

**BEYOND ETHNIC BIAS: AN EXEGETICO-HERMENEUTICAL STUDY OF JOHN
12:20-22**

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Abstract: *Ethnicism is a problem that is as old as the history of humanity. It is believed by many that God created the world but even at the point of creation, boundaries were set. Different cultural settings, languages and skin colours demonstrate this demarcation. It is because of these noticeable disparities that people talk of migration. Relocation to another city or country outside one's nativity makes the person a stranger. Thus, from pre-modern Homo Erectus who first migrated from Africa over the Levantine Corridor and Horn of Africa to Eurasia to Homo Antecessor, Neanderthals and till the contemporary times, human beings are yet to see themselves as one. There is always a great divide, racial discrimination, migration laws, and survival of the fittest mentality. Unfortunately, the bible especially the Old Testament does seem to give credence to the reality of this evil. The wars recorded in the bible are all because of ethnic bias. In some New Testament texts, the story is not very different. This paper settles to open the mind of the readers to Jesus' exemplary attitude. He sees and preaches the brotherhood of all without limitation. The paper after touching the tip of the iceberg on some supportive New Testament texts, uses exegetical tool to argue that Jesus not only did not approve of racism but sees his glory as realized in the salvation of all as children of God. The paper advocates that humanity will be better if we see ourselves as one just as Christ did.*

Introduction

Racial and ethnic bias are two faces of the same coin. Evil winds that blow humanity no good. From pre-modern Homo Erectus who first migrated from Africa over the Levantine Corridor and Horn of Africa to Eurasia about 1.8 million years ago to Homo Antecessor, Neanderthals and till the contemporary times, human beings are yet to see themselves as one. There is always a great divide, racial discrimination, migration laws, wars, ethnic cleansings, colonisation and survival of the fittest mentality. At the level of people localised in the same area, this problem of segregation and division still comes up as ethnicism. Unfortunately, the bible especially the Old Testament does seem to give credence to the reality of this evil. In Gen. 12, Abraham had to leave his father land to another place believably shown to him by God. In Gen. 26, Isaac did not find it easy with the Philistines because he was sojourning in their land. The wars recorded in the bible were all products of ethnic bias. In some New Testament texts, the story is not very different. Emerson B. Powery (2014) talks of ethnic conflict in English Bibles citing Matt. 10: 6 as an example.

Outside the biblical circle and especially in the modern era, humanity is yet to overcome this deadly cancer of ethnicism. It is believed that during the Second World War, Adolf Hitler

exterminated about six million (6,000,000) Jews in what he regarded as racial cleansing sequent to ethnic bias. Until 1967, Law in the United States of America banned inter-racial marriages. Apartheid in South Africa equally banned inter-racial marriages.

Religion is not less guilty of ethnicism and racism. The condemnation of the high morally coated religious belief of Africans as paganism by the Western Missionaries is not unconnected with ethnicism. Most of the gory stories in Nigeria and other parts of the world are always connected with religious upheavals simply because some religions think that they have the sole right to God. The rest are fit to convert or die!

Bible on Equality

The bible upholds the equality of and justice for all. There are some passages that may seem to sound discriminatory, racial or ethnic especially the passages that deal on the Jewish ceremonial or civil laws. It is not within the purview of this paper to delve into such texts. Biblical commentaries contain explanations and interpretations of such passages. This paper insists that both the OT and NT teach the equality of all before God.

Gen. 1:27 is a clear text on the equality of all. It holds that God created all in His image and likeness. He is therefore God and Father to all equally (Mal 2:10). Before Him, there is no Jew or Gentile. Thus, Deut 10:17-18 observes that God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing. In the same vein, Prov. 22:2 argues that the rich and the poor have this in common: the LORD is the maker of them all. Ps 67 calls on the nations to rejoice and sing for joy, because God judges the peoples with equity and guides the nations upon earth. Thus, in Lev. 19:33-34, He warns against every maltreatment or oppression. He says that aliens must be treated as citizens. When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The Prophets talking about God's salvific plan postulates it as covering all nations. Isa 42:6 presents the Servant of God as a light to all nations. The poem of Isa 61:1 spells the possession of the Servant by the spirit of the Lord GOD because he is anointed and sent to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the LORD's favour, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn.

