

GENTILES AND THE MINISTRY OF JESUS: FURTHER OBSERVATIONS ON MATT 10:5-6; 15:21-28

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Several passages in Matthew's gospel record Jesus, either explicitly or implicitly, confining his ministry to Jewish people. Most significant are Matt 10:5-6; 15:21-28. In the former, his mission charge to the twelve as he sent them out to preach, Jesus ordered: "Go nowhere among the Gentiles (*eis hodon ethnōn*), and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Later, while he was in the district of Tyre and Sidon, a Syro-Phoenician or Canaanite woman came requesting healing for her demon-possessed daughter:

But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, "Send her away, for she is crying after us." He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." And he answered, "It is not good (*kalon*) to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." She said, "Yes, Lord, even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." Then Jesus answered her, "O woman, great is your faith! Be it done to you as you desire." And her daughter was healed instantly (15:23-28).

Some interpreters suggest that Jesus' words, "Do not throw pearls before swine" (7:6), may be a veiled prohibition against preaching to Gentiles.

At the same time Matthew shows Jesus responding favorably to seeking Gentiles and commanding a mission among them¹ in such a way

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¹ Chapter 8 tells of Jesus' healing the servant of the centurion in Capernaum and commending the centurion's faith in the process. Jesus also seems to assume a Gentile mission when he predicts that his disciples "will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear testimony before them and the Gentiles" (10:18; cf. 24:9). The Matthean account of the incident of the grainfields on the Sabbath (12:1 ff.) includes Jesus' affirmation that "something greater than the temple [and presumably other Jewish customs and institutions] is here"—most certainly "the Son of Man [who] is Lord of the Sabbath" (v. 8). Then follows an account of another Sabbath controversy, healing the man with the withered hand, after which we read: "The Pharisees went out and took counsel against him, how to destroy him" (v. 14). This involves an attack on Jewish privilege that assumes God's concern beyond just that nation. 21:33 tells of the "householder who planted a vineyard, . . . let it out to tenants, and went into another country." If the householder is God, then the inclusion of the reference to "another country" has universalistic overtones. Matthew alone includes in the Olivet discourse that "this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole inhabited world (*en holē te oikoumenē*) for witness to all the Gentiles (*pasin tois ethnēsin*)" (24:14; but note Mark 13:10). In the great commission (28:19-20), says Matthew, Jesus pointedly commanded to "make from all the Gentiles (*panta ta ethnē*) disciples."

that a recent writer can claim: "This gentile bias is the primary theme in Matthew."²

Other gospels also include hints of a universal purpose in Jesus' mission, but without the restrictions of Matthew. There were cases in which Jesus healed and/or carried on ministry to individual Samaritans and Gentiles.³ Mark 11:17, in recording Jesus' teaching in connection with the cleansing of the temple, includes the full quotation from Isa 56:7b: "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations" ("for all nations" [*pasin tois ethnesin*] is missing from parallels in Matt 21:13; Luke 19:46).⁴ John 10:16 relates Jesus' reference to his "other sheep, that are not of this fold, (whom he) must also bring."

Luke is himself a Gentile. His version of the genealogy of Jesus goes back to Adam, the father of all peoples, not just to Abraham as does the Matthean list (Luke 3:23-38; cf. Matt 1:1-17). His account of sending the seventy to preach makes no mention of any limits—there is no prohibition nor command to include Gentiles in their mission (Luke 10:1 ff.). Luke's inclusion of the logion, "The law and the prophets were until John" (16:16), suggests his conviction of a crisis in salvation history. Luke 4:16-30, the account of Jesus' rejection and withdrawal from Nazareth, contains the same message as Mark 1:14-15 but in a more Gentile language. The distinctively Lucan parables of the lost sheep, coin, and son in chap. 15 imply Jesus' attacks on the notion of Jewish priority. And, of course, Conzelmann⁵ and his followers suggest that from the Lucan perspective the whole of Jesus' ministry in Galilee is symbolic of the Gentile mission.

