

Dig-a-bit Month 7 Episode 2

Conversations: Samaritans in Ezra 4

[00:00:00] Good morning, this is Digabit number 2 on chapter 7 of our conversation study. We're in the book of John, John chapter 4. We're in the month of March as we're studying together and I hope that you're enjoying it and being challenged as much as I am. We are in John 4 and we're talking about this woman that Jesus encountered at the well, this Samaritan woman.

She was shunned for a couple of reasons and first of all, you know, women just weren't. Elevated in the Palestinian society. back in the day of Jesus as they are in some societies today, including the one in which most of us live. So, she was shunned first because she was a woman. The disciples, I think, were shocked that Jesus was taking the time to stop and have a conversation with a woman at the well.

But more than that, she was a Samaritan. And I wanted us, I knew about the [00:01:00] ostracization, the bigotry. The biases, the prejudices that happened that were a part of life between Samaritans and Jews at the time of Jesus. And I knew something about why, but I had never really delved into what the Old Testament has to do with this separation between Samaritans and Jews and why the Samaritans were considered the mongrel race among the Jews.

I knew that they had intermarried with pagan people, but I didn't understand the chronology of, let's say, 2 Kings 17 that you're studying about in your question number one, and I hadn't really connected this to the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. So I hope that this is a dig that will be beneficial to you in helping you understand.

The [00:02:00] relationship between the Samaritans and the Jews in the New Testament. And how that Jesus was very bold, very counter cultural. As he interacted with and healed Samaritans. And told stories where the Samaritan was the heroine. And so this is just very, very interesting. 1st Kings 16.

24 King Amrei of the Northern Kingdom, and I believe he was the father of Wicked King Ahab, and Amrei was a Wicked King. And he was the king, you know, the Northern Kingdom is the ten tribes that first left under Jeroboam. And Jeroboam led them to high places and altars and idolatry eventually. And so in 1st King 1624, King [00:03:00] Amri of the Northern Kingdom bought this hill of Samaria from Shemar.

And he built there a capital city called Samaria. And the city Samaria was the capital of the region of Samaria. Kind of like New York, New York, only New York City is not the capital, but it is New York, New York. A city within a larger territory called New York State. That's kind of how Samaria was. It was Samaria, Samaria.

So this capital, Samaria, controlled the main road between Jerusalem and Galilee. So it became a very powerful city. But in 722, as you remember, the city fell to Assyria. And the city became an Assyrian stronghold. Well, of course, this had been prophesied by the Old Testament prophets that The Northern Kingdom was going to fall to Assyria because of sin, and here it did in 722 B. [00:04:00] C.

But there were some Jews that were left behind, and those Jews that were left behind in the Samaritan region, rather than remaining true to Judaism, intermarried with The people of Syria, the Mesopotamians, the people around them, they intermarried. And thus, their true Jewish blood had been relinquished at this time.

So, we read about Cyrus letting some of the people come back in Ezra chapter 1. Now in the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, the word of the Lord came by the mouth of Jeremiah. The Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and put it also in writing saying thus says Cyrus king of Persia The God of heaven has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem which is in Judah So Cyrus is [00:05:00] going to let some people come back to Jerusalem Now I want to make it really clear here The northern kingdom is what failed to Assyria.

It were, it was people of the Northern Kingdom, the Ten Tribes, that had been left behind in Samaria and had intermarried. Now later on, the Southern Kingdom fell to, who? Babylon. The Southern Kingdom fell to Babylon. And so these folks were in Babylon. Persia overtook Babylon. So when we get to Ezra 4, we're not talking about the northern kingdom anymore.

We're talking about the southern kingdom. Remember the southern kingdom was Judah and Benjamin, and Jerusalem was in the southern kingdom. The old capital that, where David had built the temple, was in Jerusalem. And so, but of course it had been destroyed. Bye. The people of Babylon, and [00:06:00] so now Babylon has fallen to Persia, crumbled under Persia, and so Cyrus is the king of Persia.

