

Saving the Samaritans

Acts 8:5-25

Who Were The Samaritans?

- The Samaritans (Samaritan Hebrew: שומרִים Samerim "Guardians/Keepers/Watchers of the Law") are an ethno-religious group descended from ancient Semitic inhabitants of the region.
- The Samaritans are adherents of Samaritanism, an Abrahamic religion closely related to Judaism. Samaritans believe that their worship, which is based on the Samaritan Pentateuch, is the true religion of the ancient Israelites from before the Babylonian Exile, preserved by those who remained in the Land of Israel, as opposed to Judaism, which they see as a related but altered and amended religion, brought back by those returning from the Babylonian exile.

Who Were The Samaritans?

- Ancestrally, Samaritans claim descent from the Israelite tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh (the two sons of Joseph) as well as from the priestly tribe of Levi, who have links to ancient Samaria from the period of their entry into the land of Canaan.
- The Samaritans believe that Mount Gerizim was the original Holy Place of Israel from the time that Joshua conquered Israel. The major issue between Rabbinical Jews and Samaritans has always been the location of the chosen place to worship God; Jerusalem according to the Jewish faith or Mount Gerizim according to Samaritan faith - John 4:5-9, 19-21

Who Were The Samaritans?

- John 4:5-9, 19-22 - “So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. 6 Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. 7 A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, Give Me a drink. 8 For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. 9 Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman? For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans... 19 The woman said to Him, Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. 20 Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship. 21 Jesus said to her, Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. 22 You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.”

Who Were The Samaritans?

- It is important to remember that Jesus taught Samaritans and Greeks - John 12:20-26
- In the Talmud, the Samaritans are called Cutheans, referring to the ancient city of Kutha, geographically located in what is today Iraq. In the Biblical account, Cuthah was one of several cities from which people were brought to Samaria, and they worshiped Nergal.
- Once a large community of over a million in late Roman times, the Samaritans shrank to several tens of thousands in the Third Samaritan Revolt (529 AD) against the Byzantines. As of January 1, 2015, the population was 775.

Who Were The Samaritans?

- “The inhabitants of Samaria, who agreed and plotted with a king hostile to me, not to do service and not to bring tribute to Ashshur and who did battle, I fought against them with the power of the great gods, my lords. I counted as spoil 27,280 people, together with their chariots, and gods, in which they trusted. I formed a unit with 200 of their chariots for my royal force. I settled the rest of them in the midst of Assyria. I repopulated Samaria more than before. The Tamudi, Ibadidi, Marsimani and Hayappa, who live in distant Arabia in the desert, who knew neither overseer nor commander, who never brought tribute to any king--with the help of Ashshur my lord, I defeated them. I deported the rest of them. I settled them in Samaria. I brought into it people from countries conquered by my hands. I appointed my eunuch as governor over them. And I counted them as Assyrians.” (Sargon II Inscriptions, COS 2.118A, p. 293; Nimrud Prisms, COS 2.118D, pp. 295-296)

Saving the Samaritans

- In the conversion of the Samaritans, there was:
 - Personal Proclamation
 - Previous Practice
 - Penitence and Profession
 - Power and Preservation
- What does the Bible really teach regarding true conversion and faithfulness?

Personal Proclamation

- Acts 8:5-9 - “Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. 6 And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. 7 For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. 8 And there was great joy in that city. 9 But there was a certain man called Simon, who previously practiced sorcery in the city and astonished the people of Samaria, claiming that he was someone great”

Personal Proclamation

- Philip proclaimed Christ, the death, burial and resurrection
 - 1Cor. 15:1-4 - “Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you--unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures”

Personal Proclamation

- He also taught the plan of salvation in view of the response of the Samaritans.
 - Matt. 28:18-20
 - Mark 16:15-16
 - Luke 24:47

Personal Proclamation

- He also taught about the church
 - Acts 8:12 - “But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized.”
- Clearly, he taught the fully revealed will of God
 - Acts 20:27 - “For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.”

Personal Proclamation

- The people heard the word
 - Rom. 10:17 - “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”
- The people did what the word required
 - James 1:22 - “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”

Personal Proclamation

- Philip confirmed the word with signs
 - John 20:30-31 - “And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.”
- The condition of the Samaritans
 - Heb. 2:3 - “How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him”

Previous Practice

- Acts 8:9-11 - “But there was a certain man called Simon, who previously practiced sorcery in the city and astonished the people of Samaria, claiming that he was someone great, 10 to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. 11 And they heeded him because he had astonished them with his sorceries for a long time.”

Previous Practice

- One of their previous religious practices was based on the magic of Simon. God has never at any time approved the practice of the dark arts
 - Deut. 18:10-12
 - Gal. 5:20 - “Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are... sorcery”

Previous Practice

- Simon elevated himself rather than God.
- Philip would have to manifest humility in order to stand out in contrast to Simon
 - Phil. 2:3 - “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.”
 - 1Peter 5:5 - “Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.”

Previous Practice

- The people believed Simon to have the power of God; but, just because they believed in him did not make it so.
 - Matt. 24:24 - “For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.”
 - 2Thes. 2:9 - “The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders”

Previous Practice

- Simon's wonders were deceptions. The people gave him attention because of it, but they did not see true miracles.
 - 1Thes. 5:21 - “Test all things; hold fast what is good”
 - 1John 4:1 - “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”

Penitence and Profession

- Acts 8:12-13 - “But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. 13 Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done.”

Penitence and Profession

- They heard the message of Christ and the kingdom.
- They could discern between Simon's message and the gospel
- They heard about the church and fellowship, the same church and fellowship in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost
 - Acts 2:42-47

Penitence and Profession

- They believed the message, a message worthy of belief; that God came down from heaven and took on the form of a man in order to save humankind
 - Phil. 2:5-9

Penitence and Profession

- They turned away from Simon's sorceries and deceptions and believed the truth. They wanted to be free from sin
 - John 8:31-32 - “Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. 32 And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”
 - Acts 17:30 - “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent”

Penitence and Profession

- They were baptized
 - Rom. 6:1-11
 - Gal. 3:27 - “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”
 - Col. 2:12-13 - “Buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses”

Power and Preservation

- Acts 8:14-19 - “Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, 15 who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. 16 For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 17 Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. 18 And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, 19 saying, ‘Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit.’”

Power and Preservation

- Acts 8:20-25 - “But Peter said to him, ‘Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! 21 You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. 22 Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. 23 For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity.’ 24 Then Simon answered and said, ‘Pray to the Lord for me, that none of the things which you have spoken may come upon me.’ 25 So when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.”

Power and Preservation

- Philip could do miracles, but the converted could not
- The apostles gave them that gift. The purpose of miracles was for confirmation of the word
 - 1Cor. 13:8-13
- The power of the saved depended on the confirmed word of God

Power and Preservation

- The preservation of Christians depended on ongoing penitence of believers
 - Simon's fall into temptation and sin put him in a lost condition
- In order for the fallen to be preserved, repentance needed to be preached and practiced
 - 2Cor. 7:9 - "Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing"
 - James 5:16 - "Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much."
- Our power and preservation depend on the same thing

Saving the Samaritans

- The salvation of Samaritans is the same as the salvation of Americans, which is the same as the salvation of all humankind
 - Eph. 4:4-6 - “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”