Thus, it seems, we are faced with something of a Christian version of a haggadah question⁶—a question in which there appears to be a contradiction in Scripture. Both apparently contradictory answers, however, are assumed to be true by Biblical writers and the alternatives merely refer to different points or emphases of the larger issue. Did Jesus limit his mission to Jews only? Yes. Did Jesus envision a mission including Gentiles? Yes. In facing our haggadah question, the interests of the larger issue require our determining the place of the restriction in the mission

² K. W. Clark, "The Gentile Bias in Matthew," in *The Gentile Bias and Other Essays* (NovTSup; Leiden: Brill, 1980) 2.

³ The healing of the centurion's servant is related by Luke (7:1-10) as well as Matthew. All of the synoptics tell of the healing of the Gadarene demoniac who, if not a Gentile, was in predominantly Gentile territory (Mark 5:1-20; Matt 8:28-34; Luke 8:26-39). John recounts Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well. A Samaritan was included among the ten lepers who were healed (Luke 17:11-19).

⁴ The Isaianic context clearly intends to include Gentiles. 56:5-7 specifically mentions "the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord. . . . These I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer."

⁵ H. Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke* (London: Faber and Faber, 1960).

⁶ I owe the suggestion to view this problem as a "haggadah question" (cf. J. Jeremias, *Jesus' Promise to the Nations* [SBT; London: SCM, 1958] 53) to Julia W. Scott, "The Haggadic Question: Jesus and the Gentiles" (unpublished paper; Wheaton: Wheaton College Graduate School, 1987). This acknowledgment is made with the sense of satisfaction of a teacher and the pride of a father.

charge (Matthew 10) and the incident involving the Canaanite woman (Matthew 15) in the totality of Jesus' ministry.

A survey of a cross-section of commentaries⁷ on these Matthean passages yields little for our concerns.⁸ Other studies do focus attention on the question, "Did Jesus intend a mission to the Gentiles by himself and/or by his disciples?" Opinions are varied. For example, Harnack argued that Jesus' appeal was to Jews and that therefore the Gentiles were not of concern to him. But the reality and spirit of his religion made it natural that it should spread beyond Judaism after his death.⁹ G. D. Kilpatrick insists, primarily on text-critical grounds, that "universalism is absent from Mark. There is no preaching the Gospel to gentiles in this world and there is no interest in their fate in the world to come."¹⁰ Spitta argues that the mixed population of Galilee made it inevitable that Jesus had contact with Gentiles and that a mission to them was in his mind from the beginning of his ministry.¹¹ Donald Ker believes that Paul's work among the Gentiles does not necessarily presuppose "that Jesus himself was deeply involved in this work."¹²

Joachim Jeremias¹³ and T. W. Manson¹⁴ have contributed studies of the intention of Jesus as related to the Gentiles centered around Matt 10:5-6;

⁷ W. C. Allen, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew* (ICC; 3d ed.; Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1912); F. V. Filson, *A Commentary According to St. Matthew* (HNTC; New York: Harper, 1960); D. Hill, *The Gospel of Matthew* (NCB; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972); A. H. McNeile, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* (London: Macmillan, 1915); H. A. W. Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Gospel of Matthew* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1877); C. H. Montefiore, *The Synoptic Gospels* (New York: KTAV reprint, n.d.); A. Plummer, *An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans reprint, 1956 [1909]); T. H. Robinson, *The Gospel of Matthew* (MNTC; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1928); E. Schweizer, *The Good News According to Matthew* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1975); R. V. G. Tasker, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961).

