

THE SAMARITANS' RELIGION

2 Kings 17:24-33, 41

INTRO. During the days of the divided kingdom, the city of Samaria became the capital of the Northern kingdom, Israel. Following the conquest of Israel by Assyria, most of the Israelites were deported to other areas, and captives from other countries were imported by the Assyrians, to live in Samaria and the surrounding area, along with the few Israelites who remained there. Eventually the entire area became known as Samaria, and its inhabitants became known as Samaritans.

In our text the religion of those who were imported is described in detail. We can, perhaps, learn some lessons from their mistakes. Their religion was...

I. A RELIGION OF "FEAR"

A. This is evident from the following statements:

1. "So they feared the Lord..." vs. 32
2. "They feared the Lord, yet served their own gods..." vs. 33
3. "So these nations feared the Lord, yet served their carved images..." vs. 41
4. But that they had the wrong kind of fear is implied in verse 34, "...they do not fear the Lord..."

NOTE: This is not a contradiction, because there are two kinds of fear.

B. There is a proper fear of the Lord as taught in both the Old & New Testaments. Acts 10:34-35.

Prov 1:7, The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Prov 14:26-27, In the fear of the LORD there is strong confidence, And His children will have a place of refuge. The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, To turn one away from the snares of death.

1. This "fear" is the awesome reverence that motivates us to turn from evil & serve God faithfully.

2. It is NOT the kind of fear that never thinks of God when things are going well, & then trembles at the prospect of facing Him in judgment.

C. So the Samaritans Had the Wrong Kind of Fear.

1. They would have never thought of God, had it not been for the lions, vs. 25-26
2. Like many today who think of God only when they are scared, sick, or in trouble.

II. THE SAMARITANS' RELIGION WAS A RELIGION OF FORM & RITUAL WITH LITTLE OR NO SUBSTANCE.

- A. Their hearts were not really in it, because God was not really in their hearts. They mixed a few Israelite rituals with the rituals to which they were already accustomed, 33-34.

- B. There is, of course, a need for whatever "form" God has commanded – but the form without substance is no service to Him at all.

2 Tim 3:1-5, But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away.

III. THE SAMARITANS' RELIGION WAS A RELIGION OF COMPROMISE.

A. In the Samaritans' case:

1. They feared God and but served false "gods"
2. They gave God lip service, but gave their false gods their real service.

3. Like many today who try to serve God & worldliness, the world always wins. It shows up in our jobs, our recreation, etc., when these take precedence over God.
4. God will not tolerate such compromise. He told Israel, Deut 6:14-15, You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are all around you (for the LORD your God is a jealous God among you), lest the anger of the LORD your God be aroused against you and destroy you from the face of the earth.
5. Jesus & His will must be in first place, MT 6:33
6. Compromise with the world is spiritual adultery. James 4:4, Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

CONCLUSION: The Samaritans had a religion that was made up of fear, form, & compromise. But it was a religion that did not please God. Let us learn from their mistakes lest we repeat them & be guilty of a religion that is empty, vain, void, & useless.

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