

Samaria and Samaritans within the New Testament Writings

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Abstract

Samaria and Samaritans are mentioned only within four of the New Testament writings: the Gospel of Matthew, the Gospel of John and the two books of Luke - the Gospel and the Acts. The Gospel of Mark contains no mention of Samaritans or Samaria. In Matthew, Jesus tells His disciples to avoid Gentile or Samaritan city. By the contrary, in Luke, the best known reference to the Samaritans is the Parable of the Good Samaritan. In the same book, Jesus heals ten lepers, of whom only one returned to praise God, and he was a Samaritan. A Samaritan village rejects a request from messengers travelling ahead of Jesus for hospitality, because the villagers did not want to facilitate a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, a practice which they saw as a violation of the Law of Moses. In Acts, Christ tells His apostles that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon them, and that they would be his witnesses in "Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (1, 8). In John, Jesus asks a Samaritan woman of Sychar for water from Jacob's Well. Thereafter many of the Samaritans from her town become followers of Jesus. This woman considered herself and her people to be Israelites, descendants of Jacob. In the same writing, Jesus is accused of being a Samaritan and being demon-possessed. He denies having a demon, but makes no comment on the Samaritan accusation. The rest of the New Testament makes no specific mention of Samaria or Samaritans. Nevertheless, the Samaritans benefit of a positive treatment in the New Testament, as an opening gate of the Gentiles to the grace of Lord and to the gift of salvation.