



## THE SECOND PENTECOST

*Sarah Hinlicky Wilson*

It was not until recent years that I realized Pentecost was a Jewish festival long before it was a Christian one. The reference in Acts to “when the day of Pentecost arrived” always hit my ears as a biblical tautology: it was the day when the Holy Spirit descended, thus Pentecost, since Pentecost is the day we remember the descent of the Spirit! But the reason the disciples “were all together in one place” (2:1) was to observe Shavuot or the Feast of Weeks, a harvest festival that takes place fifty days after Passover, hence our Christian celebration of it fifty days after Easter. The English word “Pentecost” is from Greek for “fiftieth,” a term coined by Hellenistic Jews; the Hebrew “Shavuot” means “weeks”; both refer to counting the time after Passover.<sup>1</sup>

Scripturally, Pentecost/Shavuot turns to the giving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai and the story of Ruth, the latter because of its seasonal ties to the winter wheat harvest. The juxtaposition of the two is intriguing: the first is what characterizes Israel as an elect and separate nation for the Lord, while the latter commemorates the entrance of a non-Israelite—in fact, a daughter of the hated house of Moab—not only into the heart of the chosen people but into the bloodline of beloved king David. There is a fascinating tension all through the Old Testament as the Jews sort out their status as a nation set apart and yet are forced to acknowledge the LORD’s action among other peoples—sometimes to Israel’s painful disadvantage, as in the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions, and sometimes to Israel’s embarrassment, as when deliverance comes from Cyrus of Persia instead of anything the once-proud Hebrew warriors could manage for themselves.

I suppose, then, that it shouldn’t be entirely surprising how much Christians have adopted this pattern as well, though with a twist. In our ongoing and not always successful (sometimes quite horrible) attempts to define the

relationship between Israel and the church, we often put ourselves into the place of the biblical Jews, with the result that we both displace the Jews from their own status *and* struggle to make sense of “the nations” around us, if we manage to notice them all. We quickly forget the lesson that the vast majority of us Christians are the “wild olive shoot” that was “grafted in” to share in the “nourishing root of the olive tree” (Romans 11:17). Paul warns, “Do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you” (11:18). It seems to me now that our forgetfulness about the origins of Pentecost, in our liturgical observance thereof, is not accidental but points right to the heart of the issue.

A review of the events in Acts 2 will show what I mean. The disciples, minus Judas, plus Matthias, along with the women, Mary, and Jesus’ brothers (1:14) are together inside of a house on the day in question. The Holy Spirit descends with wind and flame, causing the assembly to speak in foreign tongues—so loudly, apparently, that the commotion attracts the interest of passersby on the street! Notice, though, who these men-on-the-street were, precisely: “Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven” (2:5). We often overlook that qualifier in our anxiety to pronounce the roll-call of nations correctly: “Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians.” Every person on this list is either a Jew or an aspiring Jew. Peter’s preaching in the paragraphs to follow confirm this. He speaks to “men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem” (2:14), “men of Israel” (2:22), “brothers” (2:29; not the kind of thing a Jew normally calls a Gentile!), and “all the house of Israel” (2:36). The content of his preaching appeals entirely to the prophecies of the Scripture that

we call the Old Testament; there is no reference to “an unknown God” or Greek poets, such as Paul uses to get the attention of the Athenians in Acts 17. The gospel, at this point, is a message from the Jews and for the Jews. The Gentiles are not on the radar screen at all.

And this is the irony: as largely Gentile Christians, we celebrate Pentecost as the beginning of the church through the inclusion of the nations. But that wasn't really what happened at all. The Jewish diaspora across the known earth was there in microcosm, and *they* were the ones “far off” (2:39) who were called to be saved through repentance and baptism in the name of Jesus Christ. The long list of foreign names refers only to where Jews had settled away from the promised land but has nothing to do with the Gentiles whose lands they were. As a celebration of the church, this Pentecost actually excludes most of us who are in the church now! But since we tend to think of ourselves as Israel 2.0, new and improved, we barely notice our non-appearance in this part of the story.

