

JAMES'S QUOTATION OF AMOS 9 TO SETTLE THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL DEBATE IN ACTS 15

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I. INTRODUCTION

The book of Acts is the story of the early church in transition. One of the defining moments in its transition from an initially all-Jewish church to a church composed of both Jews and Gentiles occurred at the Jerusalem Council recorded in Acts 15. That Gentiles could become part of the people of God had been accepted earlier as a result of Peter's ministry in the home of Cornelius (Acts 11:18). Yet there were lingering questions, particularly in what would be expected of Gentiles regarding their conduct and adherence to Jewish customs. Some Christians of Jewish descent were of the opinion that Gentiles needed to keep the Law and be circumcised. In fact, some held that Gentiles could not be saved apart from this (Acts 15:1, 5). More "enlightened" Christian leaders (such as Paul and Barnabas) strongly objected to any attempt to impose such Jewish customs on the Gentiles. Yet the issue was so contentious that a summit meeting was needed in Jerusalem in order for the senior leaders of the church to make an official pronouncement on this subject. This council took place in AD 49, probably not long after Paul's first missionary journey.

At the council, James (the brother of the Lord) spoke last, which seems to reflect that by this time the early church looked to him as one of its senior spokesmen, if not its most prominent leader (cf. Gal 2:6–9). With James's speech, the debate was settled. Of particular importance was James's appeal to Amos 9:11–12, as this text gave the scriptural basis for his argument and the resulting decision of the council. The Amos quotation refers to the rebuilding of David's "booth" (or hut) and links this with the ingathering of Gentiles who are known by God's name. This paper will seek to understand the meaning of the Amos quotation in its own context; how the LXX rendered the verses into Greek, how the NT relates to both the MT and LXX; and finally the hermeneutics involved and what theological conclusions can be drawn from James's appeal to Amos 9.

The use of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15 has been the subject of much discussion in modern theological debate. Covenant theologians have understood this as indicative of the church replacing Israel in God's program (replacement theology), whereas dispensational theologians have

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traditionally argued that the fulfillment of Amos 9:11–12 is not for the present age but rather in the millennium when Israel is restored. In this paper, I will seek to propose a third alternative that avoids what I believe to be the pitfalls of the other two approaches.

II. THE CONTEXT OF AMOS

In light of the introductory information found in Amos 1:1, the book of Amos can be dated about 765–760 BC. The book is primarily concerned with the northern kingdom of Israel during the years preceding the Assyrian invasion. During the days that Jeroboam II ruled over Israel, the land experienced a certain prosperity and tranquility, yet this was but a deceptive veneer over the moral and spiritual wickedness of the kingdom. As a result God announced that judgment was coming in the form of foreign invasion and exile from the land (note esp. Amos 5:25–27; 6:7; 7:11). God used the prophet Amos to denounce the nation's corruption and the leadership behind it, and then to pronounce the judgment that was soon to fall.

The book of Amos reflects a carefully worked literary artistry.¹ Following a brief prologue (1:1–2), the book is composed of three major sections. The first (1:3–2:16) consists of a series of judgment oracles against various nations, the eighth and final one being Israel itself. The central section (3:1–6:14), consisting of words of warning and woe pronouncements for Israel, is composed of five divisions arranged in a chiasmic structure. The final section (7:1–9:15) consists of two major divisions. The first (7:1–8:3) is a series of visions to reinforce the notion that judgment will not be forestalled. The second (8:4–9:15) comprises the final confrontation about judgment upon the nation, but with the added note of “salvation”—a remnant will be spared and final restoration is envisioned.

Although the thrust of the book is upon the indictment and pronouncement of judgment upon Israel, the topic of Gentiles receives minor attention. In the opening section of the book, the sins of six Gentile nations are surveyed, and punishment is proclaimed for them. At the end of the book we find a short but clear description of Israel's restoration. Included in this restoration motif, however, is a positive statement about blessing upon Gentiles. Such Gentile blessing is associated with God's raising up the fallen booth/hut of David (Amos 9:11–12). It is this that James appeals to in Acts 15.

¹ For a detailed presentation of the literary structure of Amos, see J. Paul Tanner, “Amos; Structural Features of the Book,” Supplement to Session Twenty-Three, at <http://www.paultanner.org>, under Old Test Notes, Vol. II.

III. THE MT OF AMOS 9:11–12

Translation of the MT

Hebrew MT

¹¹ In that day

בְּיוֹם הַהוּא¹¹

I will raise up the fallen booth/hut of David

אָקִים אֶת־סֶכֶת דָּוִד הַנִּפְלָה

and I will wall up its breaches

וְגִדְרֵי אֶת־פְּרִצֵיהֶן

and its ruins I will raise up

וְהִרְסֹתָיו אָקִים

and I will rebuild it

וּבְנִינֶיהָ

as (in) the days of old,

כַּיְמֵי עוֹלָם:

¹² in order that they might possess the remnant of Edom

לְמַעַן יִרְשׁוּ אֶת־שְׂאֵרֵי אֱדוֹם¹²

and/even all the Gentiles,

וְכָל־הַגּוֹיִם

upon whom My name is called,

אֲשֶׁר־נִקְרָא שְׁמִי עֲלֵיהֶם

declares the LORD who does this.

נְאֻם־יְהוָה עֲשֵׂה זֹאת:

1. *In that day.* The opening phrase “in that day” places the following scene in the indefinite future.² This is often used of a time of judgment, sometimes in regard to the day of the LORD, occasionally in reference to God’s restoration work, but at other times as merely transitional with no specific time in view. In the present context, it moves the scene beyond that described in the preceding verses. The preceding pericope (9:1–10) highlighted the inescapability of God’s judgment upon Israel at the hands of foreign nations. Their covenant status before God would not protect them from the impending doom. Nevertheless a ray of hope was offered in Amos 9:8, “Nevertheless, I will not totally destroy the house of Jacob,” declares the LORD.” God would spare a remnant (the “kernel” in v. 9) with whom he would eventually bring about a gracious restoration. The words “in that day” advance the revelation from God’s outpouring of judgment to that future day when restoration begins.

2. *The fallen booth of David.* The restoration commences with God raising up the fallen booth of David (סֶכֶת דָּוִד). This phrase does not occur elsewhere in the OT. Rather, this is a metaphorical way (ironical) of referring to “the house of David,” i.e. the Davidic dynasty of kings (e.g. 1 Kgs 12:19–20, 26). This is not so much the kingdom itself as the kingship that governs the kingdom (note 1 Kgs 14:7–8), although admittedly one goes with the other. God had made a covenant with David (the Davidic covenant) promising that one from his seed would have an eternal throne and rule (2 Sam 7:11b–16). The word סֶכֶת commonly refers to a booth for the Feast of Tabernacles, but it can also refer to a temporary shelter (2 Sam 11:11; 1 Kgs 20:12; Jon 4:5).³ In the context of Amos 9, the “booth of David” looks at the dilapidated state of the kingship from David’s line (hence, it is ironically described as a “booth” or “hut” rather than having

² For further discussion, see Douglas Stuart, “Amos,” in *Hosea-Jonah* (WBC 31; Waco, TX: Word, 1987) 399.

