

Matt 28:16–20 and the Course of Mission
in the Apostolic and Postapostolic Age¹

by

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For Ulrich Luz on his 60th birthday on February 23, 1998

The end of the Gospel of Matthew is a fascinating text. It is not just “the key” to the Gospel of Matthew² but also is of eminent importance for the understanding of the mission to the Gentiles (in the period) between the Exaltation and Parousia (Second Coming) of Jesus Christ. It is therefore regrettable that critical exegesis still has not yet gained any clear picture concerning the message, redactional function, and significance of this meaningful text for the course of mission in the apostolic and postapostolic age. It still vacillates between two possible explanations which Annette Merz and Gerd Theißen compare in their textbook “Der historische Jesus”³ as follows: If one reckons with a “strong anti-Jewish attitude of the Evangelist Matthew”, then his portrayal of the Easter event becomes “an indictment against Judaism (and a defense against the theory circulating among the Jews that the body of Jesus was stolen). Easter is the ‘sign of Jonah’ which is given (27:63 refers back to 12:40) to this ‘evil and adulterous generation’”, and “it is here that mission efforts begin to turn to the Gentiles. The command to missionize, heretofore restricted to Israel, is expanded universally and is now valid for all peoples (πᾶντα τὰ ἔθνη, 28:19f.)”. Or, one reckons with no such attitude of the Evangelist. Then “the Risen One appears as ruler of the universe, to whom all authority in heaven and on earth is

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² OTTO MICHEL, “Der Abschluss des Matthäusevangeliums,” *EvT* 10 (1950/51) 21 (16–26).

³ Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2nd ed., 1997.

given", his "superior power is apparent in the fact that the conspiracy of the powerful *from the Jews and from the Gentiles* (the high priests and Roman soldiers) cannot harm him"; from 28:20 it can even be said: "The Gospel of Matthew wishes to make the *Jewish Torah* as interpreted by Jesus binding in the form of his commandments for all peoples, Jews and Gentiles."⁴ In view of the synchronic and diachronic dimensions of Matt 28:16–20, the alternative could also be described as follows: In order to interpret the text as the conclusion of Matthew's Gospel, its individual statements appear to have to be critically questioned and interpreted anew, and if one lets the individual statements stand unaltered, then essential elements of Matthean interpretation start to totter, together with the picture which biblical scholarship has drawn of the history of the early Christian mission.

To illustrate the dilemma and, if possible, to surmount some difficulties of the interpretation of the text, four steps are to be taken: First the text with its problems will be discussed in detail, then, we will ask questions concerning the framework of the tradition in which it is to be understood; after this, we will come back once again to the message of Matt 28:16–20, and finally, this message will be connected to the development of the Jewish and Gentile missions as it is attested to in the Pauline letters and in Acts.

1. The Text and its Problems

Matt 28:16–20 does not present any great *text critical* problems. The text of the 27th edition of Nestle-Aland offers the best available version at present. This is also true for v. 19, where the aorist is not to be read as in B and D, but, rather, the present tense form βαρτίζοιτες, and all major sources present the reading of the triadic formula "in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit".

The *translation* is much more difficult because philological questions and interpretive problems overlap here. For example, should one render of δέ in v. 17b with "but they" or with "some of them"? Matthew uses of δέ very often and mostly combines it with a change of subjects (cf. 2:5-9; 4:22; 8:12-27 etc.). Because such a change is not present in 28:17, it is likely that of δέ refers to all eleven disciples and one could think that all of them doubled (cf. Luke 24:37).⁵ However, with of δέ, the Evangelist can also distinguish within a group between the one and the other (cf. 26:67). According to this linguistic usage he would differentiate in 28:17 (similar to John 20:24–25) between some disciples

⁴ Ibid. (cf. n. 3) 429, italics in the original.

⁵ Cf. DONALD A. HAGNER, *Matthew 14–28* (WBC 33B; Dallas: Word Books, 1995) 884. He cites a whole list of exegetes who hold the same view as he.

who doubt and others who do not.⁶ This understanding is chosen by, e.g., Eduard Schweizer⁷ and Robert H. Gundry.⁸ The verb διορθέειν, which appears in the entire NT only in 14:31 and here (Matt 28:17), means "to doubt", or "to be uncertain". If one refers this "doubt" to the appearance of the Risen One, which Luke 24:38 and John 20:25–27 suggest, then the overcoming of doubt only by Jesus' words in v. 18 identifies our text as a late appearance story.⁹ But if the doubt (as in Matt 14:31) signals a weakness of faith of all eleven disciples (see below), there is no reason for a late date (of the tradition) of our passage. – Verses 18b and 19b are best understood as a fulfillment of Dan 7:13–14.¹⁰ But some have also tried to keep the thought of Daniel 7 away from the text because Daniel has a theocratic understanding of power, whereas Matthew has one which is based on a theological understanding of creation, and mission is not to be connected with the seizure of power, but, rather, with the guarantee of salvation.¹¹ One cannot, though, use Matt 24:14 to support this view of missions. It is not by coincidence that this passage states that the Gospel of the Kingdom of God is to be passed on εἰς μακρότιον πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν. That means: the peoples of the world shall be confronted with the Gospel in such a way that they cannot say on Judgment Day that they had not heard anything about this message. – According to Ulrich Luz, πάντα τὰ ἔθνη in v. 19a must be rendered: "all Gentiles"¹², whereas Joachim Gnlika and Donald Hagner in their commentaries and Hans Kvalbein¹³ contradict him and include Israel in πάντα τὰ ἔθνη; they all translate this as "all nations". – Furthermore, it is disputed how the aorist imperative μαθητεύσατε is to be connected with the three participles πορευθέντες, βαρτίζοιτες and διδάσκοντες in vv. 19 and 20. Should the command to make disciples of all nations be realized in going (as a precondition) and in the baptizing and teaching (as completion) of the μαθητεύειν?¹⁴ Or, should

