

# MONDAY EVENING BIBLE STUDY

June 12, 2023 – Matthew 9:35-10:8 (9-23)

## Summary

Chapter 9 ends with the need for laborers for God's harvest; chapter 10 begins with Jesus commissioning His disciples (compare Mark 6:7–13; Luke 9:1–6). Matthew records the names of Jesus' 12 primary disciples—later called apostles—as well as His instructions for spreading the message of the kingdom of heaven.

In our gospel reading Jesus continues his mission of preaching, teaching, and healing, and he commissions his twelve disciples in this ministry with him. The need for this work is great. The twelve are constituted as a kind of new Israel, and their healing acts and proclamation tell that God's ruling power has drawn near. At first this ministry will be concentrated on the Jewish nation. Later it will reach all peoples. The disciples are to meet every circumstance with confidence and trust in God.

## Immediate Context

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Matthew 5:1-7:29 The Sermon on the Mount                      | <b>Matthew 10:1-11:1 Mission &amp; Ministry of the Twelve</b> |
| Matthew 8:1-4 Jesus Cleanses a Leper                          | Matthew 11:2-6 Messengers from John the Baptist               |
| Matthew 8:5-13 Jesus Heals a Centurion's Servant              | Matthew 11:7-19 Jesus Praises John the Baptist                |
| Matthew 8:14-17 Jesus Heals Many at Peter's House             | Matthew 11:20-24 Woes to Unrepentant Cities                   |
| Matthew 8:18-22 Would-Be Followers of Jesus                   | Matthew 11:25-30 Jesus Thanks His Father                      |
| Matthew 8:23-27 Jesus Stills the Storm                        | Matthew 12:1-8 Plucking Grain on the Sabbath                  |
| Matthew 8:28-9:1 Jesus Heals the Gadarene Demoniacs           | Matthew 12:9-14 The Man with the Withered Hand                |
| Matthew 9:2-8 Jesus Heals a Paralytic                         | Matthew 12:15-21 God's Chosen Servant                         |
| Matthew 9:9-13 The Call of Matthew                            | Matthew 12:22-32 Jesus and Beelzebul                          |
| Matthew 9:14-17 The Question about Fasting                    | Matthew 12:33-37 A Tree and Its Fruit                         |
| Matthew 9:18-26 A Girl Restored to Life & a Woman Healed      | Matthew 12:38-42 The Sign of Jonah                            |
| Matthew 9:27-31 Jesus Heals Two Blind Men                     | Matthew 12:43-45 The Return of an Unclean Spirit              |
| Matthew 9:32-34 Jesus Heals One Who Was Mute                  | Matthew 12:46-50 The True Kindred of Jesus                    |
| <b>Matthew 9:35-38 The Harvest is Great, the Laborers Few</b> |   |

## Helpful Scriptures

### Matthew 4:23-25 (NRSV)

<sup>23</sup> Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people. <sup>24</sup> So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought to him all the sick, those who were afflicted with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, and paralytics, and he cured them. <sup>25</sup> And great crowds followed him from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.

### Luke 10:1–12 (NRSV)

<sup>1</sup> After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. <sup>2</sup> He said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. <sup>3</sup> Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. <sup>4</sup> Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. <sup>5</sup> Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house!' <sup>6</sup> And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. <sup>7</sup> Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the laborer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house. <sup>8</sup> Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; <sup>9</sup> cure the sick who are there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' <sup>10</sup> But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, <sup>11</sup> 'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God has come near.' <sup>12</sup> I tell you, on that day it will be more tolerable for Sodom than for that town.

**John 4:31–38 (NRSV)**

<sup>31</sup> Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, “Rabbi, eat something.” <sup>32</sup> But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you do not know about.” <sup>33</sup> So the disciples said to one another, “Surely no one has brought him something to eat?” <sup>34</sup> Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. <sup>35</sup> Do you not say, ‘Four months more, then comes the harvest’? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. <sup>36</sup> The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. <sup>37</sup> For here the saying holds true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’ <sup>38</sup> I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.”

