

Samaria

A territory in the uplands of central Canaan, corresponding to lands formerly allotted to the tribes of Ephraim and the western portion of Manasseh and part of the former northern kingdom.

Covering approx 1400 sq. miles, it stretched from Bethel in the south to Mount Carmel in the north. Its rich soils produced grain crops, olives and grapes. Well-served by trade routes north to south and east to west, Samaria engaged in commerce with Phoenicia nearby, and with the distant nations of Egypt and Syria.

Because of its fertility and trade, the Northern Kingdom had always been more prosperous than the Southern Kingdom of Judah. This very affluence, however, attracted invaders and colonization, while the trade with pagan nations led to the adoption of pagan religious practices and intermarriage. The wickedness of Samaria was strongly condemned by the prophets. [Hosea 7: 1,2](#)

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In the time of Jesus, there were three provinces west of the Jordan. Samaria, located between Galilee and Judea, was part of the natural route for travellers between these two provinces

- By now, Samaritans were shunned by orthodox Jews
- ,
- who often travelled east of Jordan to avoid contact with them

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A scholar of the law posed the question to Jesus: *And who is my neighbour?* The answer would have been disconcerting and challenging to the listeners.

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