³ Some translations in Acts 15:16 have the “tabernacle of David,” but this should not be misunderstood as the tabernacle where sacrifices and worship took place.

the dignity of a “house”).⁴ This notion is reinforced by speaking of it as “fallen.” Prior to Amos’s day, the Davidic line of kings had suffered the indignity of seeing the nation split into the northern and southern kingdoms in 931 BC. Following Amos’s day, the northern kingdom would go into exile by Assyria (722/21 BC) and the southern kingdom by Babylon (586 BC). Amos 9:11, however, predicted that in a future day this fallen kingship from David’s line would be raised up, that is, reestablished and given prominence once again.⁵ In the remainder of verse 11, the metaphor shifts slightly, so that the Davidic kingship appears as a structure whose walls and ruins are repaired and rebuilt. Care should be exercised not to equate this with a literal rebuilding of Jerusalem. The twofold use of בָּנִי in verse 11 suggests that the entire verse looks at the restoration of the kingship, not necessarily a physical rebuilding of a city.⁶

3. *The purpose clause: to possess.* Verse 12 begins with the conjunction of purpose כִּי־יִבְנֶה , “in order that.” According to the MT (which differs considerably from the LXX), the purpose of restoring the Davidic kingship is that “they might possess the remnant of Edom.” Edom had been the historic enemy of Israel in the OT.⁷ In light of the following line (“and all the nations”), it seems that Edom is used in this verse as an illustration. Edom represented a nation once at great enmity with Israel but which in the future day of the restored Davidic kingship would have a completely different relationship. The word “possess” need not signify military conquest. Although the word יָרַשׁ was often used of Israel defeating the nations of Canaan and taking possession of their territories following the exodus from Egypt (Ps 105:44), this type of terminology is

⁴ McComiskey is correct in concluding that the booth “refers to a rude shelter (a ‘hut’) and pictures the ‘house’ of David that was becoming a dilapidated shack. By Amos’s time the Davidic dynasty had fallen so low that it would no longer be called a house” (Thomas E. McComiskey, “Amos” [EBC 7; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985] 329).

⁵ That the promise in Amos 9:11 would find fulfillment in the messianic Davidic king was not unique to the first century Christian community. A document composed by a member of the Qumran community, 4Q Florilegium (4QFlor), quotes Amos 9:11 in this regard. Jacob M. Milgrom dates this to the early first century (“Florilegium: A Midrash on 2 Samuel and Psalms 1–2,” in *Pesharim, Other Commentaries, and Related Documents* [vol. 6B of *The Dead Sea Scrolls; Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Texts with English Translations*; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002] 248). Qumran document CD 7:16 also quotes Amos 9:11.

⁶ The first person singular Qal imperfect verb form בָּנִי only occurs four other times in the OT, and interestingly in two of these we have messianic promises. In Deut 18:18, God promises to raise up a prophet (Messiah), and in Jer 30:9 we read of “David their king, whom I will raise up for them.” The verb בָּנִי (“I will raise up”) is very well suited to the notion of God elevating one to the position of ruling as king.

⁷ For a helpful survey of Edom and the Edomites, see Kenneth G. Hoglund, “Edomites,” in *Peoples of the Old Testament World* (ed. Alfred J. Hoerth, Gerald L. Mattingly, and Edwin M. Yamauchi; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994) 335–47. Cf. Gary V. Smith, *Amos* (A Mentor Commentary; Ross-Shire, UK: Christian Focus, 1998) 380. Hoglund (p. 342) notes, “Oracles against Edom became a standard part of the prophetic denunciation of Israel’s enemies (Jer 9:25–26 [MT 9:24–25]; 25:17–26; 49:7–22 [LXX 29:7–22]; Ezek 25:12–14; 32:29; 35; Joel 3:19 [MT 4:19]).”

rarely used again to speak of Israel in relation to Gentile nations.⁸ Instead the word יְרֵא comes to refer to people being brought into covenant relationship with God and therefore under his sovereignty and rule. In Exod 19:5, for instance, as the Hebrews were brought out of Egypt and led to Mt. Sinai to enter into the Mosaic covenant, God promised them “you shall be *My own possession* among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine” (cf. Deut 7:6; 14:2; 26:18).

Interestingly, the notion of Edom becoming a possession is associated elsewhere with Messiah's rule. In Num 24:17, we read that “a star shall come forth from Jacob, a scepter shall rise from Israel.” In the very next verse we are told, “Edom shall be a possession,” and in verse 19 “One from Jacob shall have dominion.” This leads to the conclusion that Amos 9:12 may very well have Num 24:17–19 as its referent. Edom, like other nations, will become the possession of Messiah in the day of his dominion. In Psalm 2, a psalm having the Davidic covenant in view, God promised the One called “My Son” that he “will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Your possession.” The Messiah Son of David will possess the nations in the sense that his kingly rule will be extended over them.

4. *My name is upon them.* In Amos 9:12, Edom and “all the nations” are possessed, not as hostile enemies but rather as those “upon whom My name is called.” Notice carefully that the text does not say “who call upon My name.”⁹ Rather, the expression is in the passive voice: $\text{אֲשֶׁר יִקְרָא שְׁמִי עֲלֵיהֶם}$. The textual combination of the passive verb יִקְרָא with the noun שֵׁם and preposition עַל reflects not what one *does* but rather one's *status* of having a relationship with God, that is, of being *God's people*. We read in Deut 28:10, for instance, “So all the peoples of the earth will see that you are called by the name of the LORD.” In light of the preceding verse in Deut 28:9 (“The LORD will establish you as a holy people to Himself”), the point is that Israel would have a reputation of being God's people (cf. 2 Chr 7:14). This was true, of course, because they had entered into covenant with Him (Exod 19:5). This same formula could also be applied to inanimate things like the temple (God's house) or the city of Jerusalem.¹⁰ The point is that they *belonged to* God and were identified with Him. In Isa 63:19, the negative is used before this construction as a way of expressing (in light of God's discipline) that it seemed as though they were not God's covenant people.

⁸ One possible exception is Obadiah 17–21.

⁹ The active nuance “to call upon God's name” is expressed with the Qal imperfect (active) plus the preposition ב , as in Ps 80:19: $\text{וְיִקְרָא וְיִשְׁמְעֵנוּ}$, “and we will call on/upon Your name.”

¹⁰ The temple is referred to in 1 Kgs 8:43, “Your name is called over this house.” Cf. Jer 7:10, 11, 14, 30; 32:34; 34:15; 2 Chr 6:33. In Jer 25:29, we see the city of Jerusalem referred to as “the city which (has) My name called over it.” Cf. Dan 9:18–19.

In light of the usage of this passive construction in the OT, the point in Amos 9:12b is that the Gentiles in view are those who have the status of being *God's people*, in covenant relation with the LORD (just as those in Israel had experienced). Although we cannot conclude from this that the church was prophesied in Amos 9:12 (Eph 3:1–7 calls the church a “mystery”—not previously revealed), from a NT perspective it is easy to look back to the OT and see the church in prophetic form.

IV. THE LXX TRANSLATION OF AMOS 9:11–12

When we come to an examination of the LXX translation of Amos 9:11–12, we discover a rather interesting change in the text. For the most part, the LXX is a near-literal rendition of the MT, but the initial line of verse 12 reads quite differently. Rather than “in order that they might possess the remnant of Edom” (so MT), we find “in order that the rest of mankind might seek (the Lord).”¹¹ Although the changes in the text are not difficult to account for, the more perplexing issue is *how* or *why* the LXX came to have such a different reading. McLay writes,

Where did this translation come from? Is it totally due to a theological point (*Tendenz*) that the translator wished to introduce, or did the translator misread the *Vorlage* (the source text from which the translation was made), or was the source text for the OG different from what we have in the MT?¹²

Most scholars today admit that we have no certain way of knowing how the LXX came to have this reading.¹³ The following chart helps us to see a comparison of the two texts we have.

