

What is the significance of Mount Gerizim in the Bible?

<https://www.gotquestions.org/mount-Gerizim.html>

Mount Gerizim is a mountain located in the central Samaritan highlands. Its summit is about 2,800 feet above sea level. Mount Gerizim sits directly opposite Mount Ebal with the biblical city of Shechem resting in the pass between the two elevations. Mount Gerizim on the south side of the valley and Mount Ebal to the north played significant roles in a ceremony renewing Israel's covenant with the Lord upon entering the Promised Land.

Mount Gerizim, situated about 30 miles north of Jerusalem, is known as Jabal at Tur today. Mount Ebal (modern Jabal Ibal) and Mount Gerizim are the two highest mountains in this region of the Holy Land. Shechem, at the base of Mount Gerizim, was a well-traveled trade intersection in ancient times. It was also one of the most frequently referenced cities of the Old Testament.

Through Moses, God gave detailed instructions for a ceremony of "blessings and cursings" to take place when the people of Israel entered Canaan (Deuteronomy 27:1-26). The ceremony would symbolize the renewal of Israel's covenant commitment to the Lord. Once they had crossed the Jordan, the Israelites were to build a monument of stones containing the words of the law, as well as an altar for offering sacrifices to the Lord (verses 1-8). Worshiping the Lord and obeying God's Word were to be essentials for Israel's existence in the Promised Land.

After the law of Moses was written on the stones, the people were to divide into two groups. Half of Israel's tribes were to gather on Mount Gerizim and the other half on

Mount Ebal, while the priests with the Ark of the Covenant were to stand in the valley between. As the Levites read the blessings for obeying the law, the six tribes on Mount Gerizim were to pronounce a resounding “Amen!” When the Levites recited the curses for disobeying the law, the other six tribes on Mount Ebal were to give a great cry of “Amen!” (Deuteronomy 27:9-26).

Joshua, successor to Moses, faithfully and precisely carried out these instructions, as recorded in Joshua 8:30-35. Through the solemn ceremony, Israel was reminded of the importance of loyal obedience to God and the foolishness of disobedience. In this way, Mount Gerizim came to be known as the “mount of blessing.”

Mount Gerizim also served as the stage of a pivotal event in the period of the judges. Gideon’s son Abimelech convinced the people of Shechem to make him king by conspiring with his mother’s relatives there. He had his half-brothers, the 70 sons of Gideon, slaughtered. Only Jotham survived. From atop Mount Gerizim, which overlooks Shechem, Jotham delivered his “Fable of the Bramble King,” a story damning Abimelech and cursing the townspeople (Judges 9:5-20). His words had no immediate impact, but within three years Abimelech lost favor with his supporters in Shechem. Eventually, he was killed while fighting against them when a woman dropped a millstone from a tower, crushing his skull (Judges 9:22-57).

The New Testament does not mention Mount Gerizim by name, but it figures notably in the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman, who called it the mountain where “our fathers worshiped” (John 4:20-23). According to Genesis 12:6-7, Abraham built an altar there, and in Genesis 33:18-20 Jacob constructed an altar there as well. For the Samaritans, Mount Gerizim had been a sacred site for the worship of God for centuries. On this

mountain the Samaritans had built a temple to rival the Jewish temple in Jerusalem. But Jesus told the Samaritan woman that the physical location of our worship is not important. Temples and tabernacles, cities and mountains: these were only fading symbols that pointed to the spiritual reality—Jesus Christ—who was standing in front of her. True worshipers must worship the Lord their God in spirit and in truth.