Of course, Acts has another twenty-six chapters yet to go. Luke unfurls his tale with a very definite plan in mind: the story starts out in the heart of Jewish faith in the risen Lord, but it is always swelling outward in larger and larger rings around its Jerusalem home, with the Gentiles in its sights. Actually, this was already happening in the Gospels. The Book of Acts doesn't spring Gentile faith on the nascent church out of nowhere. Reading the four Gospels with an eye on the Gentiles might help remind us of where we came from and how we got here.

We'll start with Mark, since he almost certainly wrote his Gospel first. In ch. 5 Jesus ventures out of his usual haunts to “the country of the Gerasenes” (v. 1), which was assuredly not populated by Jews, since their livestock was swine. Indeed, Jesus seems to display a peculiarly Jewish sense of humor by sending the demons into

pigs, who then plunge to their death, thereby temporarily depriving the region of unkosher meat. The demoniac, who is forced to spend his days among the tombs of the dead—which would cast him out of pretty much any society, not only the corpse-avoiding Jewish one—knows the visitor instantly as “Jesus, Son of the Most High God” (v. 7). His healing results in the first independent missionary journey of the New Testament (no messianic secret in this case!) as Jesus instructs him to “go home to your friends and tell them how much the

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Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.” And this is not in Jewish territory but in the Decapolis (v. 20), a Greek and Roman region on the eastern side of the Jordan.

Not long after that, in ch. 7, Jesus encounters a woman who is “a Gentile, a Syrophenician by birth” (v. 26), an episode that troubles many on account of Jesus' seeming hardness of heart (and has, unfortunately, inspired the worst sermons I have ever heard from Lutheran pulpits). Not much can be done to soften the blow for contemporary readers, but Jesus' logic here may be illuminated by Paul's in Romans 2: “There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality” (vv. 9–11). Jesus doesn't say that the “dogs” are not to eat at all, only that “the children

be fed first” (v. 27). His mission is first and foremost to Israel (a point Matthew makes clearer in his own version: see 15:24). But the Syrophenician reminds Jesus of the “also the Greek” part. Her insistence on completing the sequence impels Jesus to exorcise the demon from her daughter. She insists vocally on what we Gentile Christians simply take for granted!

Then in the “little apocalypse” of ch. 13, Jesus warns his followers that “you will stand before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them. And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations [*ethnē*, the Septuagint's translation of Hebrew *goyim*]” (vv. 9–10), the only explicit mention of the missionary task in all of this Gospel. But its logical outcome is to be seen in the most unexpected of ways when Jesus, abandoned by his friends and disciples and to all appearances by his heavenly Father as well, breathes his last and is acclaimed by a Gentile, of all people, no less than a Roman centurion who had overseen his miscarried trial and horrifying execution. “Truly this man was the Son of God!” (15:39).

Mark's notice of the Gentiles is modest but unmistakable; it is much the same with John. John's heartache is that the Christ “came to his own, and his own people did not receive him” (1:11). But there are others who do receive him, and slowly they creep their way into the story. The edges are blurred a bit in ch. 4 when Jesus pays a long visit to the Samaritan woman, who disputes with Jesus over ancestral questions but still clearly comes from the same fractious extended family as he does. Later, when Jesus forecasts his ascension, the uncomprehending Jews wonder, “Where does this man intend to go that we will not find him? Does he intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks?” (7:35), which may mean either Jews abroad or their local proselytes. Jesus gives the first and slightest hint of the global mission to come in 10:16 when he says, “I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must

bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd,” but it is clear enough that nobody grasps the import of this just yet.