⁶ Cf. FRIEDRICH BLASS-ALBERT DEBRUNNER, *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch*, bearb. von FRIEDRICH RENGKOPF (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 14th ed., 1976) § 250,1 and MAX ZERWICK-MARY GROSVENOR, *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 3rd ed., 1988) 99.

⁷ *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (NTD 2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 3rd ed., 1981) 345.

⁸ *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) 594.

⁹ This view has been common since OTTO MICHEL's essay (cf. n. 2) (cf. there pp. 17ff.).

¹⁰ Cf. OTTO MICHEL, *ibid.* (cf. n. 2) 22.

¹¹ Cf. ANTON VÖGTLE, "Das christologische und ekklesiologische Anliegen von Mt 28,18–20" in his book: *Das Evangelium und die Evangelien*. (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1971) 255f (253–272), and JOACHIM GNLIKA, who follows him in his commentary: *Das Matthäusevangelium, II Teil* (HTKNT; Freiburg: Herder, 1988) 508.

¹² Cf. ULRICH LUZ, *The Theology of the Gospel of Matthew* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 139f.

¹³ HANS KVALBEIN, "Has Matthew abandoned the Jews?", 54–57.

¹⁴ JOACHIM GNLIKA, *op. cit.* (cf. n. 11) 508; EDUARD SCHWEIZER, *op. cit.* (cf. n. 7) 348, and DONALD A. HAGNER, *op. cit.* (cf. n. 5) 886f. argue for this understanding of the phrase.

ρογευθέντες and μαθητεύσατε be seen together: "Therefore, go, and make disciples . . ." and, thus, only the present participles βαπτίζοντες and διδασκοντες be understood as a description of μαθητεύειν?¹⁵ – Finally, does the expression σὺν τῷ κόσμῳ, which also appears in Matt 13:39–41 and in 24:3, allude to the judgment of the world and the Parousia of the Son of Man and Judge of the World, or does v. 20 intend to avoid using this majestic title together with a reference to the Parousia?¹⁶

There are also very differing opinions as to the *literary form*, or *genre* of the text. In his days Otto Michel found the enthronement of Jesus Christ described in Matt 28:16–20. However, Gerhard Friedrich pointed out that there were no reliable *religionsgeschichtliche* parallels for the Ancient Near Eastern enthronement ritual presupposed by Michel¹⁷, and Günther Bornkamm objected that, while enthronement ideas were found in the text, its peculiarity lies, however, in the connection of exaltation and mission to the peoples.¹⁸ In addition, Benjamin Jerome Hubbard showed in his dissertation that the end of Matthew is closely related to many Old Testament stories of callings, for example, the calling of Moses (cf. Exod 3:1–4:16) or the calling of Gideon (cf. Judg 6:11–24).¹⁹ In his view, a calling narrative formed along the lines of the Old Testament pattern constitutes the basis of our text, which Matthew revised and to which he added statements about baptism. Hagner is hesitant in approving this suggestion because some basic structural elements of calling narratives are lacking,²⁰ and Hubbard's view made only a "very subjective" impression upon Gnika.²¹ Yet, he can only propose against this the assumption "that Matthew had an Easter account, in which the Resurrected One introduces himself to the disciples as the one whom all authority in heaven and on earth is given, who sends the disciples out to preach the Gospel to all peoples, to baptize in His name, (and possibly, to teach them to keep all things, which he had commanded them)".²² This line of argument does not solve the problem of determining the literary genre, but merely shifts it in the direction of a summary.

¹⁵ This is WALTER GRUNDMANN's view in his commentary: *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (THKNT; Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1968) 578f.

¹⁶ Cf. GÜNTHER BORNKAMM, "Der Auferstandene und der Irdische," in: *Zeit und Geschichte*, Dankesgabe an R. Bultmann zum 80. Geburtstag (ed. by E. Dinkler; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1964) 172, 174 (171–191).

¹⁷ Cf. GERHARD FRIEDRICH: "Die formale Struktur von Mt 28,18–20," *ZTK* 80 (1983) 150 (137–183).

¹⁸ Op. cit. (cf. n. 16) 174f.

¹⁹ Cf. his dissertation, written under the supervision of George W. Nickelsburg: *The Matthean Redaction of a Primitive Apostolic Commissioning: An exegesis of Matthew 28:16–20* (SBLDS 19; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1974).

