

## **JOHN 12,20-22 AS A MISSIONARY TEXT: AN EXEGETICAL STUDY IN THE LIGHT OF ISAIAH 42B AND ISAIAH 52,15 LXX**

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### **Introduction**

John 12, 20-22 has no direct synoptic parallel. The small section is about Greeks coming to see Jesus. It affirms the universality of the mission of Christ for the salvation of all. In John's Gospel economy, all are children of God. Salvation is for all. It is not a strict reserve of any. This introduction of the special visit by Greeks at the crucial moment in which Jesus seems to be ending his earthly ministry coupled with their insistence to see Jesus makes the whole episode theologically significant. The visit by the Greeks raises a lot of questions. In the first place, it seems to be lacking in connection with the sequence of the narrative in the rest of the chapter. It sounds like an intrusion. Again, it is apparently foreign to Jesus' proclamation of the advent of his hour. It is the presupposition of this paper that an understanding of the theological significance of the episode resolves these apparent problems. The researcher believes that the text underscores the missionary task of the Messiah as a call to gather all nations to God and not just a nation. It echoes directly, the provision of Isa 42b and Isa 52,15LXX as one of the functional demands of the Messiah. It is therefore a missionary text detailing Jesus messianic fulfilment as getting beyond the confines of Palestine to reach the ends of the earth, including the gentile nations. Our investigation must of necessity commence with an effort to contextualize our text.

### **a) Problem of contextualization**

Bultmann (1971) understands John 12, 20-22 as an introduction lacking a continuation because their request to see Jesus was not answered and immediately after, they vanished from the scene. Becker (1981) interprets John 12,20-23.27-36 as a dialogue in three parts. He argues for a missing coherence of thought and thus cuts off vv. 24-26 as a post Johannine "ecclesiastical redaction" (pp. 382-383). Brown (1979) opines that since the section appears awkward an early tradition must have been used as the basis to elicit a theological adaptation. Moore (1967) is of the idea that the visit of the Greeks was a temptation for Jesus to anticipate his mission to the gentiles and to avoid the Cross. Beutler (1990) has criticized Moore's position here as unacceptable because the issue at stake is not where Jesus goes but who comes to him. Viewed from the point of the preceding chapter and the verses immediately after, our inclination is to link the visit by the Greeks with Jesus' announcement of his imminent death. Already in John 11,4 Jesus declared Lazarus' sickness as not one unto death but for the glorification of the Son of Man. This is followed by the attempt by his disciples to dissuade him from going to Judea for fear he would be killed by the Jews, a fact confirmed by Thomas' suggestion that they would go there to die with him. The miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead necessitated the meeting of the Sanhedrin and the final decision to kill Jesus (John 11,47-53). Then immediately after the coming of the Greeks, Jesus announced that the hour has finally come (John 12,23). Thus, John 12,20-22 fits well into the context confirming the view of the Pharisees that the whole world is moving after Jesus (John 12,19). With the coming of the Greeks, John sets the stage for the journey towards the passion through which Jesus would draw all to himself. The Greeks' visit is a confirmation of John's message that salvation is for all who believe and not for the Jews alone. The wording of our text supports our resolution of this problem. Two verbs are very pertinent

here: “coming” and “seeing”. Equally important is the person they met. Interpretation of the passage opens the way for deeper comprehension.

## **b) Exegesis**

We are concerned here with the meaning and message of the text under study. We are giving our primary attention to the variants in textual readings to enable us to get to a more useful working translation of the text. This will be followed by a deeper interpretation of the text.

### **i. Textual Study and Translation**

Our text reads

<sup>20</sup> +Hsan de. {EIlhnej tinej ek twñ anabainontwn iħa proskunhswsin en th|eòrthħ

<sup>21</sup> outoi ouñ proshlqon Filippw| tw| apo. Bhqsaiħa. thj Galilaiaj kai. hrw|twn auton legontej( Kurie( qelomen ton Vhsouħ ideihħ

<sup>22</sup> ercetai o| Filippoj kai. legei tw| VAndreħ( ercetai VAndreaj kai. Filippoj kai. legousin tw| Vhsoul