LXX Translation	Hebrew MT
¹¹ ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ	בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא ¹¹
ἀναστήσω τὴν σκηνὴν Δαυὶδ τὴν πεπτωκυῖαν	אָקִים אֶת־סֵכֶת דָּוִד הַנִּפְלֵת
καὶ ἀνοικοδομήσω τὰ πεπτωκότα αὐτῆς	וְנִדְרֵי אֶת־פְּרָצֵיהֶן
καὶ τὰ κατεσκαμμένα αὐτῆς ἀναστήσω	וְהַרְסוֹתַי אֲקִים
καὶ ἀνοικοδομήσω αὐτήν	וּבְנִינָהּ
καθὼς αἱ ἡμέραι τοῦ αἰῶνος,	כִּי־מֵי עוֹלָם:
¹² ὅπως ἐκστήσωσιν οἱ κατάλοιποι τῶν ἀνθρώπων	לְמַעַן יִרְשׁוּ אֶת־שְׂאֵרֵי־אָדָם
καὶ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη,	וְכָל־הַגּוֹיִם
ἐφ' οὓς ἐπικέκληται τὸ ὄνομα μου ἐπ' αὐτούς,	אֲשֶׁר־נִקְרָא שְׁמִי עַל־יָהֶם
λέγει κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ ποιῶν ταῦτα.	אֲנִי־הַיְהוָה עוֹשֶׂה אֵת:

¹¹ In the LXX, the object of the verb is not specified in manuscript B (Vaticanus). However, manuscript A (Alexandrinus) does have the words “τὸν κύριον” (the Lord). In the NT (Acts 15:17), τὸν κύριον is present.

¹² R. Timothy McLay, “The Use of Scripture in the New Testament,” in *The Use of the Septuagint in New Testament Research* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003) 20.

¹³ I am not presuming that there was only one translator behind the LXX of Amos. I will use the singular “translator,” though I realize that the LXX of Amos could easily have been the product of multiple scribes.

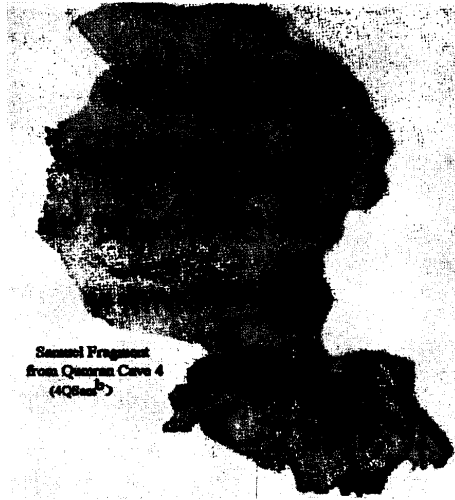
1. *Differences with the MT.* Setting aside minor variations, the differences between these two texts are primarily three:¹⁴

(1) MT's וְשִׁי? (they will possess) appears in LXX as ἐκζητήσωσιν (they will seek).

(2) MT's הַרְיָאֵשׁ מִדְּנֶהָ (the remnant of Edom) appears in LXX as οἱ κατάλοιποι τῶν ἀνθρώπων (the rest of mankind).

(3) The particle הַ in MT (sign of the accusative) is not reflected in LXX. Whereas “the remnant of Edom” in MT functioned as the object of the verb “they will possess,” “the rest of mankind” in LXX functions as the subject of the verb “shall seek.”

These three changes can be explained. First, the Greek verb ἐκζητήσωσιν would appear in Hebrew as וְשִׁי?, so that the difference between “they will possess” (וְשִׁי?) and “they will seek” (וְשִׁי?) is slight. We must keep in mind that the present Hebrew script in today's printed editions (which actually use the squared off Aramaic letters) would appear differently than the hand-written Hebrew letters used in the post-exilic period (when the LXX was produced). In many of the older manuscripts predating the time of Christ (primarily the Dead Sea Scrolls), the text was not as clear as we would wish.¹⁵



Second, the difference in Hebrew between “Edom” and “mankind” is merely that of a single vowel. “Edom” is written אֲדָמָה (with a *holem-waw*),

¹⁴ For a complete list of textual variants found in the LXX tradition, see *Duodecim Prophetæ*, in *Septuaginta Vetus Testamentum Graecum Auctoritate Societatis Litterarum Göttingensis* (Vol. XIII; ed. Joseph Ziegler; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1943) 204–5.

¹⁵ We must also keep in mind that the letter *yod* (י) tended to drop down lower in older manuscripts than we see in today's printed editions, making the difference between the *yod* and the *daleth* much less obvious.

but “mankind” is expressed in Hebrew by some form of אדם—whether לֵל הָאָדָם (Gen 7:21), הָאָדָם (Num 5:6), or in some cases simply אָדָם (Ps 73:5). When we take into account that Hebrew before the time of Christ was written without the vowel pointing, there would have been very little difference between אָדָם and אָדָם. Furthermore, even the DSS witness the fact that there was inconsistent use of the historically long vowels in manuscripts, meaning that the *Vorlage* of the MT and LXX did not necessarily have the ו anyway (regardless of which word was intended).¹⁶ Hence, אָדָם/אָדָם might have been understood as either “Edom” or “mankind.”

Third, the presence of the particle אֵת in MT (sign of the accusative) is not altogether determinative of the meaning of the text. As it stands, in our present-day printed editions (e.g. *BHS*), this does indicate that the following words are the object of the verb (hence, “they shall possess the remnant of Edom”). However, the original *Vorlage* might have had a pronominal suffix attached, such as אֵתִי or אֵתוֹ, which would have made the suffix (Me or Him) the object, allowing the remainder of the sentence to be the subject of the verb.¹⁷

2. *Assessment.* Taking all three explanations above into account and recognizing the translator of LXX would have worked with an unpointed text, he could have legitimately had a text that read (or he understood the text to read) לְמַעַן יִדְרְשׁוּ אֵתִי שְׂאֵרֵי אָדָם, which he would appropriately translate “in order that the rest of mankind might seek Me.” But since we have no way of knowing what text the LXX translator had before him, we simply cannot say for sure. Perhaps he did have a Hebrew text that resembled the MT, but he may have been influenced to understand the text in such a way as to harmonize it with the following dangling phrase וְכָל הַגּוֹיִם, “and all the Gentiles.”¹⁸ Taking וְכָל הַגּוֹיִם as a parallel object (“to possess all the Gentiles”) would be admittedly awkward. Realizing this,

¹⁶ The ו is present in Amos 9:12 cited in MS Mur 88 from Qumran (in fragmentary form).

¹⁷ Amos 9:12 may be picking up on the exhortation for Israel to “seek the Lord” mentioned earlier in Amos 5:4, 6. Ironically, then, Gentiles do what Israel was commanded to do.