The NT does not differ from the OT in this biblical idea of equality of all. In Matt 24:14 Jesus calms the anxiety of his listeners by assuring them that the good news must get to the ends of the earth before the end would come. This means that all are equally children of God no matter the race and colour and God shows no partiality (Rom 2:11). Jesus presents love of God and neighbour as the greatest of all commandments. He demonstrates the limitless and boundless nature of the exercise of this love with the parable of the man who fell into the hands of robbers (Luke 10:30-37). Other NT texts that demonstrate the equality of all include Eph 2:14; 5:21; 1John 2:2; Heb 12:14; James 2:8-9; Luke 14:13-14; Acts 10:34-35; Col 3:10-11; James 2:1-4.9; Gal 3:26-29; Rom 10:12; Acts 8:26-40; 1Cor 12:13; Rev 7:9-10.

Jesus and Ethnicity: An Exegesis of John 12:20-22

Jesus, in fulfilment of the Old Testament projections about the Messiah, went beyond the bias of the extreme Jewish discriminatory idea of Jews and Gentiles to let his evangelical and salvific mission get to the end of the earth. He proved this in many ways but most prominently in John 12:20-22. He was told that Greeks came to see him. At the time, dealing with gentiles

has strict limitations. It is interesting to note that instead of asking why they came to see him, Jesus immediately proclaimed that the coming of the Greeks signified the *terminus ad quem* of his time on earth. This is because, he has gone beyond the boundaries of Jewish ethnic bias to reach all on earth. His salvific mission is not just for the Jews but for all. An exegetical study of this short pericope makes this clearer.

a) Problem of contextualization of John 12:20-22

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 criticised 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

²⁰ Ēsan de Hellēnes tines ek tōn anabainontōn hina proskunēsōsin en tē heortē.

²¹ houtoi oun prosēlthon Philippō tō apo Bēthsaida tēs Galilaias kai ērōtōn auton legontes, Kurie, thelomen ton Iēsoun idein.

²² erketai ho Philippos kai legei tō Andrea, erketai Andreas kai Philippos kai legousin tō Iēsou.

Verses 21 and 22 exhibit some attendant textual problems. In v. 21, ⁶⁶ D K W 0250 *pc* a sa bo give Bēdsaida as an alternative reading. In v. 22 `O is omitted by ^{8A} D W ⁹ Y 0250 ¹³ Ū but witnessed in ^{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 *erketai Andreas kai Philippos kai A K Φ (D, W) Y 0250 f^{1.13} (33) Ū (aur f vg) sy^{(p).h} read palin*, while *kai palin* is the reading testified in O A. Again, in the MSS O F *î^{66*} b ff²* the reading is *de Kai*. This is also the reading testified in *î^{66c} (Θ) c (1) sa ac² pbo*. The reading in our text is witnessed in *î^{75vid} A B L pc a (sy^s)*. 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 (*palin*) 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 *hina* 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, *proskunēsōsin en tē heortē*. 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 keeps 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 *ide ho kosmos opisō autou apēlthen*. 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 realised. 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 perhaps a 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, *Ēsan de Hellēnes tines ek tōn anabainontōn*. 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 *tines* which qualifies the *Hellēnes* and also by the partitive particle *ek* 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 *Hellēnes*. 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 attended 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 *Hellēnes*. They were mentioned only here and in the next verse. Nothing further was said about them. The narrative then continued smoothly. Also, Martson's view cancels the possibility of converts to Judaism. Thus, we believe that *Hellēnes* distinguished from *hellēnistai* 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 *proselthon Philippō tō apo Bēthsaida tēs Galilaias*.

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 —erōtaō. This verb is generally taken to mean “to ask, to request”. It is notable that in the LXX, the verb together with its compound — eperōtaō, mean simply “to ask”. Whenever it talks of requesting, the LXX uses aiteō. 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'ʾl*. 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 —legontes, 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 —thelomen ton Iēsoun idein. According to Limbeck (1994) the verb thelō 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 Iēsoun idein. 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 —idein 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 blepō and theōreō. 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 — *erketai*. 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 only mentions his name in 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 in the next page demonstrates this Christology, soteriology and ecclesiology of John 12:20-22.

