

Gentiles and the People of God: A Study of Apostolic Hermeneutics and Theology in Acts 15¹

The purpose of this paper is to study the hermeneutics involved in and the theology resulting from the quotation of Amos 9 in Acts 15, which James uses to support the inclusion of Gentiles, as Gentiles, in the people of God in this age. The paper will proceed from a study of the context and meaning of Amos 9 in the Masoretic Text (MT) and Septuagint (LXX). Then I will survey the context of Acts 15 and the interpretations of it by proponents of Traditional Dispensational, Progressive Dispensational, and Promise Theology. Since this paper was prepared for the Dispensational Study Group, this study will attempt to be especially sensitive to issues relevant to Dispensational interpretation of Amos 9 and, especially, Acts 15. Finally in my conclusion I will propose some applications of this study to our understanding of the People of God in this age and the relationship between Israel and the Church.

¹ The phrase “Apostolic Hermeneutics” in this title is not meant to connect the hermeneutic in Acts 15 with the hermeneutic espoused by Peter Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005). See the reviews of Enns’ book in D. A. Carson, “Three More Books on the Bible: A Critical Review” *TRINJ 27NS* (2006): 1-62, esp. pp. 18-45 and G. K. Beale, “Myth, History, and Inspiration: A Review Article of *Inspiration and Incarnation* by Peter Enns” *JETS 49:2* (June 2006): 287-312. The phrase “Apostolic Hermeneutics” is used in the title of this paper to refer to the hermeneutic used by James in the quotation of Acts 15, which will be investigated in this paper.

Amos 9:11-12²

We will consider Amos 9:11-12 in two parts, first looking at it in MT and then in LXX, which is the text quoted in Acts 15.

Amos 9:11-12 in MT

God called the prophet Amos to minister to the Northern Kingdom of Israel during the reign of Jeroboam II, a time when this kingdom's borders had been expanded, its economy was strong, and the religious leaders were preaching that these things were indications of divine favor. Amos was called to this kingdom to preach that these things were not indications of divine favor but were only a thin veneer of prosperity and blessing. In fact, Israelite society, especially the upper levels of it, was infested with corruption and spiritual rot. Therefore, the Lord was poised to judge the nation and destroy all the sinners. They should prepare to meet their God! However, the book ends with a message of hope for the future in 9:11-15. Although the present generation would be destroyed, in the end the Lord would reconstitute (restore) the nation and restore Davidic rule.

Amos 9 contains four paragraphs. The last of the five visions in the book (9:1-4)³ involves the destruction of the Temple and all the people who are remaining, even those in "exile." The third hymn in the book (9:5-6)⁴ celebrates Yahweh's power and ability to judge as described in the preceding vision. In 9:7-10 Amos answers the implied objection

² I am assuming a traditional dating of Amos in the 8th century BC during the reigns of Jeroboam II in Israel and Uzziah in Judah. This is the historical situation described in the book (1:1; 7:10-17). The prosperity of Israel (6:1-6) and military victories (6:13) described suggest Jeroboam's reign was well established and thus a date around 765-760 B.C. See Gary V. Smith *Amos* (A Mentor Commentary; Ross-Shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 1998), esp. pp. 13-16.

³ See also 7:1-3; 7:4-6; 7:7-9; and 8:1-3.

⁴ See also 4:13; and 5:8-9.

of the people that they would be protected from danger; he insists that Yahweh would judge them like the other nations, only he would not totally destroy the “house of Judah.”⁵ The last paragraph, or epilogue, of Amos (9:11-15) is the only positive message in the book.⁶ It assumes that the judgment prophesied earlier in the chapter has already taken place, and it promises blessing, rebuilding, and restoration after Israel returns from exile and when the nation is reestablished in the land.

The phrase “in that day” in Amos 9:11 places the prophecy of blessing in 9:11-15 in the indefinite future. The phrase itself means something like “then” or “following upon that,” connecting what follows with the preceding.⁷ The repeated references to divine activity (9:11, 12, 14, 15) as well as the supernatural blessings involved (9:13) suggest that in this context “in that day” is referring to “the day of the Lord,” a future time of miraculous divine intervention in the affairs of the world.⁸ God himself is the active agent and subject in 9:11, who restores, repairs, and rebuilds David’s fallen tent.

⁵ In verse 8 Israel, which is going to be destroyed, is described as “the sinful kingdom,” and yet the Lord promises he will “not totally destroy the house of Jacob.”

⁶ For a discussion of the authenticity of this section, see Smith, pp. 374-8.

⁷ See Peter Andreas Munch, *The Expression “Bajjom Hahu.” Is It an Eschatological Terminus Technicus?* (Oslo: I Kommissjon Hos Jacob DyBwad, 1936), pp. 1-69, esp. pp. 56-57. The phrase occurs 208 times in MT (counting using Accordance). Munch appears to have overstated the evidence when he says that in the OT the phrase “never has been used as an eschatological term” (57). However he establishes his point that only the context can determine whether the phrase has a more technical significance, and most often it is only a contextual connector. See the discussion of this in O. Palmer Robertson, “Hermeneutics of Continuity” in *Continuity and Discontinuity* ed. John S. Feinberg (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1988), p. 90.

⁸ In Amos this kind of terminology is associated with Israel’s judgment and end in 2:16; 3:14; 8:3, 9, 11, 13 and Israel’s blessing in 9:13. The phrase “in that day” (הַיּוֹם הַהוּא) in Amos (5x—2:16; 8:3, 9, 13; 9:11) refers most frequently to events that take place when the Lord judges Israel and they are destroyed and go into captivity (2:16; 8:3, 9, 13), but as is common in the OT, the phrase can also have reference to events that go beyond the historical situation directly addressed by the prophet. Stuart (p. 399) suggests that in Amos 9:11 it refers to “some time in the indefinite future;” Douglas Stuart, “Amos” in *Hosea-Jonah* (WBC 31; Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1987). See also his discussion of this terminology as used in Hosea (p. 57). He comments (p. 386) that this

“David’s fallen tent” is apparently a reference to the Davidic kingdom/dynasty.⁹ The Davidic dynasty was described as a “house” in the Davidic covenant (2 Sam. 7:11, 13, 16, 27; cf. 7:5, 7). In light of verse 12 “David’s fallen tent” must refer to more than a ruler or dynasty; it also refers to the exercise of rule.¹⁰ The “tent” (תֹּכַח) is “fallen/falling”¹¹ and gives the impression of “a dilapidated little hut.”¹² Smith comments, “This structure which is fallen/falling is a prophetic metaphor of the present and future state of

terminology “normally functions stylistically to introduce new oracles or sections thereof.”

⁹ So Robert B. Chisholm, *Interpreting the Minor Prophets* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), p. 104; Shalom M. Paul, *A Commentary on the Book of Amos* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), pp. 290-1; and Richard S. Cripps, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Amos* (London: SPCK, 1969), pp. 270 and 320; Smith, *Amos*, pp. 378-9 takes it as the Davidic kingdom. Hans Walter Wolff, *A Commentary on the Books of the Prophets Joel and Amos* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), p. 352, suggests it could refer to the Davidic dynasty, the southern kingdom of Judah as a destroyed state, or the fallen empire of David; he seems to settle on a “Davidic imperium” (i.e., supreme authority or empire). Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, p. 398, vocalizes the Hebrew (תֹּכַח) as Succoth, a city on the east side of the Jordan Valley, from which “David successfully dominated (united) Israel’s neighbors to the east and south.” He argues that its “rebuilding would herald the return of Israel to power.” His argument is not convincing. G. F. Hasel refutes this last interpretation in *The Remnant: The History and Theology of the Remnant Idea from Genesis to Isaiah* (Andrews University Monograph Series in Religion 5; Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 1972), p. 474.

¹⁰ Paul, *Amos*, p. 290, n. 15 suggests that if the word “house” were used in this passage “it would have been understood to refer only to the Davidic “house” (=dynasty).” F. M. Cross notes (p. 177, n. 31) in “The Priestly Tabernacle in the Light of Recent Research,” pp. 169-180 in *Temples and High Places in Biblical Times*, ed. A. Biran (Jerusalem: Keter, 1981) that in Amos 9:11 “[the prophet] is drawing on the typology between the dynasty and the dynastic shrine—the Tent of Yahweh.” (See the discussion in Paul, *Amos*, p. 290, n. 18.) The different pronominal suffixes (3 fem pl; 3 mas sing; 3 fem sing) in 9:11 apparently refer to the Davidic dynasty/kingdom in collective and distributive senses. The plural could refer to the Northern and Southern Kingdoms.

¹¹ Only context can determine the temporal sense of this *qal* active participle, *GKC*, 116d; see Paul, *Amos*, p. 290, n. 16 and Cripps, *Amos*, p. 271, n. 1, who notes that it could also be future.

¹² Smith, *Amos*, p. 379. See his helpful survey of the word תֹּכַח on p. 379.

the Davidic kingdom.”¹³ The kingdom is already divided, and Amos has prophesied that the Northern Kingdom will be destroyed and go into exile.

That “the tent” will be restored, repaired, and rebuilt “as it used to be” must be “a nostalgic reflection upon the ideal period of the Davidic Empire.”¹⁴ Like David, the revitalized dynasty/kingdom will subjugate Israel’s enemies (9:12).¹⁵ Also implied in this prophecy is the reunification of Amos’ target audience, Israel, with the Southern Kingdom of Judah (Ezek. 37:15-28) under a Davidic ruler. Noteworthy is the absence in this prophecy of any reference to the Messiah.¹⁶

The particle “so that” (לְמַעַן) at the beginning of 9:12 indicates that that verse contains the purpose for the action in 9:11.¹⁷ If 9:11 refers, at least in part, to the reestablishment of a dynasty/kingdom, 9:12 refers to the reassertion of the authority of that dynasty/kingdom. After the dynasty/kingdom is reestablished it will reassert its authority over “Edom” and “all the nations that bear my [the Lord’s] name.” “Possess” (יָרַשׁ) here has the sense of “subduing” surrounding nations (as in Obadiah 17 and 19), and the subject “they” has its antecedent in 9:11.¹⁸

In Amos the “remnant” of Edom is most likely whatever remains after the judgment of the cities of Edom described in 1:11-12. “All the nations that bear my name,” which is parallel to “the remnant of Edom,” is the second object of the verb

¹³ Smith, *Amos*, p. 379.

¹⁴ Paul, *Amos*, pp. 290-1.

¹⁵ Chisholm, *Minor Prophets*, p. 104.

¹⁶ Cripps, *Amos*, p. 271 discusses the Messianic application of this prophecy in later Judaism,

¹⁷ Paul, *Amos*, p. 291, calls it “the next stage.” See n. 28 and 29. This particle occurs three other times in Amos; twice it indicates purpose (1:13; 5:14); in 2:7 the sense is debated. Koehler and Baumgartner, p. 614, say that with this particle “often the result is expressed as intent.” See also Bruce K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), p. 91.

