

# “Mt. Gerazim”

John 4:20

Sometimes it takes a trained eye to detect something that is an imitation. We can be fooled by counterfeit money, by fake jewelry (cubic zirconium looks a lot like a diamond); we are fooled by imitations of the original all of the time.

When something has value or worth, it almost always gets copied. A popular clothing design is soon followed by cheaper imitations. When one type of car becomes popular, other cars soon begin to look like it. Almost everything in our life is an imitation of something else.

However, in regard to our faith, God reminds us to beware of the imitation. It is not the real thing. Other teachings and other religions may seem to come close, but it's not real. Therefore, it is no surprise that Satan is in the counterfeit business. Imitation of the real thing is his specialty. He loves to sell the children of Adam something that seems to look or sound like what the Second Adam has already brought to us.

This was true of Mt. Gerazim in Samaria. Mt. Gerazim is up in central Samaria, near Jacob's well. When the children of Israel came into the land, Mt. Gerazim was the site of the loyalty services held by Joshua and all the people [Josh. 8:33]. At this mountain, the people renewed their vows of loyalty to the Lord. They shouted the blessings which they had been promised if they remained faithful. And they shouted the curses that would befall them if they broke God's covenant. This mountain remained a favorite place in the minds of the people.

However, the Temple of the Lord was built in Jerusalem. The altar of the Lord was there at Mt. Zion. Jerusalem was the focal point of worship. Sacrifices were not supposed to be offered anywhere else.

But after King Solomon died, there was a rebellion against Solomon's son Rehoboam. A young man named Jeroboam led the 10 northern tribes to split away from the government in Jerusalem and split away from the Temple.

Jeroboam built an altar for the North at Mt. Gerazim. It was a convenient place. It was centrally located. It was a majestic place; a much higher mountain than the Temple mount of Zion. It was an historic place. Joshua had been there. But it was the wrong place.

Gerazim was a cheap imitation. They used the same books of Moses.

They used many of the same rituals and ceremonies. But they were not doing what God had commanded them to do. They were not worshiping in the place which God had promised He would hear all who face the temple and call upon His Name.

Years later, this false altar would still have worshipers. The Samaritan woman at Jacob's well asked Jesus, "Where is the true place to worship: Gerazim or Jerusalem?" Jesus tells her that the people never should have abandoned Jerusalem as the place of worship. "You Samaritans worship what you do not know." But a time will come and has come when you won't worship at the altars at Gerazim or Jerusalem. A new high priest has arrived; there is a new mediator between the people and the Father; there is a new kind of sacrifice that is going to be offered on a different kind of altar. Christ will be offered as a sacrifice on the altar of the cross.

God still reminds the people of this world, "Watch out for imitations. Watch out for counterfeits." These imitation religions may sound pious; they may say many of the things that we say; they may seem to offer a way to salvation – but it is not the way of the cross.

Some of the false religions are easy to spot. It's like trying to spot counterfeit money and someone gives you a three dollar bill. You know better

than to take it. However, spotting most false religions or false teaching is like spotting a counterfeit 20 dollar bill. They try to make it look as close to the real thing as possible, but it is just as fake as that 3 dollar bill.

Everything that draws us away from Christ and His suffering and death on the cross is a false altar. Those preaching at the false altars in this world will tell you what you want to hear. They will always mix in enough godly sounding words that what they are offering seems to be from God. The sacrifice of our Lord on Mt. Calvary is the only reason for our forgiveness, life, and salvation. Anything added to that or taken away from that creates a false altar and would have you worshipping on a false mountain.

Mt. Gerazim is a warning place. It is a warning to the people of this world: "No more imitations." Like Mt. Gerazim, imitations always seem more grand and more inviting than the image of a beaten and bloody man from Galilee hanging on a cross on Mt. Calvary. Yet, we are continually reminded to fix our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfector of our faith. No imitation or substitute could fulfill the will of God, be the Second Adam, and carry the sins of the world to Mt. Calvary. He is no imitation. He is the real Messiah – the Son of the Living God who came into the world for you. Amen.