The real significance of the Gentiles in John only appears at last in ch. 12—but here they are no less than the linchpin of the entire Gospel’s action. Everything changes at this point. Beforehand Jesus had been engaged in his itinerant ministry, coming and going from Jerusalem, but from here on out it is an unflinching road to the cross because his hour has come. There were some false starts regarding this “hour”: Jesus rebuked his mother for prompting the wine miracle in Cana since “my hour has not yet come” (2:4), and two attempts to arrest Jesus failed also because his hour had not yet come (7:30 and 8:20). All along Jesus has been telling his disciples that “the hour is coming” (4:21, 4:23, 5:25, 5:28). So what signals that his hour has finally arrived? “Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, ‘Sir, we wish to see Jesus.’ Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. And Jesus answered them, ‘The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified’” (12:20–23). The moment that the Gentiles finally take notice of Jesus—that is the hour. Jesus’ speech here is followed by the one single time the Father speaks in this Gospel (v. 28); there is no declaration at Jesus’ baptism and no Transfiguration for John. And the result of the coming judgment of the world is that “I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself” (v. 32).

John’s engagement with Gentiles reaches its apex—which is indeed the apex of the entire Gospel’s action—in Jesus’ confrontation with Pilate. There is a sense in which everything after, even the crucifixion and resurrection narrative, is only denouement to the climax of the king of the Jews in tense conversation with the governor of the Gentiles.<sup>2</sup> Pilate is the one who asks

on behalf of all the nations, “What is truth?” while Jesus is the one who offers himself as the answer to every nation’s question. As Mark gives us the irony of the Roman centurion’s faith, John offers us the irony of the chief priests’ self-betrayal in their cry, “We have no king but Caesar” (19:15). Instead, it is the compromised, cowardly politician Pilate who first declares the good news to the wider world by having an inscription written in Aramaic, Latin, and Greek that says, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews” (19:19).

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Matthew and Luke are positively bubbling over with such stories. Matthew starts in ch. 1’s genealogy with a rare mention of a woman, the aforementioned Gentile ancestor of Jesus, namely Ruth. At the same time, both he and Luke make a point of informing the reader that Jesus does not genetically fall into this bloodline. In Matthew the line leads to Joseph, the husband of Mary but most definitely not the father of Jesus (1:16), and likewise Luke tells us that Jesus was “the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, the son of Heli,” carrying on in the opposite direction from Matthew till he reaches “the son of Adam, the son of God” (3:23, 28). Bizarre as this seems at first blush, it is how both evangelists forecast the fact that blood inheritance will no longer to be the mode of inclusion in the chosen people of God. Now it will be adoption—a theme that Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, explores at greater length in Galatians and Romans. Jesus, the “natural-born”

Son of God, is adopted by Joseph into the royal line of Judah, so that Gentiles might be adopted into the house of Israel as well.

Matthew’s Gentile references continue to come fast and thick. He alone has the story of the magi, wise men of Persia or somewhere else to the east, whose astrology leads them to the newborn king. To escape the terrors at home, Joseph takes his young family to Egypt for an extended sojourn. Jesus offers Gentile examples as a negative foil for his teaching in the Sermon on Mount (5:47, 6:7, 6:31–32), yet shortly thereafter assorted Gentiles put on impressive displays of genuine faith. A centurion in Capernaum protests that Jesus doesn’t need to come all the way home to heal his servant, all he needs to do is say the word; Jesus replies, “Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith. I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness” (8:10–12), another adoption motif. Matthew repeats Mark’s story of the demoniac (though the one has turned into two) but this time he holds off on the missionary proclamation: Matthew isn’t quite ready for that just yet and will instead give the disciples pride of place as the first to carry the message, so the Gadarenes just beg Jesus to leave them alone. In the commissioning of the disciples, Jesus tells them to “go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans” (10:5) but to expect that “you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles” (10:18). Matthew also repeats Mark’s story of the Syrophenician woman (though calls her a Canaanite instead) and is as impressed with her faith as the centurion’s.