⁸ Most simply restate the obvious: These passages indicate that Jesus' ministry was confined to the Jewish people. McNeile, *Matthew* 134, explains Matt 10:5-7 as Jesus' conviction that "if the Jewish nation could be brought to repentance, the new age would dawn"; according to Schweizer, *Good News* 235, the statement is to a Jewish Christian community with anti-Gentile bias. Robinson, *Matthew* 135 (cf. Plummer, *Matthew* 216), suggests that the reply to the Canaanite woman reflects the conviction that service to the heathen might interrupt and hinder Jesus' ultimate aim of winning Jews who would then become his "evangelistic agents." Plummer, *Matthew*, commenting on 10:6, suggests not only that the Jews had first claim on the gospel but also that the twelve lacked competence and experience to deal with Gentiles.

⁹ A. Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1908), 1. 36 ff.

¹⁰ G. D. Kilpatrick, "The Gentile Mission in Mark and Mark 13:9-11," *Studies in the Gospels: Essays in Memory of R. H. Lightfoot* (ed. D. E. Nineham; Oxford: Blackwell, 1955) 157. Kilpatrick continues, however: "The Gospel is to be preached outside Palestine and the signs of the times are to be read by Gentiles as well as Jews, but that is as far as Mark goes."

¹¹ F. Spitta, "Jesus und die Heidenmission" 72 ff., as cited by D. Ker, "Jesus and Mission to the Gentiles," *IBS* 10 (1988) 92.

¹² Ker, "Jesus and Mission" 98.

¹³ J. Jeremias, "The Gentile World in the Thought of Jesus," *Bulletin of SNTS* 3, 18 ff. This was later expanded in his *Jesus' Promise*.

¹⁴ T. W. Manson, *Only to the House of Israel?* (Philadelphia: Fortress reprint, 1964 [1955]).

15:22-28. Jeremiah portrays Jesus' ministry against the background of an active mission by Jews to win converts to Judaism of which Jesus' only recorded comment was negative (23:15). The twelve were prohibited from proclaiming not the gospel to the Gentiles, says Jeremiah, but the final triumph of God. The Gentiles, he believes, will be brought into the kingdom not by the mission of the Church but "as the result of God's eschatological act of power."¹⁵ Before God's call to the Gentiles could go out, there were two preconditions that Jesus must fulfill: (1) the offer of salvation to Israel, and (2) his death. Jeremiah concludes:

Jesus realized that it was his earthly task to prepare for the revelation of the Kingdom by fulfilling these two necessary preconditions. "The reason why Jesus came to Israel was precisely because his mission concerned the whole world." That is to say, his announcement of salvation to Israel, just as his vicarious death, was at the same time an act of service to the Gentiles. Both took place *in order that* the incorporation of the Gentiles into the Kingdom of God might be possible. Jesus' preaching to Israel was the precondition, his death for countless hosts rendered possible, and his parousia will bring into being, the people of God of the New Age, the Kingdom of God over the whole world.¹⁶

Manson says that Jesus was concerned to found the Church. It was necessary to build up within Israel a body of men and women who had learned from Jesus to accept, who would live in, and who would extend the kingdom of God. The creation of this community was his intermediate task, for it was through this transformed body that the world would be transformed.

It seems to be a given that the Matthew 10 and Matthew 15 passages assume Jesus' involvement in a ministry in and to Israel before its fruits could be made available beyond the covenant people (he said that "the children must first be fed"). At the same time both Matthew and the other three gospels clearly portray the expectation of the eventual inclusion of the Gentiles, the "other sheep that are not of this fold" (John 10:16). But although Manson and Jeremiah have made major contributions to understanding the situation, there remains the need for further clarification of Jesus' actions and attitudes toward Gentiles, recorded in Matthew 10 and Matthew 15, during his ministry.

Jeremiah's evidence for a vigorous Jewish missionary effort may be overstated and, in any case, must be balanced with recognition of the strong sentiment among many Second Commonwealth Jewish groups against contact with Gentiles. Requirements for ceremonial purity as well as Israel's experience with Gentiles, especially during the Second Temple period, had taught them to think of Gentiles as idolatrous, immoral, cruel and hostile.¹⁷ In addition the Hebrew sense of election and of a status as

¹⁵ Jeremiah, *Jesus' Promise* 71.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 73 (*italics his*).