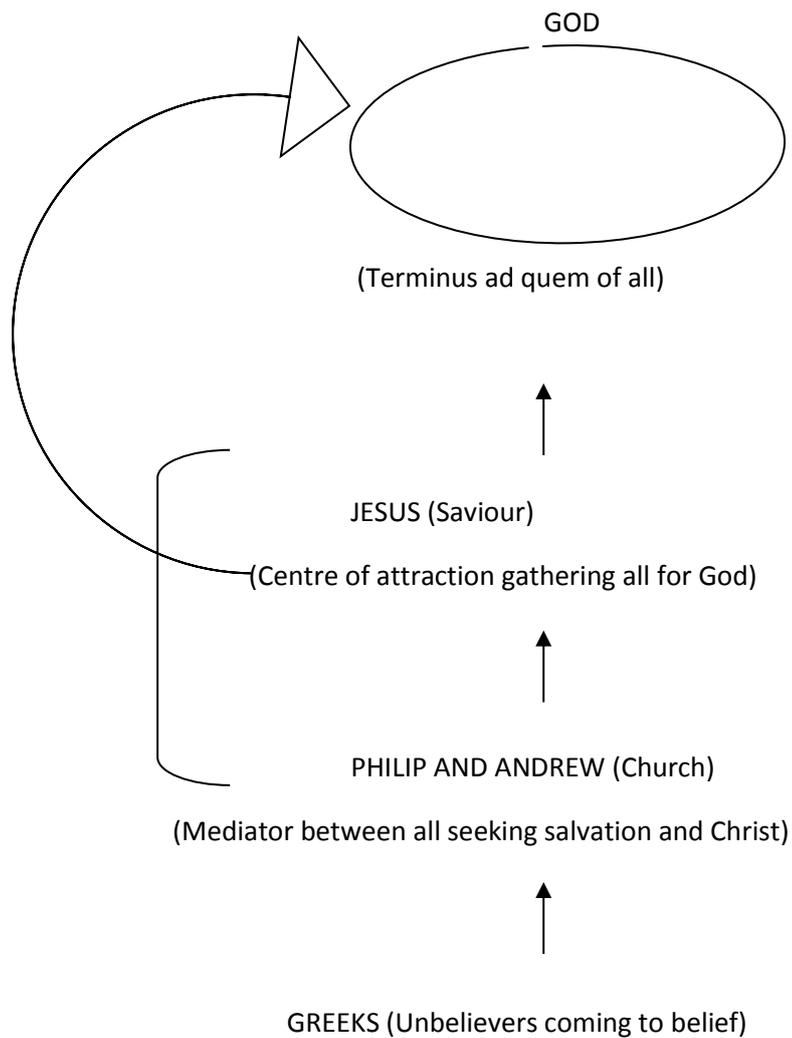


Figure 4.2 representing Jesus' mission of gathering all to God through his salvific death and glorification made realizable today through the evangelizing and mediatorial mission of the church.

Evaluation and Conclusion

Ethnicism breeds nepotism, bipartisanism, favouritism, rancour and suspicions. There is no peace where ethnicism thrives. This is because, fraternalism is sacrificed on the altar of destructive criticism and enmity. This is one the greatest dangers bedevilling the entire world and especially multi-ethnic countries like Nigeria. Every tribe wants to be at the helm of affairs and complains against another where their desires are not met. Leaders with ethnic tendencies favour their ethnic relatives to the detriment of the common good. In the face of ethnicism, nepotism is given primacy of place rather than professionalism and competence. The result is that backwardness, incompetence and decadence characterize such a nation. In John 12:20-22, Jesus by attending to the Greeks/gentiles went beyond the limits of semitic bias to embrace all. By his attitude here, he broke down the dividing walls between the Jews and all none Jews. For him all are equal and as good as the other. Christ by extending his mission beyond the confines of Judah has left us an example to follow to overcome the bias of ethnicism.

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