Matthew quotes from Isaiah to describe Jesus’ ministry in 12:18–21, noting among other things “I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles... and

in his name the Gentiles will hope,” though he actually adds the first reference to the Gentiles and modifies the second a bit (cf. Isaiah 61:1, 11:10). Soon after, Jesus refers to the “sign of Jonah” (12:38–42 and later again in 16:1–4), which we commonly interpret through 12:40, which compares Jonah’s three days in the belly of the fish to Jesus’ three days in “the heart of the earth.” But it even more strongly points to the inclusion of the Gentiles—as Luke’s rendering in 11:29–32, without mention of the fish belly, confirms—because the Gentiles of Nineveh repented at Jonah’s preaching, while Jonah the Jew slunk off to pout. The same goes for the “queen of the South” mentioned just after Jonah, who traveled great distances to listen to the wisdom of Solomon. The parable of the laborers in the vineyard (ch. 20) probably alludes to the late inclusion of the Gentiles in the plan of salvation, despite their lack of credentials or long obedience.

Though not as dramatic as in John, Gentiles hover on the edges of Matthew’s passion narrative as well. Judas’s blood money is used to buy a potter’s field as a burial place for foreigners (27:7). Pilate’s equally Gentile wife recognizes Jesus as a righteous man in a dream (27:19). The centurion (with a few others) appears again, making the same confession of faith, and of course the whole Gospel ends with the mountaintop charge to “go therefore and make disciples of all nations [*ethnē* again]” (28:19).

That brings us to Luke, who has Gentiles on the brain more than any other Evangelist, since he was the one who troubled to write a second volume detailing just how they came to participate in Jesus’ salvation. It does not look promising for them at first. The story starts in the most Jewish fashion possible, with a pious elderly couple mourning their long infertility until an angel interrupts them with good news. Rather more surprising is a virgin’s pregnancy, but her song, modeled on Hannah’s in 1 Samuel, testifies to her Jewishness. The first mention of Gen-

tiles is invasive and hostile, namely Caesar Augustus and Quirinius governor of Syria, whose taxation plans leave this poor Jewish girl to give birth in a strange place far from home. But Simeon puts a different spin on their role: the child born to Mary will be “a light for revelation to the Gentiles,” though he will also cause the “fall and rising of many in Israel” (2:32, 34).

By the time these two baby boys are grown, Tiberius has become Caesar and Pontius Pilate the governor of Judea (3:1). Jesus’ first public self-presentation in the synagogue gets off to a promising start, as he tells

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the assembly that Isaiah’s words have been fulfilled in their presence, and they “marveled at the gracious words coming from his mouth” despite being startled that he is one of their own (4:22). But rather than pressing his advantage, Jesus deliberately provokes them: “I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land, and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian” (4:25–27). This so enrages the people that they try to drive Jesus off a cliff! (He escapes.) In ch. 7 we hear again the story of the centurion

whose servant was sick, with the same greater-than-in-Israel faith, and in ch. 8 the Gerasene demoniac is restored to his role as early evangelist. The “prodigal son” story is probably about the return of the Gentiles to God (and Jewish resentment of their warm welcome), along the same lines as Matthew’s laborers in the vineyard.

Luke also gets in a few good words for the Samaritans, most famously in the Good Samaritan parable but also in the healing of the ten lepers when Jesus asks, “Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?” (17:18), which indicates that the Samaritans were as good as Gentiles to most Jews. Luke’s own “little apocalypse” forewarns that “Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled” (21:24). The Gospel ends with Jesus explaining that “repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem... But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high” (24:47, 49).