¹⁸ Cripps, *Amos*, p. 273. “They” probably refers to the people of Israel, but it could have reference to the combination of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms.

“possess;” in other words, this is the second object over which restored Israel will reassert its authority. The OT authors often singled out Edom “as Israel’s archenemy and as an appropriate symbol for all its foes” (see Ps. 137:7; Isa. 34:5-15; 63:1-6; Lam. 4:21; Ob. 1),¹⁹ and here it functions as a close synecdoche for its parallel “all the nations.”²⁰

A more literal rendering of the phrase “that bear my name” (NIV) is “that are called by my name” (ASV).²¹ The phrase “denotes ownership and the act of possession,”²² which can be accomplished by war (2 Sam. 12:28) or agreement to the requests of those desiring to be owned and possessed (Isa. 4:1). It indicates legal right of possession, and the name of the new owner is called over property when it is transferred

¹⁹ Chisholm, *Minor Prophets*, p. 104. For a helpful survey of Edom and Edomites in the Old Testament see Kenneth G. Hoglund, “Edomites” in *Peoples of the Old Testament World*, eds. Alfred J. Hoerth, Gerald L. Mattingly and Edwin M. Yamauchi (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), pp. 335-47. Edom was called Israel’s “brother” and Edomites could possibly become part of the “assembly of the LORD” (Num. 20:14; Deut. 23:8-10), in contrast to Ammonites and Moabites. However, because of their gloating over the demise of Judah (Ob. 11-14) and their later occupation of the southern portions of Judah (Ezek. 35:10-12), the Jews came to be look upon them with great bitterness (Ps. 137:7; Obadiah). In keeping with Amos, Obadiah looked forward to a day when the Edomite occupation of Judea would be reversed (Ob. 19). “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] (Hoglund, 342).” Malachi refers to the desolation of Edom (Mal. 1:2-3). Smith, *Amos*, p. 380 gives a summary of the long history of hatred and conflict between Edom and the Davidic kingdom. Note the inclusion of Edom among the surrounding nations (enemies?) of the Northern kingdom in Amos 1-2 (1:11-12). Smith’s suggestion (p. 380) that “Edom may have functioned as a representative of the human race (*dm*) as the Old Greek and the New Testament translates it,” goes a bit too far for the evidence and reads the later interpretation into MT without warrant.

²⁰ Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, p. 398.

²¹ The phrase is אֲשֶׁר-נִקְרָא שְׁמִי. The words נִקְרָא שְׁמִי (“called by my name”) occur in this order 14x in MT. Among other things they refer to the Lord’s relationship to the Temple (Jer. 7:10, 11, 14, 30; 32:34; 34:15), Jerusalem (Jer. 25:29; Dan. 9:18), and his people (Jer. 15:16; 2 Chron. 7:14); see also Isa. 4:1; 63:19; and 2 Sam. 12:28. Note the similar phrases in Deut. 28:10; 2 Sam. 6:2; Isa. 43:7 and 65:1; and Jer. 14:9.

²² Paul, *Amos*, p. 292.

from one owner to another.²³ Often in OT to be called by God's name involves a relationship with him which gives the people involved the right to call upon him for help (Jer 14:9; 15:15-6) and the responsibility to be loyal to him (Deut 28:10). When the phrase is applied to Israel, as God's people, it is based on their covenant relationship with him (Deut 28:10; 2 Chron 7:14). Gentiles, by contrast, have not been called by the name of the Lord (Isa. 63:19). Such covenant relationship, as experienced by Israel, is not explicit in the MT of Amos 9:12.²⁴ Here the ownership or control, which are basic to the meaning of this phrase, appear to be as a result of military conquest, as in 2 Samuel 12:28.

The reference to the "nations" in 9:12, as well as the implied inclusion of both Judah and Israel in the fulfillment of the prophecy of 9:11-12 forms an "overarching inclusio" with the judgment of the nations (including Judah and Israel) in chapters 1-2.²⁵ The blessing promised to the Davidic dynasty/kingdom in 9:11-12 is fulfillment of promises of restoration of power over enemies (Deut. 30:7; reversal of Lev. 26:36-39).²⁶ However it must also be read in the fuller canonical context of the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants. Smith appropriately concludes, "Amos is not announcing the doom of Edom as much as a positive promise of blessing on Edom and all the nations (Gen. 12:3; 28:14) committed to Yahweh (cf. Deut. 28:9-10; Jer 14:9). They will enjoy the blessings

²³ See NIDOTTE, 3, 973; KB, 1130.

²⁴ That is not to say they could not be inferred from the MT. Richard Bauckham, "James and the Gentiles (Acts 15:13-21)" in *History Literature and Society in the Book of Acts*, ed. Ben Witherington (Cambridge: University Press, 1996), pp. 168-9, comments that although this phrase in Amos 9:12 originally "no doubt referred to the subjection of Israel's neighbors to Davidic rule. Even the MT could easily have been understood by a Jewish Christian as predicting the extension of Israel's covenant status and privilege to the Gentile nations."

²⁵ Paul, *Amos*, p. 292. He quotes Cross: "the recovery of the Davidic empire complements the condemnation of the nation states of the Davidic empire (Amos 1:3-2:3)."

²⁶ Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, p. 398. It is interesting that there are not many of these kinds of promises in the Law; see Stuart, pp. xli-xlii.

of this restored kingdom just like the remnant of Israel.”²⁷ This short section (9:11-12) closes with the Lord’s assurance that he will do what he has promised (“declares the Lord, who will do these things”).

Amos 9:11-12 in LXX

Since LXX is the text quoted in Acts 15, we need to look at it also. The context preceding LXX-Amos 9:11-12 is similar in meaning to MT; however, it is worth noting that 9:9b in LXX is not a message of judgment as in MT (where Israel will be “sifted” and none will escape). Instead the last clause of 9:9 is “a confident oracle of salvation” that destruction will never again fall on the land to afflict it and its inhabitants. After the time of exile and punishment, the Lord promises the true remnant of Israel a new era of freedom and peaceful occupation of the land; there will be no more destruction and punishment.²⁸

The translation of v 11 is close to MT; the major difference is the translator’s harmonization of the Hebrew pronominal suffixes (“their breaches,” fem, pl; “his ruins,” mas, sing; and “her,” fem, sing) so they all refer to the “tent” (ἡ σκηνή); as a result, “collapsed parts of it” (τὰ πεπτωκότα αὐτῆς) and “ruined parts of it” (κατεσκαμμένα αὐτῆς) are both parts of the “tent.”²⁹

The LXX rendering of 9:11 is very polished.³⁰ Not only have the pronouns been harmonized, but the first and third verbs are identical (ἀναστήσω) as are the second and

²⁷ Smith, *Amos*, p. 380. The idea of Edom being a representative of all the nations is clearer in the LXX and developed more in the discussion there.

²⁸ Dines, *Amos*, p. 289.

²⁹ Also James A. Arieti, “A Study in the Septuagint of Amos” (Ph.D. Diss., Stanford University, 1972), p. 31, calls the rendering of “breaches” (רָחֵץ) as “collapsed parts” (perfect passive participle from πίπτω) a paraphrase.

³⁰ See Jennifer Mary Dines, “The Septuagint of Amos: A Study in Interpretation.” (Ph.D. Diss., London, 1991), pp. 293-4 for a comparison with the less stylish MT

fourth (ἀνοικοδομήσω).³¹ The fourfold repetition of the prepositional prefix (ανα-) and the two perfect passive participles from πίπτω add to the assonance.³² As a chiasmic hub the verse contains the central phrases τὰ πεπτωκότα αὐτῆς καὶ τὰ κατεσκαμμένα αὐτῆς. Although Wolff and Stuart allow that many of these refinements were in the LXX's *Vorlage*, the stylistic refinements just mentioned suggest they are more likely “logical and stylistic improvements” of the translator.³³ This is especially true of the fourfold repetition of the prepositional prefix (ανα-), which is more than stylistic and emphasizes rebuilding and restoration.³⁴

The phrase καθὼς αἰ ἡμέραι τοῦ αἰῶνος could refer to an idealized reign of David in the future or to the distant past, since the noun αἰών can refer to the past (e.g., Gen 6:4; Deut 32:7) or future. (e.g., Gen 3:22; 6:3; Ex 14:13; Isa 13:20; 25:2; 48:12). The same phrase without the comparative in Sir 50:23 and Isa 63:9, and the exact phrase with the comparative in Mic 7:14 and Mal 3:4 all refer to the past. The context in Amos requires such an understanding in 9:11 also. Since it is “in that day,” i.e., in the future, that the Lord will restore the Davidic dynasty and rule, he will not be making it as it will be in the future, but as it was in the past.

The key term in the verse is the “tent” (σκηνή) of David that is to be restored and of which all the “collapsed” and “ruined” things in the verse are a part. This term (436x in LXX) describes a tent or hut, the tabernacle, or the feast of tabernacles. In Amos 5:26 it describes the portable sanctuary or tabernacle of Moloch, and in this passage it seems to be used metaphorically for the dynasty and kingdom of David. This understanding of it

³¹ In MT the first and third verbs are the same and the second and fourth are different.

³² See the discussion (n. 25) above on the *Vorlage* of the second of these participles.

³³ Dines, “Amos,” p. 294; cf. Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, p. 350 and Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, p. 396.

³⁴ E. Richard, “The Creative Use of Amos by the Author of Acts” *NT* 24 (1982), p. 48.

is supported by the parallel use in Isaiah 16:5³⁵ and the context of Amos 9:11, which seems to describe the divided and weakened state of Israel. The verse promises a future restoration of David’s dynasty and the kingdom over which it rules so that it will be like it was in former times.³⁶

The differences between MT and LXX in Amos 9:12 are well known, because of their importance the quotation in Acts 15. In LXX the translator changes the MT reading, “that they may possess the remnant of Edom” (לְמַעַן יִירְשׁוּ אֶת־שְׂאֵרֵי־הָאֲדוֹמִים), to “that the remnant of men may seek (me)” (ὅπως ἐκζητήσωσιν οἱ κατάλοιποι τῶν ἀνθρώπων). Gelston suggests that the main reason for the differences is the confusion of one letter; the translator confused the second *yod* in יִירְשׁוּ (“possess”) for a *daleth* and read יִרְשׁוּ (“seek”). He adds the other main change, reading “Edom” as “men,” is “essentially a matter of vocalization, and it may very well be the case that the vocalic *waw* [in אֲדוֹמִים] was not yet present in the *Vorlage* of the LXX.”³⁷ Furthermore, he proposes that the

³⁵ This verse describes on who will sit on a throne in the “tent of David” (ἐν σκηνῇ Δαυιδ) and judge in truth and righteousness.

