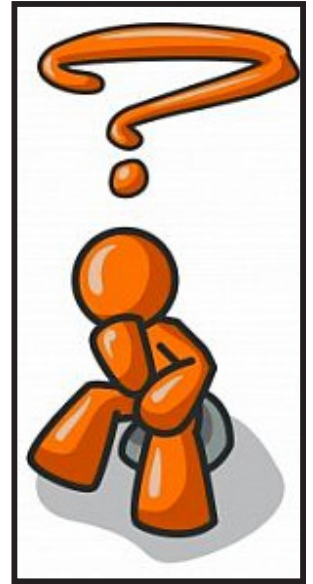


What About ... The Samaritans?

By DR. DAVID AND ELLEN DEWITT

There are three stages in the development of the Samaritans:

- 1. The Northern Kingdom Israelites adopted the idolatry of Jeroboam (933-722 B.C.).** This set the stage for the religious separation of the Samaritans, who combined a belief in the Pentateuch with idolatry, rejecting the rest of the Old Testament and, under King Omri (886-875), moved the capitol to Samaria.
- 2. The Samaritans were born racially, with a mixture of Assyrians with Israelites (722-444 B.C.).** In 722 B.C., Assyrian King Shalmaneser V deported the Northern Kingdom of Israel into captivity but died the following year. His successor, Sargon II, sent a group of Assyrians to inhabit Samaria/Israel, who then intermarried with the Israelites. But they were plagued with lions, which they interpreted as an omen, and asked Sargon for help. Sargon sent a priest from Bethel, but Sargon didn't know he was an evil priest who led the Samaritans back into idolatry.



3. The Samaritans built a temple at Mt. Gerizim (444 B.C. -70 A.D.).

After their return to Jerusalem from Babylon, the Jews began rebuilding their temple. While Nehemiah was engaged in building the walls of Jerusalem, the Samaritans vigorously attempted to halt the undertaking (Nehemiah 6:1-14). Failing this, the Samaritans built a temple for themselves on "Mount Gerizim," which the Samaritans insisted was the place where Abraham sacrificed Isaac and the mountain designated by Moses as the place for the nation to worship. Sanballat, the leader of the Samaritans, established his son-in-law, Manasses, as high priest. After that, the Samaritans ended their idolatry, became monotheists, and worshipped God from Mount Gerizim, using "The Samaritan Pentateuch." Because they were racially mixed, disregarded the Davidic kings, rejected the poetic and prophetic books of the Old Testament, and worshipped at Gerizim, the Jews had no dealings with them (John 4:9). After 70 A.D., when the Romans conquered the area, some Samaritans continued to live there. As of January 1, 2015, the Samaritan population of 777 people are divided between Mount Gerizim and Holon, a village near Tel Aviv [thesamaritanupdate.com].

The Significance of the Samaritans

The significance of these people is what we learn about God from the discussion of Jesus with the Samaritan woman at the well in Sychar, as recorded in John 4.

- 1. Worship is not in significant places, but in spirit and truth.** The Samaritan woman pointed out that she and Jesus believed in different places of worship. *Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father."* That was because, in the coming church age, no one physical place would be more holy than another. True worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth—not in traditions, not in places, not by rituals, and not by laws.
- 2. The Special Revelation of God comes only from the knowledge given to the Jews, recorded in the Bible.** Jesus said, "*You worship what you do not know we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews*"—He didn't mean that all Jews were saved or were especially devout. But the Jews, not the Samaritans or anybody else, were the recipients of God's Word (see also Romans 3:1-2).
- 3. There is only one Messiah, the One predicted by the Jewish Old Testament Prophets.** *The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ ["the one who has been anointed"]); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us"*—Because the Samaritans only believed in the Pentateuch, they expected a Moses-type leader who would declare all things to them—Deuteronomy 18:15-18. However, the prophets in the rest of the Old Testament predicted an anointed king of the Davidic line. So *Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He."*