²⁰ Op. cit. (cf. n. 5) 883.

²¹ Op. cit. (cf. n. 11) 502.

²² Op. cit. (cf. n. 11) 505.

Concerning the *history of the transmission* of Matt 28:16–20, the opinions of scholars once again stand diametrically opposed to one another. Many interpreters want to find a tradition in the text which grew in steps. Heinrich Balz summarizes their opinion precisely when he states that in the baptismal and missionary command of Matt 28 "the quintessence of Matthean theology, condensed in a formal and ceremonial way, converges with the accounts of a post-Easter commissioning of the disciples by the Risen One (John 20:19–23; Mark 16:14–20; Luke 24:36–49), firmly anchored in the oldest tradition."²³

Despite the unanimous text tradition of v. 19b, the question is still discussed whether or not Eusebius of Caesarea had a pre-Matthean version of the text in front of him which contained a baptismal formula including only a single element. Some refer to the phrase frequently appearing in Eusebius' quotation of Matt 28:16–20, "ρογευθέντες μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι μου". Yet, because Eusebius also cites Matt 28:16–20 in five cases in the form familiar to us, the assumption of a pre-Matthean baptismal tradition cannot be proven by reference to him.²⁴

Heinrich Kasting,²⁵ Jack Dean Kingsbury,²⁶ as well as Ulrich Luz²⁷ object to such considerations and point out that the end of Matthew, which is dominated by Matthean terminology and connected in many ways with the Gospel, should first and best be understood as a (purely) redactional construction of the Evangelist; Luz omits only the triadic baptismal formula from this opinion. However, for Ferdinand Hahn the Matthean character of Matt 28:16–20 is certainly no adequate occasion to doubt "that in this text of Matthew, a wider stream of tradition, which was of fundamental importance to most ancient Christendom, . . . was coalesced."²⁸ Robert Gundry concurs with this opinion also.²⁹

Most modern exegetes see *no* possibility to place the text of Matthew (respectively his tradition) at the beginning of the early Christian history of missions: Like Hahn they do not consider Matt 28:16–20 "to be a piece of tradition from which can be drawn any 'historical' information in the modern sense"³⁰, and assign the verses to the period after the destruction of Jerusalem, in which

²³ HEINRICH BALZ, "Mission, Missionstheologie," *EKL* III (3rd ed.) 439 (425–444).

²⁴ The references are listed and discussed by BENJAMIN J. HUBBARD, op. cit. (cf. n. 19) 152.

²⁵ *Die Anfänge der urchristlichen Mission* (BEVT 55; Munich: Kaiser, 1969) 37.

²⁶ "The Composition and Christology of Matt 28:16–20," *JBL* 93 (1974) 573–584, and by the same author: *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975) 75f.

²⁷ Op. cit. (cf. n. 12) 139.

²⁸ FERDINAND HAHN, "Der Sendungsauftrag des Auferstandenen" in: *Fides pro mundi vita*, Festschrift for H. W. Gensichen zum 65. Geburtstag (ed. by Th. Sundermeier; Gütersloh: Mohr, 1980) 33 (28–43). The article is reprinted in: FERDINAND HAHN, *Mission in neutestamentlicher Sicht* (MWF N.F. 8; Erlangen: Erlanger Verlag für Mission und Ökumene, 1999, 11–26).

²⁹ Op. cit. (cf. n. 8) 593ff.

³⁰ Op. cit. (cf. n. 28) 37.

the Church recognized the mission to the Gentiles as its main task. However, there is also the contrary view: Without denying the redaction of Matthew, Robert Gundry defends "the basic authenticity of the Great Commission"³¹ and, for Otto Betz, "the Great Commission of the Resurrected One, which has universal validity (Matt 28:19f.; cf. Matt 16:15f.; Luke 24:47), is in accord with the will of Jesus during his earthly existence and with the eschatological Kairos brought forth by God through the Resurrection/Exaltation (cf. Isa 52:13–53:1; Luke 24:46f.)."³² In fact, the coincidence of the phrase εἰς πάντας τὰ ἔθνη in Matt 28:19 and Luke 24:47 is quite conspicuous. The only major difference between Matt 28:16–20 and Luke 24:44–49 lies therein that the missionary instructions given by the exalted Christ occur in Galilee in the one and in Jerusalem in the other Gospel. The differing statements as to location must be explained precisely if one sees old tradition worked on in Matt 28:16–20.