³⁶ Amos 9:11 is also quoted (without v 12) in CD 7:16 and in 4Q174 3:12. In the former the “tent of David” is taken as the books of the Law that will be reestablished and interpreted by an interpreter of the Law who will be raised up to lead the nation; in the latter the “booth of David” refers to the “shoot of David,” who will arise to fulfill the Davidic Covenant and deliver Israel (4 Kgdms 7); the eschatological, messianic interpretation of 4Q174 3:12 is similar to the text’s meaning in Amos 9. It is possible that the translator of Amos 9:11 understood the prophecy to refer to the restoration of Jerusalem by Nehemiah or the rebuilding of the Temple by Joshua and Zerubbabel, who was the last descendant of David in the OT. Sir 49:12 praises these last two characters because “they built the house (ᾠκοδόμησαν οἶκον) and raised up a holy temple to the Lord.” The next verse praises Nehemiah, who “raised our fallen walls” (τοῦ ἐγείραντος ἡμῖν τείχη πεπτωκότα). There is nothing in LXX Amos 9:11 to prove to whom the translator felt the passage referred, but readers of it could have applied the concepts in it to several different situations. It does appear that Amos 9:11 was an important “prophecy” for several communities. Dines discusses the possibility that LXX Dan 11:14 is dependent on Amos 9:11. (Dines, *Amos*, pp. 296-300. See also P. D. M. Turner, “Ἀνοικοδομεῖν and Intra-Septuagintal Borrowing” *Vetus Testamentum* (1977): 472-3).

³⁷ Anthony Gelston, “Some Hebrew Misreadings in the Septuagint of Amos.” *VT* 52:4 (2002): 498.

difference in the syntax of the clause in the Septuagint, changing the “remnant” from the direct object as it is in the MT to the subject, may be because the particle כִּי , marking the direct object in the MT, “was a secondary refinement not yet present in the *Vorlage* of the LXX,” or it was ignored by the translator, who could not make sense of it in light of the way he read the verb.³⁸ The only other option Gelston considers for explaining the changes in this verse is the possibility that the Septuagint represents the original text of the passage, which he rejects, favoring the idea that “the LXX rendering arose initially through the accidental misreading of a single Hebrew letter.”³⁹

In this example Gelston seems to base too much on the misreading of one letter.⁴⁰ There are several other possible explanations of the differences between the MT and the Septuagint. McLay lists three possible explanations: (1) the translator may have read it the way he did “to create a theological rendering;” (2) he may have “misread the verb and *Edom* and rendered the text in a way that made sense to him;” or (3) a mediating position is that he did not completely understand the text, and he “assumed that the scribe who had copied the Hebrew text had made an error;” therefore he introduced change to make sense of the passage.⁴¹ Dines suggests that the translator may have been influenced by other texts, especially Zechariah 14:2, 9, 16, which contains phrases similar to Amos 9:12 ($\text{\u03c0\u03ac\u03bd\u03c4\u03b1 \u03c4\u03ac \u03b5\u03b8\u03bd\u03b7 \u03ba\u03c4\u03b1\u03bb\u03b5\u03b9\u03c6\u03b8\u03c9\u03c3\u03b9\u03bd \u03b5\u03ba \u03c0\u03ac\u03bd\u03c4\u03c9\u03bd \u03c4\u03c9\u03bd \u03b5\u03b8\u03bd\u03c9\u03bd}$)⁴² Zechariah 8:22 is

³⁸ Gelston, “Hebrew Misreadings,” p. 498.

³⁹ Gelston, 499. See also Gleason L. Archer and G. C. Chirichigno, *Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament: A Complete Survey* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), p. 155, who suggest emending MT to a text reflecting the LXX.

⁴⁰ See my more complete response to Gelston’s suggestion (in “Hebrew Misreadings”) concerning twenty-three differences between MT and LXX in Amos in W. Edward Glenny, “Hebrew Misreadings or Free Translation in the Septuagint of Amos?” *VT* forthcoming 2007.

⁴¹ R. Timothy McLay, *The Use of the Septuagint in New Testament Research* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), p. 21.

⁴² Dines, “Amos,” p. 302; the context in Zechariah 14 describes the defeat of the “nations” and also their later recognition of God. The MT emphasizes the former and the LXX emphasizes the latter. Dines also suggests other texts, like Isa. 19:16-25, may have

another text from a context similar to Amos 9 that could have influenced the translator of Amos; it reads, “and many peoples and many nations will come to seek the face of the Lord Almighty in Jerusalem” (καὶ ἤξουσιν λαοὶ πολλοὶ καὶ ἔθνη πολλὰ ἐκζητῆσαι τὸ πρόσωπον κυρίου παντοκράτορος ἐν Ἱερουσαλημ).⁴³ The reference in this text to the “nations” that “seek” the Lord, may be behind the translator’s change from “possess” to “seek” discussed above. F. F. Bruce uses Amos 9:12 as an example of prophetic interpretation in the Septuagint. He writes, “In turning the prophetic books from Hebrew into Greek, the Septuagint translators were quite ready to conform the wording to their own religious outlook or otherwise to adapt it to an interpretation which was accepted in the circles to which they belonged.”⁴⁴ He claims that Amos 9:11ff. is one of the best-known examples of this.⁴⁵ There is more going on in the Septuagint text of Amos 9:12 than the misreading of an obscure letter; it appears that several factors may have influenced the translator in this passage, and the changes likely reflect the theology of the translator, which was influenced by other portions of Scripture, especially the Prophets.

influenced the translator. Palmer, “Zechariah,” pp. 134-5 argues that Isa. 19:16-25 influenced the translator of Zechariah, from the way he renders 8:21.

⁴³ See Palmer, “Zechariah,” pp. 135-6, for a discussion of a possible connection between Amos 9:7 and Zechariah 8:20-23. The title “Lord Almighty” is important in both of these contexts (see LXX-Amos 9:15 and Zech 8:22 and 23), emphasizing God’s sovereignty over all the nations.

⁴⁴ F. F. Bruce, “Prophetic Interpretation in the Septuagint” *BIOSCS* 12 (1979) 17. Bruce allows for revocalization and misreading, as Gelston suggests, but he argues that “the total effect is more than the sum of these textual variants.”

⁴⁵ Karen H. Jobes and Moisés Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), p. 195, comment on this passage in some detail also. They write: “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.”

Bauckham emphasizes that it is important to understand “the way in which Jewish exegesis of this period treated the biblical text, as the Dead Sea Scrolls in particular have now made clear to us.”⁴⁶ He continues to explain that a Jewish reader would have understood that this was “either a variant text or a deliberate alternative reading of the text.”⁴⁷ Furthermore, it was hardly possible to tell the difference between variants in the text that had arisen accidentally in the transmission of the text and variants that were the result of reading the text differently by means of small changes.⁴⁸ 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 tiqrê'*) 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.⁴⁹

Several further aspects of LXX-Amos 9:12 deserve comment. First, the verb “may seek” does not have an object. However, it picks up again the theme of “seeking the Lord” (from Amos 5:4, 6), and that earlier theme plus the immediate context suggest that the reader is to supply “me” (με), as several Lucianic mss and versions do.⁵⁰ Second, the change from “the remnant of Edom” to “the remnant of men” may have been made because if Edom, Israel’s perpetual enemy, is included in the blessing, then all nations

⁴⁶ Bauckham, “James and the Gentiles,” p. 160.

⁴⁷ Bauckham, “James and the Gentiles,” p. 161.

⁴⁸ Bauckham, “James and the Gentiles,” p. 161. In later rabbinic terminology these deliberate “alternative readings” were called *'al tiqrê'*; see the example from LXX in David Instone-Brewer, *Techniques and Assumptions in Jewish Exegesis before 70 CE*. TSAJ 30 (Tübingen, 1992), p. 178. See also George J. Brooke, *Exegesis at Qumran: 4QFlorilegium in its Jewish Context*. JSOTSS 29 (Sheffield, 1985), pp. 29-36 and 281, 284, 288-9, and 327 for examples in the Targumim and Qumran literature. Bauckham, “James and the Gentiles,” p. 161, n. 20 has a fuller bibliography on the topic.

⁴⁹ Bauckham, “James and the Gentiles,” p. 161.

⁵⁰ Alexandrinus, influenced by Acts 15:17, supplies “the Lord” for the object of “seek.”

are. The parallelism of Edom and the nations here and in other verses (like Isa 63:1-6; 34:1-8; and Obadiah 15-21) suggests Edom could have functioned in the OT as a representative of the human race.⁵¹ Third, the concept of having God’s name “called upon” someone is theologically rich.⁵² The Greek construction (ἐπικαλεῖται τὸ ὄνομα τινος ἐπὶ τινά) has basically the same meaning as the parallel phrase in MT. What is different is the context in the two texts because of the changes in LXX discussed above.⁵³ Whereas in MT the restored dynasty/kingdom of David exercises ownership or control over the “nations,” apparently by military conquest, in LXX the “nations” (τὰ ἔθνη) seek the Lord, the God of Israel, because his name is called upon them. Thus, LXX gives the idea of the nations desiring and seeking a covenant relationship with Israel’s God. Furthermore, the fact that those who seek him have his name “called upon them” suggests in the LXX context they have been chosen to be his covenant people. Both parties involved desire the Lord’s ownership and control of the “nations.” What is most striking about the use of the phrase in 9:12 is its application to Gentiles (τὰ ἔθνη); this is the only place it is so applied.⁵⁴ In Amos 9:12 the Gentiles, as Gentiles, have the Lord’s name called upon them and are the people of God. In LXX 9:12 the gentiles do what Israel is commanded to do in 5:4 and 6; they seek the Lord.

It is clear in 9:11-12 that the purpose for the Lord restoring and rebuilding the dynasty/kingdom of David (9:11) is “so that” (ὅπως plus the aorist subjunctive) Gentiles may seek the Lord and be his people. Thus the Lord is going to make himself known in

⁵¹ Jobs and Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint*, p. 195, 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. In line with the spiritual thrust of the rest of the verse (“upon whom my name is called”), the translator then expressed the concept of possessing Edom in terms of human response to God.”

⁵² See the discussion above in the MT.

⁵³ BDAG, 373.

⁵⁴ Dines, *Amos*, p. 303. This is true, of course, for MT and LXX, but the contexts of the two texts made the meanings quite different.

the reestablishment of the Davidic dynasty/kingdom so that Gentiles may seek him. (see also Zech 14 and Isa 19:17-25). The purpose for the restoration of the “tent of David” in LXX is fundamentally different than the purpose in MT. In MT the Davidic kingdom is restored so that other nations may be included in the kingdom by virtue of Israel’s extension of its dominion and possession of its ancient conquests and “all the nations.” This indicates an extension of authority and control far beyond the ancient Davidic kingdom. In LXX the Davidic dynasty and kingdom are restored so that all the Gentiles may seek “the Lord, who accomplishes these things.” In LXX, as a result of the restoration of the Davidic kingdom, Gentiles will seek the God who remembers the Davidic covenant, the Lord God of Israel, and they, as Gentiles, will be his covenant people.