Which brings us at long last back to Acts. The descent of the Spirit at Pentecost and the gift of many languages are crucial in restoring a good chunk of Israel to its LORD after the treachery of Jesus’ unjust death on the cross. And the disciples, now apostles, certainly keep busy spreading the word in Jerusalem. But they stay put. It is not until the strange victory of Stephen’s martyrdom that the apostles are “scattered” (8:4) outward. First Philip goes to Samaria, and his work summons Peter and John to help (8:14). But after a preaching journey among the Samaritans they gravitate back home to Jerusalem (8:25). So the Lord has to nudge Philip out again, this time on the southern road to Gaza, where he meets a proselyte from very far away, the Ethiopian eunuch. After baptizing him, Philip finds himself near the coast in the town of Azotus and carries on preaching straight on to Caesarea, but still in areas where there would have been Jews and Samaritans aplenty. By

now the church has expanded beyond Jerusalem proper and flourishes in “all Judea and Galilee and Samaria”(9:31), and a critical change in personnel has taken place, too, with the conversion of Saul. This is the calm before the storm of Acts 10.

For here at last is where we have what I’m calling “the second Pentecost,” namely the event that led to the inclusion of the Gentiles in the salvation of the Jews. “At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort” (v. 1). He is a devout, generous, prayerful man, but he is most certainly not one of the chosen people of Israel. Yet the angel of the LORD appears to him—terrifying him in the process, we are told—and tells him to seek out “one Simon who is called Peter” currently residing in Joppa (v. 5). Peter, meanwhile, is being prayerful, too, and is equally terrified by what he sees: a sheet descending from heaven, filled with unclean animals, accompanied by the order to “rise, Peter; kill and eat” (v. 13). Peter, good Jew that he is, refuses. The voice comes again: “What God has made clean, do not call common” (v. 15).

This alarming vision happens three times in succession.

The whole sequence leaves Peter “inwardly perplexed” (v. 17), to say the least, but the truth of it gradually becomes clear when Cornelius’s servants take him to their master’s house in Caesarea the following day. The centurion is so overwhelmed at Peter’s arrival that he falls down and attempts to worship the apostle, but Peter lifts him up with the assurance that he is a mere mortal like Cornelius. Then Peter takes his first crack at interpreting the vision: “You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean. So when I was sent for, I came without objection. I ask then why you sent for me” (vv. 28–29). Notice that it doesn’t yet occur to Peter to tell Cornelius anything about Jesus the Christ! He’s only gotten as far as sharing the same space and refraining from slanderous remarks.

So Cornelius recounts his side of the story and concludes, “We are all here in the presence of God to hear all that you have been commanded by

the Lord” (v. 33). Peter takes another giant leap forward at this point: “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality” (v. 34). There is no reason *not* to tell the gospel to Cornelius if he wants to hear it. Peter reels off a shortened version of his Pentecost sermon, no accusations necessary this time around. But he can’t quite finish, because “while Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word” (v. 44). The Jewish believers present are amazed because “the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out *even on the Gentiles*” (v. 45)! They even spoke in tongues! Peter then realizes that there really is no difference between the Gentiles and Jews, and so—another big leap here—there is no excuse for withholding baptism from them. Thus the first of the Gentiles receive baptism into Jesus’ name for the forgiveness of sins. It is the second Pentecost: the descent of the Spirit, which came first to the Jew, and now comes to the Greek—or even the Roman.

The acceptance of this new angle on the gospel did not come easy. The Jewish believers back home in Jerusalem were severely displeased with



Peter, and not unreasonably—he had contravened the law, their law, God’s law. Luke is mindful of the gravity of this charge and that’s why he makes such a point of Peter’s vision—it takes place three times in Acts 10 and is repeated in great detail by Peter in Acts 11—because nothing less will cut it. His final remarks on the whole experience with Cornelius stress the surprising similarity between Jews and Gentiles. “As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ If then God gave the same gift to them as He gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God’s way?” (11:15–17). The Jewish believers were so astonished that “they fell silent,” but finally they came around to rejoicing, for “to the Gentiles *also* God has granted repentance that leads to life” (v. 18).<sup>3</sup>