**John 10:1–18 (NRSV)**

<sup>1</sup> “Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. <sup>2</sup> The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. <sup>3</sup> The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. <sup>4</sup> When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. <sup>5</sup> They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.” <sup>6</sup> Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. <sup>7</sup> So again Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. <sup>8</sup> All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. <sup>9</sup> I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. <sup>10</sup> The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. <sup>11</sup> “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. <sup>12</sup> The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. <sup>13</sup> The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. <sup>14</sup> I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, <sup>15</sup> just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. <sup>16</sup> I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. <sup>17</sup> For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. <sup>18</sup> No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.”

**1 Kings 22:17 (NRSV)**

<sup>17</sup> Then Micaiah said, “I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, like sheep that have no shepherd; and the Lord said, ‘These have no master; let each one go home in peace.’ ”

**Jeremiah 23:1–6 (NRSV)**

<sup>1</sup> Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! says the Lord. <sup>2</sup> Therefore thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who shepherd my people: It is you who have scattered my flock, and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. So I will attend to you for your evil doings, says the Lord. <sup>3</sup> Then I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the lands where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. <sup>4</sup> I will raise up shepherds over them who will shepherd them, and they shall not fear any longer, or be dismayed, nor shall any be missing, says the Lord. <sup>5</sup> The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. <sup>6</sup> In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. And this is the name by which he will be called: “The Lord is our righteousness.”

**Micah 5:1–15 (NRSV)**

<sup>1</sup> Now you are walled around with a wall; siege is laid against us; with a rod they strike the ruler of Israel upon the cheek. <sup>2</sup> But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. <sup>3</sup> Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall

return to the people of Israel. <sup>4</sup> And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth; <sup>5</sup> and he shall be the one of peace. If the Assyrians come into our land and tread upon our soil, we will raise against them seven shepherds and eight installed as rulers. <sup>6</sup> They shall rule the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod with the drawn sword; they shall rescue us from the Assyrians if they come into our land or tread within our border. <sup>7</sup> Then the remnant of Jacob, surrounded by many peoples, shall be like dew from the Lord, like showers on the grass, which do not depend upon people or wait for any mortal. <sup>8</sup> And among the nations the remnant of Jacob, surrounded by many peoples, shall be like a lion among the animals of the forest, like a young lion among the flocks of sheep, which, when it goes through, treads down and tears in pieces, with no one to deliver. <sup>9</sup> Your hand shall be lifted up over your adversaries, and all your enemies shall be cut off. <sup>10</sup> In that day, says the Lord, I will cut off your horses from among you and will destroy your chariots; <sup>11</sup> and I will cut off the cities of your land and throw down all your strongholds; <sup>12</sup> and I will cut off sorceries from your hand, and you shall have no more soothsayers; <sup>13</sup> and I will cut off your images and your pillars from among you, and you shall bow down no more to the work of your hands; <sup>14</sup> and I will uproot your sacred poles from among you and destroy your towns. <sup>15</sup> And in anger and wrath I will execute vengeance on the nations that did not obey.

### **Ezekiel 34 (NRSV)**

<sup>1</sup> The word of the Lord came to me: <sup>2</sup> Mortal, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel: prophesy, and say to them—to the shepherds: Thus says the Lord God: Ah, you shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? <sup>3</sup> You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fatlings; but you do not feed the sheep. <sup>4</sup> You have not strengthened the weak, you have not healed the sick, you have not bound up the injured, you have not brought back the strayed, you have not sought the lost, but with force and harshness you have ruled them. <sup>5</sup> So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd; and scattered, they became food for all the wild animals. <sup>6</sup> My sheep were scattered, they wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill; my sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth, with no one to search or seek for them. <sup>7</sup> Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: <sup>8</sup> As I live, says the Lord God, because my sheep have become a prey, and my sheep have become food for all the wild animals, since there was no shepherd; and because my shepherds have not searched for my sheep, but the shepherds have fed themselves, and have not fed my sheep; <sup>9</sup> therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: <sup>10</sup> Thus says the Lord God, I am against the shepherds; and I will demand my sheep at their hand, and put a stop to their feeding the sheep; no longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, so that they may not be food for them. <sup>11</sup> For thus says the Lord God: I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. <sup>12</sup> As shepherds seek out their flocks when they are among their scattered sheep, so I will seek out my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places to which they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. <sup>13</sup> I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the watercourses, and in all the inhabited parts of the land. <sup>14</sup> I will feed them with good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel shall be their pasture; there they shall lie down in good grazing land, and they shall feed on rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. <sup>15</sup> I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God. <sup>16</sup> I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with justice. <sup>17</sup> As for you, my flock, thus says the Lord God: I shall judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and goats: <sup>18</sup> Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture, but you must tread down with your feet the rest of your pasture? When you drink of clear water, must you foul the rest with your feet? <sup>19</sup> And must my sheep eat what you have trodden with your feet, and drink what you have fouled with your feet? <sup>20</sup> Therefore, thus says the Lord God to them: I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. <sup>21</sup> Because you pushed with flank and shoulder, and butted at all the weak animals with your horns until you scattered them far and wide, <sup>22</sup> I will save my flock, and they shall no longer be ravaged; and I will judge between sheep and sheep. <sup>23</sup>

