

THE SAMARITANS

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. GENERAL THOUGHTS

1. The greatest tension/conflict of the New Testament and Inter-Testamental period was between the Jews and Samaritans.
2. Although Gentiles were not favored among the Jews at least they didn't portray hypocrisy by claiming to be religious.
3. The Samaritans mixed Judaism and Cult worship to produce a mixed religion not acceptable to the Israelites.

II. THE HISTORY OF THE SAMARITANS

A. Their beginning's in the old testament

1. 2 Kings 17:21-24; 32-41
 - a. They were immigrants exiled by the King of Assyria, not the seed of Abraham
 - b. They Were Idolaters (2 Kings 32-41)
 - c. Josephus discusses this in Antiquities of the Jews 10.14

B. They were rejected from aiding the Jews in rebuilding the temple after their return from Babylon.

1. Ezra 4:1-10,17
 - a. The enemies of Judah and Benjamin (Geographically the territory the Samaritans settled was their territory).
 - b. Vs. 2 ***"Let us help you build because, like you, we seek your God and have been sacrificing to him since the time of Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, who brought us here."***
 - c. Israel's reply vs. 3 ***"You have no part with us in building a temple to our God."*** (Resentment builds).

C. They Mocked Nehemiah when he was rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem

1. Nehemiah 2:19-20
 - a. Vs. 19 ***"But when Sandballat the horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite***

official and Geshem the Arab heard about it (rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem), they ridiculed us.”

- b. In Inter-Testamental literature Sanballat is mentioned as the Governor of Samaria.

D. The result of these events in the Jewish Mind

1. The Samaritans were an idolatrous people group who had no genealogical connection to the Israelites, the land or their God.
2. It was idolatry, which sent the Jews to exile in Babylon, and they certainly didn't desire to head down the path of chastisement again.
3. The land of Israel was given to Abraham and his seed as a promise. The king of Assyria was responsible for placing these people in Samaria. As far as the Jews were concerned, the sooner they leave the better.

E. The results of these events in the Samaritans mind

1. They were trained in the ways of the Lord and the priesthood.
2. They could intermingle with the Jews and serve God together.

III. THE HISTORY OF THE SAMARITAN TEMPLE AND SURROUNDING EVENTS

A. The account of its origins as recorded by Josephus, the historian.

1. Around or shortly after the time of Nehemiah a priest named Manasseh intermarried with a Samaritan woman. The priest felt this was violating the law by intermarrying with the nations around them (cf. Ezra 10:2-3). He was requested to put her away or yield the priesthood. The interesting fact of the matter is who his father in law was, Sanballat. The grandson of Sanballat mentioned in Nehemiah 2:19, the governor of Samaria. After Manasseh informs him of the Jews proposition to him the following dialogue unfolds. ***“And then Sanballat promised him no only to preserve to him the honor of his priesthood, but the procure for him the power and dignity of a High Priest, and would make him governor of all the places he himself now ruled, if he would keep his daughter for his wife. He also told him further, that he would build him a temple like that at Jerusalem upon Mt. Gerizzim, which is the highest of all mountains that are in Samaria.” (Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews. 11.8).***

2. Mt. Gerizzim has its Old Testament roots in Deuteronomy 27-28 where the Israelites shouted back and forth the blessing and curses of the law. The reason for choosing this mountain can be found in Deuteronomy 12:4-14. It reads ***“But***

you are to seek the place the Lord your God will choose from among all your tribes to put his name for his dwelling. It repeats, *“To the place the Lord will show you”*. In Jerusalem the Temple was built on Mt. Moriah, the place Abraham was going to sacrifice Isaac. The Samaritans placed their temple on Mt. Gerizzem; the place Israel shouted the blessings from Deuteronomy 27-28. This became a debate among the Samaritans and Jews. Josephus also brings this point out.