¹⁸ F. F. Bruce writes, “In turning the prophetic hooks from Hebrew into Greek, the Septuagint translators were quite ready to conform to their own religious outlook or otherwise to adapt it to an interpretation which was accepted in the circles to which they belonged” (“Prophetic Interpretation in the Septuagint,” *BIOCS* 12 [1979] 17). Jobes and Silva add, “Since the Hebrew preserved in the MT is not particularly difficult, we may consider the possibility that the LXX translator—whether or not he made a mistake in reading the Hebrew characters—was primarily motivated by hermeneutical concerns. Elsewhere in the Minor Prophets (Hos. 9:6; Amos 2:10; Ob. 17, 19, 20; Mic. 1:15; Hab. 1:6; Zech. 9:4) the Hebrew word יָרַשׁ is represented with κληρονομέω (“to inherit”) or one of its cognates, but such a rendering may have appeared to the translator less appropriate here” (Karen H. Jobes and Moisés Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000] 195). They go on to suggest, “Possibly inspired by the parallel concept of ‘all the nations,’ he [the translator] in effect harmonized ‘Edom’ to the context, an instance of the part for the whole, that is, one pagan nation representing all nations” (p. 195).

the LXX translator might have been influenced in his thinking by an eschatological and messianic passage such as Isa 11:10: “Then *in that day* (הַיּוֹם הַהוּא בְיָמָיו) the *nations* (גּוֹיִם) will *resort to* (יָרִישׁוּ) the root of Jesse, who will stand as a signal for the peoples; and His resting place will be glorious.” The textual affinities with Isa 11:10 are quite strong (cf. Zech 8:22, “So many peoples and mighty *nations* (גּוֹיִם) will come to *seek* the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of the LORD”).¹⁹

As different as the LXX and MT might seem to us when reading an English translation, the actual differences are not nearly so large. Furthermore when we recognize that the apparent differences are actually a variant way of reading the Hebrew text, and realizing we do not have access today to the Hebrew *Vorlage* that stands behind either the LXX or MT, we must conclude that both translations should be allowed to stand as possible legitimate renderings of what was originally intended.²⁰

V. JAMES'S QUOTATION OF AMOS 9:11–12 IN ACTS 15

When we come to the text of Acts 15:16–18, it is clear that James is essentially quoting from the LXX of Amos 9:11–12. However, there are numerous minor differences between the text of the LXX and the corresponding portion in the NT. The following chart helps to see both simultaneously:

¹⁹ In the case of Zech 8:22, although the Hebrew word for “seek” is not יָרִישׁוּ but שָׁקַדּוּ, the words are conceptually related.

²⁰ For further help in understanding how early Jewish exegesis treated the biblical text, see Richard Bauckham, “James and the Gentiles (Acts 15.13–21),” in *History, Literature, and Society in the Book of Acts* (ed. B. Witherington III; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 160–61. Bauckham concludes, “The ‘misreading’ of the Hebrew text presupposed by the LXX of Amos 9.12 is quite comparable with many examples of deliberate ‘alternative readings’ (*al āqrāʿ*) in the Qumran pesharim. Thus there is not the slightest difficulty in supposing that a Jewish Christian exegete, familiar with the Hebrew text of the Bible but writing in Greek, should have welcomed the exegetical potential of the LXX text of Amos 9.12 as a legitimate way of reading the Hebrew text of that verse” (p. 161).

LXX Translation

11 ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ

In that day

ἀναστήσω τὴν σκηνὴν Δαυὶδ τὴν πεπτωκυῖαν

I will raise up the tabernacle of David that has fallen

καὶ ἀνοικοδομήσω τὰ πεπτωκότα αὐτῆς

and I will rebuild its fallen parts

καὶ τὰ κατεσκαμμένα αὐτῆς ἀναστήσω

and its parts that were destroyed I will raise up

καὶ ἀνοικοδομήσω αὐτήν

and I will rebuild it

καθὼς αἱ ἡμέραι τοῦ αἰῶνος,

just as (in) the days of old

12 ὅπως ἐκζητήσωσιν οἱ κατάλοιποι τῶν ἀνθρώπων

in order that the rest of mankind might seek [77 ms A: "the Lord"]

καὶ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη,

and all the Gentiles

ἐφ' οὓς ἐπικέκληται τὸ ὄνομα μου ἐπ' αὐτούς,

upon whom My name is called upon them

λέγει κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ ποιῶν ταῦτα.

says the Lord God who does these things

The NT Text: Acts 15:16-18

16 μετὰ ταῦτα ἀναστρέψω

After these things I will return

καὶ ἀνοικοδομήσω τὴν σκηνὴν Δαυὶδ τὴν πεπτωκυῖαν

and I will rebuild the tabernacle of David that has fallen

καὶ τὰ κατεσκαμμένα αὐτῆς ἀνοικοδομήσω

and its parts that were destroyed I will rebuild

καὶ ἀνορθώσω αὐτήν,

and I will rebuild it

τὸν κύριον

17 ὅπως ἂν ἐκζητήσωσιν οἱ κατάλοιποι τῶν ἀνθρώπων[†]

in order that the rest of mankind might seek the Lord

καὶ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη

and all the Gentiles

ἐφ' οὓς ἐπικέκληται τὸ ὄνομα μου ἐπ' αὐτούς,

upon whom My name is called upon them

λέγει κύριος ποιῶν ταῦτα¹⁸ γνωστὰ ἀπ' αἰῶνος.

says the Lord who makes these things known from of old.

The most crucial verse in regard to this study is Amos 9:12a, and in this case both the LXX and the NT have essentially the same text (i.e. they do not have a statement about Edom as does the MT). Otherwise, despite minor variations, the more notable differences are:

(1) LXX verse 11 begins with “in that day,” whereas NT verse 16 begins with “after these things.”

(2) LXX verse 11b, c seems to be *reshaped* in the NT to what we see in verse 16a, b. [Notice that the verb ἀνοικοδομήσω in LXX 11c has been combined with τὴν σκηνὴν Δαυὶδ τὴν πεπτωκυῖαν in NT 16b.

(3) The phrase καθὼς αἱ ἡμέραι τοῦ αἰῶνος in LXX verses 11–12 are omitted in verse 16 of the NT. However, a remnant of this phrase appears in NT verse 18.

(4) The final line of each text is different. The LXX follows the MT almost identically, but the NT adds γνωστὰ ἀπ' αἰῶνος (“known from of old”).

VI. AN ANALYSIS OF JAMES'S SPEECH AND HIS APPEAL TO AMOS 9:11–12

1. *The context.* James's speech begins in Acts 15:13 with the words “After they had stopped speaking.” The discussion must have gone on for quite some time in light of the words in verse 7, “After there had been much debate.” Apparently many people had a chance to speak their mind, following which Peter spoke, and then Paul and Barnabas. Yet the last to speak was James, the brother of the Lord Jesus. Although Peter had been the primary apostolic leader on the day of Pentecost and in the early years, James eventually became the recognized spiritual leader of the Jerusalem

church.²¹ Apparently by the time of the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, if not earlier (note Acts 12:17), the believers looked to James as the foremost leader, and appropriately he spoke last (much like an Indian chief or tribal head might do).