Verses 21 and 22 exhibit some attendant textual problems. In v. 21,  $\hat{\iota}^{66}$  D K W 0250 *pc* a sa bo give Bhdsaiħa as an alternative reading. In v. 22  $\Theta$  is omitted by  $\aleph$  A D W  $\Theta$  Y 0250 *f*<sup>1.13</sup>  $\bar{\cup}$  but witnessed in  $\hat{\iota}^{66.75}$  B L 33. 892. 1241 *pc*. The omission is probably purposefully intended to maintain some consistency with the same name already mentioned in v. 21. Since our text is a more difficult reading and also witnessed in more ancient texts, we consider it as closer to the original. In the same v. 22, we have many separate alternative readings in different MSS for ercetai VAndreaj kai. Filippoj kai. A K  $\Phi$  (D, W) Y 0250 *f*<sup>1.13</sup> (33)  $\bar{\cup}$  (aur f vg) sy<sup>(p).h</sup> read pa|in, while kai, pa|in is the reading testified in O A. Again in the MSS O F  $\hat{\iota}^{66*}$  b ff<sup>2</sup> the reading is de. Kai. This is also the reading testified in  $\hat{\iota}^{66c}$  ( $\Theta$ ) c (1) sa ac<sup>2</sup> pbo. The reading in our text is witnessed in  $\hat{\iota}^{75vid}$  A B L *pc* a (sy<sup>s</sup>). Perhaps the alternative readings try to smooth out the clumsy nature of the text in repeating names — Philip and Andrew. Instead of repeating the names, conjunctions (de, and kai) and the linkage (pa|in) are adopted to make the text appear easier, more meaningful and readable. Since our text presents a more difficult reading, we presume it to be closer to the original.

Having dealt with the textual problems, we posit our working translation thus: “Now there were some Greeks among those who were going up in order that they may worship at the feast. So, they came to Philip who is from Bethsaida of Galilee and then were requesting him saying, ‘Sir, we wish to see Jesus’. Philip comes and speaks to Andrew, Andrew and Philip then coming, speak to Jesus”.

### **i. Interpretation**

Our text is dominated by three major semantics — persons, verbs of movement and verbs of saying. The persons mentioned in the text are the Greeks, others going up for the feast, Philip, Andrew and Jesus. We are not so much concerned with those anonymous others who were going

up to worship at the feast. It is sufficient to note the ἵνα of purpose which connects in a most logical way the action of going up and the reason for which they were going up. In other words, it explains immediately the reason for the gathering of the crowd. Both those already present and those still coming up had a common reason, namely, προσκυνήσωσιν ἐν τῇ ἐarth. Their mission here takes us back to John 11,55-57. This text identifies the feast in question as that of Passover. The triumphant nature of Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem (John 12,12-17) would surely attract the attention of anyone around. It is not therefore astonishing that the Greeks were also interested in meeting him. John 12,18 also explains that the crowd came to meet him because of the great sign of raising Lazarus from the dead which he performed. The text kept talking of the Pharisees and the crowd that came for the feast. To have singled out some Greeks and their move towards Jesus via the mediation of some of the disciples is not without outstanding reason. An identification of some of these personalities and the interpretation of the verbs used would help largely in delving into the richness of the text.

Verse 19 outlines a desperate complaint by the Pharisees in their hyperbolic statement ἰδεὸς κόσμου ὀπίσω αὐτοῦ/ ἀπὸ γέν. Ridderbos (1997) interprets this statement to mean that despite human resistance, God's work continues. Like Caiaphas in John 11,49-50 they tend to say more than they realized. They were being prophetic. The first people that sought to see Jesus after the entry were Greeks. A look at the sequence of events from John 12, 9 shows a perhaps double meaning of the idea of the world here. After the anointing at Bethany, there is a picture of response, namely, the believing of many (vv. 9-11). In the same way, the entrance into Jerusalem is followed by a complementary scene of belief (vv. 17-19). This latter scene goes a bit deeper to tell of hearers and believers. The whole world in v. 19 refers to those who bear witness and those who hear. Both meet and gather to form the whole world (John 12,12-13.17-18). Brodie (1993) alludes that while depicting the ageless process of witness and hearing, the author maintains the fundamental idea of everybody, Jews and gentiles. There is a progression from actual hearing to coming to belief as we have also in the case of the Samaritans in John 4,42 and Thomas in John 20,27-28.