I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. <sup>24</sup> And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them; I, the Lord, have spoken. <sup>25</sup> I will make with them a covenant of peace and banish wild animals from the land, so that they may live in the wild and sleep in the woods securely. <sup>26</sup> I will make them and the region around my hill a blessing; and I will send down the showers in their season; they shall be showers of blessing. <sup>27</sup> The trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield its increase. They shall be secure on their soil; and they shall know that I am the Lord, when I break the bars of their yoke, and save them from the hands of those who enslaved them. <sup>28</sup> They shall no more be plunder for the nations, nor shall the animals of the land devour them; they shall live in safety, and no one shall make them afraid. <sup>29</sup> I will provide for them a splendid vegetation so that they shall no more be consumed with hunger in the land, and no longer suffer the insults of the nations. <sup>30</sup> They shall know that I, the Lord their God, am with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are my people, says the Lord God. <sup>31</sup> You are my sheep, the sheep of my pasture and I am your God, says the Lord God.

### Key Words/Phrases/Verses

**MATTHEW 9:35** – This verse summarizes Jesus’ ministry in nearly the same words as 4:23, the introduction to the Sermon on the Mount. Note the verbs. Jesus goes about (1) teaching (2) proclaiming and (3) curing. He commissions the disciples to become his partners in these activities (10:7-8), although he will not commission them to teach until after the resurrection (28:19-20). The ministry of the disciples thus grows naturally out of the ministry of Jesus. Jesus provides the shape that their ministry will take—first by the example of his ministry and, secondly, by this commission (10:7-8).

**HE HAD COMPASSION FOR THEM** – ἐσπλαγγίσθη from σπλαγγίζομαι meaning to experience great affection and compassion for someone—to feel compassion for, to have great affection for, love, compassion. It’s an especially strong word which comes from the word σπλαγγνον, which means “bowels” or “inward parts.” It expresses a compassion that springs from the deepest part of one’s being—today we would call it heartfelt compassion. Four times this word is used in Matthew’s gospel and only in reference to Jesus. And each time, Jesus not only feels compassion, but acts because of it.

#### **Matthew 9:36 (NRSV)**

<sup>36</sup> When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

#### **Matthew 14:14 (NRSV)**

<sup>14</sup> When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick.

#### **Matthew 15:32 (NRSV)**

<sup>32</sup> Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said, “I have compassion for the crowd, because they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat; and I do not want to send them away hungry, for they might faint on the way.”

#### **Matthew 20:34 (NRSV)**

<sup>34</sup> Moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes. Immediately they regained their sight and followed him.

**THEY WERE HARASSED AND HELPLESS** – The word for “harassed” is ἐσκυλμένοι from σκύλλω, meaning “to trouble, bother, annoy.” The word for “helpless” is ἐρριμμένοι from ῥίπτω, meaning “to throw down, hurl, scatter, disperse; to throw with considerable force.”

**LIKE SHEEP WITHOUT A SHEPHERD** – This phrase “is reminiscent of several Old Testament passages that portray God’s people as a flock neglected by its shepherds (I Kings 22:17; Jer. 23:1-6; Ezek. 34:1-10; Micah 5:2-4). Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel present ‘David’ as the future good shepherd of Israel (Jer. 23:5; Ezek. 34:23). Jesus is presenting himself as the promised ‘David’.” Jesus’ observation that the sheep have no shepherd is a damning critique of the Pharisees, who should be their shepherds.