Ulrich Luz would like to see Matt 28:16–20 as a *programmatic text* when he writes: "The Great Commission includes two catchwords from 10:5–6, *po-reueshathai* ('to go') and *ethnē* ('heathens'). In other words, Matthew returns to Jesus' instruction of 10:5–6 and changes and enlarges it. After Easter, he seems to be saying, the resurrected Lord no longer sends his disciples to Israel, or exclusively to Israel, but now to the heathens as well."³³ The Great Commission marks, thereby for Luz "a volte-face: from now on the disciples are to turn to the Gentiles. On the surface of the story, 'now' means Easter. But to Matthew's original readers 'now' referred to their own day, a time when the Gentile mission was apparently still a new or controversial task for the community. Having failed in Israel, the community has been assigned a new task by its Lord."³⁴ Luz also understands 24:14 in the same sense.³⁵ The missionary effort to the Gentiles propagated by Matthew, according to Luz, included, rather than excluded "obedience to the Law"; the Jewish Christian opponents of Paul in Galatia as well as Justin, in his Dialogue with Trypho, 47:2, indeed attest to a Jewish Christianity which was observant to the Torah.³⁶ Hans Kvalbein, however, objects to this entire view. In his opinion, the Evangelist did not with Matt 28:16–20 wish to fundamentally correct the tradition in Matt 10:5–6 of the sending out of the disciples, which is open up until the present, but, rather, only wanted to complete it.³⁷ Nor does Donald Hagner see in Matt 28:16–20 any proof reference for a programmatic turning away from the mission to the Jews.³⁸

Hans Kvalbein, moreover, points out that Justin still attests to the continuation of an active mission to the Jews around 160 CE (cf. *Dial.* 39:1f.).³⁹ Because of the fact that in Justin prayers for the conversion of Jews can still be found (cf. *Dial.* 35:8; 96:3; 108:3; 133:6),⁴⁰ and, in addition to this, there are traces all throughout the entire second century of a mission to the Jews,⁴¹ the question is to be raised whether the position of the Evangelist and his Church suggested by Luz has a setting ('Sitz im Leben') in the history of early Christian missions at all (see below).⁴²

The *introductory verse* of our text seems to be entirely puzzling. No commentator can exactly say for certain what Jesus' announcement in Matt 26:32 (cf. with Mark 14:28) means, when he states: "After my resurrection I will go ahead of you to Galilee", and why the disciples are ordered in Matt 28:7, 10 (cf. with Mark 16:7) to go to Galilee, where they would then see the Risen One. It remains open, who or what occasioned the *παθῆραι* to follow these instructions and to present themselves in Galilee on the mountain (of which is not yet spoken in Matt 26:32; 28:7, 10, but only in 28:16). Three alternative explanations have been offered. The first is from Ernst Lohmeyer. In his monograph "Galiläa und Jerusalem"⁴³ and in the fragments of his unfinished commentary on Matthew⁴⁴, he utters the opinion that for Mark Galilee was still the place of the imminent Parousia of Christ and then was chosen by Matthew "to be the motherland of all disciples . . ." Hans von Campenhausen objected to Lohmeyer in stating that ὄψεσθε in Mark 16:7 and Matt 28:7 (likewise ὄψομαι in Matt 28:10) is not to be connected with the Parousia, but, rather, with the appearance(s) of Jesus which took place in Galilee; besides this, one must reckon seriously and historically with the possibility that "the disciples really set out from Jerusalem under the leadership of Peter and travelled to Galilee".⁴⁵ There can be little objecting to this line of reasoning, if one does not hold the view that the

³⁹ Op. cit. (cf. n. 13) 56.

⁴⁰ Cf. for the context of these references GEORGE KRETSCHMAR: "Das christliche Leben und die Mission in der frühen Kirche," in: *Kirchengeschichte als Missionsgeschichte*, Vol. 1: Die Alte Kirche (ed. by H. Frohnes and U. W. Knorr; Munich: Kaiser, 1974) 123 (94–128).

⁴¹ OSKAR SKARSAVNE confirms Kvalbein's view and gives still further patristic references for the continuation of the mission to the Jews; cf. his contribution to this volume: "The mission to the Jews – a closed chapter? Some patristic reflections concerning 'the Great Commission,'" pp. 69–83.

⁴² In view of these references, I can no longer agree with Luz as I did earlier in my *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, Vol. 1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2nd ed., 1997) 215f. as well as in my essay: "Kirche nach dem Neuen Testament," *TBei* 26 (1995) 315 (301–325).

⁴³ (FRLANT), N.F. 34; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1936) 101f.

⁴⁴ *Das Evangelium des Matthäus. Nachgelassene Ausarbeitungen und Entwurfe zur Übersetzung und Erklärung* von ERNST LOHMEYER. (Prepared for publication and edited by WERNER SCHMAUCH, KEK.S.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 4th ed., 1967); the following quote is found on p. 423.

⁴⁵ *Der Ablauf der Osterereignisse und das leere Grab* (SHAW/PH 1958, 2. Abh.; Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 3rd ed., 1966) 48.

³¹ Op. cit. (cf. n. 8) 596.

³² "Mission III. Neues Testament," *TRE* 23, 25 (23–31).

³³ Op. cit. (cf. n. 12) 16.

³⁴ *Ibid.* (cf. n. 12) 140.

³⁵ *Ibid.* (cf. n. 12) 140, n. 13.

³⁶ *Ibid.* (cf. n. 12) 17.

³⁷ Op. cit. (cf. n. 13) 55.

³⁸ Op. cit. (cf. n. 5) 886ff.