¹⁷ Second Commonwealth Jewish attitudes toward Gentiles were complex and varied. Even in the OT Isaiah and Jeremiah seem to hold a more universalistic view, while Ezekiel tends toward particularism; cf. T. W. Manson, *The Teachings of Jesus* (Cambridge: Cambridge

the favored of Yahweh promoted within many segments of Second Commonwealth society both convictions of superiority and the mechanism for isolationism. Even the suggestion of God's favorable disposition toward Gentiles could bring a violent response, well illustrated by the attempts to throw Jesus off the brow of the hill in Nazareth (Luke 4:25-29) and to lynch Paul in the temple courts in Jerusalem (Acts 22:21-23).

To what extent was this distrust, withdrawal, and hatred of Gentiles a genuine reflection of the divine intent as revealed in the OT, and how much was it an aberration of it? There can be no doubt of the OT affirmation that Israel is God's chosen,¹⁸ his son,¹⁹ the apple ("little man"²⁰) of his eye.²¹ Yet favoritism need not imply exclusivism. The Abrahamic covenant stands at the heart of Israel's election and nationhood, but it also contains the provision that "through you shall all nations of the earth be blessed" (Gen 12:3).²² For Paul this statement is "the gospel" of Gentile salvation (Gal 3:8). If he is correct, then the same covenant upon which some Second Commonwealth Jews based their notions of Jewish privilege and particularism contains also the charter of the availability of salvation to "all nations." Israel (both old and new) is to be the instrument, the channel, for bringing salvation to others. Exodus 19:6-7 pronounces Israel not only as Yahweh's "own possession, . . . a holy nation," but also "a kingdom of priests," again implying a mediatorial function. Exodus 34:10 says that Yahweh performed marvels in Israel so that "all the people among whom you are shall see the work of the Lord." Indeed, the OT clearly contains the sentiment summarized in

University, 1935) 180-181; W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (London: SPCK, 1958) 60. Early Jewish Christians were convinced they were living in the final age. Of paramount importance for them was the question of the effects of the dawning of the final age upon the state of Gentiles because this would determine the attitude of these Jewish Christians toward mission among Gentiles. Attitudes on this matter among Second Commonwealth Jewish groups were particularly diverse. By way of summary, the following is a listing of some of the views regarding the status of Gentiles during the *eschaton*: Gentiles would be (1) the enemy—the allies of evil—to be defeated in the final battle, (2) slaves to serve Israel, (3) servants of Yahweh under the direction of Israel but not as proselytes, (4) so deprived that they would resist and reject Yahweh even during the messianic age, (5) seeking to become proselytes but motivated by self-interest and so not accepted into Israel, (6) beyond God's concern and salvation and so not able to become proselytes, (7) proselytes and incorporated into Israel and therefore would receive the blessing and salvation of God.

¹⁸ Deut 7:6; 1 Kgs 3:8; 1 Chr 16:13; Pss 89:3; 105:6; Isa 41:8; 43:20-21; 44:1; 45:4; Amos 3:2; etc.

¹⁹ Exod 4:22-23; Jer 31:20 (of Ephraim); Hos 11:1.

²⁰ *ʿišōn*, the diminutive of *ʿīš*, refers to the "pupil" of the eye—the reflection one sees of oneself in the pupil in the eye of another when very close to the second party. There is no justification in the Hebrew for translating "apple" unless, on the principle of the part standing for the whole, "pupil" is understood as the whole eyeball and "apple" is euphemistically employed for it.

²¹ Zech 2:8; cf. Deut 32:10; Ps 17:8; Prov 7:2.

²² The form of *brk* used in the covenant formula here and in Gen 18:18; 28:14 is niphal; the hithpaal is found in 22:18; 26:4; Jer 4:2. The distinction between niphal (usually passive, "be blessed") and hithpaal (usually reflexive, "bless themselves") is not always clear. At times each is used with the connotation usually associated with the other. The LXX of Gen 12:3 translates with the aorist passive, *eneulogēthēsontai*, the reading employed by Paul in Gal 3:8.

