



Mary Craig Ministries, Inc.

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"A Journey to Samaria"

Just days before leaving for Israel, a pamphlet advertising World Wildlife Expeditions arrived in the mail. On the back cover was a quote from Rick Ridgeway, WWF National Council Member:

The best journeys answer questions that in the beginning you didn't even think to ask.

I had this quote in mind as I left for Israel with our MCM World Missions Team. While there, we journeyed to Samaria; I found myself in a place that brought up questions I had not thought to ask. Why did Jesus need to go through Samaria? Was there something more going on than witnessing to the woman at Jacob's well?

Our team of six just returned from Israel a few days ago. This was the seventh call to Israel. The mission concerned the war between truth and lie, assessing and utilizing the strategy of Nehemiah and releasing the anointing of restoration to Jerusalem and to Israel, comfort to the elect, protection and preservation; about seeing the true condition of the place. It was about how God wins battles according to Scripture; about His Name as Mighty One Who Saves, and El Elyon [Most High God]. This mission was about God warring for the souls and the salvation of His people. We prayed for the will of the Father, the mind of Christ, and the heart of the Holy Spirit to prevail as the Bride of Christ is being prepared for Jesus' return and the nations are being sifted and sorted.

Prior to the trip (because the trip happens before the trip in spiritual warfare missions), we knew to expect itinerary changes and to focus on what God did in winning battles for His people. On the trip we were taken to places governed by the Palestinian Authority, to Bethlehem, to Samaria, to the West Bank, and to East Jerusalem. It was rather like looking at biblical history through the eyes of God's covenant enemies inasmuch as the guide gave us the perspective from the viewpoint of all of the "ites" and the Philistines, etc. For example, instead of telling the story of David and Goliath from the perspective of God's covenant (who is this uncircumcised Philistine to defy the armies of the Living God), one would get the conflict from the perspective of the Philistines.

One place, about which I want to write and which held a lasting impact on me, was the city of Shechem located in the hill country of Ephraim. Shechem in central Israel lay at a crossroads at the northern end of "The Way of the Patriarchs." This ancient road, now a modern one, passes right through Shechem with Mount Gerizim on one side and Mount Ebal on the other.

As we traveled this road I could not help but think of the significance of this when Jesus said that He must needs go through Samaria in John 4. When I returned, I researched this place and found a great article by Wayne Stiles on the geographical and spiritual significance of Shechem; I want to share some of what I learned along with my own thoughts. Here's the link for the long version: <https://bible.org/article/geographical-historical-spiritual-significance-shechem> .

Shechem is the first city to which Abram came (Genesis 12:6). Abram built an altar to the Lord here and God confirmed His promise to give the land to Abram. He could have seen much of the land being promised from the top of Mount Ebal.

Jacob came to Shechem and also built an altar (Genesis 33:17-20). Here in Shechem Jacob buried all his idols. He dug a well, now called Jacob's well. We went to a church which claimed to be the very location, but who knows? (If you've traveled, you know there are two sites for just about every significant spiritual event. Nevertheless, the geography of a place remains.)

Joseph was sent to find his brothers who were keeping flocks in Shechem (Genesis 37:12-14). Not finding them there, he went to Dothan, where he was sold into slavery and ended up in Egypt. Joseph believed God that His people would return to Canaan, and so he commanded that his bones be carried back and buried there (Genesis 50:25).

Moses pronounced the blessings and curses of the Mosaic Covenant at Shechem and commanded the building of an altar. (Deut. 27:4-6) Joshua divided the nation, "Half of them stood in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal" (Joshua 8:33). Mount Ebal stood as a reminder of the curses of the law for disobedience and Mount Gerizim stood as a reminder of the blessings for obedience. Joshua built an altar of whole stones to God on Mount Ebal according as Moses had commanded. (Joshua 8:30-35)

Shechem was also a city of refuge, one of three on the west side of the Jordan. Then during the time of the kings, Jeroboam set up worship centers in Bethel, just south of Shechem. (1 Kings 12:25-33) Shechem became the capital for the Northern Kingdom. Later still, Omri chose Samaria as his capital. People who worshipped on Mount Gerizim came to be known as "Samaritans." By the time of Christ, Jews and Samaritans hated each other. By John 4:20 people were arguing about the true place of worship – Gerizim or Jerusalem.