The perspective of LXX concerning Gentiles would be much more attractive than that of MT to Jews in the Diaspora who sought to fit into their culture and show the attractiveness of their religion to the gentiles among whom they lived.⁵⁵

Amos 9:11-12 in Acts 15

The decision of the Jerusalem Council, recorded in Acts 15, is one of the most important turning points in the spread of the gospel and the book of Acts.⁵⁶ The Church was facing a crisis: Could Gentiles be saved as Gentiles without circumcision and the Law of Moses? It became such an issue in the church at Antioch that that church sent

⁵⁵ The desire for Jews in the Diaspora to be accepted and to demonstrate to the gentile world that their religion was credible and even desirable for gentiles is seen in works like *Aristeas*.

⁵⁶ The older Scofield Reference Bible says concerning the Amos quotation in Acts 15, “Dispensationally, this is the most important passage in the New Testament. It gives the divine purpose for this age and for the beginning of the next.” C. I Scofield, ed., *The Scofield Reference Bible* (New York: Oxford, 1909), p. 1169, n. 1.

Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem to meet with the apostles and elders about this question (15:1-5).

Acts 15 records four different stages in the discussion of this issue at the Council. Peter addresses the Council (15:7-11), then Paul and Barnabas report on their ministry (15:12), then James speaks and cites Amos 9:11-12, and finally the Council issues an Apostolic Decree containing requirements for Gentile converts (15:19-35).

First, Peter addressed the Council (15:7-11), referring to his experience beginning with Cornelius and his household. He addresses the issue by pointing out that God gave the Spirit to Gentiles (τὰ ἔθνη, v. 7) just as he did to Jews,⁵⁷ and they were not circumcised.⁵⁸ Second, he notes that God purified their hearts by faith (τῇ πίστει καθάρισας τὰς καρδίας αὐτῶν, v. 8), just like he purifies Jews. If that is the case, why should the circumcision party (“you,” v. 10) test God by putting on the Gentiles the burden of the Law, which the Jewish forefathers could not bear? Jews and Gentiles are saved through “the grace of our Lord Jesus” (15:11).⁵⁹

The second stage in the Council meeting, as recorded by Luke, was the testimony of Paul and Barnabas “about the miraculous signs and wonders that God had done among

⁵⁷ The Spirit signifies that the age of Messianic salvation and deliverance promised in the OT has arrived (Isa. 11; 32; 42; 44; 61; Ezek. 36-37; Joel 2). The Spirit is one of the blessings promised in the New Covenant (Ezek. 36:25-27).

⁵⁸ This baptism with the Spirit that Cornelius and his house receive is in Luke-Acts clearly connected with the baptism that John the Baptist promised when the Messiah comes and with the baptism that the Jews received in Acts 2. See Luke 3:17-19 where John prophesies a two-fold baptism (Spirit and fire) to inaugurate the Messianic Age, Acts 1:5, referring to the baptism of the Spirit on Jews at Pentecost (Acts 2), and Acts 11:15-17 referring to the pouring out of the Spirit on Cornelius’ household (Acts 10). The conclusion in Acts 11:17 is that since God gave them (Gentiles) the same gift he gave us (Jews), how could I oppose God in resisting what he was doing? It is noteworthy that the purging with fire prophesied in Luke 3 is dropped in the language of Acts, and it was not a part of the experience of the disciples. It is apparently still to come in the future (Acts 3:19-21).

⁵⁹ God himself is now transgressing the Law, sanctifying Gentiles, as Gentiles; thus the only possible conclusion is that the Law has been abolished.

the Gentiles through them” (15:12; cf. esp. 14:3 but also 13:46-48; 14:21 and 27; and 15:3-4). This evidence confirmed Peter’s testimony that the Gentiles were receiving the Spirit.⁶⁰

The third and crucial stage in the proceedings of the Council was James’ speech. His was the finally decisive argument, because it is based on Scripture.⁶¹ His point was to show that the present ingathering of Gentiles, as Gentiles, which was reported by Peter, Barnabas, and Paul, is consistent with prophetic expectation. He began the speech with reference to Simon’s description of the salvation of the house of Cornelius: “first God visited [or concerned himself]⁶² to take out of the nations a people for his name,”⁶³ Thus he continued the argument Peter began that God is now taking Gentiles to be his people, and he places the beginning (“first”) of this with the salvation of Cornelius’ house, to which Peter referred in 15:7. James then built his argument from Scripture on Peter’s testimony, stating that the words of the “prophets” agree with “this,” and he quoted a form of LXX-Amos 9:11-12 in support (“as it is written”). The point of the quotation was to show that Scripture supports and is consistent with the present ingathering of Gentiles into the people of God, which was reported by Peter (and Barnabas and Paul). James’

⁶⁰ Peter and especially James are the main speakers at this Council, as Luke presents it. That may be because of the Jews’ respect for James and his leadership in the Jerusalem Church.

⁶¹ Bauckham, “James and the Gentiles,” p. 154, writes, “After all, the matter under discussion is one of *halakah* (15:5) which could only be decided from Scripture.”

⁶² BDAG, p. 378 suggests the meaning “concern himself about” here. The verb (*ἐπισκεπτομαι*) is used throughout Scripture (LXX) to describe God’s saving acts on behalf of Israel, his people (Gen. 50:24-25; Ex. 3:16; 4:31; 13:19; Ruth 1:6; 1 Sam. 2:21; Ps. 79:15 [Heb. 80:14]; 105:4 [Heb. 106:4]; Jer. 36:10 [Heb. 29:10]). See its similar use in Luke 1:68, 78-79; 7:16; note also the same theme in Luke 19:41-44.

⁶³ See the discussion above in the OT contexts on the theological significance of this language. “People” (*λαός*) is especially important in the LXX (and also in Luke-Acts) as a description of God’s elect-covenant people, in contrast to the Gentiles (*ἔθνη*); see the helpful discussion in Robertson, “Systems of Continuity,” p. 103. In the OT God chose Israel out from among the nations to be his people, and now he is calling a people out of the nations to be his people.

appeal to divine authority with the formula “it is written” indicates that he feels the OT Scriptures speak directly to the issue that the Council is debating.⁶⁴ In order to show Scripture support for what is taking place he needs to show that the Gentile incorporation into God’s people on an equality with Jews, which James Barnabas and Paul reported, is prophesied in the Jewish Scriptures (“God visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for his name,” 15:14).

The Text Form of the Quotation in Acts 15:16-18a

The text quoted in Acts 15 evidences dependence on LXX, but it also evidences significant, and apparently deliberate, divergence from LXX. Bauckham is correct, “James’ quotation is far from simply a quotation of the LXX text of Amos 9:11-12 ‘with small variations.’”⁶⁵ It appears to be a conflation of several different texts (cf. “the words of the prophets,” v. 15). The opening words of the quotation, “after this I will return” (μετὰ ταῦτα ἀναστρέψω) and the last words, “that have been known for ages” (γνωστὰ ἅπ’ αἰῶνος), are not from Amos 9:11-12. The object “the Lord” (τὸν κύριον) and the particle ἄν are also added in Acts 15:12. Two phrases in LXX-Amos 9:11 are also omitted in Acts 15: “and I will build up the fallen parts of it” (καὶ ἀνοικοδομήσω τὰ πεπτωκότα αὐτῆς) and “as the days of old” (καθὼς αἱ ἡμέραι τοῦ αἰῶνος).⁶⁶ Other

⁶⁴ His reference to God taking a people for his name from among the nations in his introduction to the quotation (15:14), which alludes to the language in the quotation (15:17) supports further that James is citing Amos because this passage does speak directly to the matter before the Council. If the Scripture quoted does not speak directly to the matter before the Council, it takes the authority out of James’ appeal to Scripture.

⁶⁵ Bauckham, “James and the Gentiles,” pp. 156-7. He is quoting K. Lake and H. J. Cadbury, in F. J. Foakes Jackson and K. Lake (eds.), *The Beginnings of Christianity: Part I: The Acts of the Apostles*, vol. IV (London, 1933), p. 176, who believe it is quoted “with small variations.” Bauckham has a very helpful discussion of the text of Acts 15:16-18 (esp. on pp. 156-70).

⁶⁶ See Bauckham, “James and the Gentiles,” p. 160, for his suggestions of why these were omitted; his suggestions are in keeping with his interpretation of the “tent of David” as the “Temple in the messianic age.” The first of the two omissions may have been

changes from LXX in the Acts quotation are also important: in Acts the verb ἀνοικοδομήσω, “I will build up,” replaces the two occurrences of ἀναστήσω, “I will raise up” (translating קָבַץ) in LXX, and one occurrence of ἀνοικοδομήσω in LXX (καὶ ἀνοικοδομήσω αὐτήν, Amos 9:11) is rendered ἀνορθώσω, “I will restore” (καὶ ἀνορθώσω αὐτήν, Acts 15:16) in Acts 15.⁶⁷

Sources Used in the Quotation in Acts 15:16-18a

Since in Acts 15:15 James introduces his OT quotation by stating that the “the prophets” (plural) agree with the testimony of Peter, Barnabas and Paul, we should not be surprised if James’ reference to the Scripture reflects several different contexts.⁶⁸ That certainly seems to be the case.⁶⁹ The first words of the citation, “After this,” are a change from “in that day” in Amos 9:11.⁷⁰ These words probably come from Hosea 3:5. In Hosea 3:4 the prophet predicts that Israel will live many days without a ruler (“king or

considered repetitive, or in Acts it may have been conflated with the preceding clause from LXX; the NT uses the verb originally found in the omitted clause (καὶ ἀνοικοδομήσω τὰ πεπτωκότα αὐτῆς) in the preceding clause (καὶ ἀνοικοδομήσω τὴν σκηνὴν Δαυὶδ τὴν πεπτωκυῖαν), instead of ἀναστήσω, which was found in LXX. The omission of “as the days of old” in Acts may have been because what was being done, as reflected in the conflated quotation in Acts 15:16-18a was not “as the days of old.”

⁶⁷ If the citation in Acts was meant to refer to the resurrection of Christ it is hard to imagine any reason why the author (or speaker) would have twice substituted ἀνοικοδομήσω for ἀναστήσω, a reading excellently suited for such a purpose.

⁶⁸ I have suggested above that the LXX translator already was influenced by Zechariah 8:22-23, and it seems James (or Luke) was aware of that with his reference to “the prophets.” Some of the additions that are made to the quotation in NT, as developed below are then simply a further clarification of what the LXX text was already saying.

⁶⁹ Robertson notes James “was quoting Amos as a single source which represented a message which could be found in many other prophets” (“Hermeneutics of Continuity,” p. 345, n. 7). I wonder if Amos would have considered the quotation to be “a single source;” it seems from the introduction he is using Amos to point to what the prophets in general say.