Verse 20 says, +Ἐκ τῶν ἀναβαίνοντων. It singles out some Greeks as a group among many going up to Jerusalem for the feast. By implication, many, including Greeks and non-Greeks were going up. Among these were some Greeks who now deviated to attempt seeing Jesus. Our view here is informed by τινῶν which qualifies the Ἐκ τῶν ἀναβαίνοντων and also by the partitive particle ἐκ which gives the impression that the Greeks in question were comparatively a selected few among the teeming number of pilgrims. Possibly, there were some Greeks who did not deviate but went on straight for the feast. Our interest is with the identification of these few who went to see Jesus. The text calls them Ἐκ τῶν ἀναβαίνοντων. Most scholars like Dodd (1970), Brown (1979), Barrett (1978), Kysar (1986), and Bernard (1928) agree that these were persons of non-Jewish people and of Greek speech and culture but who surely were not pagans since they attend a Jewish festival. Scholars like Martson (2002) think that the term refers to Greek-speaking Jews. He argues that if this is not so, they would not be at the feast. His argument leaves much to be desired because even in Acts 8,26-40 we read about an Ethiopian eunuch

who went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem. If we accept his opinion, then, one does not see the reason why John should identify them as Ἑλληnej. They were mentioned only here and in the next verse after which they disappeared and yet the narrative continued smoothly without them. Also Martson's view cancels the possibility of converts to Judaism. Thus we believe that Ἑλληnej distinguished from ἑλληnistai, refers to Greek proselytes and not to Greek-speaking Jews (cf. Windisch 1995, Beutler 1990). Robinson (1960) also suggests that the term refers to Greek-speaking Jews but identified as such to distinguish them from the Greek-speaking Jews resident in Palestine. Their adoption by the evangelist depicts a deep symbolic sense. The image represents the Hellenistic world coming to seek the Revealer. They are representatives of the gentile world. One could describe it as the mission of evangelization all over the world at the embryo stage.

According to the reading of our text, they did not just go up to Jerusalem to purify themselves for the feast; they also had another interest, namely to see Jesus. They could not go to Jesus directly probably for fear that Jesus would not be disposed to see non-Jews. Bent on realizing their dream, they προσηλqon Filippw| tw| apo. Bhsaiða. th| Galilaiaj.

Evidently the Philip referred to here is one of the twelve. In the NT, we are aware of three Philips. The first is Philip, the first son of Herod and Cleoptara of Jerusalem. He became the tetrarch of Gaulanitis, Trachonitis, Auranitis, Batania and Paneas after his father's death in AD 4 (Josephus 2004). Luke 3,1 speaks of him as reigning also over Ituraea. He rebuilt Paneas into Caesarea Philippi (Mark 8,27) and then Bethsaida into Julius. He died in AD 34.

The second Philip is one of the seven associated with Stephen (Acts 6,5). He is said to have served as a missionary in Samaria (Acts 8,5-13). He preached to and baptized the Ethiopian eunuch who made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem (Acts 8,26-40). He later settled in Caesarea and received Paul as a guest (Acts 21,8). Schneider (1994) has a detailed discussion on the three Philips.

The third Philip is the one in our text. John describes his birthplace as Bethsaida (John 1,44; 12,21). The text describes Bethsaida as a city in Galilee. Scholars have discovered a misrepresentation of geography here. The city is actually located in Gaulanitis which is not in Galilee though only a short distance away (cf. Kysar 1986). Barrett (1978) however observes that perhaps John followed a later description because according to him, after the war of AD 66-70 the entire territory around the lake was described as Galilee (see also Bernard 1928). He became a disciple quite early. Thus in the Synoptics he is mentioned fifth after the first two pairs of brothers (Matt 10,3; Mark 3,18; Luke 6,14; Acts 1,13). In the FG, he is not so much a hidden figure. He played special roles in the Gospel. In John 1,43-48 we read about his vocation. John 6,5.7 presents his dialogue with Jesus concerning the purchase of bread and in John 14,8.9 he asks Jesus to show them the Father. His involvement with the Greeks in our text is particular. The fact that his name is Greek together with that of Andrew give a probable reason why these Greeks decided to meet them. Because they were strangers on a pilgrimage, they probably wanted to avoid possible embarrassment. They went straight to meet one like them at least in name and by mentality. Kysar (1986) observes that Bethsaida was associated in popular mentality with gentiles. This long protocol is understandable bearing in mind that the Jews had

