

An Exploration of Their Origins, Beliefs, and Jesus' Redemptive Message

After the Israelites were taken into exile by the Assyrian Empire (around 722 BC), the king of Assyria repopulated the land with people from other nations—such as Babylon, Kuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim. This was a common Assyrian practice to break national identities and religious loyalties. These people settled in Samaria, which had been the capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

2 Kings 17:24 (NIV)

“The king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Kuthah, Avva, Hamath and Sepharvaim and settled them in the towns of Samaria to replace the Israelites. They took over Samaria and lived in its towns.”

These settlers were pagans who brought their own gods and religious practices. They did not know the God of Israel, Yahweh, nor how to worship Him. As a result, Scripture says that God allowed lions to attack them—a sign of divine judgment and warning.

2 Kings 17:25 (NIV)

“When they first lived there, they did not worship the Lord; so he sent lions among them and they killed some of the people.”

Recognizing something was wrong, the king of Assyria ordered that a Jewish priest be sent back to the land to teach these people how to worship the God of Israel.

2 Kings 17:27-28 (NIV)

“Then the king of Assyria gave this order: ‘Have one of the priests you took captive from Samaria go back to live there and teach the people what the god of the land requires.’ So one of the priests who had been exiled from Samaria came to live in Bethel and taught them how to worship the Lord.”

However, this resulted in a syncretistic religion. The people continued worshipping their native gods while also trying to incorporate worship of Yahweh. This is evident in the biblical

critique:

2 Kings 17:33 (NIV)

“They worshiped the Lord, but they also served their own gods in accordance with the customs of the nations from which they had been brought.”

Theological Reflection:

This religious compromise made the Samaritans deeply suspect in the eyes of the Jews. While they lived in the land and followed some elements of the Law (especially the Pentateuch—the first five books of Moses), they rejected the rest of the Hebrew Scriptures, including the prophets. As a result, they were viewed as heretical and unclean by orthodox Jews.

This historical and theological divide persisted for centuries. By the time of Jesus, Jews still avoided any close contact with Samaritans.

John 4:9 (NIV)

“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 do not associate with Samaritans.)”

Jesus Breaks the Barrier:

Jesus’ interaction with the Samaritan woman in John 4 is revolutionary. He not only speaks to her, a Samaritan and a woman (both cultural taboos), but also reveals profound theological truth: that worship of God is no longer tied to physical locations like Mount Gerizim (Samaritan holy site) or Jerusalem, but is spiritual and universal.

John 4:21-23 (NIV)

“Woman,” Jesus replied, “believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.

You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews.

Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.”

This message underlines the gospel truth: salvation is no longer defined by ethnicity, temple, or tradition, but by faith in Jesus Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit and grounded in truth.

A Call to Worship in Spirit and Truth:

True worship, as Jesus teaches, must be in Spirit (empowered by the Holy Spirit) and in Truth (according to the Word of God). It is not about rituals or geography, but relationship.

John 14:6 (NIV)

“Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’”

Invitation:

Are you worshiping God in Spirit and in Truth today?

If not, you can make that decision now. Accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Be baptized by immersion in His name, as practiced by the early Church, for the forgiveness of sins.

Acts 2:38 (NIV)

“Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’”

Maranatha—The Lord is coming!

Let this truth transform your life—and share it with others.

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