2. *The Gentiles as "God's people."* In verse 14, James acknowledges the testimony of Peter. The words he uses, however, are theologically loaded: "taking from among the Gentiles *a people* (λαόν) *for His name.*" The notion of being God's people who are associated with God's name draws us back in thought to OT times. This recalls God's promise in Exod 19:5 that the Hebrews, by entering into God's covenant at Sinai, would be a people for God's "own possession." The LXX rendered this: λαός περιούσιος ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν ἔθνῶν (a special *people* from all the nations). The status of being God's "people"—a covenant status—had now become the privilege of Gentiles, not on the basis of the Mosaic covenant but rather on the basis of the new covenant (note esp. 1 Pet 2:4–10). The principle in the book of Hosea by which God took those who were "not My people" and made them "My people" had found fulfillment (not merely application) with Gentiles in the church on the basis of the new covenant.²²

3. *Agreeing with the Prophets.* In verse 15, James went on to add, "with this the words of the Prophets agree." By saying this, we are alerted to the fact that the truth he draws from Amos 9:11–12 is not found in this one passage alone, but is reflected elsewhere among the OT Prophets.²³ Had he chosen to do so, James could have cited other passages affirming this. In fact careful observation of Acts 15:16–18 alerts us to other passages that he might have had in mind.²⁴ In the previous section, one of the differences between the LXX and the NT was that the latter added the

²¹ James faithfully served the Lord Jesus at Jerusalem for nearly thirty years. His fame as the Christian leader was known far beyond the circle of the early church. Even Josephus, the noted Jewish historian of the first century, records his death (*Ant.* 20.9.1). Upon the death of the procurator Festus (c. AD 62), the newly appointed young high priest Ananus II "assembled the Sanhedrin of judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others, and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned" (D. Edmond Hiebert, *The Epistle of James* [Chicago: Moody, 1979] 36). The Jewish masses, on the other hand, condemned the murder. In light of his godly life, he gained the title "James the Just."

²² For a detailed discussion of the apostle Paul's use of Hosea 1–2 in Romans 9:25–26 as "fulfillment" with Gentiles, see my earlier article "The New Covenant and Paul's Quotations from Hosea in Romans 9:25–26," *BSac* 162 (2005) 95–110.

²³ James may have been employing a Jewish methodology known as *gezerah shavah*, one of the 32 rules of exegesis laid out by Eliezer B. Jose Ha-Ge-lili that makes an argument from analogy. In this technique, biblical passages containing synonyms or homonyms are subject, however much they differ in other respects, to identical definitions and applications.

²⁴ Meek, on the other hand, does not think the expression "the words of the prophets" indicates that the citation is a composite, nor is the reference indefinite. See James A. Meek, "The Kingdom and the Gentiles (Amos 9.11–12 in Acts 15.16–18)," in *The Gentile Mission in Old Testament Citations in Acts; Text, Hermeneutic, and Purpose* (Library of New Testament Studies 385; New York: T & T Clark, 2008) 62–63, 80. Most scholars, however, disagree with Meek's conclusion.

words γνωστὰ ἀπ' αἰῶνος (known from of old). Although the form is different, this last line of the NT text (Acts 15:17c–18) has similarities to the LXX of Isa 45:21:

LXX Isa 45:21: [God speaking] ἀκουστὰ ἐποίησεν ταῦτα ἀπ' ἀρχῆς

NT Acts 15:17c–18: λέγει κύριος ποιῶν ταῦτα Ἰγνωστὰ ἀπ' αἰῶνος

If James had Isa 45:21 in mind, this would be quite appropriate, because the next verse (v. 22) states, “Turn to Me and be saved, *all the ends of the earth*; for I am God, and there is no other.” Isaiah wrote prolifically about the theme of Gentile salvation and of the Servant’s ministry to “the nations.” Hinting at Gentiles being brought into covenant status, God declared of his Servant in Isa 42:6, “I will appoint You as a covenant to the people, as a light to the nations.” Again in Isa 49:6, God promised his Servant, “I will also make You a light of the nations so that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth” (cf. Isa 42:1; 52:10, 15; 55:5; 60:3; 65:1). Of course, none of these promises are really surprising, since God had declared in Gen 12:3 that his ultimate intention was for all the Gentiles of the world to be blessed through Abram’s seed. Both the Davidic covenant and the new covenant are really an outworking of that promise theme.

A clue to another OT passage that might have been in the mind of James is suggested by the words “after these things” (μετὰ ταῦτα) that he uses in Acts 15:16 to introduce the quotation from Amos 9.²⁵ But these words are neither found in the LXX of Amos 9:11, nor do they have an appropriate correspondence with the MT (both the MT and LXX have “in that day”). Significantly, μετὰ ταῦτα was used in the LXX of Joel 2:28 to introduce the passage Peter quoted from on the Day of Pentecost. On that day, Peter proclaimed that Joel’s prophecy was being fulfilled in the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. “This is what was spoken of,” he announced. This need not mean that the Joel passage was completely fulfilled on that occasion, but it was truly fulfilled (i.e. the prophecy was beginning to be fulfilled, though the events of Acts 2 did not exhaust the

²⁵ The phrase “after these things” cannot mean that James is intending a time sequence of fulfillment with his statements, that is, that “after these things” means the Amos 9 quotation only comes about *after* God finishes taking a people for himself from the Gentiles. Rather James uses this to (1) place Amos 9:11–12 after the time of judgment upon Israel mentioned earlier (their exile); and/or (2) to link Amos 9:11–12 with other OT passages that find fulfillment in the messianic days. Bock notes, “The only likely antecedent to ‘this’ is the reference in verse 14 to the Gentile inclusion that Simeon had experienced. Efforts to tie the expression ‘this’ to the beginning of verse 16 and the phrase ‘after this,’ so that a look to the future can be defended, are forced and go against the normal reading of such constructions. They also ignore the linkage within the citation that looks back to verse 14. The connection of ‘this’ to past events is reinforced by the fact that the only part of the Amos citation that matches the exposition of James is the phrase ‘all the Gentiles who are called by my name’ in verse 17, and it matches verse 14. The Gentile inclusion of verse 14 is what James is interested in noting. When James says that the prophets agree with ‘this,’ he is not looking forward, but backward to the events Peter just experienced” (Darrell L. Bock, “Evidence from Acts,” in *A Case for Premillennialism; A New Consensus* [ed. Donald K. Campbell and Jeffrey L. Townsend; Chicago: Moody, 1992] 196).

Joel passage). This should not be surprising, because the prophet Ezekiel had predicted the pouring out of the Holy Spirit and implied that this would be a hallmark feature of the new covenant (Ezek 36:26–28).²⁶ Since Peter had preached to Cornelius, and these Gentiles believed and then received the Holy Spirit, they had been brought into the bond of the new covenant. Peter's quotation ended with the promise, "And it shall be that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Acts 2:21). Although this was the message for those of Jerusalem when Peter preached (cf. Acts 2:40), in the course of time and with Peter's preaching to those of Cornelius's household, it became apparent that the word "everyone" went beyond those of Jewish descent.

The conclusion from these observations is that James was probably not just thinking of Amos 9:11–12, though that is the primary passage he cites. In saying "the words of the Prophets" (plural), he had in mind a number of OT passages that anticipated God's great work of salvation among the Gentiles. This was the logical connection to the fact that God had already evidenced the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon Gentiles (Acts 10), signifying that they were also participants of the new covenant.

VII THEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING CHRIST'S RULE

1. *Debating the time of fulfillment.* When we look at the final verses to the book of Amos (i.e. 9:11–15), it is clear that these constitute a salvation oracle depicting eventual restoration to blessing following God's severe and certain judgment upon the nation of Israel for her covenant unfaithfulness. Of these, the first two verses are quoted in Acts, because they mention "the nations upon whom My name is called." The final three verses go on to predict Israel's ultimate regathering to the land and restoration:

¹³'Behold, days are coming,' declares the LORD,
'When the plowman will overtake the reaper
And the treader of grapes him who sows seed;
When the mountains will drip sweet wine
And all the hills will be dissolved.

¹⁴Also I will restore the captivity of My people Israel, [NIV: I will bring back my exiled people]
And they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them;
They will also plant vineyards and drink their wine,
And make gardens and eat their fruit.