From then on, the mission increases its scope. The apostles still travel to Jewish communities, but they dare to go farther away: Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch (11:19), where Jesus’ followers were first called Christians (11:26) and also where Paul’s ministry undergoes a decisive change: “We are now turning to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, ‘I have set you to be a light for the Gentiles, so that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth’” (13:46–47). Not surprisingly, “when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and praised the word of the Lord” (13:48). The drama continues from there—Jews and Gentiles temporarily co-exist in a new church community, but then jointly turn on Paul and try to stone him—yet after fleeing to several other cities, Paul eventually wends his way back to Antioch and speaks joyfully about how God “had opened a door of faith for the Gentiles” (14:27). This still-surprising fact, and the assertion of some of the Jewish believers that “unless you are circumcised according

to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved” (15:1), prompts the very first council of the church, in Jerusalem, which decides the essential question of whether the Gentile believers will be required to keep the law of Moses. The answer is no; a modest list of suggestions is drawn up in its place. And from then on the Gentile mission only builds in energy and excitement. Acts draws to a reluctant close with Paul headed to bear his witness in Rome, the epicenter of the Gentile world, but it’s not really an ending, for where the Scripture leaves off, church history begins.

The point of this long rehearsal of the Gentiles’ place in the Gospels and Acts is that the church is not Israel! We have not replaced or displaced Israel. The promises are valid because of the God Who made them (Romans 9–11). We misunderstand both Israel and ourselves when we conflate the two. The Pentecost of Acts 2 is the good news brought to the people of Israel, to which some have responded in faith and others have not—exactly like the Gentiles. The “second Pentecost” of Acts 10 is the inclusion of the Gentiles into Israel’s salvation. And this is an ongoing story: it is the story of the mission of the gospel that has proceeded in fits and starts over the past two millennia, with a definite amplification in the past two hundred years. It is a fact that the Christians of “Christendom” have not always taken kindly to new arrivals in the church, or their ways of worship, or their interpretations of the good news they have received, much less the criticisms that newer Christians have sometimes leveled against older ones. That there is conflict should be no surprise: it is one of the oldest church stories we have! But it is hard to see that if we make ourselves Israel. We do better to recognize the ongoing challenge, in both directions, in the encounter of old believers with the new. The Book of Acts and even the Gospels furnish plenty of food for thought on that topic.<sup>4</sup>

Some practical suggestions for reorienting our thinking about Pente-

cost are in order. For one thing, resist the lectionary’s decision to replace the Old Testament lesson with Acts during the Easter season. Nothing says louder, liturgically, that the Jews have been cut off, and that we are grafted into nothing, than the severing of our spiritual roots in this fashion! When the “day of Pentecost” rolls around, certainly preach on Acts 2, but use it as an occasion to remind Christians of the “nourishing root” into which they have been engrafted. Make time to preach on Acts 10 and 11 too, and then follow them up with a series of sermons and Bible studies on the other missions to the Gentiles throughout Acts, which contains some of the most exciting, and hilarious, stories in the entire New Testament (that of the sons of Sceva in ch. 19 is my favorite). And finally, remember Paul’s unshakable hope in Romans 11:11–12: “But through their stumbling salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous. Now if their stumbling means riches for the world, and if their defeat means riches for Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!”

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#### Notes

1. A helpful introduction to Jewish festivals is Arthur Waskow’s *Seasons of Our Joy: A Modern Guide to the Jewish Holidays* (Boston: Beacon, 1982), which explores at length the scriptural accounts of the various holidays as well as later traditions kept by Jews.

2. Surprising confirmation of this observation is to be found in the musical “Jesus Christ, Superstar”: Jesus and Pilate’s exchange is the dramatic highpoint of the show, and everything afterward is a slow winding down of the action—and in this case, there isn’t even a resurrection to offer a counterpoint.

3. I have explored Acts 10 and 11 at length, with some differences in emphasis, in a lectionary-commentary article available online at [www.clcumary.com/6-easter-13-may-2012/](http://www.clcumary.com/6-easter-13-may-2012/) (accessed April 15, 2013).

4. As does Willie James Jennings’s *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), which also discusses the ill effects of the church’s thinking that it has replaced Israel and forgetting the story of the ingrafting of the Gentiles.