing to progress in Israel. Omri manages to exceed in sin, acting more wickedly than any of the kings before him. He was even more wicked than Jeroboam.
9. The author does give us a piece of information that will be significant in the future of Israel. Once he was established as Israel's king Omri purchased and named Samaria and established it as his capital. Samaria sat on a hill 300 feet high. It had military, political, and economic significance for Omri. It was connected to major highways that cut through the middle of Israel and became a prestigious city. But it had much greater significance.
- A. We must give careful attention. Samaria was established to rival another city built on a hill, Jerusalem the city of David. Omri officially moved the worship of God from Jerusalem to Samaria. Samaria would be the capital of the Northern Kingdom for the rest of its history, until besieged by the Assyrians.
- B. Archaeologists have uncovered the foundations of Omri's palace as well as parts of Ahab's palace. Under the influence of Jezebel, Samaria became the center of idolatrous worship. Ahab built the house of Baal in Samaria. Their idolatry became the focus of God's wrath.
- Hosea 8:5-7 NAU** - "He has rejected your calf, O Samaria, saying, "My anger burns against them!" How long will they be incapable of innocence? <sup>6</sup> For from Israel is even this! A craftsman made it, so it is not God; Surely the calf of Samaria will be broken to pieces. <sup>7</sup> For they sow the wind And they reap the whirlwind."
10. Later the name Samaria was transferred to the country of which it was the capital, so Samaria became synonymous with the Northern Kingdom. After the Northern Kingdom was destroyed by the Assyrians many in Samaria were deported.
11. During the Babylonian captivity of the Southern Kingdom, Babylon placed not only dispersed Israelites back into Samaria, but also other people of mixed national origin. These largely held the identity of the Samaritans. When the Jews were allowed to return and begin reconstructing Jerusalem they would not allow the Samaritans to help with the building and the Samaritans opposed the reconstruction of the Temple.
- Ezra 4:1-4 NAU** - "Now when the enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that the people of the exile were building a temple to the LORD God of Israel, <sup>2</sup> they approached Zerubbabel and the heads of fathers' *households*, and said to them, "Let us build with you, for we, like you, seek your God; and we have been sacrificing to Him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us up here." <sup>3</sup> But Zerubbabel and Jeshua and the rest of the heads of fathers' *households* of Israel said to them, "You have nothing in common with us in building a house to our God; but we ourselves will together build to the LORD God of Israel, as King Cyrus, the king of Persia has commanded us." <sup>4</sup> Then the people of the land discouraged the people of Judah, and frightened them from building,"
12. In the ensuing years the Jews and Samaritans continued as bitter enemies.
- A. The worst thing you could call someone was a Samaritan
- John 8:47-48 NAU** - "He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear *them*, because you are not of God." <sup>48</sup> The Jews answered and said to Him, "Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?"
- B. Jesus broke this barrier by going through Samaria and actually speaking to a Samaritan woman.
13. I want us to see briefly the significance of Omri setting up Samaria as a place of worship.

- I. Samaria is an example of religious self-determination
- A. Human beings are religious by nature
1. God has revealed Himself to all by natural revelation. It is a clear and undeniable revelation.  
**Romans 1:19-20 NAU** - "because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. <sup>20</sup> For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse."
  2. Human beings also understand that they are estranged from God. There is universal guilt and condemnation.  
**Romans 1:18 NAU** - "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,"
  3. God has established a way of reconciliation through Christ. But fallen humanity doesn't want God's way. This is the problem of fallen humanity. They deny God. They deny God's right to reign. Instead, they exacerbate their sin by insisting on their own way. They invent their own religion.
- B. History is paved with testimony to human religion
1. Every culture has its own religion
  2. The Bible describes it well  
Cain insisted on his own way.  
The Tower of Babel displays self-determination.  
The nations around Israel all practiced idolatry
  3. Fallen man continues to insist on going his own way, even as he strives to appease divinity.
- C. Worshipping at Samaria was in direct violation to God's command
1. Jerusalem was the city chosen by God  
**1 Kings 11:36 NAU** - "But to his son I will give one tribe, that My servant David may have a lamp always before Me in Jerusalem, the city where I have chosen for Myself to put My name."
  2. God determined where and how He would be worshipped  
Worship was confined to Jerusalem. Sacrifices were confined to the Temple. The mercy seat was confined to a particular place. This was by God's design and command.
  3. Under the reign of Jeroboam he determined that it was acceptable to worship apart from Jerusalem  
**1 Kings 12:26-28 NAU** - "And Jeroboam said in his heart, "Now the kingdom will return to the house of David. <sup>27</sup> "If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will return to their lord, *even* to Rehoboam king of Judah; and they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah."  
<sup>28</sup> So the king consulted, and made two golden calves, and he said to them, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem; behold your gods, O Israel, that brought you up from the land of Egypt."
  4. This further brought God's condemnation upon the house of Israel

- D. Now Omri has established Samaria as the permanent place of worship
1. Mount Gerizim was the place of sacrifice.  
Nine hundred years later the Samaritan woman challenged Jesus with the location of true worship. The Samaritans had come to believe that this mountain had been chosen by God as the proper place of worship.  
**John 4:20 NAU** - "Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you *people* say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."
  2. The Samaritans were religious, but it was a man-made religion. As descendants of the northern kingdom, they had long-ago abandoned the true worship of God. They determined how God would be approached. They determined the location of the temple and the way to worship God. It was as religion of human imagination—but they were convinced it was right. This continues even to this day.

II. Under the New Covenant God still orders how He will be worshipped

- A. Worship is no longer confined to a particular place
1. In the New Covenant the focus is upon Christ. Wherever His people gather for worship is holy  
1689 LBC 22:6 – *Of Religious Worship and the Sabbath Day* – “Neither prayer nor any other part of religious worship, is now under the Gospel, tied unto, or made more acceptable by any place in which it is performed, or towards which it is directed; but God is to be worshipped everywhere in spirit and in truth.”
  2. But God still demands worship of His choosing. He does not allow worship of human invention according to human imagination.  
1689 LBC 22:1 – *Of Religious Worship and the Sabbath Day* – “The light of nature shews that there is a God, who hath lordship and sovereignty over all; is just, good and doth good unto all; and is therefore to be feared, loved, praised, called upon, trusted in, and served, with all the heart and all the soul, and with all the might. But the acceptable way of worshipping the true God, is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshipped according to the imagination and devices of men, nor the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representations, or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scriptures.”
  3. True worship demands following the way of God’s choosing – known as the Regulative Principle of Worship. In other words, worship is to only include those elements that God commands: prayer, the reading and exposition of the Word, Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, the observance of the ordinances.  
1689 LBC 22:5 – *Of Religious Worship and the Sabbath Day* – “The reading of the Scriptures, preaching and hearing the Word of God, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, sing with grace in our hearts to the Lord; as also the administration of baptism and the Lord’s Supper, are all parts of religious worship of God”

- B. We can still fall into the sin of Jeroboam and Omri who insisted in their own way
1. Most insist that we should be free to choose our own way. They insist the only essential thing is that we be sincere. The Samaritans were very sincere.
  2. In many Christian churches today, worship is largely centered around the music. And its largely music that mirrors secular music. The lyrics are not the main consideration.
  3. Preaching is often minimized.

**Conclusion:**

1. We must carefully guard ourselves against falling into the sins committed by Israel who abandoned God's way of worship.
2. God desires worship. In fact, He demands worship. But it must be worship of His choosing.