little or no dealing with the gentiles (John 4,9). Again the protocol is consistent with Jesus' prayer in John 17,20 about those who will believe in him through the witness of his disciples. Their request is evidence of the fear of the Pharisees that the whole world is moving after Jesus (John 12,19).

Their purpose for contacting Philip is clearly expressed with the verb of saying — *erwtaw*. This verb is generally taken to mean “to ask, to request”. It is notable that in the LXX, the verb together with its compound — *eperwtaw*, mean simply “to ask”. Whenever it talks of requesting, the LXX uses *aitew*. Schenk (1994) explains the presence of both meanings in the NT as an influence of Hellenistic secular usage. It may also be because of the influence of the ambiguous Hebrew *š'ʔ*. It occurs about 63x in the NT. Out of these, 27 occurrences mean “to ask” while the other 36 have the meaning “to request”. The former meaning is limited to the Gospels while the latter is common to both Gospels and other NT books. In John 12,21, it is a polite request. This is because the subjects of the verb are strangers in need of something. The tense of the verb is particularly connotative. Its imperfect form together with the present participle — *legontej*, indicate an action in continuity. It carries the nuance of a passionate request. They kept requesting that they might be helped to see Jesus. The request was not just once. They continued to ask. Hence Philip's reaction. He had to meet Andrew to help him get these Greeks' request communicated to Jesus. Philip is not a Rabbi, yet they addressed him with *kurie* in the vocative. The respect is an acknowledgement of his position as a disciple of the one whom they admire with reverence (Bernard 1928).

Their request is straightforward and clear. They said — *qe|omen ton Vhsouh ideih*. According to Limbeck (1994) the verb *qe|w* means “will, be willing, want, desire”. In our text, it is used to express wish or desire. The utterance is understandable since the presence of the Greeks around Jesus would really raise some suspicion. This is not simply because the 12 have been ordered not to preach to the gentiles (Matt 10,5-6) but more because in John 7,35, the Jews already suspected that Jesus wanted to switch over to the Greeks to teach them. Hence, to allay such embarrassment, they immediately expressed their wish for being there. Their wish is obvious. Meeting Jesus is their desire — *ton Vhsouh ideih*. It is striking that they did not ask for Jesus Christ but for Jesus. This could be an indication that they did not understand Jesus as the Christ. They simply used his personal name. If they considered Jesus as the Christ, they would have addressed him more respectfully just as they did for Philip. This is the idea also expressed by the Jews in John 18,5-7. It follows immediately from here that their desire to see him — *ideih* may not necessarily imply desiring to be converted. Brown (1979) suggests that it could mean “to believe in” in the Johannine theological context. Moore (1967) sees the visit by the Greeks as a temptation to Jesus to anticipate the mission to the gentiles and to avoid the Cross. It is more of desiring to have a private conversation with him. Tarelli (1946) also distinguishes between *blepw* and *qewrew*. He holds that the former is the verb for seeing as distinct from being blind. It is therefore clear that the Greeks were not asking to see Jesus in the sense of Bartimeus in Mark 10,51. The Greeks were not blind in the physical sense. The larger context of the verse alludes to

this understanding. John 12,12-16 talks about the entry into Jerusalem. In John 12,17 the witnesses at the raising of Lazarus from the dead testified to the sign. John 12,18 gives this as the reason for which a crowd teemed after him. It is therefore evident that the Greek visitors were aware of this particular and wondrous event. Their asking to see Jesus could be to have a private discussion with him, perhaps to win his favour when eventually he becomes king as he entered Jerusalem as a triumphant king. It could also be that they want a private discussion with him in reaction to the decision by the Jewish elders to arrest and kill Jesus, John 11,53.57. It is possible that they wished to convince him to move over to their own side to preach or even rule. However, over and above all these interpretations, the message goes far deeper.