Easter stories can or may not at all be evaluated historically. This remains true even against Luz's attempt to understand the appearance of Jesus on the mountain in Galilee from the quotation in Matt 4:15–16 (cf. with Isa 8:23–9:1 [ET: 9:1–2]). Luz sees in this quotation a redactional "signal", which points toward the end of the Gospel: The earthly ministry of Jesus, which was concentrated upon Galilee, would, in effect, "come to benefit the Gentiles".⁴⁶ This explanation is problematic because Galilee was a Jewish homeland during the entire first century and, before 70 CE, even a center of Zealot movements and, after the destruction of Jerusalem, the seat of important Jewish scholars.⁴⁷ Galilee is, therefore, rather poorly suited as a symbol for the Church's departure to the mission to the Gentiles. What, then, does the statement about the location mean?

We see, after all, that the end of Matthew's Gospel puzzles the exegetes in many ways, and our overview shows also that modern historical critical study of Matthew has not yet found historically and theologically satisfying solutions for these problems.

2. The Traditio-historical Framework of the Text

If we do not simply let the exegetical problems lie unsolved, we should proceed now in the direction which *Harimut Gese* showed in the doctoral seminar on the Psalms in the New Testament, which I had the privilege of holding with him in the summer of 1997. We went into Matt 28:16–20 in one of the sessions because Gese, in his lectures on the Psalms and also in his publications, had made certain observations on the understanding of Mark 14:28 (Matt 26:32): 16:7 (Matt 28:7, 10) and on the perspectives of the early Christian mission, which merit the attention of New Testament exegetes.⁴⁸ An exegetical premise for looking at our text in the way of Gese is the fact, which cannot easily be disputed, that the end of Matthew is a piece of Jewish-Christian tradition and must be seen within the perspectives of the tradition of the Old Testament which is open to the New Testament. The parts of this tradition which made up the *Fest of Tabernacles*, celebrated annually in Jerusalem until the year 70 CE, are especially interesting for the interpretation of Matt 28:16–20. This feast, connected with a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, was very popular in ancient Judaism, and its traditions were commonly known among the Jews.

⁴⁶ Op. cit. (cf. n. 12) 29.

⁴⁷ Cf. MARTIN HENGEL, "Die Ursprünge der christlichen Mission," *NTS* 18 (1971/72) 27, n. 42 (15–28); RAINER RIENSNER, "Galiläa," *Das Große Bibellexikon*, Vol. 1 (1987) 406–407; GERD THEISSEN-ANNETTE MERZ, op. cit. (cf. n. 3) 156–170.

⁴⁸ ERICH SCHEURER draws on Gese's observations in the exegetical part of his dissertation: *Altes Testament und Mission* (Gießen/Basel: Brunnen, 1996) 351–411.

If one follows Gese, then the dispute concerning the *genre* of Matt 28:16–20 can be solved first. Hubbard rightly saw that it involves the calling and commissioning of the (Eleven) disciples. The Old Testament narratives of the callings of Moses, Gideon, or Jeremiah consist of three elements. At the beginning is a vision of God or His angel (cf. Exod 3:2–6; Judg 6:12) and a commission is given (cf. Exod 3:10; Judg 6:14; Jer 1:5). This order is met by objections from the ones concerned: Moses does not feel up to the task and explains that he is incapable of speaking (cf. Exod 3:11; 4:10), Gideon thinks that he cannot save Israel because his clan is the weakest in Manasseh (cf. Judg 6:15), and Jeremiah fights against his calling because he cannot speak and is too young (cf. Jer 1:6). In spite of these objections, the commission is repeated in all three cases, and reaffirmed by the phrase promising God's assistance, "I am with you" (cf. Exod 3:12; Judg 6:16 and Jer 1:8). It states that God is at work in and through the ones He has commissioned. In Matt 28:16–20, these three elements reappear: In vv. 16–17a, we find the location, vision, and worship of the Exalted Christ. The Risen One presents Himself to the hesitating disciples as the Son of Man who has been given the rights of universal lordship (vv. 17b–18), and issues them the global commission to be sent out in vv. 19–20a, and in v. 20b he reinforces it with the phrase promising assistance to them. This threefold structural parallel to the Old Testament accounts extends far enough to see in Matt 28:16–20 a *commission story*, which wants to lay the foundation for the post-Easter apostolic mission.

Moreover, *the introductory verse*, Matt 28:16, can be explained amazingly well if one considers the text from the viewpoint of the Old Testament. This view is confirmed by John 10:1–18, and it is quite possible that John, in his discourse on the Good Shepherd, intends to comment on the facts which will be referred to now. One must begin with Jesus' last prophecy concerning His death in Mark 14:26–31 (Matt 26:30–35). On His final walk to the Mount of Olives Jesus reminds His disciples of the fate of death mapped out for the Messianic Shepherd of Israel by God in Zech 13:7 and of the dispersion of the flock of sheep (i.e., Israel and the *judhrai*), which is imminent. The quotation of Zech 13:7 in Mark 14:27 (Matt 26:31) follows the Masoretic Text closely and fits as superbly with Jesus' own understanding of Himself as Messiah as with the context of suffering foreseen by Jesus, the Messianic Son of God. According to Zech 13:8–9, two-thirds of the herd will perish, but the final third will be purified through the judgment and become God's new people that call out: "Yahweh is my God" (cf. likewise also Hos 2:25 [ET: 2:23]). In Mark 14:28 (Matt 26:32), Jesus contrasts the prophecy of death and judgment with the announcement that He will go on ahead of His disciples to Galilee after His resurrection. The verb *progoρευειν* can be applied to the notion of the Messianic Shepherd from John 10:4, 27. The disciples are to follow Jesus, who goes on ahead of them (like Israel follows Yahweh in Hos 11:10). Or, as John 10:3–4 phrases it: Like the one God leads Israel as a shepherd (cf. Ps 80:2) and, as King, goes ahead of His