¹⁵I will also plant them on their land,
And they will not again be rooted out from their land which I have given them,'
Says the LORD your God. [Amos 9:13–15, NASB]

²⁶ The promise "you will be My people, and I will be your God" found in Ezek 36:28 is also reflected in Jer 31:33.

The crucial question is how Amos 9:11–12 relates to these verses. Premillennialists believe the final three verses find fulfillment in a literal restoration of Israel to the land following the Second Coming of Christ. Does this imply that Amos 9:11–12 must also await that future kingdom period to be fulfilled? Also, why does James choose to quote from Amos 9:11–12 at the Jerusalem Council? Amillennialists typically have taken the position that James quoted Amos 9:11–12 because he saw these verses as fulfilled in the days of the early church—but a fulfillment that involved the church replacing Israel in God’s program. One problem with this view is that it simply does not do justice to Amos 9:13–15 and leads to spiritualizing the land promises and Israel’s restoration.²⁷ In countering this suggestion, however, many premillennialists have also taken an untenable position, arguing that Amos 9:11–12 is only fulfilled in the millennium.²⁸ They suggest that James quotes this passage, not because it had any present fulfillment, but only to make the point that if Gentiles are in the millennium as Gentiles and not Jews, then this must *imply* (by analogy) that they can be God’s people in the present age without becoming Jews (and thus do not need to follow the Mosaic Law). Yet this position is also not without problems. If the fulfillment is only in the millennium, would James’s quotation of Amos 9:11–12 have carried decisive weight with the Judaizers in the church who were insisting upon Gentile adherence to the Law at the present time?²⁹ Furthermore, if James only wanted to draw an analogy, why not simply begin the citation with Amos 9:12 (thereby excluding a reference to the fallen booth of David) or make some other reference to Gentile salvation such as those used by

²⁷ J. A. Motyer understands Amos 9:13–15 as the removal of the curse of Genesis 3 upon the earth in the messianic age and a restoration of the entire world to an Edenic state (*The Day of the Lion* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1974] 205–8). I concur that the messianic kingdom will bring worldwide restoration, but care must be taken not to gloss over the special promises for Israel’s regathering and restoration to the land.

²⁸ See, for example, Brian K. Moulton, “The Use of the Davidic Covenant in Acts 15” (Ph.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1999). A helpful summary of the various views regarding the interpretation of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15 and a defense of the traditional dispensational interpretation is provided in Stanley Toussaint, “Acts,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament* (ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck; Wheaton: SP Publications, 1983) 394–95. Moulton summarizes his understanding of James’s use of Amos 9 when he writes, “The quotation was not introduced as a prediction of God’s visit to the Gentiles, but rather to relate truth in *harmony* with such a visit” (p. 223). Elsewhere, he elaborates: “At issue between classic and progressive dispensationalists is the content upon which the prophets agreed as indicated by the quotation from Amos. Classic dispensationalists generally agree that James used the quotation from Amos NOT to suggest the fulfillment (or beginning of the fulfillment) of the Davidic covenant, but to suggest an analogy between the present ingathering of Gentiles and the future habitation by Gentiles in the Millennial kingdom” (pp. 221–22).

²⁹ Kaiser raises this issue in an article he has written (Walter C. Kaiser Jr., “Including the Gentiles in the Plan of God,” in *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* [Chicago: Moody, 1985] 177–94).

Paul in Rom 15:9–12³⁰ Finally, as we have already pointed out, James is not merely basing his argument upon this one passage alone in Amos, for what he has in mind is in keeping with “the words of the Prophets.” The OT clearly anticipated God’s salvation going out to the Gentiles—to “the ends of the earth” as Isaiah expressed it. Thus what the early church had seen happening from Acts 10 onward should have come as no great surprise. The issue was not blessing or even salvation upon Gentiles, but how they related to God’s theocratic program.

2. *Relation with the kingdom promises to David’s seed.* In seeking a better solution, then, we do well to think further of what the reference to the “fallen tabernacle/booth of David” refers, and how this might tie in with Gentile inclusion as God’s people.³¹ Earlier, I suggested that this booth (or temporary shelter) was a figurative way of referring to the kingly line from David, that is, the house of David. In 2 Sam 7:11b the prophet Nathan informed David, “The LORD also declares to you that the LORD will make a *house* for you.” This referred metaphorically to a dynasty of kings that would come forth in the line of David, and which eventually would result in the fulfillment of God’s promise to “establish the throne of his kingdom forever” (2 Sam 7:13). Hence the title “Son of David” became a way of referring to Messiah (cf. Matt 22:42–45; John 7:41–42).³²

That Jesus of Nazareth is the “Son of David” is, from a Christian perspective, beyond dispute. The crucial question, however, is: When does God “raise up the fallen booth of David”? Related to this is the question about when Jesus sits on the throne of David. Unfortunately, this question has in recent years created some heated debate among premillennialists. Personally, I feel that far too much has been made of this issue, and this has clouded the discussion of how OT covenants find fulfillment. We have been very accepting of the notion that the

³⁰ Robert L. Saucy makes this very point in “The Rebuilding of the Tabernacle of David,” in *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993) 79.

³¹ For a helpful discussion and evaluation of various views of the “fallen booth of David,” see W. Edward Glenny, “Gentiles and the People of God: A Study of Apostolic Hermeneutics and Theology in Acts 15” (paper presented at the Dispensational Study Group, National ETS Meeting, November 2006) 24–27 (available online at <http://ntresources.com/documents/Amos9inActs15b.pdf>). Strauss concludes, “The restoration of the Davidic reign predicted in Amos 9:11–12 and accomplished in the resurrection-ascension of Jesus is presented by James as Scriptural justification for the Gentile mission and as the means by which ‘the rest of mankind’ may seek the Lord” (Mark L. Strauss, *The Davidic Messiah in Luke-Acts; The Promise and its Fulfillment in Lukan Christology* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995] 192). Meek (*Gentile Mission* 83) also understands the “fallen booth of David” similarly when he states, “. . . ‘the tent of David’ must be understood as the (restored, eschatological) Davidic kingdom.” He goes on to say, “For Luke, the kingdom is restored in the ascension of Christ (Acts 2.34).”

³² The title “Son of David” was used in the Second Temple period as a messianic reference. In 2 Esdr 12:32, we read of “the Messiah whom the Most High has kept until the end of days, who will arise from the posterity of David.” Cf. Sir 45:25; 1 Macc 2:57; 4 Ezra 12:32, 34; and *Pss. Sol.* 17:21–44.

Abrahamic and new covenants are progressively fulfilled in Scripture, but have not given enough attention to the notion that the Davidic covenant is also progressively fulfilled.³³

The phrase “throne of David” only occurs nine times in Scripture, and of these nine, all are found in the OT.³⁴ Most refer to some historic king of the past in the line of David, such as Solomon or the kings at the time of the Babylonian exile. Only Isa 9:6–7 refers directly to Messiah: “For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; . . . There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace *on the throne of David* and over his kingdom.” Although this passage indicates to us *what* he will do when he takes up the throne of David, it does not clearly delineate *when* this happens. The only NT verse that uses similar terminology of David’s throne is Luke 1:32, when the angel announces to the virgin Mary that “the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David.” The promise of sitting on David’s throne is thus clearly promised to Jesus (in keeping with 2 Sam 7:13 and Isa 9:7), but the time of fulfillment is still unclear (partly owing to the fact that the phrase is rarely mentioned in Scripture).