And he says the Lord has put it on his heart to build, rebuild this temple in Jerusalem. Well, the prophecy of that had already come and this is God's remnant getting to go back to Jerusalem and try to rebuild and it ended up being both walls and a temple. So verse three in Ezra chapter one, who is there among you of all his people, his God be with him and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah and build the house of the Lord God of Israel.

And whoever remains in any place where he sojourns, let the men of his place help him with silver and gold and goods and beasts beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem. So this is the [00:07:00] first remnant return back to Jerusalem. It's not that northern kingdom that had been knocked Assyrians, but it is.

This is the remnant of the people of Judah, of Jerusalem, that are going to go back and rebuild with not only the permission but with the encouragement and with the funding of Persia. So they're going to go back and rebuild. So this is the first returning that we're reading about in Ezra chapter 1. And it is under a man named Zerubbabel.

And he was a descendant of the kings of Judah. And we're going to see that 80 years later, there's going to be more people return. But right now, these are, in 536 B. C. That's where we are now. Zerubbabel is leading the first, wave, of people of Judah back to [00:08:00] Jerusalem. Now, what's happened to the Northern Kingdom?

They're in captivity, but remember, some of their people were left behind and intermarried with the nations around them. So, all of Palestine, all of Israel is not a very big territory. So, here are the people of the Southern Kingdom coming back to rebuild, and guess who the opposition to the rebuilding is going to be?

Well, it's going to be those Samaritans who were Jews, but had intermarried with Mesopotamians and Syrians. And those people are going to rise up in Ezra chapter 4 and again in Nehemiah. Those people are going to rise up and be the enemies of the building of God's temple in Jerusalem. I'm telling you, hostilities that are going to still exist in the time of Jesus are being forged here really strongly in the book of [00:09:00] Ezra.

So, when you go to Ezra chapter 4, we have this opposition from the people around Ezra. This opposition to the rebuilding of the temple. And we see that in verse 17, well, these people sent a letter to the king and said don't let these

people build because they're going to be hostile to all the people around and they gathered their resources together.

So now, by Ezra 4, We don't have Cyrus anymore, we have Artaxerxes, and this, they tell this king that the Jews which came up from you to us are come to Jerusalem, verse 12, Ezra 4, building that rebellious and that bad city, and they have [00:10:00] set up the walls of it. Be it known now to the king that if this city is built and the walls are set up again, then they will not pay toll, tribute, and custom, and so thou, you are endangering the revenue of all the kings of this area.

And now because we are eating the salt of the palace, it says, we're eating your You are good to us, and it wasn't kind for us to see the king's dishonor, so we're sending you this letter. And he's, they are basically making up negative things about those rebuilders of Jerusalem. So the king sent an answer, but I want you to notice verse 17.

The king sent an answer unto Rehum the chancellor and to Shemshi the scribe. And to the rest of their companions who are [00:11:00] living in, where? Samaria. And unto the rest beyond the river, peace. And at such a time, the letter which you sent has been plainly read, and search has been made, and it is found that this city of old time has made insurrection against kings, and rebellion and sedition have been made.

So it comes, the end of this is that Artaxerxes letter was read and temporarily the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem had to come to a halt. And the last verse of that chapter tells us that it came to a halt until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia. So this first wave of people comes back To Jerusalem from Babylonian captivity which turned into Persian captivity and they're [00:12:00] coming back to rebuild the temple and the enemy are the people of This is not going to sit well with the people of God as they're trying to build, rebuild the temple.

And those hostilities are going to grow and grow. We're going to see a little bit more about how they have grown by the time of Nehemiah and his attempt to rebuild the walls. But for now, let's just see that this hostility by the time Jesus comes is 700 years old. At least, and the Samaritans are those people who are trying to stop the work of the temple in Jerusalem, way back in Ezra chapter 4.

Alright, we'll talk a little bit about that opposition of the Samaritans in the book of Nehemiah next time, but I hope you have a great day.