people through the gate, in order to reestablish Israel (cf. Mic 2:12–13), so Jesus will do the same after His resurrection. He will go before His sheep as divine Shepherd, will gather and unite them with the other $\pi\alpha\rho\theta\alpha\tau\alpha$, which do not belong to Israel, but to the many nations, which will then once and for all form with Israel the people of God (cf. John 10:16 with Zech 2:15 [ET: 2:11], see below). Jesus' going on to Galilee is a symbolic act (as they are also otherwise characteristic for the Jesus tradition, cf. e.g., the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem and the so-called Cleansing of the Temple, Mark 11:1–11, 15–17par.).

Jesus' proceeding to Galilee involves the symbolic restoration of (Greater) Israel after the catastrophe of judgment which has come upon the shepherd and his flock. Jeremiah's Book of Consolations, Jer 30:1–31:40, as well as Ps 80 and Mic 2:12–13 speak of the reestablishment of Israel in the sense of the United Monarchy under David and Solomon. The territories of the tribes of Manasseh, Ephraim, and Benjamin, which had been separated from Judah since the end of the eighth century BCE and resettled by foreigners, will belong once again to Israel. Jer 31:10 says: "The one who scattered Israel will gather her up again and protect her as a shepherd does his sheep." Also Ps 80 speaks of the divine Shepherd: In vv. 2–3 (ET: vv. 1–2), Yahweh is implored: "Hear us, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock, you who sit enthroned between the cherubim, shine forth before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh" (NIV), and in v. 18 (ET: v. 17), Yahweh is entreated to let His hand "rest on the man at your right hand, the son of man" (that is, the Davidic Messiah), so that He can reestablish the greater Davidic kingdom heretofore destroyed. One look at the map shows that the territories of Benjamin and Ephraim separate the tribal area of Judah from the part of Israel which we call Galilee, while Manasseh includes broad regions east of the Jordan River. When Yahweh shines forth upon Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh and the Messiah is successful in His work, then Israel will be restored to her old boundaries.⁴⁹ Jerusalem will then be rebuilt and the promise of Zech 2:14–15 (ET: 2:10–11) will be fulfilled: "'Shout and be glad, O Daughter of Zion. For I am coming, and I will live among you,' declares the LORD. 'Many nations (MT: עַמֵּי עַרְבָּי; LXX: ἔθνη τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ) will be joined with the LORD (LXX: ἐπι τὸν κύριον) in that day and will become my people.'" (NIV) When this is related to Matt 28:16, it means that when the exalted Christ goes on before His disciples to Galilee, he is not just returning to

⁴⁹ In post-exilic times "God is really reminded of the fulfillment of the irrevocable covenant of David (Ps 89), and this Son of Man, as it is written in Ps 80:18 (ET: v. 17), i. e., this definite person, who, as is said later, sits at the right hand of God, is expected as the Restorer of all of Israel with its northern part (one may compare this with how the Risen One goes ahead of his disciples to Galilee in Mark 16:7par.), and, according to Ps 84 we find as the goal of every pilgrimage to Zion the procession around the sanctuary, where the theophany is viewed as the culmination (v. 8 [ET: v. 7]), whereupon then the prayer for this one Messiah follows (vv. 9f. [ET: vv. 8f.])" (HARTRICH Gestz, "Alttestamentliche Hermeneutik und christliche Theologie," *Beihft zur ZTK* 9 [1995] 78 [65–81]).