Isa 42:6: "I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations." Whether this is addressed to Israel, or to the servant of Yahweh, or to both, it indicates Yahweh's intention of employing his chosen as a channel of blessing for Gentiles. The tension between Matthew 10 and Matthew 15 and the rest of the gospels can be understood as Jesus' recognition, on the basis of the OT, that the establishment of a new Israel must precede her use as the means through which "all nations of the world will be blessed."

In connection with the healing of the centurion's servant Matthew notes that Jesus said, "many [presumably Gentiles] shall come from the east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom [presumably Jews] will be thrown into the outer darkness" (8:5 ff.). Jesus sees eschatological overtones in the coming of the Gentile centurion and in the act of healing. This should not be surprising. Isaiah had predicted healing as a feature of the messianic age.²³ Jesus plainly associated exorcism with the appearance of the kingdom.²⁴ In fact it is probable that most if not all healings by Jesus imply the arrival of the final age.²⁵ The allusion to the messianic banquet²⁶ and the inclusion of the Gentiles heightens the eschatological framework in this passage.

As has been noted by others,²⁷ the request of the centurion—like that of the Canaanite woman—was granted only after recognition of the distinction between Israel and others. Although Jesus looked forward to the gathering of the nations in the end time, he clearly saw the cases of the Canaanite woman, the centurion's servant, and others as exceptions to what he was doing at the time.

Some light may be shed on this in Matthew 12. Here the evangelist records two Sabbath controversies,²⁸ those involving the grainfield and healing the man with a withered hand. Then follows the implied rejection by Jesus of the Judaism of his day and the rejection of Jesus by leaders of Second Commonwealth Judaism (12:1-14). Matthew then notes (12:15-21)

²³ Isa 29:18-19; 35:5-6.

²⁴ Matt 12:24-29 (Luke 11:18-23): "If it is by the Spirit of God ("finger of God," Luke 11:20) that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you."

²⁵ A. M. Hunter, *Introducing New Testament Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1957) 29 ff.; cf. L. Goppelt, *Theology of the New Testament: The Ministry of Jesus in Its Theological Significance* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 1. 139 ff. On the place of miracles in the ancient world as a whole see H. C. Kee, *Miracle in the Early Christian World* (New Haven: Yale, 1983).

²⁶ C. G. Montefiore states: "The Messianic Kingdom under the figure of a meal is common and Rabbinic" (*The Synoptic Gospels* [2d rev. ed.; New York: KTAV reprint, 1968 (1927)], 2. 130; cf. L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1913), 4. 115; G. Dalman, *The Words of Jesus: Considered in the Light of Post-Biblical Jewish Writings and the Aramaic Language* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1902) 110-113; Matt 22:1-14; 25:10; Rev 19:7-9).

²⁷ Cf. Jeremiah, *Jesus' Promise* 30, 34-35.

²⁸ It must be remembered that, in addition to being parts of the OT legislation, Sabbath-keeping, circumcision and kosher laws were emphasized as elements of protection for Jewish racial and national identity during the intertestamental period.

that Jesus withdrew with many people following him. He healed and commanded those healed not to report it. By way of explanation Matthew cites the Isa 42:1-4 servant passage:

This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he shall proclaim justice to the Gentiles (*ethnesin*). He will not wrangle or cry aloud, nor will any one hear his voice in the streets; he will not break a bruised reed nor quench a smoldering wick till he brings justice to victory, and in his name will the Gentiles (*ethnē*) hope.

Thus Matthew clearly intends that God's offer to Israel through his servant and Israel's subsequent rejection of it opens the door for the proclamation of justice and hope to the Gentiles. But this does not negate the fact that blessings to the Gentiles must come through the descendants of Abraham, the patriarch to whom the covenant was first given.