The fact that John enshrined this experience within the Passover feast, the time when a lamb of sacrifice is offered to recollect redemption of the Jews depicts a high theological sense. With the decision to kill and declaration of Jesus as a wanted man, it is obvious that the scene is well set. The Jews before now offer lambs. In this particular period, Jesus is to be the Lamb of sacrifice in order that all will be redeemed; hence the coming of the Greeks at this crucial moment. His death is to be for all and not for the Jews alone. The Jewish elders acknowledged that the whole world is moving after Jesus, John 12,19. Jesus has described himself as the Light of the World (John 8,12). He is charged to give life to believers (John 3,16) and make them children of God (John 1,12) by saving them (John 3,17). Thus seeing the Greeks coming to see him and not the Jews alone, he knew already that he has come to the prime of his earthly life. The Jews and non-Jews were present. His Gospel of truth has reached all. Thus, he needed no direct answer to the request because the presence of the Greeks and of course the Jews signifies the fulfilment of his mission of salvation for the whole world. In John 12,23 therefore, he interprets the occasion as an indication that the hour has come for his glorification. In this sense, the text depicts an *inclusio* with John 11,4 where the reason for the sickness of Lazarus was presented as a means to glorify the Son of Man. Now in this verse, the hour of that glorification has come (John 12,23). He is to die as the Lamb of sacrifice not for the Jews only but for all. The presence of both the Jews and Greeks implies amplification of the Gospel message. The Jews would carry the message to the Jewish territories. The gentiles would take it home to their locations preaching about it. By implication, he *ipso facto* becomes Light to the World (John 8,12), Saviour of the world (John 3,17) and executor of judgement (John 5,27). By this singular act of glorification, other sheep that are not of the fold would be gathered under one Shepherd (John 10,16; 11,49-52).

John 12,22 is laden with the verb of movement — *ercetai*. First, it is Philip going to Andrew and then both of them going to Jesus. The verb appears all in the singular even when referring to Philip and Andrew. Bernard (1928) explains that use of singular for plural is quite a classical usage in a sentence like this. The circular movement from the Greeks to Philip and then Philip to Andrew and finally to Jesus expresses the difficulty of the request by the Greeks. The spectacular fact about this is that both Philip and Andrew were disciples of Jesus. The NT shows little interest in Andrew. In the Synoptics, he was called together with his brother Peter (Mark 1,16-18). Luke omits him entirely in his Gospel account apart from the list of the apostles.

In John, he seems to have a more pre-eminent place. John presents him as the first of the apostles to be called by Jesus from the retinue of John the Baptist's followers (John 1,35-40). He brought his brother Peter to Jesus (John 1,41-42). He is from Bethsaida and not from Capernaum (John 1,49). He appears again in John 6,8-9 and then in John 12,22 (MacDonald 1992). There must therefore be a reason for which Philip needed to go to Andrew in order to go and see Jesus. The primary reason could be because he belonged to the first four disciples called by Jesus (John 1,40). Secondly, the reason might not be unconnected with character disposition. In John 6,7-8, the character and association of both men are expressed. Philip seems expressive (John 14,8-9) but not an initiator. He is cautious. Andrew is both expressive and confident in resolution of difficult problems. He is the practical type. Thus in the case of the feeding of the five thousand in the desert (John 6,8-9), he saw beyond the five loaves and two fish. He presented it to Jesus immediately. The number was small and worth nothing but at least it was expandable and could feed some and hence give some relief. It is therefore in his nature to proffer unusual requests. Thus in our passage, Philip, the rather cautious man goes to Andrew the practical man to present to Jesus the unusual request from the Greeks. Apart from the reasons above, it is believed that Philip like Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist before his call by Jesus near Bethany beyond the Jordan (Watson 1992). If this is so, it follows that he has more intimate connection already with Andrew since both belonged to the same brotherhood before they went over to Jesus.