**THE HARVEST IS PLENTIFUL BUT THE LABORERS ARE FEW** – (see John 4:35 and Luke 10:2). Who does Jesus ask the disciples to pray for? Not preachers. Not skilled orators. Not outgoing, charismatic, winsome folk. Not talented musicians. Jesus asks them to pray for “laborers,” common laborers. While God can use talented people, most work is done by ordinary, nearly anonymous, behind-the-scenes disciples.

**JESUS SUMMONED HIS TWELVE DISCIPLES** – προσκαλεσάμενος from προσκαλέω; which is a word made up of the prefix προσ meaning “to, toward” and the root verb καλέω meaning “to call, name, summon, invite, call to a task” or “to urgently invite someone to accept responsibilities for a particular task.” This verb is the most common translation of the Hebrew קָרָא (qārā). Like qārā, the verb kaleō can be used to indicate giving names to persons.

Until now, Matthew has spoken only of Jesus’ disciples—not of the twelve. He has told us of Jesus calling only five disciples—Peter and Andrew, James and John (Matthew 4:18-22) and Matthew (Matthew 9:9), but he has surely called others along the way. This verse sounds as if Jesus is calling together an already constituted group of twelve; a highly symbolic number which corresponds to the number of the tribes of Israel. The number 12 is itself of course full of meaning, as anyone in Jesus’ world would recognize; at the heart of what Jesus was up to was his belief that through his work God was at last renewing and restoring Israel, which traditionally had been based upon the twelve tribes. But now the Twelve were not just to be a sign that God was restoring Israel; they were to be part of the means by which he was doing so. You can find the lists of the twelve in Matthew 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:13-16; and Acts 1:13.

**AND GAVE THEM AUTHORITY OVER UNCLEAN SPIRITS** – ἐξουσίαν from ἐξουσία which is made up of the prefix ἐξ and the root word ουσία meaning “power” and “wealth.” Jesus is giving them the “right, authority, permission, power” to cast out unclean spirits and cure diseases. This mission of healing... makes it clear that God’s reign is expressed in the care of whole persons, not (just in) ‘saving souls.’

ἀκαθάρτων from ἀκάθαρτος meaning “unclean.” Πνευμάτων from πνεῦμα meaning “wind, breath, spirit.” In the Bible, people may contract ritual impurity by contact with a corpse, certain dead animals, the involuntary flow of fluids from the sexual organs, certain diseases, or the eating of prohibited foods. Certain objects are regarded as pure (tahor), but may be rendered impure (tame’) as a result of contact with an impure person who has not undergone purification rites. While impure, a person is enjoined from certain actions, primarily contact with the temple or its religious practices. Specific rites of purification were required for various forms of ritual impurity. The process of purification consisted of several stages: a waiting period of from one day to several months, depending upon the nature of the impurity, counting from the time of the cessation of the cause of pollution; a cleansing agent such as water (Lev. 15:16), fire (Num. 31:23), or blood (Lev. 14:25); and the offering of a sacrifice. The duty of the priest was to maintain the ritual purity of Israel and its sanctuary. Thus, laws of purity are found mainly among Priestly materials in such biblical books as Leviticus and Numbers.

In the NT, the expressions “demon,” “unclean spirit,” and “evil spirit” appear to be interchangeable terms for the same entities. In the ancient world, there was widespread belief in spiritual powers or beings that existed in addition to the well-known gods and goddesses. These beings were not understood as necessarily evil, though some might be. The idea that many or even all such beings were allied with the forces of darkness and wickedness only came into focus during the Second Temple period, probably under the influence of Persian thought. There are traces of the belief in harmful spirits in the earlier biblical writings (e.g., Gen. 6:1-4; Lev. 16:6-10, 26; Isa. 34:14; Job 6:4; Ps. 91:5), but little was made of this idea in Hebrew thought until the late postexilic period. Then the belief developed that there existed not only numerous evil spirits or demons, but also a leader for these evil forces. This leader came to be known by several titles, though the most common designation was Satan (the Greek title diabolos, “the devil,” was then used as a virtual synonym for Satan, as, e.g., in John 8:44). As a result of this type of thinking, the idea developed that there were armies of demons, under the leadership of Satan or the devil, doing battle with God and God’s allies.

