

## I. Why was Jesus Christ sent only to the Jews?

A. THE MINISTRY OF THE TWELVE: ***“These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, ‘Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.’” (Matthew 10:5-6 ESV)***

1. This makes still more evident what I have lately hinted, that the office, which was then bestowed on the apostles, had no other object than to awaken in the Jews the hope of an approaching salvation, and thus to render them more attentive to hear Christ. On this account, he now confines within the limits of Judea their voice, which he afterwards commands to sound everywhere to the farthest limits of the world. The reason is, that he had been sent by the Father to be the minister of circumcision, to fulfill the promises, which had anciently been given to the fathers, (Rom 15:8.) Now God had entered into a special covenant with the family of Abraham, and therefore Christ acted properly in confining the grace of God, at the outset, to the chosen people, till the time for publishing it were fully come. But after his resurrection, he spread over all nations the blessing which had been promised in the second place, because then *the veil of the temple had been rent*, (Mat 27:51,) and *the middle wall of partition had been thrown down*, (Eph 2:14.) If any one imagine that this prohibition is unkind, because Christ does not admit the Gentiles to the enjoyment of the gospel, let him contend with God, who, to the exclusion of the rest of the world, established with the seed of Abraham alone his covenant, on which the command of Christ is founded. (John Calvin, commentary on Matt. 10:5-6)

B. JESUS SENT ONLY FOR THE LOST SHEEP OF ISRAEL: ***“And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, ‘Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon.’ But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, ‘Send her away, for she is crying out 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 right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.’ She said, ‘Yes, Lord, yet 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 for you as you desire.’ And her daughter was healed instantly.” (Matthew 15:22-28 ESV)***

1. He informs the Apostles that his reason for refusing the woman of Canaan arises out of his desire to devote himself entirely to the Jews to whom alone he was appointed to be a minister of the grace of

God. He argues from the call and the command of the Father, that he must not yield any assistance to strangers; not that the power of Christ was always confined within so narrow limits, but because present circumstances rendered it necessary that he should begin with the Jews, and at that time devote himself to them in a peculiar manner. For as I have said in expounding [Mat 10:5](#), *the middle wall of partition* ([Eph 2:14](#)) was not thrown down till after Christ's resurrection that he might proclaim peace to the nations which were aliens from the kingdom of God: and therefore he prohibited the Apostles, at that time, from scattering anywhere but in Judea the first seed of doctrine. Justly therefore, does he affirm that, on this occasion, he was sent to the Jews only, till the Gentiles also followed in the proper order. (John Calvin, commentary on Matt. 15:24)

- C. JESUS SENT TO THE JEWS FIRST TO CONFIRM THE PROMISES TO THE PATRIARCHS: ***“May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness<sup>1</sup>, in***

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<sup>1</sup>You will give truth to Jacob And unchanging love to Abraham, Which You swore to our forefathers From the days of old. (Micah 7:20 NASB) Micah 7:20  
The faithful confirm here the former truth, that God had deposited his covenant with them, which could not be made void: and hence also shines forth more clearly what I have said before, that the faithful do not learn by their own understanding what sort of Being God is, but embrace the mercy which he offers in his own word. Except God then speaks, we cannot form in our own minds any idea of his grace but what is uncertain and vanishing; but when he declares that he will be merciful to us, then every doubt is removed. This is now the course which the Prophet pursues.

He says, Thou wilt give truth to Jacob, mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn to our fathers; as though he said, “We do not presumptuously invent any thing out of our own minds, but receive what thou hast once testified to us; for thy will has been made known to us in thy word: relying then on thy favor, we are persuaded as to thy gratuitous pardon, though we are in many respects guilty before thee.” We now then understand the design of the Prophet.

As to the words, it is not necessary to dwell on them, for we have elsewhere explained this form of speaking. There are here two expressions by which the Prophet characterizes the covenant of God. Truth is mentioned, and mercy is mentioned. With respect to order, the mercy of God precedes; for he is not induced otherwise to adopt us than through his goodness alone: but as God of his own will has with so great kindness received us, so he is true and faithful in his covenant. If then we desire to know the character of God's covenant, by which he formerly chose the Jews, and at this day adopts us as his people, these two things must be understood, that God freely offers himself to us, and that he is constant and true, he repents not, as Paul says, as to his covenant: The gifts and calling of God, he says, are without repentance, ([Rom 11:29](#);) and he refers to the covenant, by which God adopted the children of Abraham.