3. *New Testament clues regarding Davidic rule.* With no clearly stated verses in the NT to understand *when* Jesus takes the throne of David, we must turn our attention to relevant passages to see what we can deduce from them.³⁵ One such clue is found in Rev 3:7, a verse introducing Christ’s message to the church of Philadelphia. Jesus is introduced as “He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens.” Each of the seven messages to the seven churches begins with a statement describing Christ, and in every case it is a present reality (not a prophecy of something that will come true in the future). Hence, Jesus has “the key of David” now. This verse is an allusion to Isa 22:22, where (in that context) a servant under Hezekiah named Eliakim was entrusted by God with “authority” (Heb מְלָכָה, rule, dominion) to act on behalf of the people. This Eliakim was then a type of the Lord Jesus who is entrusted with ruling authority.³⁶

As we turn to the book of Acts, we can begin to understand that the promise to Jesus of ruling on David’s throne is connected with his

³³ For those who object that the Davidic covenant is being progressively fulfilled, I call their attention to the promise in 2 Sam 7:13, “He shall build a house for My name.” This had an initial fulfillment with Solomon, but it has a greater fulfillment in Christ. He is *presently* building a spiritual “house” made up of “living stones,” himself being the chief corner stone (see 1 Pet 2:4–5). If this aspect of the Davidic covenant is being fulfilled now, we should be willing to entertain the notion that other aspects might be operative now as well.

³⁴ 2 Sam 3:10; 1 Kgs 2:12, 24, 45; Isa 9:7; Jer 17:25; 22:30; 29:16; 36:30.

³⁵ For a helpful survey of the Davidic covenant promises and their fulfillment in Christ, see Saucy, *Case for Progressive Dispensationalism* 66–80.

³⁶ Ford observes, “The Targum to Isa 22:22 renders the key of the house of David as a ‘key to the sanctuary and dominion of the house of David’” (J. Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation* [AB 38; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975] 416).

resurrection and ascension. In Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost, he highlighted the fact that God the Father raised Jesus from the dead and then defended this on the basis of Psalm 16. Yet Peter went on to point out the connection of Jesus' resurrection to David's throne by appealing to Ps 132:11 (see Acts 2:30–31). He stated, "And so, because he [David] was a prophet and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants on his throne, he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ . . ." Peter goes on to clarify that the ascension of Jesus to the Father's right hand in fulfillment of Ps 110:1 ("Sit at My right hand") fulfills this throne promise.³⁷ In doing so, Peter uses a Jewish technique of linking passages by key words, in this case "sit" from Ps 132:11 and Ps 110:1. Thus in concluding his message, Peter stated the bottom line: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified." He is Lord in that he now *rules* as the promised Davidic king, and just as the OT anticipated of the "Christ."

4. *Christ's present authority proclaimed.* It simply will not do to suggest that Christ is sitting today, not on David's throne, but only at the Father's right hand. This misses the point. When we look at Eph 1:20–23, we see that the Father "*raised Him* from the dead and *seated Him* at His right hand in the heavenly places." In this role, Christ is far above all rule and authority, and all things have been put "in subjection under His feet." Furthermore, Christ himself (in giving the Great Commission to the church) declared, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Matt 28:18). It is rather obvious from Eph 1:20 that this authority of Christ is connected with his resurrection and ascension to the Father's right hand, and Acts 2 does make a link to his being seated on David's throne in its quotation of Ps 132:11. To suggest that Christ's present authority is not associated with the Davidic throne promise flies in the face of the evidence. Why else would Jesus claim that he has the "key of David"?

5. *Promise fulfillment declared in Acts 13.* Yet an even stronger case can be made that the Davidic covenant promise finds fulfillment in the resurrection and ascension of Christ when we turn to the apostle Paul's sermon in Acts 13 at Pisidian Antioch. In verse 22, Paul points out that in the past God raised up David to be Israel's king. Then he links Jesus to the Davidic covenant promise in verse 23: "From the descendants of this

³⁷ The apostle Paul's statement in 1 Cor 15:25, "For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet," clearly has Ps 110:1 in mind and implies that his reign as David's greater son has already commenced while he is seated at the Father's right hand—the position of messianic authority. That is, to reign from the Father's right hand is to rule from the Davidic throne. Saucy adds, "As we have seen, the right hand of God was not spatially thought of as being in heaven. In fact, it was not primarily a spatial concept at all, but a metaphor for the supreme position of authority next to the king" (*Case for Progressive Dispensationalism* 71).

man, *according to promise*, God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus.” Yet we must not fail to see the repetition of the word “promise” later in the sermon when Paul preaches the resurrection. After proclaiming the fact of Jesus’ resurrection (Acts 13:30–31), Paul makes a rather remarkable statement having direct bearing on the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant promise: “And we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers, that *God has fulfilled this promise* to our children in that he raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, ‘You are My Son; today I have begotten You’” (Acts 13:32–33). From these verses, it is clear that Paul saw the resurrection/ascension of Jesus as the *time of fulfillment* of the Davidic covenant promise. This is not the same as establishing the fact that Jesus is the promised descendant. The fulfillment is achieved specifically with the resurrection/ascension event.

Having said this, I would go on to qualify this by saying that “fulfillment” does not have to mean *complete* fulfillment. In other words, the Davidic covenant promise of the eternal throne to one of David’s descendants *begins* to find its fulfillment in Jesus.³⁸ But that is not to say that he has exhausted the expectations of what David’s throne signified. If we could understand this principle, I think we could get over any reluctance (and debate) as to whether or not Jesus is presently ruling on the throne of David. Much of what is prophesied of his rule in the OT has not yet been fulfilled (e.g. Isa 2:1–4 and Psalm 72), but he is *right now* the Davidic ruler and using that authority. Primarily in this age he uses this authority for causing the gospel to go forward and build his church. We will see a greater use of this authority in connection with his second coming and the establishment of his millennial rule. Hence, what I am arguing for here is a progressive fulfillment of the Davidic covenant promises, just as the Abrahamic and new covenants are being progressively fulfilled (both these latter covenants await the Second Coming and the millennium for their complete fulfillment).³⁹ Jesus was recognized as the “Son of David” in his earthly ministry, and with his resurrection/ascension the promise of an eternal throne and rule have commenced.

³⁸ Here I am in essential agreement with Kenneth L. Barker when he discusses *progressive fulfillment* (“The Scope and Center of Old and New Testament Theology and Hope,” in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church* [ed. Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992] 327).

³⁹ Darrell Bock wisely concludes his study of the kingdom presentation in the book of Acts with these words: “What Luke reveals is a kingdom that has come and will come in stages: ‘already’/‘not yet.’ The ‘already’ kingdom shows that God is rebuilding the house of David through a raised and reigning Jesus Christ (Acts 2). Gentiles also share in blessing, as God’s promise and activity show (Luke 24:47; Acts 10–11, 15). The Abrahamic Covenant (Acts 3:22–26), Davidic Covenant (Acts 2:30–36), and New Covenant (Acts 2:16–39) have all received an initial fulfillment. Eschatological events have begun, but they move on into a future, more glorious fulfillment” (*Case for Premillennialism* 197–98).