The gathering of the Gentiles was an expected feature of the final age. It was associated with the presentation of "one like a son of man" who, according to Dan 7:13-14, received rule over "all peoples, nations, and languages" in a "kingdom . . . that shall not be destroyed." But the "gathering" concept includes not only Gentile nations being passively assembled under the Son of Man²⁹ but also their active coming to Israel, a "pilgrimage of the nations" to the holy city and especially to the temple, an expectation well documented in both the OT and intertestamental literature.³⁰

²⁹ At this point it seems immaterial to me whether the Son of Man is considered a single individual (as Dan 7:13, etc., seem to imply) or a corporate figure (as could be understood from Dan 7:18-27); see M. Black, "The Son of Man Problem in Recent Research and Debate," *BJRL* 45 (1963); A. J. B. Higgins, *Jesus and the Son of Man* (London: Lutterworth, 1964).

³⁰ Ezra 3:12-13 describes the grief of those who saw the first temple when, as the foundations for the second were laid, they realized it would be smaller and less glorious than its predecessor. In response to this situation the Lord promises that he will "shake all nations, so that the treasure of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with splendor" (Hag 2:7 ff.). Isaiah 56:6 ff. refers to "foreigners who join themselves to the Lord" and to the temple being "called a house of prayer for all peoples." 60:7 predicts the gathering of those who "come up with acceptance on my altar, and I will glorify my glorious house." 60:10 speaks of foreigners building up the walls; 60:14-16 predicts an end of oppression and the acknowledgment of God's people and city as his people "suck the milk of nations." Zechariah 8:20-23 depicts Gentiles going to Jerusalem.

Some Second Commonwealth Jewish documents allude to the pilgrimage of the nations to the holy city and especially to the temple; cf. Tob 13:13: "Rejoice and be glad for the sons of righteousness; for they will be gathered together and will praise the Lord of the righteous"; *Pss. Sol.* 17:26-32: "He [their king, the son of David] will gather a holy people whom he will lead in righteousness. . . . He will have Gentile nations serving under his yoke, and he will glorify the Lord in (a place) prominent (above) the whole earth. And he will purge Jerusalem (and make it) holy as it was even from the beginning, (for) nations to come from the ends of the earth to see his glory, to bring as gifts her children who had been driven out, and to see the glory of the Lord with which God has glorified her. And he will be a righteous king over them, taught by God. There will be no unrighteousness among them in his days, for all shall be holy, and their king shall be the Lord Messiah."

John records the coming of the Greeks (presumably Gentiles),³¹ who, immediately following the triumphal entry, request of Philip: "We wish to see Jesus" (John 12:22). This is the same point in the chronology of Jesus' life at which the synoptics place the cleansing of the temple, with Mark's affirmation that Jesus' intention was to restore it as a place of prayer "for all the nations." The symbolic significance of this for our study lies in the fact that it was most certainly from the court of the Gentiles that Jesus chased the money changers and merchandisers, thus making suitable for worship and prayer the only part of the temple open to Gentiles.

Furthermore, in response to the coming of the Greeks Jesus declared:

The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. . . . Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say—"Father, save me from this hour"? No, for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify thy name. . . . Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the ruler of this world be cast out; and I, if I am lifted up from the earth, shall draw all (*pantas*) to myself (John 12:20-32).

The crowd, convinced of the eternity of the Messiah, replied: "How can you say that the Son of man must be lifted up?" (12:34).

Four elements clearly come together at this point in the chronology of Jesus' ministry: (1) the opening of the way for Gentiles and their actual coming to Jesus in Jerusalem, (2) the arrival of Jesus' "hour" (which John had previously insisted had "not yet come" [2:4; 7:30; 8:20]), (3) Jesus' awareness of his impending death and its universal implications, and (4) the sudden introduction of the "Son of Man" title by Jesus. Furthermore Jesus had just arrived in Jerusalem, accompanied by the twelve and a multitude that heralded him with messianic praise. It appears that Jesus believes the conditions and time then indicated the arrival of a decisive point in salvation history. At least the nucleus of the new Israel has been gathered. He has been openly offered as Messiah to Israel in Jerusalem.³² His death was at hand. With the coming of the Greeks the pilgrimage of the nations had begun, and the Son of Man was about to begin gathering some from "all peoples, nations, and languages" to be placed under his dominion (Dan 7:14). The Gentile mission could begin because Jesus as