Jesus did not give any direct answer to their request probably because he perceived in their visit a fulfilment of his mission, namely, the gathering of the people of God who were dispersed throughout the world; a mission realizable only through the death and glorification of Jesus (Olsson 1974). This explains why immediately in John 12,23-24 he started talking about his death and glorification. It follows in this sense that the mission of Jesus is connected with soteriology. All are inclusive in the one Saviour, Jesus. The richness of John 12,20-22 is such that it can be described as a rapport of Christology, soteriology and ecclesiology. The Christology is here represented by Christ himself whom all including the Greeks want to see. The soteriology is pictured in his vision of his death in the visit by the Greeks (John 12,23-24). For Leske (1989) the Greeks wish to see him but they can only see him after his death when all will be drawn to him (John 12,32). The Jesus they must see is not Jesus the philosopher; not Jesus the teacher in his teaching moments (John 7,30; 8,20) or the miracle worker who attracts people because of his miracles. It is not the Jesus of the Cana miracle for that is not his hour (John 2,4). John 12,23-32 give the image of the Jesus they will see as the one who must die first to bear the fruit of gathering all properly to himself. The presence and part played by Philip and Andrew portray the position of the church in her mission of gathering and drawing whoever comes to her to Christ who in turn unites all as one under God. The verses are therefore a compendium of theology expressing the fruits of the death and glorification of Jesus. According to Schnackenburg (1987): "Jesus' glorification is here seen particularly from the point of view of

its universal fruitfulness, of its drawing to itself all men and women who are prepared to believe (v. 32)”.

The diagram below demonstrates this Christology, soteriology and ecclesiology of John 12,20-22.

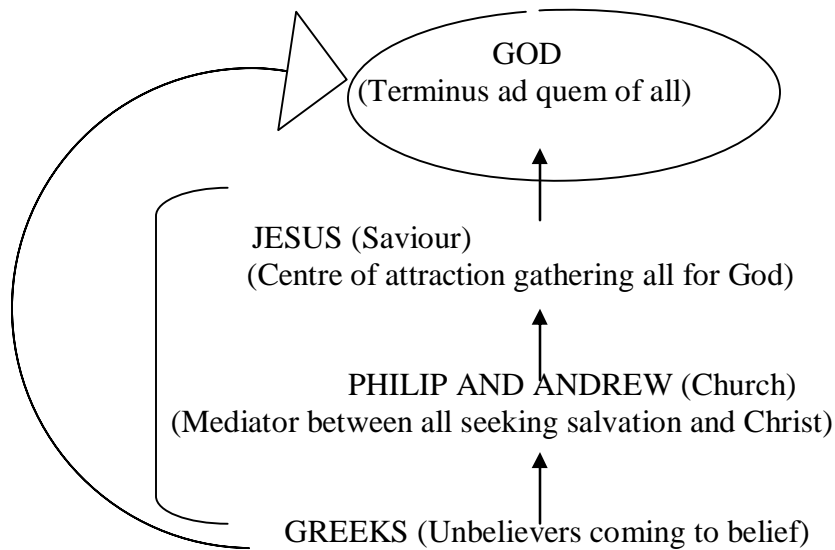


Figure 4.2 representing Jesus’ mission of gathering all to God through his salvific death and glorification made realizable today through the evangelizing and mediatorial mission of the church.

**c) John 12,20-22 and Isaiah**

John 12,20-22 seem to allude two sections of the SS, namely, of Isa 42,4b and Isa 52,15 LXX. The allusion is firstly in fulfilment and then in wording.

The MT text of Isa 42,4b reads that the coastlands shall wait for the teaching of the Servant of God. The LXX of the same text has a subtle difference. It reads *kai. epi. tw/ onomati autou/ eqnh el piouſin* (and the nations shall hope in his name). We would like to observe that this is one of the texts where one cannot immediately say that John depended on the MT or LXX translation. Our text seems to echo the meaning of both translations. The following discussions make it clear.

