

Saving the Samaritans

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction:

A. Acts 8:5-25

B. Who were the Samaritans?

1. The Samaritans (Samaritan Hebrew: שומרים Samerim "Guardians/Keepers/Watchers of the Law") are an ethnoreligious group descended from ancient Semitic inhabitants of the region.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. 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, 19-22
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. "The inhabitants of Samaria/Samerina, 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)

C. In the conversion of the Samaritans, there was a:

1. Personal Proclamation
2. Previous Practice
3. Penitence and Profession
4. Power and Preservation

D. What does the Bible really teach regarding true conversion and faithfulness?

1. The book of Acts is about the growth of the church. At the beginning of the book, Jesus says that the apostles would be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria and to all parts of the earth. The book of Acts records their work in carrying out this mission. Acts 1-7 primarily concerned the growth of the church in Jerusalem; then, a great persecution began against the Lord's church, resulting in the members of the Lord's church scattered throughout the known world. But they went out preaching the gospel, which is how Philip came to be in Samaria.

I. PERSONAL PROCLAMATION - Acts 8:5-9

- A. Philip proclaimed Christ, the death, burial and resurrection - 1Cor. 15:1-4
- B. He also taught the plan of salvation in view of the response of the Samaritans.
 1. Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:47; Mark 16:15-16
- C. He also taught about the church - Acts 8:12
 1. Clearly, he taught the fully revealed will of God - Acts 20:27
- D. The people heard the word - Rom. 10:17
- E. The people did what the word required - James 1:22
- F. Philip confirmed the word with signs - John 20:30-31
- G. The condition of the Samaritans - Heb. 2:3

II. PREVIOUS PRACTICE - Acts 8:9-11

- A. One of their previous religious practices was based on the magic of Simon.
 1. God has never at any time approved the practice of the dark arts
 - a. Deut. 18:10-12; Gal. 5:19-20
 2. Simon elevated himself rather than God.
 3. Philip would have to manifest humility in order to stand out in contrast to Simon - Phil. 2:3; 1Peter 5:5
 4. 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; 2Thes. 2:9
 5. Simon's wonders were deceptions. The people gave him attention because of it, but they did not see true miracles.
 - a. 1Thes. 5:21; 1John 4:1

III. PENITENCE AND PROFESSION - Acts 8:12-13

- A. They heard the message of Christ and the kingdom.
 1. They could discern between Simon's message and the gospel
 2. They heard about the church and fellowship, the same church and fellowship in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost - Acts 2:42-47
- B. 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
 1. Phil. 2:5-9

- C. They turned away from Simon's sorceries and deceptions and believed the truth.
 - 1. They wanted to be free from sin - John 8:31-32; Acts 17:30
- D. They were baptized - Rom. 6:1-11
 - 1. Gal. 3:27; Col. 2:11-13
 - 2. Simon also both believed and was baptized. He became a Christian.

IV. POWER AND PRESERVATION - Acts 8:14-25

- A. Philip could do miracles, but the converted could not
 - 1. The apostles gave them that gift. The purpose of miracles was for confirmation of the word - 1Cor. 13:8-13
 - 2. The power of the saved depended on the confirmed word of God
- B. The preservation of Christians depended on ongoing penitence of believers
 - 1. Simon's fall into temptation and sin put him in a lost condition
 - 2. In order for the fallen to be preserved, repentance needed to be preached and practiced - 2Cor. 7:9; James 5:16
 - 3. Our power and preservation depends on the same things

Conclusion:

- A. 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