³¹ I see no reason to assume that these *Hellenēs* were "Hellenistic Jews." Jesus would certainly have frequently seen them in Galilee and elsewhere. Hellenistic Jews had access to the temple (note that Philo tells of visiting it, *On Providence* 2:64; *Special Laws* 1:67). When the NT writers refer to "proselytes" they use the word *prosēlytos* (e.g. Acts 2:11; 6:5).

³² Note the significance of the triumphal entry, especially in view of the messianic connotations of riding into Jerusalem (cf. Ps 24:7-10) at the head of a great crowd, and the words with which he was heralded and praised (118:26). Matthew notes that, following the cleansing, "the blind and lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them." This was the type of activity expected in the final age by the Messiah on the basis of Isa 29:18-19; 35:4b-6. The implications of all this were not lost on the inhabitants of Jerusalem. The chief priests and scribes asked Jesus to call a halt to children praising him in this way (Matt 21:15-16). Matthew 21:11 notes that some said of him, "This is the prophet, Jesus, the (one) from Nazareth." "The prophet" was the second-Moses messianic title based on Deut 18:18.

Israel's Messiah was also a more-than-Jewish Messiah, the universal Son of Man who was about to assume his position of reign, unlimited by time, space, racial or national boundaries.³³ The twelve and the others who with them believed were poised to assume the role of "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, . . . [to] declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Pet 2:9; cf. Exod 19:5-6). Jeremiah is correct: The call had to be made to Israel, and "the Son of Man must suffer" before the proclamation to the Gentiles. He is wrong to assert that Gentiles are brought into the kingdom only by God's power apart from proclamation by the Church. God intended that it was through Abraham's seed that "all nations of the world would be blessed." The believing community, the Church, is the Israel of the new age to fulfill that purpose (cf. Gal 3:14, 29). Paul's strategy, "to the Jew first and also to the Greek," has its roots in the divine plan for the role of Israel as revealed in the OT. This same strategy limited the ministry of Jesus until the eschatological Israel could be called and trained, the eschatological age established by the sufferings of the servant, and the Son of Man enthroned. Then and only then could the gathering of Gentiles in his kingdom begin.

The answer to the haggadah question is to be found in a proper understanding of the way God works at various stages of salvation history. God's offer of salvation to accept the unworthy, his promise that "I will be your God and you shall be my people," is to all, but it is to be mediated through his chosen people. Jesus' words and deeds in Matthew 10 and Matthew 15 show his awareness of the need to make the offer of salvation first to Israel and to call into being the renewed people of God who will then communicate that message to others. It was a procedure that had been firmly fixed in the OT and understood by at least some of Jesus' contemporaries. These words and deeds demonstrate a keen sense on Jesus' part of what was appropriate in the stage in salvation history in which he lived. His healing and ministry to Gentile demoniacs, the centurion's servant, a Samaritan woman and leper, and other non-Jews is the firstfruits of a larger ingathering and shows that his compassion for individuals was not restricted.³⁴

³³ This is precisely what I believe to be the culmination of Stephen's Acts 7 speech and the impetus for the beginning of the Church's mission beyond Jerusalem as recorded in Acts 8; see my "Stephen's Defense and the World Mission of the People of God," *JETS* 21/2 (1978) 131-141.

³⁴ I gratefully acknowledge contributions from papers by two former students: Scott, "Haggadic Question," and Daniel C. Elliott, "Jesus and the Gentiles" (unpublished paper; Wheaton College Graduate School, 1988). I also thank colleagues J. McRay, H. Wolf, T. Phillips and R. Yarbrough for their assistance.