⁷⁰ Note the change in the Joel quotation in Acts 2:17 from Joel’s “And after these things” (καὶ ἔσται μετὰ ταῦτα) to “In the last days.”

ruler”), worship (“sacrifice or altar” in LXX), or even idols; this is apparently a reference to their captivity. However “after this” (μετὰ ταῦτα) they will return and be reconciled to “the LORD their God and David their king;” these times are called “the last days” at the end of verse 5.⁷¹ The reading in Acts 15:16, “after this,” reflects the idea of Amos’ “in that day,” which as discussed above has the idea of “then” and in Amos 9:11 apparently has eschatological connotations. In Amos the rebuilding of “the tent of David” takes place after the exile and judgment described in the preceding context. Hosea 3 looks to a day when Israel will seek the Lord and David their king, implying that a Davidic king will again rule over a united Israel and explicitly connecting Israel’s worship of (“seek”) the Lord with their “seeking” David.⁷² The parallel idea of the building of the tent of David and the nations seeking the Lord in Acts 15:17 should not be missed. In Acts the rebuilding of David’s tent and the resulting seeking of the Lord are both possible through the same person who is the Davidic descendant and the Lord whom the nations seek. The adjustment of the text in Acts, changing “in that day” to “after this,” does not change the meaning in Amos, but it does connect the text with an interesting parallel in Hosea 3.

The source of the Lord’s promise to “return” in Acts 15:16 (ἀναστρέψω) could be from Zechariah 8:3 (τάδε λέγει κύριος καὶ ἐπιστρέψω ἐπὶ Σιων),⁷³ or even more

⁷¹ See Bauckham, p. 163 for other connections between Hos. 3:4-5 and Acts 15:16. The verbs “they will return and they will seek” (ἐπιστρέψουσιν οἱ υἱοὶ Ἰσραὴλ καὶ ἐπιζητήσουσιν) are similar to verbs in Acts 15:16 and 17; the second is used in 15:17, following the text of LXX-Amos.

⁷² The connection between David and the Lord is common in the Old Testament (Isa. 9:6-7; Ezek 34). The relationship between David and the Lord is the basis of Jesus’ question for the Pharisees in Mk. 12:35-37 (par. Mt. 22:41-46 and Lk. 20:41-44). See also Ps. 110:1 and 2 Sam. 7:16.

⁷³ See the discussion above concerning the possible influence of Zechariah 8:22-23 on the LXX translation of Amos 9:12. LXX Zechariah 1:16 is another important passage that could have influenced the conflation in Acts 15 at this point; it reads ἐπιστρέψω ἐπὶ Ἱερουσαλημ ἐν οἰκτιρμῷ καὶ ὁ οἶκός μου ἀνοικοδομηθήσεται ἐν αὐτῇ λέγει κύριος παντοκράτωρ. See Palmer, “Zechariah,” pp. 109-11 on the LX change to the future tense in Zech. 1:16.

likely from Jeremiah 12:15 (καὶ ἔσται μετὰ τὸ ἐκβαλεῖν με αὐτοὺς ἐπιστρέψω). In Jeremiah 12 the context before verse 15 describes God’s abandonment of the Temple (12:7) and the judgment of his people. Jeremiah 12:14-17 then describes what happens to Israel’s “pagan neighbors” (a neighbor that rebels against the Lord is called τὸ ἔθνος ἐκεῖνο in v. 17) “after” (καὶ ἔσται μετὰ) the judgment of Israel and those nations. “After” casting Israel’s pagan neighbors out of their land, the Lord returns and has mercy on them, reestablishing them in their own lands and establishing those pagan neighbors who learn the ways of the Lord in the midst of his people Israel (καὶ οἰκοδομηθήσονται ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ λαοῦ μου).⁷⁴ It should be noted that Acts 15 employs ἀναστρέψω, rather than ἐπιστρέψω, which is used in both Zechariah 8:3 and Jeremiah 12:16. It is possible that the verb was adapted in the quotation in Acts so it is parallel with the other verbs in Acts 15:16, all having the same prefix(ανα-); the polished nature of the LXX rendering of Amos 9:11 suggests that is the case. It is also possible, but unlikely, that the citation in Acts 15 is not dependent on LXX in its addition of ἀναστρέψω.⁷⁵

It was noted above when discussing the LXX rendering of Amos 9:11-12 that already at that point Zechariah 8:22-23 apparently influenced the translator. That text tells of a time when “many peoples and many nations will come to seek earnestly the face of the Lord Almighty in Jerusalem.”⁷⁶ While the idea of the nations seeking the Lord may have influenced the translator of LXX-Amos (ἔθνη πολλὰ ἐκζητήσαι), it is not until the

⁷⁴ There is a textual variant in LXX; B and S have “it will be built” and most others have “they will be built.”

⁷⁵ Other parallels between Amos 9:11-12 and Jeremiah 12:14-17 suggest it was influential in the quotation in Acts 15. See Bauckham, “James and the Gentiles,” pp. 163-4. Luke also employs ἀναστρέψω one other time (Acts 5:22) in another construction where there is assonance between the two parallel verbs. The related verb ἐπιστρέψω is much more common in Luke-Acts (18x), although it is never used of God returning to his people. It is much more commonly used for people repenting or being converted (Luke 1:16; Acts 15:19; 28:20).

⁷⁶ LXX reads, καὶ ἤξουσιν λαοὶ πολλοὶ καὶ ἔθνη πολλὰ ἐκζητήσαι τὸ πρόσωπον κυρίου παντοκράτορος ἐν Ἱερουσαλημ καὶ τοῦ ἐξιλάσκεσθαι τὸ πρόσωπον κυρίου.

New Testament that “the Lord” is explicitly stated to be the object of the seeking, perhaps drawing further on Zechariah 8:22-23 (ἔθνη πολλὰ ἐκζητῆσαι τὸ πρόσωπον κυρίου), and thus clarifying what the LXX translator was already implying.⁷⁷

Another passage that “agrees” with the testimony of Peter and has several verbal connections with LXX-Amos 9:11-12 is Zechariah 2:14-17 [Eng. 2:10-13]. In verses 14-15 the prophet commands Zion to rejoice because the Lord is coming to live (ἐγὼ ἔρχομαι) among them (v. 14) and in that day (ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ) many nations (ἔθνη πολλὰ) will flee to the Lord for refuge and become his people (καὶ ἔσονται αὐτῷ εἰς λαὸν) and they will dwell in the midst of you [Israel],⁷⁸ and when this happens you will know that the Lord Almighty has sent me [i.e., the Lord]. The main verbal connector with Amos is the “nations,” who become the people of God, but there are also several conceptual connections. One of the most important is the concept of the gentiles being God’s “people,” something Peter referred to in Acts 15:14 before he quoted Acts 15. Of course, the idea of being “called b God’s name” in the Amos quotation (Acts 15:17) is another way to describe what it means to be God’s people. What is especially interesting for Acts 15 is the fact that this happens when “the Lord Almighty” sends “the Lord” to Israel, and it is the turning of the “nations” to the Lord that is the proof that the Lord Almighty has sent him.⁷⁹ The speaker of verse Zechariah 2:14 [Eng. 2:10] (“the Lord”) is certainly deity, and he is the one sent by the Lord Almighty in verse 15; he must be the messianic Servant-Messenger.

⁷⁷ From my study of the LXX translators, I would suggest that the translator did not add the object of the “seeking,” because there was no warrant for the addition in his *Vorlage* (Hebrew text of Amos) on which he could base such an addition. The LXX translators often adjusted the text, but normally all their renderings had a basis in their *Vorlage*. Therefore, the object of the seeking was only implied in LXX.

⁷⁸ MT has “I will dwell in the midst of you.”

⁷⁹ Another passage with many conceptual parallels with Amos 9:11-12 and the other passages we have been considering is Isaiah 19:16-25. Palmer, p. 135 demonstrates the connection of Zechariah 8:22-23 with Isaiah 19 in LXX.

It was noted above that the last words of the citation in Acts 15:18a, “that have been known from eternity” (γνωστὰ ἀπ’ αἰῶνος) are also an addition to the Amos passage. Thus the LXX text, “the God who is doing these things” (ὁ θεὸς ὁ ποιῶν ταῦτα) becomes “making these things known from eternity” (ποιῶν ταῦτα γνωστὰ ἀπ’ αἰῶνος)⁸⁰ in Acts 15:18, conflating Amos 9:12 and Isaiah 45:21, “who made these things heard from the beginning” (τίς ἀκουστὰ ἐποίησεν ταῦτα ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς).⁸¹ This context of Isaiah 45 passage is especially appropriate to be connected with Amos 9:11-12; it describes those who “are saved out of the nations” (σωζόμενοι ἀπὸ τῶν ἐθνῶν) and “those from the end of the earth” (οἱ ἀπ’ ἐσχάτου τῆς γῆς), who will be saved (45:20, 22). They come and draw near to the only true God, the Lord (45:20-21). The conflation of the phrase from Isaiah 45:21 in the citation in Acts 15:18 emphasizes that the entrance of Gentiles into the people of God as Gentiles is part of the plan and purpose of God for eternity past. This context in Isaiah was important for early Christian exegesis (Philippians 2:10; see also Rom. 14:11).

The survey of the sources conflated in the citation in Acts 15:16-18 indicates how extensive the foundation of the argument at the Council really was. James was summarizing what the “prophets” said about the Gentiles. He connected several contexts, and in all cases it is possible to show how he linked the texts by means of a shared word or phrase, a methodology called *gezerah shavah*. Such a link between two or more verses “enabled the interpreter to explain or expand one text in light of another.”⁸² It appears

⁸⁰ Acts drops ὁ θεὸς ὁ before ποιῶν ταῦτα.

⁸¹ In Isa. 45:21 MT has מִי הַשָּׁמִיעַ זֵאת מִקִּדְמָה מֵאֵז הַתְּיָדָה (“who caused this to be heard from ancient times?”) It is likely that the NT rendering is a translation from the MT text; there would be no reason for the one using this phrase in the quotation in Acts 15 to change the LXX if they were quoting directly from it.

⁸² D. Instone-Brewer, “Theology of Hermeneutics,” (A paper Brewer gave me in 2002), p. 3. Some of the theological presuppositions that underlie this methodology are the beliefs that there is a single author of Scripture and that it is written with an exactitude that does not allow for any contradiction or ambiguity.

that the interpretation of Amos 9 by other related Scriptures began in the LXX translation of the text, but the citation in Acts goes further with the expansion and explanation.⁸³ It should also be emphasized that when Acts 15:15 says the words of the prophets “agree” with Peter’s testimony, this verb is not meant to diminish the fulfillment or realization of what is cited from the prophets.⁸⁴ The quotation from Amos 9:11-12 is introduced with a typical introductory formula, “as it is written” (καθὼς γέγραπται).⁸⁵ The verb “agree” (συμφωνέω) in verse 15 was aptly chosen because the citation is a conflation of several verses from the OT Scriptures, and they all “agree” or “are in harmony” with Peter’s testimony (and thus with each other) concerning this topic.⁸⁶

David’s Fallen Tent

Strauss summarizes four prominent views of the “hut of David” in Acts 15:16. First, it could refer to “restored Israel made up of Jews who have accepted Jesus as their messiah.”⁸⁷ For this view, championed by Jacob Jervell, the salvation of Gentiles (Acts

⁸³ See above on the LXX text of Amos 9:11-12.