Further development led to the idea that demons could invade human bodies and cause mental illness, physical disease, or other specific problems such as deafness or blindness (e.g., Matt. 9:32; Mark 9:5; Luke 6:18; 9:42; 11:14). Some even believed that demons could take control of nature and cause natural calamities and disasters. Such ideology is clearly reflected in the Synoptic Gospels, where Jesus is known as one who characteristically exorcises demons (e.g., Matt. 8:28–34; Mark 5:1–20; Luke 8:26–39; Matt. 12:22–32; Mark 3:22–27; Luke 11:14–23). Likewise, Jesus’s disciples are given authority to exorcise demons (Matt. 10:1, 8; Mark 3:14–15; 6:7; Luke 9:1; cf. Mark 9:38–39), the Pharisees are said to exorcise demons (Matt. 12:27), and, in the book of Acts, spirit-filled leaders of the early church exorcise demons (5:16; 8:7; 19:14–16). In John’s Gospel, there are no references to exorcism, but Jesus’s opponents do claim that he is demon-possessed (7:20; 8:48; cf. 10:19–21); a similar charge was leveled in the Synoptic Gospels with reference to both Jesus (Mark 3:30) and John the Baptist (Matt. 11:18; Luke 7:33).

**THE TWELVE APOSTLES** – ἀποστόλων from ἀπόστολος meaning “one’s sent with authority.” The Greek word for disciple literally means *student* while the Greek word for apostle means a *messenger* or *sent one*. The word apostle in Greek is made up of the prefix ἀπό meaning “from” followed by the root στέλλω meaning “to send forth.” The word apostle means “one sent forth from” by another, often with a special commission to represent another and to accomplish the work of the other. It can be a delegate, commissioner, ambassador sent out on a mission or orders or commission and with the authority of the one who sent him.

**GO NOWHERE AMONG OR ENTER THE TOWN** – These instructions seem odd, because Jesus dealt positively with Samaritans and Gentiles in his ministry (see John 4:4–42; Luke 10:30–37; Matthew 8:5–13; 15:22–28).

There are at least two possible explanations:

- The principle at work seems to be, “for the Jew first, and also for the Greek” (Romans 1:16). This passage may also reflect “a very conservative Jewish Christian community, which confined itself to the circumcised” (Craddock, 329).
- “The geographical terms used here (‘way’ of the Gentiles, ‘town of the Samaritans’...) indicate a restriction on the area to be visited rather than a total ban on contact with Gentiles and Samaritans as such” (France, 382). His purpose might be to focus their efforts in Galilee, the area most responsive to his ministry, before broadening their reach to less receptive areas.

Jesus’ restriction prohibits the disciples from going north into Syria, east into the Decapolis, or south into Samaria. To the west there is only the Mediterranean Sea.

**GENTILES** – ἐθνῶν from ἔθνος meaning a “non-Jew” and from where we get the word “ethnic” or “ethnicities.” The distinction between Jews and Gentiles has its roots in the biblical account of seven nations (Heb. goyim) not driven completely from the land (Josh. 24:11). According to several traditions, the Israelites were enjoined to maintain separation from the people of these nations in matters of religion, marriage, and politics (Exod. 23:28–33; Deut. 7:1–5; Josh. 23:4–13). Historically speaking, the amount of interchange between the Israelites and the peoples of the land seems to have been considerable, and it was only in postexilic times that individuals were referred to as goyim or Gentiles; even then, however, the primary reference seemed to be to nations. In the New Testament itself, the term “Gentile” (Gk. ethnos) is used with a range of meanings. The basic meaning seems to be “non-Jew,” as is apparent from the instances in which Jews and Gentiles (or Jews and Greeks) are referred to in a sense that seems to connote “all humanity” (Acts 14:1, 5; 19:10, 17; 1 Cor. 1:22–24).

**SAMARITANS** – Members of a particular ethnoreligious community based in the area, living for the most part around Mount Gerizim (John 4:1–42), but residing also in their own villages throughout the region (Matt. 10:5; Luke 9:52). From these texts one learns that the Jews and Samaritans shared a common heritage (“our father Jacob,” John 4:12), but differed from one another radically with regard to the relative sanctity of Jerusalem/Zion and Mount Gerizim (4:20). They also had different legal traditions regarding the cleanliness of vessels and, in general, they avoided contact with one another (4:7–10). The negative attitude of the Jews toward the Samaritans is reflected in Jesus’s statement in Matt. 10:5, in which Samaritans are linked with

Gentiles in contrast to “the house of Israel” (cf. Acts 1:8, in which Samaria occupies a median position between Jerusalem/Judea and the Gentile world; and John 8:48, in which the adversaries of Jesus refer to him contemptuously as “a Samaritan”—and demon-possessed as well). The itinerary of Jesus in Mark (10:1; it is followed in Matt. 19:1, but altered somewhat in Luke) seems to reflect a standard Jewish practice of avoiding Samaria in pilgrimages to Jerusalem.