Now Jesus must needs go through Samaria to meet the woman at the well, Jacob's well to be exact. Here God had met the patriarchs, calling them out of idolatry to the worship of the One, True God. Here Joshua had reminded the people of God's grace and faithfulness. Here he also reminded them of a holy God, a jealous God, and of what they had vowed in saying they would serve the LORD. (Joshua 24). At the end of a long review and reminder of that faithfulness, we read:

Now, therefore, fear the LORD and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. Joshua 24:14

Stones. Joshua had written a copy of the law on a pillar of stones. (Joshua 8:30-35) Then after the conquest, he gathered the nation to Shechem and set up another stone when the people made all these promises to serve the LORD and to obey His voice. (Joshua 24:16-26)

Behold, this stone shall be for a witness against us, for it has heard all the words of the LORD which He spoke to us; thus it shall be for a witness against you, lest you deny your God."

Joshua 24:27

Jesus will come as a tried Stone, bearing witness to the truth; the Stone the builders had rejected, the Stone which will mark the foundation of the new thing God was doing. (Matthew 21:42-44)

Therefore thus says the LORD GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation; he that believes shall not make haste. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place. Isaiah 26:16, 17

Jesus meets this woman at the well. He gives her two major revelations: one about Him being Living Waters and the other about worship. No longer would people worship the true God on this mountain or that mountain, but in spirit and in truth. (Remember where He's located when saying this.) Joshua had told the people to stop making the mistakes of their parents/family and stop following the current culture. Jesus says that He is the Source of living water. He brings life through the Spirit which enables true worshippers of the Living God to worship Him in spirit and in truth. No longer would worship be tied to physical locations or "earth portals" or "energetic centers." Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. (John 14:6)

Jesus says unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes unto the Father, but by Me." John 14:6

Jesus had to pass through Samaria. He walked the road with Mount Ebal (curses) and Mount Gerazim (blessings) on either side of Him. He calls people to put away their idols, their idolatrous worship, to worship the Living God in spirit and in truth. Jesus is that truth. He is the Source of Living Waters that if one drinks, one will never thirst again.

The faith of our fathers does not save us; it can only point us to truth if that faith is in Jesus Christ alone for salvation. Culture usually runs counter to Christ, even and often in the church. We need a living faith and a living relationship with a Living God.

Every step, every place that Jesus walked holds significance, both geographically and spiritually. Going to this place, to this well, was a clue for us to be reminded of all the history that happened in this place in the lives of God's people. God is a God of covenant. Jesus came to usher in the New Covenant in His Blood. Only by the sacrifice of Himself, only as Jesus, sinless as to His Person, but bearing our sin, our curse, and the wrath of God as Surety/Mediator/Messiah, can one be saved. There is forgiveness in none other. There is no other way to be reconciled to a holy God and know Him as Father rather than as Judge. There is no other means of redemption, of being delivered from the penalty, power, and presence of sin (which God takes as an offense against His Person). There is no other means of being accepted, but to be accepted in Christ alone. There is none other that could bear the wrath of God, His holy recoil against all that is contrary to His nature and ways. There is no other means of destroying Satan's hold and strongholds in one's life.

It is the Holy Spirit who regenerates the heart, who opens eyes to see and ears to hear. With that it becomes:

And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. Revelation 22:17

Thank you to all of you who supported this MCM World Mission Team through your prayers and finances. This journey answered some questions I hadn't thought to ask. We thank God for all of you who hear and obey the Holy Spirit in giving gladly, generously, graciously, and as He guides.

We prayed: God gave us Psalm 83 specifically. We stopped and pondered Psalm 88. We saw God move powerfully, even as we prayed and saw Him heal a woman in pain walking with a cane such that afterwards, no pain, no cane. We witnessed to many. We even fed a few very hungry cats!

Serving the Lord of Glory,

Mary Craig

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*Before the mountains were brought forth,
Or ever You had formed the earth and the world,
Even from everlasting to everlasting,
You are God. Psalm 90:2*

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