⁸⁴ For an example of this interpretation of this verb see the Traditional Dispensational Interpretation of this passage, described below.

⁸⁵ Willard M. Aldrich, “The Interpretation of Acts 15:13-18” *BSac* 111 (1954); 317-23 cites a dozen different introductory formulae for OT quotations in Acts.

⁸⁶ BDAG, pp. 960-1. Celsus Spicq, *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament*. 3 vols. Transl. and ed. by James D. Ernest. (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson: 1994) 3:324-8 has a very helpful discussion of this word. See esp. p. 325, n. 6. He notes that Josephus uses the word to describe religious teaching that “conforms to the law” *Ag. Apion* 2.181. The Traditional Dispensational interpretation that this word only means “agree in principle” does not do justice to the word or the context. See the presentation of this view below in this paper and the critiques of it in Walter C. Kaiser Jr. “The Davidic Promise and the Inclusion of the Gentiles (Amos 9:9-15 and Acts 15:13-18): A Test Passage for Theological Systems” *JETS* 20 (1977): 97-111, esp. p. 107; Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism* (Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 1993), pp. 79-80; and Strauss, *Davidic Messiah*, p. 186,

⁸⁷ Strauss, *Davidic Messiah*, p. 187. This is the view of Jacob Jervell, *Luke and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1972), esp. pp. 51-54 and 92-93. Jervell calls

15:17) follows the salvation of Jews (Acts 15:16), which is the referent of the restoration of the fallen tent of David. This view is distinct from the next one because its proponents insist “that restored Israel remains a group distinct from the Gentiles within the church, the people of God.”⁸⁸ Second, the majority of commentators agree that the rebuilt tent of David refers to “the restoration of true Israel.” This “true Israel” is now the “church as a whole” made up of both Jews and Gentiles.⁸⁹ Third, Haenchen demands a strict Christological reading, and for him the phrase refers to the resurrection of Jesus, in which the Davidic covenant is fulfilled.⁹⁰ According to a fourth view, the “hut of David” refers to “the whole plan of God accomplished through Jesus’ resurrection-exaltation *and* the establishment of the church.”⁹¹ A fifth view, related to the third, and adopted by Strauss, is found in several more recent works. According to this view the “hut of David” is the Davidic dynasty/kingdom that is rebuilt in the resurrection and ascension of Christ.

Gentile Christians an “associate people” of God, who are joined to the Jews, the people of God (pp. 143, 147).

⁸⁸ Strauss, *Davidic Messiah*, p. 188.

⁸⁹ Strauss, “Davidic Messiah,” p. 188. This is similar to Bauckham’s understanding of the phrase. He argues that the exegete understood it to refer to “the *Temple* of the messianic age, which he understands to be the Christian community” (“James and the Gentiles,” 158-9, 181). Bauckham’s arguments are primarily theological and based on cross-references; he does not consider sufficiently the meaning of the texts cited in their OT contexts (esp. Amos 9), the context in Acts, or the theology of Luke-Acts. If the “exegete” who formulated the argument in Acts 15 had wanted to refer to the “Temple” as “the Christian community,” as Bauckham argues, it seems he would have quoted Zech. 1:16, or used it more explicitly in his argument. See also Tobit 13:11 (texts of B and A) where the “tent” (ἡ σκηνή) is the tent of the Lord (ἵνα πάλιν ἡ σκηνὴ αὐτοῦ οἰκοδομηθῇ σοι μετὰ χαρᾶς) or in S “your tent,” The tent here is likely the Temple, but also could be Jerusalem (see 13:17). Tobit 14: 5 speaks of the rebuilding of the Temple, as described in “the prophets,” but the Temple is called ὁ οἶκος τοῦ θεοῦ. Therefore, these last two texts do not offer strong support for his view either.

⁹⁰ E. Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Trans. B. Nobel, G. Shinn, R. McL. Wilson; Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), 448.

⁹¹ Strauss, *Davidic Messiah*, p. 188. See F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts* NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), p. 310.

The second view is unlikely, because the rebuilt tent of David in Acts 15:16 is distinct from the Gentile mission in 15:17, and the stated purpose for rebuilding the hut (15:16) is “so that” (note ὅπως ἄν with an aorist subjunctive at the beginning of 15:17) the Gentiles may be the people of God (15:17). It is the rebuilding of the hut that enables the Gentiles to come to the Lord. The same basic argument could be used against the fourth view, which also includes the Church in the rebuilt fallen tent. The first view builds a distinction between Jews and Gentiles that is foreign to the context and the rest of the New Testament (Eph. 2). It also sees more emphasis in the context on the relationship of Jews and Gentiles than is warranted. Strauss argues that the main emphasis in the context of Acts 15 is “the initiative of God” (see 15:7-9 and 14-18).⁹² He writes, “The argument of the passage as a whole is that since God has chosen the Gentiles and provided for and confirmed their salvation, it is not for the church to place restrictions on them.”⁹³ Furthermore, in response to the first view presented above, the phrase “hut of David” is not simply “restored Israel made up of Jews who have accepted Jesus.” This interpretation makes the distinction required by the grammar between the rebuilt “tent” in verse 16 and the people who come to God in 15:17, but it does not do justice to the phrase “tent of David.” God’s actions in rebuilding the fallen hut enable the Gentiles to seek the Lord, it is not simply the salvation of Jews that does that. The actions that have enabled the Gentiles to seek the Lord are the death and resurrection of Jesus (Luke 1:30-32; Acts 2:38-9; 10:43; 11:17-8; 13:39; 26:23). “[I]t is the work of Christ, not the restoration of Israel, which opens the way for the Gentiles to seek the Lord.”⁹⁴ Therefore, Strauss opts for a modified version of view three and understands the fallen hut of David to be a reference to “the restoration of the Davidic dynasty accomplished

⁹² Strauss, *Davidic Messiah*, p. 189.

⁹³ Strauss, *Davidic Messiah*, p. 189.

⁹⁴ Strauss, *Davidic Messiah*, p. 190.

through the life, death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus.”⁹⁵ The “tent” is not the church or Israel, but rather the Davidic dynasty or “kingly reign” (of Jesus).⁹⁶ He adds that this interpretation is supported by the context of Amos 9, as discussed above in this paper and the overall perspective of Luke.⁹⁷ Strauss also mentions that in 4QFlor 1.10-13 the raising of the fallen hut of David refers to a messianic figure, further supporting this understanding of Acts 15:16-17.⁹⁸

Strauss’ arguments are supported by the context of Acts 15, the OT context in Amos 9, and the theology of Luke-Acts; his conclusion is worth quoting: “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.”⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Strauss, *Davidic Messiah*, p. 190.

⁹⁶ Strauss, *Davidic Messiah*, p. 190. See n. 36 for further discussion of this.

⁹⁷ See Strauss, *Davidic Messiah*, for development of the last claim. I would add passages like Acts 2:16-36 and 13:32-37, which are parallel in perspective. See also Luke 1:32-33 and 69-69. For further clarification of the Davidic connections in Acts 2 see Darrell Bock, “The Reign of the Lord Christ,” pp. 37-67 in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*. Eds. Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock. (Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 1992). The fact that Davidic promise is fulfilled in the resurrection/ascension/exaltation of Jesus is seen most clearly in Acts 13:32-37 (see also 13:22-23). The Acts 13 context states that the promises to the fathers have been fulfilled in the resurrection of Jesus (32-33); then it quotes Psalm 2 referring to the covenant relationship of the Davidic king and the Lord, established at the time of the king’s installation into office (Ps. 2:7 in Acts 13:24). This is connected with Jesus resurrection, and the “blessings promised to David (Isa. 55:3 in Acts 13:34); then all of this is explained as fulfilled in the resurrection of Jesus to fulfill the promises given to David (Ps. 16:10 in Acts 13:35-37). Basic to the fulfillment that this passage is referring to is the promise of on to sit and rule on David’s throne forever (2 Sam. 7). The reference to Ps. 16:10 in Acts 13 connects the argument with Acts 2:22-36.

⁹⁸ Strauss, *Davidic Messiah*, p. 191.

⁹⁹ Strauss, *Davidic Messiah*, p. 192. Jesus Christ is the Davidite who fulfills the Davidic covenant promises is also the Lord (Ps. 110:1; Acts 2:36), and therefore he mediates the Spirit and salvific benefits to all peoples (Acts 2:17, 21, 39; 10:44-45).

Traditional Dispensational Interpretation of Acts 15

One could use several different sources for the Traditional Dispensational interpretation of Acts 15:16-18; I will draw primarily from the 1999 dissertation of Brian K. Moulton.¹⁰⁰ Moulton states clearly that the purpose of his chapter on “The Davidic Covenant in Acts 15” is, “to demonstrate that the meaning of the Davidic Covenant as originally expressed in 2 Samuel 7 has not changed in its intended meaning, through its use in Amos 9 and the quotation of Amos 9 in Acts 15.”¹⁰¹

Moulton follows Chafer in understanding the reference to “first” in v. 14 to refer to Peter’s experience in the household of Cornelius.¹⁰² The reference to God showing concern or visiting the Gentiles in that verse speaks of his acts of salvation on their behalf; he is in this age taking out of them a “people for his name.” The fact that the words of the prophets “agree” with this (v. 15) means that they “agree in principle” with the salvation of Gentiles about which Peter testified, not that they fulfill it.¹⁰³ The verb “to agree” (συνφωνέω)¹⁰⁴ never has the idea of fulfillment attached to it, and if James

¹⁰⁰ Brian K. Moulton, “The Use of the Davidic Covenant in Acts 15” (Ph. D. diss. Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas Texas, 1999), esp. pp. 204-56. Other important sources are Stanley D. Toussaint, “Acts,” pp. 349-432 in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament Edition*, eds. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1983), pp. 394-5; Willard M. Aldrich, “The Interpretation of Acts 15:13-18” *BSac* 111 (1954): 317-23 and Walter C. Kaiser Jr., “The Davidic Promise and the Inclusion of the Gentiles (Amos 9:9-15 and Acts 15:13-18): A Test Passage for Theological Systems” *JETS* 20 (1977): 97-111.

¹⁰¹ Moulton, “Davidic Covenant,” p. 204.

¹⁰² Lewis Sperry Chafer, *The Kingdom in History and Prophecy* (Chicago: Bible Institute Colportage Assn., 1936), p. 73. Other dispensationalists think “first” is developing a chronological sequence to be followed by “after these things” (v. 16) and “I will return” (v. 16).

¹⁰³ Moulton, “Davidic Covenant,” does not develop the idea of multiple sources behind the quotation in Acts 15:16-18 (i.e., “words of the prophets”). Also it seems it would be inappropriate to say the “words of the Prophets” fulfill the experiences of the Gentiles. Normally when one speaks of fulfillment, it is the other way around, the event, action, or experience fulfills the Scripture.