the country where He began His activity, but He is appearing also and especially as the representative of the divine $\beta\alpha\sigma\iota\lambda\epsilon\iota\alpha$ in the region of the northern districts of Greater Israel, which were formerly inundated with Gentiles (cf. 2 Kgs 15:29), and, therefore called $\text{I } \alpha\lambda\lambda\epsilon\iota\alpha \tau\omega\upsilon \acute{\epsilon}\theta\nu\omega\upsilon$ (MT: עִמְּתָר עַרְבָּי) in Isa 8:23 (ET: 9:1). If one sees this soteriological and eschatological context, then one can say that the exalted Christ, with his announcement of going to Galilee, and the instruction to follow and meet him there, and with his appearance on the mountain initiates the *eschatological restoration of Greater Israel*. Not only had post-exilic Judaism put its hope in this, but Jewish Christianity as well. Besides Acts 1:6; 3:21 (and Luke 24:21), this is also verified by old texts from the book of Revelation, especially Rev 7:4–8; 21:9–22:5.⁵⁰ The fulfillment quotation of Isa 8:23–9:1 (ET: 9:1–2)) in Matt 4:15–16 (its conformity to the Masoretic Text is not coincidental) points ahead, in my opinion, not to the mission to the Gentiles (as Ulrich Luz points out)⁵¹, but, rather, it prepares Matt 28:16–20 in a Jewish-Christian manner: *Jesus' going ahead to the 'Galilee of the Gentiles', His appearance before the (eleven) disciples, and their commissioning have all to do with the setting up of the βασιλεία τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ (cf. Acts 1:6) by the exalted Messianic Son of Man*. In the course of human history, ground must still be broken finally for God's βασιλεία, which is represented by the risen Son of Man-Messiah, and these final events shall be prepared by the preaching of the εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας (Matt 24:14) among all peoples. The disciples of Jesus shall go forth to confront all ἔθνη with the Gospel of Christ (cf. Matt 24:14), and make (the elect among) them disciples of Jesus.

It follows that the allusions to Dan 7:13–14 in Matt 28:18–19 are not coincidental. The Exalted Son of Man is the $\text{Κύριος } \pi\alpha\tau\epsilon\rho\omega\upsilon$, to whom $\pi\alpha\sigma\alpha \acute{\epsilon}\theta\nu\omega\tau\alpha \acute{\epsilon}\nu \sigma\upsilon\gamma\alpha\pi\eta\ \kappa\alpha\iota \acute{\epsilon}\pi\iota \tau\eta\varsigma \gamma\eta\varsigma$ is granted. All peoples of this world, without exception, must render homage to Him. Israel is also included among these peoples (cf. the inclusive use of $\pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\alpha \tau\acute{\alpha} \acute{\epsilon}\theta\eta$ in Matt 24:9, 14; 25:32). It only still has predominance over the Gentile peoples in as far as its purified one-third (cf. Zech 13:9) will become the core of the universal people consisting of Jews and Gentiles.⁵² If one translates ἔθνη in 28:19 (with reference to the linguistic usage of the Evangelist in 6:32; 10:5, 18; 12:18, etc.) only as "Gentiles", then one improperly restricts the dominion of the exalted Son of Man.

⁵⁰ Cf. to these texts the important analyses of PETER HINSCHEBERG, *Das eschatologische Israel* (Neukirchen: Neukirchner Verlag, 1999) 166ff., 244ff.

⁵¹ Cf. ULRICH LUZ, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus I* (EKKNT 1/1; Zürich: Benziger and Neukirchen: Neukirchner Verlag, 3rd ed., 1992) 170f.

⁵² This relativizing of the preferred status of Israel most probably shocked the Jewish-Christian readership of the Gospel of Matthew. Cf. DONALD A. HAEGNER, op. cit. (cf. n. 5) 887: "It is shocking now to find Israel thus subordinated and absorbed into the comprehensive reference to the nations. In the now completed salvific work of the Messiah, Israel has accomplished her special role in salvation history. She now too is to enjoy the fruit of that accomplishment as *primus inter pares* (cf. Rom 1:16)." (italics by H.)

According to the Evangelist, the mountain in Galilee is most probably identical to the high mountain upon which Jesus gloriously was revealed to his disciples before his death as the promised Messianic Prophet (cf. Deut. 18:18) and – in good Old Testament style – was called “Beloved Son” by God Himself (cf. Matt. 17:1–9). At that time, Jesus commanded Peter, James, and John to say nothing of their vision until after Jesus rose from the dead. Now (cf. the *ὄψιν* in Matt. 28:19) the time has come, and Jesus, as exalted Son of Man, gives all His disciples the explicit (missionary) command to proclaim His kingdom to the peoples of the world. The horizons of expectation are clearly coherent with Jesus’ intention to gather, with the aid of the Twelve, the eschatological people of God, made up of the twelve tribes. Thereby, he had the Gentile world early in view (cf. Luke 11:2 with Ezek. 36:16–38; Mark 4:30–32 par. and Luke 13:28–29 par.). Matthew emphasizes this relation to the Gentile world in a special way (cf. Matt. 2:1–12; 4:24–5:1). If one takes Mark 12:1–12 par. as well as Luke 22:29–30 (Matt. 19:28) along with this and sees Mark 13:27 par. and 14:62 par. as authentic, then one can add that Jesus, after his Parousia, intends to unite the converted Jews with the elect from many nations at the eschatological thanksgiving meal on Mt. Zion in Jerusalem (cf. Zech. 2:10–16 [ET: 2:6–12]⁵³), and that he has chosen the Twelve to rule the eschatological people of God together with him.