6. *The Davidic covenant promise and Christ's resurrection fulfilling Isaiah 55.*

Before leaving this subject, I would like to take it a step further by looking at Acts 13:34. The apostle Paul went on to say, "As for the fact that He raised Him up from the dead, no longer to return to decay, He has spoken in this way: 'I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.'" Here we see Paul associating the resurrection with a promise drawn from Isa 55:3. In Isa 55:1–5, "everyone who thirsts" is invited to come to the waters to be satisfied. Then in verse 3 we read, "Listen, that you [plural] may live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you (plural), according to the faithful mercies shown to David." When we read of the "holy and sure blessings of David" in Acts 13:34, these words (in Greek) are exactly the same as the words translated "the faithful mercies shown to David" from the LXX. The specific mention of "everlasting covenant" in the verse confirms that we are talking about the Davidic covenant. But who are the "you" (plural) who are being invited to come into the bond of this covenant? The next line gives us the answer: "Behold, I have made him (sg) a witness to the peoples (אַרְבֻּמִּיּוֹת), a leader and commander for the peoples." The "him" in this verse is not David (Isaiah writes long after the time of David), but the promised Davidic descendant, i.e. the Messiah. He will be a "leader and commander" for the peoples.⁴⁰ The word "peoples" (note the plural) refers to the Gentile peoples. Isaiah 55:5 speaks about them as a "nation": "Behold, you (sg.: the Messiah) will call a nation you do not know, and a nation which knows you not will run to you, because of the LORD your God, even the Holy One of Israel; for He has glorified you."⁴¹ The Gentiles are a "nation which knows you not" (God did not make them a special people to Himself, as he had with Israel at Mt. Sinai). Nevertheless, they will "run" to David's descendant, and he will be their ruler. This is a beautiful picture of what God is doing in this church age as Gentiles turn to Israel's Messiah in faith! Finally, in Isa 55:6, the invitation is extended, "Seek the LORD (הַיְהוָה יִרְשָׁו) while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near." In light of the preceding context, it is reasonable to conclude that Gentiles are primarily in mind. Interestingly, the word for seek (Heb שָׁרָו) is the same word understood by the LXX translator in Amos 9:12, "that all mankind might *seek* [Him]." Thus we see in Isa 55:1–6 another portrait from the OT anticipating God's salvific work among the Gentiles. The invitation is for those who are "thirsty" to "seek the Lord," and to "listen" that they might live. Those who so respond will be brought into the bond of the Davidic covenant in the

⁴⁰ The word translated "leader" in this verse is Heb מְנַיִן. The same word is used in Dan 9:25 for "Messiah the Prince" (מְשִׁיחַ בְּנֵי יָמִין). The word means a "leader, ruler, prince" (BDB 617). Although the term has a variety of usage, it is often used of a king-ruler (e.g. 1 Sam 9:16; 13:14).

⁴¹ The use of the singular "nation" to speak of the Gentiles is not unusual in biblical jargon. We see the same thing in Matt 21:43 and 1 Pet 2:9. The Gentiles that turn to Christ become a "nation," as they inherit the promises of being "God's people."

sense that they will come under the rule of Messiah, the promised Davidic descendant.

VIII. CONCLUSIONS

Early in the church's history, beginning with Acts 10, Gentiles began to turn to Christ and receive the Holy Spirit. As each year passed, more and more Gentiles became a part of the church. This accelerated all the more upon Paul's first missionary journey to the regions of Galatia. The original recipients of the gospel had been those in Judea, and (thankfully) many of them had become Christians. This included a great number whose background was from the sect of the Pharisees. Yet this was still a time of great transition in the church's history, and confusion prevailed. The Jerusalem Council met to resolve the debate which culminated in the speech by James. In his mind, the OT prophets clearly foretold that God's salvation would be extended to Gentiles, and now (in retrospect) it was becoming more and more obvious how this all tied together.

The Amos quotation (Amos 9:11–12) was just one of these many OT passages that bore evidence to God's work among the Gentiles. God's promise to raise up the "fallen booth of David" in Amos 9:11 anticipated that God would one day restore the Davidic kingship originally promised to David in 2 Samuel 7. In this "rebuilding," there would be Gentiles upon whom God's name was called. The phrase "upon whom My name is called" indicated they had the status of covenant relationship.

When we examine the complete ending to Amos, we see that Amos 9:11–15 constitutes a salvation oracle for a time following God's judgment upon the nation. In this salvation oracle, the restorative work of God begins with him raising up the "fallen booth of David," continues with a work of grace among Gentiles, and finally concludes with the full regathering and restoration of Israel in the land of promise. Yet there is no need to think that all this must await the Second Coming of Christ. A closer investigation of the book of Acts (especially Acts 2:29–36 and Acts 13:22–34) reveals that the raising up of the "fallen booth of David" began with the resurrection and ascension of Christ. In this grand event, the Father seated Jesus at his right hand, that is, he gave Jesus the place of highest honor. In this act, the promise to David that one of his descendants would rule from an eternal throne had commenced.

James quoted from Amos 9:11–12, not because it spoke of conditions in the millennium, but because he recognized in what the church was witnessing of the Gentile harvest in that day what the OT anticipated of David's promised seed. In fact, this is the logical expectation of the purpose clause in Acts 15:12, as signaled by the

conjunction ὅπως ἂν; God raises up the Davidic kingship *in order that* the Gentiles might seek Him.⁴² Even Isa 55:1–6 anticipated that the Davidic covenant would be extended over Gentiles, and he would become their ruler, too. The issue of how the LXX translated Amos 9:12a (whether it should be “possessing Edom” or “all mankind seeking the Lord”) actually had little bearing on the point James had to make. That Amos 9:12b mentioned Gentiles who had God’s name called on them (which all three—the MT, LXX, and NT—specified) was really his main concern.

Thus the complete fulfillment of the promises in Amos 9:11–15 extend over a lengthy time, beginning with the resurrection/ascension of Christ and extending into the millennium. If we see the passage in light of the larger biblical theology as I have suggested in this article, we understand that James’s quotation of Amos 9:11–12 was very forceful, for it was being fulfilled in the very days in which he spoke. Gentiles, as Gentiles, were becoming “his people.” They did not have to become Jewish proselytes to participate in the rule of David’s greater Son, and therefore were not bound to the Mosaic Law.

Finally, let us not overlook how the theme of “grace” is fundamental to all that has been said. At the Jerusalem Council, Peter ended his speech by proclaiming, “But we believe that we [Jews] are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they [the Gentiles] also are” (Acts 15:11). The Isaiah 55 passage anticipated that Gentiles would be saved by grace, not law-keeping, when it said to those who were thirsty, “Come, buy wine and milk, without money and without cost.” God’s gift of eternal life is not for sale; rather it is “without cost.” Isaiah, as did Amos, envisioned Gentiles coming to drink freely! Circumcision would be of no avail for obtaining forgiveness and eternal life, the greatest of all gifts. God would glorify Himself by bringing multitudes of Gentiles to Himself “by grace through faith,” and they would become “his people.” May God strengthen us to ever uphold the precious truth that salvation is by grace and only by grace! This invitation for the “thirsty” to come and drink of God’s saving grace is the message God has for the world today, and those who so respond are brought into the bond of the Davidic covenant in which Jesus Christ serves as their king.

⁴² Meek makes this very point in his work: “James’s argument turns on ὅπως ἂν in 15.17a: the purpose for which God has restored the kingdom is to claim the nations as his own. The inclusion of Gentiles is a necessary consequence of the rebuilding of David’s fallen tent. Since the kingdom has been restored, the time for Gentile inclusion is now. It does not belong still to the distant future or depend on the prior completion of Jewish evangelism” (*Gentile Mission in Old Testament Citations in Acts* 89).



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