¹⁰⁴ Six times in NT; cf. its use in Acts 5:9.

would have been arguing for fulfillment, the suggestion of such would have provoked some sort of a riot of the Jews. Thus, Amos 9 only refers to the salvation of Gentiles in the Millennium, the time of Israel's national restoration to kingdom blessings on earth in Jerusalem."¹⁰⁵ This quotation from Amos 9 was not introduced at the Jerusalem Council "as a prediction of God's visit to the Gentiles [at that time], but rather to relate truth in harmony with such a visit."¹⁰⁶

Further, Moulton sees a chronology of events in the phrases "after these things," "I will return," and "I will rebuild." The first phrase "after these things" introduces what will happen after Gentiles are allowed in the church. "I will return" refers to "the physical return of Christ to the earth, coming after the completion of God's program with the church." "I will rebuild" points to "the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant in Christ's Millennium." He summarizes "the overall purpose of James' quotation from Amos" as: "Since Gentiles will be allowed into the Millennium after the return of Christ, there is no problem with the present allowance of Gentiles into the church." Since there is no mention of circumcision in the quotation, it indicates James uses it "in general as an analogy rather than specifically as a statement of prophetic fulfillment." Interestingly he concludes from this that "James used the Amos quotation to prompt the allowance of Gentiles into the church, NOT to answer directly the matter of saved Gentiles requiring circumcision." The point is that "since God had a plan for Gentiles in the Millennium, He could also allow Gentiles to partake in the blessings of the church."¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Moulton, "Davidic Covenant," pp. 222-3.

¹⁰⁶ Moulton, "Davidic Covenant," p. 223.

¹⁰⁷ The last two quotations are from Moulton's summary on p. 266; the emphasis is his. Moulton argues throughout his dissertation that the Davidic prophecies must not be spiritualized and that a fulfillment of them in this age would do that. Furthermore, the throne of David is "literal" and "physical" (pp. 260-61), and therefore Christ could not be sitting on it today in fulfillment of Davidic promise. Christ is seated at the right hand of God and not on a Davidic throne. He also uses the parable in Luke 19:11-27 as support that Christ must go away to receive his kingdom and then return (p. 267).

Moulton understands “the rest of mankind” in Acts 15:17 to refer to Gentiles, in contrast to Scofield, who takes this as a reference to Israelites, who come to know the Lord after the reestablishment of Davidic rule over Israel.¹⁰⁸ Apparently Moulton includes the salvation of Israel in the future in the reestablishment of the Davidic rule over Israel.¹⁰⁹

Progressive Dispensational Interpretation of Acts 15

I am not aware of an extensive treatment of this passage from a Progressive Dispensational perspective. I will draw primarily from the discussion by Darrell L. Bock in *A Case for Premillennialism: A New Consensus*.¹¹⁰ In Bock’s article in this collection of essays he discusses Acts 15 as “Another ‘Already’ Argument,” following his discussion on Acts 2. He introduces his discussion of this passage by noting that this passage is often regarded as a difficult text for the Premillennial view, and that an argument for fulfillment in this context is often taken to “show that OT promise is reinterpreted or applied to the church in a way that makes a literal fulfillment for Israel unnecessary.” The response by premillennialists to the argument for fulfillment in Acts

¹⁰⁸ Scofield, *Reference Bible*, p. 1170 (note on Acts 15:13).

¹⁰⁹ See Moulton, “Davidic Covenant,” p. 249. What Scofield is trying to do with this interpretation is consistent with Traditional Dispensational theology (Rom. 11, esp. vv. 25-29) and interpretation of this passage. However, it is unlikely that “the rest of mankind” refers to Jews; it seems to be parallel to “all the Gentiles.”

¹¹⁰ Darrell L. Bock, “Evidence from Acts” in *A Case for Premillennialism A New Consensus*, eds. Donald K. Campbell and Jeffrey L. Townsend (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), esp. pp. 194-97. See also Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), pp. 76-80, and Kenneth L. Barker, “The Scope and Center of Old and New Testament Theology and Hope,” in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, eds. Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), p. 327.

15:16-18 has often been that “the application of Amos 9 really looks to the future and does not speak of a present fulfillment.”¹¹¹

Bock contends that the Traditional Dispensational interpretation on Acts 15 has difficulties with the introductory formula in verse 15. He comments that the only likely antecedent of “this” (τούτῳ) in verse 15 (“And with this the words of the prophets agree”) is to Gentile inclusion in verse 14. As a result, efforts to tie “this” to “after this” (μετὰ ταῦτα) at the beginning of verse 16, in order to defend a look to the future in the quotation from Amos, are “forced and go against the normal reading of such constructions.”¹¹² When James says all the prophets agree with “this,” he is not looking forward and referring to the quotation to follow; instead he is looking back and referring to the events Peter just described.¹¹³ Thus, James is reading a text “on kingdom expectation and is applying it to the current events as kingdom events.”¹¹⁴ The fact that the words of the prophets “agree” with “this,” that is with the salvation being experienced

¹¹¹ Bock, “Evidence from Acts,” p. 195.

¹¹² The interpretation of some traditional dispensationalists connects the “this” in μετὰ ταῦτα at the beginning of verse 16 with the Gentile conversion discussed earlier in the context. The fact that “this” (τούτῳ) in verse 15 is singular and “this (μετὰ ταῦτα) in verse 16 is plural is unnatural, if they refer to the same thing. Also since μετὰ ταῦτα is part of the quotation from Amos, it does not make sense, if it refers to the Gentile conversion mentioned in verse 14.

¹¹³ Bock, “Evidence from Acts,” p. 196. Bock also argues that the connection between the Gentiles being a people “for God’s name” in James’ exposition (v. 14) and the citation from Amos (v. 17) show that this is what the citation was being cited for; James is using the text from Amos to support the past salvation of the Gentiles, not to look to the future.

¹¹⁴ Bock, “Evidence from Acts,” p. 196. He summarizes, “[I]n the earliest church, OT texts were read as “kingdom texts,” not as “first coming” and “second coming” texts, since the delay only became clear as time passed. We can separate these texts, but the earliest church did not. They saw them as a unit. The texts all deal with “the kingdom.” It is the erroneous equation by some that “kingdom” equals only “millennium” that has made these texts difficult to interpret for premillennialism.”

by the Gentiles, further confirms that James is using the citation from Amos to interpret those contemporary events.¹¹⁵

Bock understands the “tent of David” to refer to “the rebuilt Davidic house,” and it “is something Luke has already shown as accomplished in his allusions to the initial fulfillment of the Davidic hope.”¹¹⁶ Thus, Bock sees an initial or “already” fulfillment of Amos 9 in Acts 15. The remainder of his treatment of this passage emphasizes that this “initial fulfillment is not exhaustive fulfillment.” He concludes,

The “already” kingdom shows that God is building 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 2:22-26), 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.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Saucy, *Progressive Dispensationalism*, p. 79, also argues that the present salvation of Gentiles discussed in Acts 15 was understood by James to be in some sense a fulfillment of the Amos prophecy. He writes, “If James were only attempting to find support for future gentile salvation, why did he not simply begin his salvation with Amos 9:12 (Acts 15:17) or some other references to gentile salvation such as those cited by Paul in Romans 15:9-12?” Robertson, “Hermeneutics of Continuity,” p. 102, also addresses this issue. He argues that the Traditional Dispensational argument that the future salvation of Gentiles in the Kingdom is used as an analogy to what is taking place in the time of the early Church is not consistent, because Dispensationalists have traditionally believed that there will be a difference between Israel and the Church in the Kingdom, following the pattern of the OT period, and the argument in Acts 15 is for equality of Jews and Gentiles (p. 102).

¹¹⁶ See the references to Psalms 110 and 132 in Acts 2 and the reference to Isaiah 55 in Acts 13:34. Saucy, *Progressive Dispensationalism*, p. 80, comments, “The crucial prophecies about the reestablishment of the Davidic dynasty in Jesus and his enthronement stop short of presenting the actual reign of Christ over an established messianic kingdom.” He appears to disagree with Bock on the extent of Davidic rule in this age.

¹¹⁷ Bock, “Evidence from Acts,” pp. 197-8. He explains further the future, “not yet” dimension of the kingdom on p. 198. See also Saucy, *Progressive Dispensationalism*, p. 80. Saucy argues for a future, complete fulfillment of these promised blessings on the basis of Paul’s statement that “when Israel returns to her God, the riches for the Gentiles will be far more than they even are today (Rom. 11:12).

For Bock the initial realization of the fulfillment of OT prophecy in Acts 15 means “God’s plan is moving ahead.” Thus what is happening in this age is all part of a unified plan. Yet within that plan some parts are newly revealed: “A new institution, the church, functions in Israel’s place for a time, during the ‘times of the Gentiles.’”¹¹⁸

Walter Kaiser’s Promise Theology and the Interpretation of Acts 15

Kaiser’s main treatment of this topic is an article in *JETS*.¹¹⁹ It is worth summarizing, because he interacts with Dispensational and Covenant interpretations of Acts 15, and he presents his system and interpretation as a “rapprochement” between the two whose unifying principle is neither soteriological (covenant) or doxological (dispensational). His unifying principle is the “single, inclusive, everlasting plan of God announced and continuously expanded.”¹²⁰ He argues for a single purpose of God, a single people of God, and a single program of God, the covenant program. And yet he does not jettison God’s promises to Israel as a nation.¹²¹ He does not like the Traditional Dispensational interpretation of Acts 15, because proponents must admit that this interpretation leaves the OT citation from Amos having no direct bearing on the question at stake. Also, this interpretation yields the hermeneutical edge Dispensationalism claims in its call for a literal, grammatical, or natural interpretation of Scripture (in Acts 15).¹²² He also rejects Covenant interpretations of Acts 15, which over emphasize the harmony

¹¹⁸ Bock, “Evidence from Acts,” p. 197. He states, God’s program had more stages and more institutions than were previously revealed.”

¹¹⁹ Walter C. Kaiser, “The Davidic Promise and the Inclusion of the Gentiles.”

¹²⁰ Kaiser, “The Davidic Promise and the Inclusion of the Gentiles,” pp. 99-100.

¹²¹ Kaiser, “The Davidic Promise and the Inclusion of the Gentiles,” p. 100.

¹²² Kaiser, “The Davidic Promise and the Inclusion of the Gentiles,” pp. 105-6. See also pp. 107-11.

of the Testaments and prematurely jettison the concept of national Israel (which is obvious in Amos).¹²³

For Kaiser the “informing theology” behind the promise of David’s dilapidated tent is the Davidic covenant (esp. 2 Sam. 7) and its connection with the covenant program of God in the OT. He then connects this with the many promises concerning the salvation of the Gentiles through the Lord’s servant (esp. in Isaiah).¹²⁴ The weakness of Kaiser’s presentation is the lack of specific details, hermeneutical and theological, about how his Promise Theology works itself out to include a fulfillment in Acts 15 and a future for national Israel.