The expectation of the eschatological restoration of Israel, the conversion of the nations, and their pilgrimage to Zion was something which came into the focus of all the Jews (and Jewish Christians) every year anew, when they celebrated the *Feast of Tabernacles* in Jerusalem. It was the one feast of joy in the *Paolaiçia of God*.⁵⁴ From 2 Macc. 10:1–8 one can gather that the Feast of Tabernacles was, in fact, the feast of the restoration of Israel in the late Old Testament period, and Zech. 14:16–19 attests to the definite connection of this feast to the expectation of the pilgrimage of the nations to Zion. The importance of the festival for ancient Judaism is brought out in *Jubilees* 16, in Josephus (*Ant.* VIII 100), and in the Mishna tractate *Sukkah*. From John 7:2 we can see that it also was of significance for the tradition of the Gospels.⁵⁵

⁵³ For the connection between Mark 13:27 and Zech. 2:10–16 cf. CRAIG A. EVANS, “Aspects of Exile and Restoration in the Proclamation of Jesus and the Gospels,” in: *Exile* (ed. J. M. Scott; JSJSup 56, Leiden: Brill, 1997) 324 (299–328).

⁵⁴ Concerning the origin, significance, and content of the Fall Festival in Israel cf. HANNS-JOACHIM KRAUS: *Gottesdienst in Israel* (Munich: Kaiser, 2nd ed., 1962) 79–88. The development of the Feast of Tabernacles from the Old Testament Fall Festival is surveyed by ERNST LUDWIG EHRLICH: *Die Kultsymbolik im Alten Testament und im nachbiblischen Judentum* (SyR 3; ed. by F. Herrmann; Vol. III; Stuttgart: Hersemann, 1959) 52–65.

⁵⁵ HEINRICH KRAFF, *Die Entstehung des Christentums* (Darmstadt: Wiss. Buchgesellschaft, 3rd ed., 1990) 217, points out the water ritual performed at the Feast of Tabernacles (cf. *mSuk.* 4:9–10) and assumes by referring to John 7:37–39 that the first Feast of Tabernacles after Easter was the point in time at which the early Church, for the first time, “brought water from the Gihon Spring or from the Pool of Siloam for their baptism which they performed by pouring”. This assumption cannot easily be covered by referring to John 7:37–39

The details and ceremonies of the Feast of Tabernacles cannot be considered at present. It is merely important here to state that both Israel and the nations were encompassed within the scope of this festival, and how this happened. According to Deut. 32:9, Israel was the portion, or allotted inheritance of the one God. Mount Zion in Jerusalem was the center of this allotted inheritance (cf. Ps 132:13–18). As the King of Israel who dwelled in Zion, the one God was also the King of the nations, whose territorial boundaries He Himself had set up (cf. Deut. 32:8). According to Ps 82:8, the nations are His possession. With respect to the Gentiles, Israel (the Servant of God) had an enormous task: He is to be the light of the nations and is to carry forth the message of God’s *ἡγήνηται*, or *ὁδηγήσει*, to them (cf. Isa 49:6). In Ps 96:2–3 this is repeated: The Israelites were to preach the *εὐαγγέλιον τῆς σωτηρίας* to the peoples (the term *εὐαγγέλιον* was chosen precisely because Ps 96:2 talks about the *ἡγήνηται* of the *ἔθνη*) so that the peoples would learn then to glorify the one God (cf. Ps 96:7). Or, in the words of Psalm 87: The peoples who flock to Zion because of the message of Israel are to learn and find out that they all have been born in Zion. In (Deutero-) Isaiah, and in Psalms 96 and 87 we have the concept of a mission to the nations going forth from Jerusalem with the goal of leading the *ἔθνη* to an understanding of their spiritual origin from Zion. One can label this concept, as Hartmut Gese does, the expectation of the “Israelization of the world”. Whether or not in what way Israel carried out the missionary task given to her, we can leave open in our context.⁵⁶

When one compares Matt. 28:16–20 with all these traditions which were remembered annually at the Feast of Tabernacles, then one sees immediately that the text portrays a *Christological variant of these traditions*. The (Eleven) disciples form the core of the new Israel and are formally commissioned by the exalted Christ to bring the Gospel of the *Paolaiçia of God* to all peoples (cf. Matt. 24:14 with Mark 13:10). Through this apostolic mission all the *ἔθνη* subordinate to the Son of Man shall be confronted with the message of salvation of the *paolaiçia of God* represented by the Risen One already at present and looking toward its completion at the end of history: When the mission has reached its end, then the Son of Man will appear on the clouds of heaven and begin to establish the *paolaiçia tou theou* in spite of the opposition of all the enemies of God. The concluding words of Jesus: “And surely, I am with you always, to the

because in v. 37 Jesus is portrayed as the (Temple) spring or source, and the Giver of the water of life. Moreover, in New Testament times, the Gihon Spring and the Pool of Siloam are identified (cf. Josephus, *Bell.* V 140 among others, and RAINER KRISNER: “Siloah”, *Das Große Bibellexikon*, Vol. III (1989), 1444 (1444–1446)).

⁵⁶ Cf. M. HENGELE-A. M. SCHWEMER, *Paul Between Damascus and Antioch* (London: SCM Press, 1997) 61–76; in the enlarged German edition: *Paulus zwischen Damascus und Antiochien* (WUNT 108; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998) 101–132, and ERICH SCHEURER, op. cit. (cf. n. 48) 384ff.