**order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, 'Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name.' And again it is said, 'Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people.' And again, 'Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples extol him.' And again Isaiah says, 'The root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles; in him will the Gentiles hope.'" (Romans 15:5-12 ESV, emphasis mine)**

1. Verse **8**. *Now I say, that Jesus Christ, etc.* He now shows that Christ has embraced us all, so that he leaves no difference between the Jews and the Gentiles, except that in the first place he was promised to the Jewish nation, and was in a manner peculiarly destined for them, before he was revealed to the Gentiles. But he shows, that with respect to that which was the seed of all contentions, there was no difference between them; for he had gathered them both from a miserable dispersion, and brought them, when gathered, into the Father's kingdom, that they might be one flock, in one sheepfold, under one shepherd. It is hence right, he declares, that they should continue united together, and not despise one another; for Christ despised neither of them. He then speaks first of the Jews, and says, that Christ was sent to them, in order to accomplish the truth of God by performing the promises given to the Fathers: and it was no common honor, that Christ, the Lord of heaven and earth, put on flesh, that he might procure salvation for them; for the more he humbled himself for their sake, the greater was the honor he conferred on them. But this point he evidently assumes as a thing indubitable. The more strange it is, that there is such effrontery in

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He says now, *Thou wilt give*, that is, show in reality; for this, to give, is, as it were, to exhibit in effect or really. *Thou will then give*, that is, openly show, that thou hast not been in vain so kind to us and ours, in receiving them into favor. How so? Because the effect of thy goodness and truth appears to us.

*Thou hast then sworn to our fathers from the days of old.* The faithful take for granted that God had promised to the fathers that his covenant would be perpetual; for he did not only say to Abraham, I will be thy God, but he also added, and of thy seed for ever. Since, then, the faithful knew that the covenant of God was to be perpetual and inviolable, and also knew that it was to be continued from the fathers to their children, and that it was once promulgated for this end, that the fathers might deliver it as by the hand to their children; they therefore doubted not but that it would be perpetual. How so? *for thou hast sworn to our fathers*; that is, they knew that God not only promised, but that having interposed an oath, by which God designed to confirm that covenant, he greatly honored it, that it might be unhesitatingly received by the chosen people. As then the faithful knew that God in a manner bound himself to them, they confidently solicited him, really to show himself to be such as he had declared he would be to his own elect.

some fanatical heads, that they hesitate not to regard the promises of the Old Testament as temporal, and to confine them to the present world. And lest the Gentiles should claim any *excellency* above the Jews, Paul *expressly* declares, that the salvation which Christ has brought belonged by covenant to the Jews; for by his coming he fulfilled what the Father had formerly promised to Abraham, and thus he became the minister of that people. It hence follows that the old covenant was in reality spiritual, though it was annexed to earthly types; for the fulfillment, of which Paul now speaks, must necessarily relate to eternal salvation. And further, lest any one should cavil, and say, that so great a salvation was promised to posterity, when the covenant was deposited in the hand of Abraham, he expressly declares that the promises were made to the Fathers. Either then the benefits of Christ must be confined to temporal things, or the covenant made with Abraham must be extended beyond the things of this world.

2. Verse 9. *The Gentiles also*, (446)<sup>2</sup> *etc.* This is the second point, on proving which he dwells longer, because it was not so evident. The first testimony he quotes is taken from [Psa 18:49](#); which psalm is recorded also in [2Sa 22:50](#), where no doubt a prophecy is mentioned concerning the kingdom of Christ; and from it Paul proves the calling of the Gentiles, because it is there promised, that a confession to the glory of God should be made among the Gentiles; for we cannot really make God known, except among those who hear his praises while they are sung by us. Hence that God's name may be known among the Gentiles, they must be favored with the knowledge of him, and come into communion with his people: for you may observe this everywhere in Scripture, that

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<sup>2</sup>(446) The construction of this first sentence is differently viewed. [[Grotius](#)] and [[Stuart](#)] connect it with "I say" at the beginning of the former verse; but [[Beza](#)] and [[Pareus](#)] connect it with the last clause, and consider  $\epsilon\iota\tau\omicron$  as being here understood: and this seems to be the best construction. Christ became the minister of the circumcision, a minister under the Abrahamic economy, for two objects, that he might confirm the promises made to the Fathers, — and that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. Mercy was destined to come to the Gentiles through the covenant made with Abraham, of which circumcision was the sign and seal. The promise, "In thee shall the nations of the earth be blessed," was made to Abraham, and not to the Gentiles. Hence it is called "mercy" to them, there being to previous promise made distinctly *to them*, while the same mercy as to the Jews is called "truth," because it was the fulfillment of a promise. A remarkable instance of this difference, noticed by [[Haldane](#)], is found in [Mic 7:20](#). What is said to be "mercy" to Abraham, to whom the promise was first made, is said to be "truth" to Jacob, to whom it was confirmed. It may also, by the way, be observed, that this verse in Micah affords an example of what we often find in Paul's style; for in mentioning two or more things, he often reverses the regular order. What Micah mentions first is "truth" to Jacob, and then he goes back to God's "mercy" to Abraham.— *Ed.*

God's praises cannot be declared, except in the assembly of the faithful, who have ears capable of hearing his praise. (John Calvin, commentary on Rom. 15:8-9)