The Apostolic Decree

The Apostolic Decree described in Acts 15:19-29 is based on the citation from Amos in 15:16-18 (“therefore” in 15:19). The quotation from Amos is presented as the basis for not imposing the Law on Gentile converts, but the decree is presented as flowing out of the quotation in 15:16-18 and as the basis for imposing four stipulations from the Law on the Gentile converts. It is widely recognized that the four prohibitions in the Apostolic Decree are from Leviticus 17:1-18:49, but why were these four prohibitions chosen?

Leviticus 17-18 MT contains five occurrences of the phrase “the alien living among them (you)” (17:8, 10, 12, 13; 18:26)¹²⁵ Two occurrences (17:10 and 12 repeat the same prohibition. The four things that are prohibited of “the alien living among you” in Leviticus correspond in the same order to the four prohibitions in the Apostolic

¹²³ Kaiser, “The Davidic Promise and the Inclusion of the Gentiles,” p. 108.

¹²⁴ Kaiser, “The Davidic Promise and the Inclusion of the Gentiles,” pp. 108-9.

¹²⁵ LXX adds a sixth in 17:3.

Decree:¹²⁶ (1) “Food sacrificed to idols” (εἰδωλοθύτων) in Acts 15:29 corresponds to Leviticus 17:8-9, which forbids offering a sacrifice whose meat could be eaten and not bringing it to the Temple. The prohibition in Leviticus 17:7 connects this with idolatry. (2) “Blood” in Acts 15:29 corresponds to Leviticus 17:10. (3) “Meat of strangled animals” (πνικτῶν) in Acts 15:29 corresponds to Leviticus 17:13, which is actually a positive prescription to drain the blood from animals. (4) “Sexual immorality” (πορνείας) in Acts 15:29 corresponds to Leviticus 18:26, which refers back to all the forms of illicit sexual relations in the preceding context (18:6-23). The reason these specific four decrees are chosen for Gentile Christians is not because there are no other decrees addressed to resident aliens (cf. Ex. 20:10; Deut. 5:14).¹²⁷ The application of these four specific commands to Gentile Christians is based on “Jewish Christian exegesis of Scripture.”¹²⁸ Each of the four passages we have discussed in Leviticus has similar vocabulary for “the alien living among you;” it is הַגֵּר הַגֵּר בְּתוֹכְכֶם.

Two of the passages that contributed to the conflated quotation of Amos 9 in Acts 15:16-18 are important here: Jeremiah 12:16 and Zechariah 2:15 [Eng 10-11]. Jeremiah 12:16 refers to the “evil neighbors” (“Gentiles,” v. 17), who will come to know God and be built up “in the midst of my people” (בְּתוֹךְ עַמִּי). In LXX-Zechariah 2:15 the nations, who become God’s people will dwell in the midst of Zion (κατασκηνώσουσιν ἐν μέσῳ σου). MT has the Lord dwelling in the midst of his people (וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹכְךָ). The Jewish Christian exegetes at the Jerusalem Council used the principle of *gezerah shavah* to

¹²⁶ The order of the four stipulations in the decree as it is given in Acts 15:29 agrees with the order in Leviticus. The order of the stipulations in the decree as it is given in Acts 15:20 is different than in Leviticus, which suggests that 15:29 is the more original of the two and 15:20 is Luke’s paraphrase of it (Bauckham, “James and the Gentiles,” p. 180).

¹²⁷ See Terrance Callan, “The Background of the Apostolic Decree (Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25)” *CBQ* 55 (1993): 284-97, for a convenient list of laws that apply both to Israel and the *ger*.

¹²⁸ See the development of this in Bauckham, “James and the Gentiles,” pp. 175-8.

connect these Gentiles (who will dwell among Israel as described in Jeremiah 12:16 and Zechariah 2:14-15) with the four prohibitions in Leviticus 17-18. These verses are all joined by the verbal correspondence of the phrase “in the midst” (בְּתוֹכָם). This correspondence is in the MT (LXX calls the resident aliens in Leviticus “proselytes”), showing that the Council was aware of and apparently was also using a Hebrew text.¹²⁹ Furthermore, this verbal correspondence is the reason these four specific prohibitions were chosen and no others were required for the Gentile converts in Acts 15. Bauckham summarizes,

The proviso in Acts 15.20 is not an arbitrary qualification of this decision [established in 15:16-18], but itself follows, with exegetical logic, from Acts 15.16-18. If Gentile Christians are the Gentiles to whom the prophecies conflated in Acts 15.16-18 refer, then they are also the Gentiles of Jer. 12.16; Zech. 2.11/15, and therefore the part of the Law of Moses which applies to them is Leviticus 17-18.

The Apostolic Decree is important for understanding the citation in 15:16-18. It is another evidence of Jewish Christian exegesis of the Scriptures at the Jerusalem Council. It also demonstrates that although Gentile Christians are not under the Law, the Jewish (OT) Scriptures still have authority. The decision that is made concerning Gentiles in Acts 15 is based finally on those Scriptures (15:21), which speak directly to the situation under consideration at the Council.¹³⁰ Thus, the Scriptures of Israel are the authority for

¹²⁹ The connection between the texts that is suggested here cannot be made in the LXX, and the LXX would not be appropriate for the argument based on Lev. 17-18 because it refers to the Gentiles as “proselytes.” If the Gentiles were “proselytes” they would be required to keep the whole Law, and thus the LXX would not be appropriate for James’ argument in that regard also. See the discussion in Bauckham, “James and the Gentiles,” p. 177.

¹³⁰ Bauckham, “James and the Gentiles,” 179, writes “Prophecies of the conversion of the Gentiles to God in the messianic age show that, while these Gentiles are not obliged to become Jews and to observe the Law as a whole, the Law itself envisages them and legislates for them.” Thus he argues that the four commands imposed on the Gentiles uphold the authority of the Law; Gentile Christians are to “keep those laws which the Torah obliges them to keep” (p. 179, n. 66). These are the conditions for table fellowship

the decisions made at the Council, and the Decree of the Council is the Law of Moses applied to Gentiles who have become the people of God in the midst of Israel.¹³¹

Conclusions

We can draw several conclusions from our study of Amos 9 in Acts 15. First, in contrast to the beliefs of Covenant Theologians, the Church's existence is not due to God's rejection of Israel. It is a corollary of David's dynasty (and kingdom) being reestablished that this Gentile mission goes forth. Second, in the same vein, the Church is not Israel nor does it replace Israel.¹³² It is as a result of God's revisiting Israel and reestablishing the Davidic monarchy and kingdom that Gentiles can now come to God as Gentiles. (The conjunction "so that" [ὅπως] at the beginning of Acts 15:17 indicates that the purpose of God in building David's fallen tent is "so that" Gentiles may be God's people. The rebuilding of the tent is distinct from the Gentile mission and is what enables it to take place. The conjunction makes no sense if the tent that is being rebuilt is the Church, or a new Israel, which includes the Gentile mission. The Gentile mission happens as a result of the building of the tent of David.) Third, in contrast to the belief of some Dispensationalists, the Gentile mission is not a parenthesis in God's program and plan. It is closely connected with God's work in Israel, and it is thoroughly consistent with the OT prophets and their message. It is only possible because the promises God made to Israel and David are being fulfilled. Fourth, the Church, which is distinct from

"between Jews and gentiles in the new situation of the eschatological people of God which includes both" (p. 179, n. 66).

¹³¹ This is further evidence against an analogous use of Amos 9 in Acts 15.

¹³² By "Israel" I mean to refer to ethnic, national Israel, unless I qualify it (i.e., with an adjective like "new").

Israel, is understood as a Gentile incorporation into a renewed Israel.¹³³ It seems necessary to see some return of God to Israel in 15:16a (“I will return”) and with all the “re-“ (ἀνα-) language in Amos and Acts, which supports that idea also. That is, the Church is not a new people of God, and there are not two peoples of God. Rather Gentiles are incorporated into the one people of God continuous with Israel.¹³⁴ The effect of the statement from Amos 9 in Acts 15 is the opposite of what is normally expressed (Rom. 11:25ff—“after the integration of the Gentiles, all Israel will be saved”); here the inclusion of gentiles follows the restoration of God’s work in Israel.¹³⁵

This, of course, does not address the future of Israel after the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. Paul addresses that in Romans 11 where he speaks of a future fullness for Israel. In Romans 11:12 Paul writes, “But if their [Israel’s] transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring?” A consistent reading of this context requires that the riches that the world (including Gentiles) is experiencing in this age is a result of Israel’s loss; and therefore according to this verse there is a time of Israel’s “fullness” still to follow this age (see also 11:25-29). That time of “fullness” is not addressed in Acts 15, as I have interpreted it. That does not mean that my reading of Acts 15 precludes a future for Israel; it does, however, require that details concerning Israel’s future be developed from other texts that address this topic directly.¹³⁶

Some who see a fulfillment of OT promise in this age, understand that initial fulfillment to be the “already” and understand the future fulfillment to be the “not yet” of

¹³³ It seems best to see some return of God to Israel (Acts 15:16a) in sending Christ, which fulfills the promises to David and results in Gentile salvation. Gentile salvation is a definite aspect of the later work of God with Israel (15:17).

¹³⁴ Through the Messiah the church has continuity with Israel; both are corporately related to him.

¹³⁵ See Dines, “Amos,” p. 305.

¹³⁶ Here I think OT promises to Israel are important and must be taken at face value, i.e., interpreted normally.

the OT promise.¹³⁷ That future fulfillment would encompass the realization of the national promises made to Israel. Others, who see the salvation of Gentiles supported by the citation from Amos in Acts 15 as “the consummation of God’s plan of redemption from ages past,” posit a future significance for Israel in the inclusion of Jewish people in the redeemed.¹³⁸

The citation from Amos 9 in Acts 15 has important ramifications for the theology of the Church and for the competing theological systems or paradigms that the Church uses to interpret Scripture. We dare not skip over it or reinterpret it to fit our systems. Instead, we need to incorporate the contextual and normal reading of this text into our systems of interpretation and our theology, so that it plays an important part in them like it did in the theology of the early Church.

¹³⁷ I am here referring to the Progressive Dispensational interpretation of this passage, discussed above.

¹³⁸ Robertson, “Hermeneutics of Continuity,” p. 108. Robertson (p. 107) argues against equating the blessings of the present with paradise and contends that there must be a second stage following the first stage of the consummation in this age. He does not seem to see a future in God’s plan (“of redemption”) for Israel as a nation. He writes, “Israel’s unique role indeed may be recognized in its being the ‘servant’ by which the gospel has been brought to the nations.” (108). Robertson calls God’s sovereign program for this world a “plan of redemption,” and he does not seem to envision national Israel playing a part in the future of God’s program. Any future interpreters would find for national Israel in this later paradigm would have to be “in Christ,” and the nation’s importance in the future could perhaps be posited because Christ is an Israelite and rules in his earthly kingdom from Jerusalem in Israel.