Our analysis of the meaning of coastlands indicate that it means cities outside the geographical boundaries of Israel. In our text, Greeks are waiting for the teaching of Jesus. The only interpretation one can give to this coincidence is that John sees Jesus as the Servant of God and so the Greeks fulfil the prophecy of Isaiah that non-Jews shall wait for the teaching of the Servant. The agreement is so obvious that in both texts, the universalistic nature of the mission of the Servant/Jesus is made manifest. For Isaiah, the Servant is not limited to Israel alone. For John, the coming of the Greeks fulfils this universal mission. Coastal regions shall wait for the teaching of the Servant. In John, the Greeks wait for the teaching of Jesus. Isaiah remained consistent in his references to the mission of the Servant to non-Jews. In Isa 42,4, he says that



the coastlands shall wait for his teaching. In Isa 49,1-7, it is the Servant himself calling on the attention of the coastlands. He declares his mission of gathering all the scattered to God because he is called to be light to the nations. In Isa 52,15 LXX which we shall see later, the Servant is said to startle many nations and then the apex of all is Isa 53,11-12 in which the justification of many is through the death of the Servant. Surely the many referred to here are not only Jews. If one reads John, one is interested to see exactly similar interest in Christ's mission to the gentiles culminating in his death and glorification as salvation for all. In John 7,35, his Jewish audience wondered if he was about to go over to the Greeks. In John 10,16, he promises to gather all including those outside the one fold of the Jewish people. The same idea prevails in John 11,51-52. It is understandable then why he switched over to a discussion about his death and glorification the moment he was told that Greeks were looking for him. Their visit marks the culmination of his mission. With their visit, Jesus has crossed the Rubicon of geographical limitation. The Greeks were already waiting for his teaching. Their getting it means salvation for them. The salvation is realized in his death. It is evident therefore that in this compact verse of John 12,20-22 is expressed a fulfilment of the Suffering Servant's mission of salvation for all, Jews and Greeks alike (Cf. Isa 42,4; 49,1-7; Isa 52,15; 53,11-12). If this is so, then it is undoubtable that for John, Jesus is the Servant of God bringing salvation for all peoples through his death. It is our opinion that though John 12,20-22 is not a direct quotation its allusion to the passage of Isa 42,4b, cannot be denied. This is because just as the coastlands who ordinarily are non-Jews wait for the teaching of the Servant, so the Greeks wait for his teaching in our text.

It is also an echo of the LXX text. This is because in Isa 42,6.8 "name" always refers to the Lord. Now the text says the nations shall hope on his name. The Greeks in our text represent these nations who bank their hope on the Lord and hence their asking to see him.

Again, a critical look at Isa 52,15 LXX and John 12,20-22 manifests a striking allusion in the wordings of both texts. The LXX text of Isa 52,15 reads: ou[twj qaumasontai eqnh polla. ep[ autw/ kai. sunexousin basileij to. stoma autwh o[ti oi] ouk anhgge[h peri. autou/ oyontai kai. oi] ouk akhkoasin sunhsousin (Thus shall many nations wonder at him; and kings shall keep their mouths shut: for they to whom no report was brought concerning him, shall see; and they who have not heard, shall understand).

It is noticeable that the LXX differs slightly from the MT. The two versions read:

Text	<p>~ykt[ m. WcPqyl wyl [?' ~yBt: ~yAG 'hZy: !KB  rv[ajk W[ar" ~h,] rP[saal} rv[aj] yK[~hyPi  Wn]Bthi W[hv'-al }</p>	<p>ou[twj qaumasontai eqnh polla.  ep[ autw/ kai. sunexousin  basileij to. stoma autwh o[ti oi-  j ouk anhgge[h peri. autou/  oyontai kai. oi] ouk akhkoasin  sunhsousin.</p>
Translation	<p>Thus he will surprise many nations. On him, kings shall shut their mouths because they have seen <i>that which</i> has not been told them</p>	<p>Thus shall many nations wonder at him; and kings shall keep their mouths shut: because <i>they</i></p>

	and they understood <i>that which</i> they have not heard.	<i>to whom</i> no report was brought concerning him, shall see; and <i>they who</i> have not heard, shall understand.
Remarks	Note the relative pronoun in italics	Note the relative pronoun in italics.