IV. CONFLICT THAT AROSE BETWEEN JEWS AND SAMARITANS.

- A. Josephus' account of the Samaritan and Jewish temple debate in the Inter-Testamental period. *“Now it came to pass that the Alexandrian Jews [in the region of Egypt] and those Samaritans who paid their worship to the temple that was built in the days of Alexander at Mt. Gerizzim, did now make a sedition one against another, and disputed about their temples before Ptolemy himself, the Jews saying that, according to the law of Moses, the temple was to be built at Jerusalem; and the Samaritans saying that it was to be built at Gterizzim. They desired therefore the king to sit with his friends and hear the debates about these matters, and punish those with death who were baffled” (Josephus Ant. 20.1).*
- B. The tension arose so great that eventually, during the age of the Apostles, there was an outbreak of violence. *“Now there arose a quarrel between the Samaritans and the Jews on the occasion following: It was the custom of the Galileans, when they came to the holy city at the festivals, to take their journeys through the country of the Samaritans; and at the time there lay, in the road they took, a village that was called Ginea, which was situated in the limits of Samaria and the great plain, where certain persons thereto belonging fought with the Galileans, and killed a great many of them’ (Josephus Ant. 20.1).”* The result of this incident was miniature war between the Samaritans and Galileans.
- C. In another account Josephus records that the Samaritans spread bones on the temple mount in Jerusalem to defile it.
- D. In ancient days the Jews operated on a lunar calendar. It would be signaled by watch fires they would set up the Jordan valley to announce the beginning of festivals etc. On many occasions and Samaritans set fires to signal the next point to light the next for the purpose of messing up the Jewish calendar. On who saw the moon would report it to the Sanhedrin. Once the Samaritans sent a false witness in and succeeded in ruining the calendar that way as recorded in the Mishnah. Because their success they established only accepting the testimony of those they recognize. *“If they in*

Jerusalem, are not going to recognize him, they in his own town send another with him to give evidence about him. At first they would accept the testimony concerning the new moon from everybody. Once the Minim [heretic] had spoiled matters, they made the rule that they should accept testimony only from those who are recognized (Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 2:1)."

V. THE BIBLICAL RECORD RELATING TO THE SAMARITANS

- A. Mathew 10:5 *"These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: 'do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel.'" The parallel to this passage is found in mark 6:8 and Luke 9:2-5 but no mention of what we have above by Mathew is mentioned. Why? Because Mathew was primarily a Jewish Gospel. The other writers were targeting Gentile Roman audiences that wouldn't understand the meaning behind the passage. Salvation is first to the Jew. Just as Acts 1:8 records Jerusalem/Judea/Samaria and then the uttermost parts of the earth. Or how Paul in acts began preaching in the Synagogue before reaching out to the Gentiles.*
- B. Luke 9:52-56 *"And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem [The Temple the Samaritans rejected but Jews accepted]. When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked; 'Lord, do you want us to call down fire from heaven and destroy them?' But Jesus turned and rebuked them, and they went to another village."*
- C. Luke 10:25-37 *"The Good Samaritan."* Who is my neighbor? My archenemy!
- D. Luke 17:11-19 Note verses 11,16,19 stressing Samaritan and Foreigner.
- E. John 4:7-9 *"When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, 'Will you give me a drink?' The Samaritan woman said to him, 'you are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?' (For Jews did not associate with Samaritans). 'Sir', the woman said 'I can see that you are a prophet. Or fathers worshiped on this mountain) Mt Gerizzim where they were at the base of by Jacob's well), but you Jews claim the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.'" Then Jesus settles a three hundred year old debate by saying "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem (vs. 21).*
- E. John 8:48-49 *"The Jews answered him, 'aren't we right in saying that your are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?' I am not possessed by a demon," said Jesus. "But I honor my father and you dishonor me."* According to Dr. Wave Nunnally,

this is the strongest insult found in the entire Bible.

F. Acts 8:4-17 Shows us Magic among the Samaritans (vs. 7-13).