D. **WHY GOD CHOSE ABRAHAM: “*The LORD said, ‘Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring to Abraham what he has promised him.’” (Genesis 18:17-19 ESV)***

1. Verse 19. For I know him, that he will command his children. The second reason why God chooses to make Abraham a partaker of his counsel is, because he foresees that this would not be done in vain, and without profit. And the simple meaning of the passage is, that Abraham is admitted to the counsel of God, because he would faithfully fulfill the office of a good householder, in instructing his own family. Hence we infer, that Abraham was informed of the destruction of Sodom, not for his own sake alone, but for the benefit of his race. Which is carefully to be observed; for this sentence is to the same effect, as if God, in the person of Abraham, addressed all his posterity. And truly, God does not make known his will to us, that the knowledge of it may perish with us; but that we may be his witnesses to posterity and that they may deliver the knowledge received through us, from hand to hand, (as we say,) to their descendants. Wherefore, it is the duty of parents to apply themselves diligently to the work of communicating what they have learned from the Lord to their children. In this manner the truth of God is to be propagated by us, so that no one may retain his knowledge for his own private use; but that each may edify others, according to his own calling, and to the measure of his faith. There is however no doubt, that the gross ignorance which reigns in the world, is the just punishment of men's idleness. For whereas the greater part close their eyes to the offered light of heavenly doctrine; yet there are those who stifle it, by not taking care to transmit it to their children. The Lord therefore righteously takes away the precious treasure of his word, to punish the world for its sloth. The expression after him is also to be noticed; by which we are taught that we must not only take care of our families, to govern them duly, while we live; but that we must give diligence, in order that the truth of God, which is eternal, may live and flourish after our death; and that thus, when we are dead, a holy course of living may survive and remain. Moreover, we hence infer, that those narratives which serve to inspire terror, are useful to be known. For our carnal security requires sharp stimulants whereby we may be urged to the fear of God. And lest any one should suppose that this kind of doctrine belongs only to strangers, the Lord specially appoints it for the sons of Abraham, that is, for the household of the Church. For those

interpreters are infatuated and perverse, who contend that faith is overturned if consciences are alarmed. For whereas nothing is more contrary to faith than contempt and torpor; that doctrine best accords with the preaching of grace, which so subdues men to the fear of God, that they, being afflicted and famishing, may hasten unto Christ.

*And they shall keep the way of the Lord.* Moses intimates, in these words, that the judgment of God is proposed, not only in order that they who, by negligence, please themselves in their vices, may be taught to fear, and that being thus constrained, they may sigh for the grace of Christ; but also to the end that the faithful themselves, who are already endued with the fear of God, may advance more and more in the pursuit of piety. For he wills that the destruction of Sodom should be recorded, both that the wicked may be drawn to God, by the fear of the same vengeance, and that they who have already begun to worship God, may be better formed to true obedience. Thus the Law avails, not only for the beginning of repentance, but also for our continual progress. When Moses adds, to do justice and judgment, he briefly shows the nature of the way of the Lord, which he had before mentioned. This, however, is not a complete definition; but from the duties of the Second Table, he briefly shows, by the figure *synecdoche*<sup>3</sup>, what God chiefly requires of us. And it is not unusual in Scripture, to seek a description of a pious and holy life, from the Second Table of the Law; not because charity is of more account than the worship of God, but because they who live uprightly and innocently with their neighbors, give evidence of their piety towards God. In the names of justice and judgment he comprehends that equity, by which to every one is given what is his own. If we would make a distinction, *justice* is the name given to the rectitude and humanity which we cultivate with our brethren, when we endeavor to do good to all, and when we abstain from all wrong, fraud, and violence. But *judgment* is to stretch forth the hand to the miserable and the oppressed, to vindicate righteous causes, and to guard the weak from being unjustly injured. These are the lawful exercises in which the Lord commands his people to be employed.

*That the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.* Moses intimates that Abraham should become possessed of the grace promised to him, if he instructed his children in the fear of the Lord, and governed his household well. But under the person of one man, a rule common to all the pious is delivered: for they who are negligent in this part of their duty, cast off or suppress, as much as in them lies, the grace of

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<sup>3</sup>SYNEC'DOCHY, n. [Gr. to take.] In rhetoric, a figure or trope by which the whole of a thing is put for a part, or a part for the whole; as the genus for the species, or the species for the genus, &c.

God. Therefore, that the perpetual possession of the gifts of God may remain to us, and survive to posterity, we must beware lest they be lost through our neglect. Yet it would be false for any one hence to infer, that the faithful could either cause or deserve, by their own diligence, that God should fulfill those things which he has promised. For it is an accustomed method of speaking in Scripture, to denote by the word *that* the consequence rather than the cause. For although the grace of God alone begins and completes our salvation; yet, since by obeying the call of God, we fulfill our course, we are said, also in this manner, to obtain the salvation promised by God. (John Calvin, Gen. 18:19)