Basically, the Jews regarded the Samaritans as “foreigners” (Luke 17:18; the Greek word *allogēnēs* is the same term used in the Jerusalem temple inscription excluding non-Jews from the court of Israel). The historian Josephus relates that the Samaritans were excluded from the Jerusalem temple by formal edict, not because of nationality, but due to acts of mischief they allegedly perpetrated there. It was the alien nature of the Samaritans, as commonly perceived, that gave an ironic sting to the story of the grateful leper (17:11–19; only one out of ten returned to express thanks, and “he was a Samaritan”) and to the parable of the Good Samaritan (10:25–37; the Samaritan stranger was the good neighbor, not the priest or the Levite).

From the few references to Samaria and the Samaritans in the New Testament, one might be left with the impression that all of the residents of Samaria were members of this community. This is not so. There were, in fact, people of various cultural backgrounds living in the area. Nonetheless, the Samaritan community was quite large and included a Dispersion; there were Samaritan groups scattered along the Mediterranean coast (notably at Gaza and Caesarea), in Lebanon, in Egypt and Syria, and as far away as Byzantium, Thessalonica, Rome, and Babylon.

As a religious sect, the Samaritans were a strict, Torah-observant party with a resolute pride in their religious heritage. They maintained that they (and not the Jews!) were the bearers of the true faith of ancient Israel as expounded by Moses and as practiced at Mount Gerizim in ancient times. The name by which they called themselves, *shamerim*, meant “observers (of the Torah).” They understood themselves to be the descendants of the Joseph tribes of ancient Israel, just as Jews claimed to be descendants of the tribe of Judah. From the Samaritan perspective, Judaism was a heresy, which they traced to the priest Eli, who established a rival sanctuary at Shiloh. The Samaritans accepted only the Pentateuch as scripture, since the other material preserved in the Hebrew Bible was regarded as apostate history. Furthermore, they possessed their own distinctive version of the Pentateuch, claiming that the Jews had edited their version to minimize the importance of Gerizim and to justify the building of a temple in Jerusalem. In particular, the Samaritans cited Ezra as having led the Jews astray, redacting their scriptures in heretical ways after the exile and introducing deviant legal and calendrical interpretations. As a priestly community at odds with Pharisaic interpretations, the Samaritans might be compared with the Sadducees of New Testament times, or with the Essenes, who are usually credited with having preserved the Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran. Some studies of early Samaritan traditions reveal early Samaritanism as but one of a greater complex of disparate religious movements and ideologies within Judaism (broadly defined) prior to the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70 CE. Most scholars have rejected the Samaritans’ claim to being the remnant of the Israelite people who had always worshiped the Hebrew God at Shechem.

**GO TO THE LOST SHEEP OF THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL** – The practical effect is to limit their ministry to Galilee. Jesus’ “aim was to concentrate his attack on Galilee, for Galilee...was the most open of all parts of Palestine to a new gospel and a new message” (Barclay, 374). Whatever the case, Jesus’ prohibition is clearly temporary. Soon he will send the disciples into all the world (28:19–20). Throughout the New Testament, sheep are used in a figurative sense for human beings. Jesus speaks of “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt. 10:6; 15:24; cf. Isa. 53:6) and has compassion on a crowd, which he considers to be like sheep without a shepherd (Matt. 9:36). Sheep also play a role in several parables of Jesus (12:11; 18:12; Luke 15:2–6), and the Gospel of John pictures Jesus as a protecting shepherd, willing to give his life for his sheep (10:7–9; cf. Ezek. 37:24; Ps. 23:1; Heb. 13:20). Jesus indicates that at the final judgment the Son of Man will separate the nations of the earth as a shepherd separates sheep from goats (Matt. 25:32). He is himself compared to a sheep led to slaughter (Acts 8:32; cf. Isa. 53:7).