The significant difference is in rendering the double relative clauses *rvaj*. In the MT, it is neuter while in the LXX, it is understood as referring to persons interpreting it as subject clause (they to whom...). However, our first point of emphasis is on *eqnh pol la*, and *basileij*. The phrase *eqnh pol la* must be referring to foreign nations (Cf. Deut 7,1; Jer 22,8; Ezek 26,3). This is confirmed by the adoption of the plural form — kings indicating that more than one nation is in question. The interpretation is obvious. It means that the Servant rejected by Israel is greeted by the world as the harbinger of salvation to the ends of the earth and so fulfils the task of Isa 42,1. It is exactly the same sense that is observable in John 12,20-22. The author of the FG holds firm to his conviction that Jesus was rejected by the Jews (John 1,11; 5,39; 6,36; 7,25.43-49; 8,59; 11,49-53.57). It is this series of rejections that made them suspect that Jesus wanted to go over to the Greeks to preach to them. In John 7,33-36 the Jews wondered whether Jesus was to go over to the diaspora to teach the Greeks. The temptation here is to think only of the Jews in diaspora, but this is foreign to the text because it asks whether Jesus was going over to the diaspora to teach the Greeks. In other words, the people to be taught if he went over were the Greeks and not the Jews in diaspora. It is exactly this same rejection that we see in Isaiah's Suffering Servant. Yet despite the rejection, others who are not Jews would be startled at him and those who never heard would hear. Surely, the reference here is outside the confines of Jewish nation because they have heard the message already. It is in the same light that the Jews rejected Jesus while the Greeks who never heard, stood speechless asking to see him. Jesus immediately conceived this move as a fulfilment of his mission to all the world and thus spoke about his death which is a culmination of that mission just as the once rejected Suffering Servant attracted the attention of other nations and kings and then by his death justified many. Thus we can affirm that the Greeks' visit to Jesus connotes the universalistic sense of Jesus mission of salvation. This is confirmed in his own words that he would draw all to himself (John 12,32).

More importantly, Beutler (1990) has correctly noted that Isa 53,1 LXX is explicitly quoted in John 12,38 confirming the midrashic character of the whole section commencing with John 12,20. He proposes five major reasons in support of his opinion that Isa 52,15 LXX is behind the construction of John 12,20-22. He contends that there are many allusions to the Greeks in the Gospel and maintains that the Greeks referred to in John 12,20-22 are not Greek-speaking Jews or else the term *ΕΙ Ιηουισται*, would have been used in place of *ΕΙ Ιηουεις*.

Again, the term «to see» meaning «to meet» is proper to John except in Luke 9,9 where it is used in a different and negative sense of Herod desiring to see Jesus.

Thirdly, the verses following immediately, John 12,23-36 suggests an influence of fourth SS especially with the combination of the verbs *uywqhsetai* and *doxasqhsetai* already witnessed in Isa 52,13 LXX.

Further, the pericope John 12,37-43 which comes immediately after cites explicitly Isa 53,1 LXX.

The last argument is that Paul used Isa 52,15 LXX in Rom 15,21 in a missionary context. Since John had no contact with Paul it follows that the text of Isaiah must have been in vogue at that early period of the Christian era. The fact that John quoted this chapter of Isaiah exactly in the chapter under discussion is a sufficient proof that:

- i. He knew the Isaiah text
- ii. He read the Isaiah text
- iii. The thoughts of the text of Isaiah influenced his construction of John 12,20-43.
- iv. He did not necessarily go into a miscellany or direct quotation of the text. He only interpreted the texts to suit his message, in a midrashic way.

Another strong point supporting our view is based on external evidence. Isa 52,15 LXX is used by Paul in Rom 15,21 in a missionary context. Since this text is witnessed in another NT author and since there is no proof that John depended on Paul's Romans, it implies that the text of Isaiah must have been important in the history of early Christianity. Again in order to heal the wounds of the seeming scandal of the Cross, the early Christians must have resorted to the OT to explain the mystery of Christ's death. The texts of the SS remain the most profitable source in this bid. Evidently, John must have been involved in this task of explanation, at least as a church leader. He must have known this verse of Isaiah and used it in John 12,20-22 to prove the universal nature of the mission of Christ.

### **Conclusion**

In history, scholars have come up with varied interpretations of both the source and meaning of the text we have studied, John 12,20-22. It is the position and conviction of this paper that based on linguistic evidences and analytical survey, our short text has a missionary tone in the sense of the SS of Isaiah. It really echoes the *mandatum magnum* of Matt 28,18-20. The gospel of salvation is no longer a strict reserve of the Jews. It now transcends the geographical and ethical boundaries to reach the end of the nations both Jews and gentiles alike.

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