

JAMES' USE OF AMOS 9: 11-12 IN

ACTS 15: 13-18

by

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Acts chapter 15 records the meeting of the church council in Jerusalem to decide whether Gentiles needed to be circumcised in order to be saved. In his speech before the council James quotes Amos 9: 11-12 which contains the prophecy of the rebuilding of the tabernacle of David. James' use of Amos 9: 11-12 has been claimed by amillennialists as well as dispensationalists as a proof text for their different systems of interpretation. The amillennialist contends that these verses indicate that the church is the fulfillment of the prophecy of restoration given to Israel in Amos 9. The dispensationalist sees these verses as detailing the dispensational programs of God. They see indicated the present church age which is followed by the second coming of Christ and the setting up of the Millennial Kingdom on earth.

One of the significant problems encountered when dealing with these passages is the textual differences between the New Testament quote of Amos 9: 11-12 and the Masoretic and Septuagint texts. The central issue is which text represents the original text of Amos, the Masoretic or the Septuagint? From the evidence available on this issue it is concluded that the Masoretic text is to be preferred unless some more conclusive evidence is found in support of the Septuagint.

The arguments for fulfillment in the church include the appearance of words and phrases which were used in the Old Testament to usually denote Israel but are used here in connection with the church. It is also argued that James changes the words of Amos to spiritualize the promise to Israel by applying it to the church. For each of the arguments presented to support a fulfillment of Amos 9: 11-12 in the church, an alternative understanding can be offered which allows for a literal interpretation while maintaining the dispensational distinctives between Israel and the church.

The main dispensational approach to this passage has been the time sequence view. This view places great importance on certain time words which they believe James used to outline the dispensational workings of God. It is this writer's conclusion that too much stress has been placed on these words and that they have been asked to bear more significance than they should. A proper dispensational understanding can be arrived at apart from the time words and such an understanding fits the context and grammar of the passage. James' use of Amos was a restating of the directly predictive prophecy concerning the restoration of Israel. He was not indicating that the prophecy was fulfilled in the church, but that it was still a valid promise to Israel which God would one day fulfill.

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INTRODUCTION

This paper is written to deal with some of the problems one faces in attempting to ascertain the correct meaning of Acts 15: 13-18. These verses are part of the speech delivered by James at the Jerusalem council. They consist mostly of a quote from Amos 9: 11-12. Of these two references, Kaiser says "It is virtually impossible to find a more appropriate set of canonical texts to test such a vast array of burning questions now posed in the whole curriculum of divinity . . ."¹. That a study of these verses is important becomes readily apparent when one considers the "burning questions" Kaiser refers to and the areas of doctrine which will be effected by how one understands these verses.

To a greater or lesser extent an understanding of these words uttered by James can influence the doctrines of eschatology, ecclesiology, soteriology and the kingdom. This passage is also important in the area of hermeneutics. These verses are of central importance in determining whether the Old Testament promises to Israel of a future kingdom involve a literal future restoration of the nation. Or is James "spiritualizing" Amos 9: 11-12 by applying it to a fulfillment in the church? Such is a common proposition of amillennialists, that James is indeed

¹Walter C. Kaiser, "The Davidic Promise and the Inclusion of the Gentiles (Amos 9: 9-15 and Acts 15: 13-18): A Test Passage for Theological Systems," The Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society, 20:2 (June, 1977), p. 97.

quoting Amos 9 as an indication that the church is a restoration of the "tabernacle of David." On the other side of the issue there are many dispensationalists who regard these verses as the most important dispensational verses in the Bible. They understand James to be setting forth the programs of God in history. They see here the calling out of the church in this present age to be followed by the return of Christ and the setting up of the kingdom on earth. Who is right, the amillennialist or the dispensationalist? Both positions and interpretations have been accused of being exegetically unsound. Depending on which interpretation one accepts, the doctrine of eschatology will be determined. If one accepts the view that Amos 9: 11-12 as used by James is teaching that the promises to national Israel are fulfilled in the church, then the church is actually only a continuation of Israel and not a distinct group from it. Following such an interpretation would necessarily demand that other Old Testament prophecies for Israel can be fulfilled in the church. This fulfillment may not be literal but a "spiritualized" fulfillment in the church.

That Acts 15: 13-18 has something to say about the doctrine of soteriology is clear from the context. Therefore, one's understanding of the passage must have something to say to the soteriological issue at hand.

Important to the understanding of any passage of Scripture is its context. Therefore, the context of Acts 15: 13-18 will be examined to see what contribution it makes to

a proper interpretation. Also the context of Amos 9: 11-12 will need to be taken into account since James quotes these verses in his speech before the council.

An important matter to be faced in dealing with these two passages is the textual differences encountered in the Septuagint and Masoretic texts. Since the differences in the texts play an important role in both the amillennial and dispensational views a study of the differences is imperative. Reflecting on the scarcity of good exegetical and contextual works on the passages here involved, Braun singles out the textual variations as a major factor. "Among the inhibiting factors that contribute to the paucity of exegetical and contextual work in Acts 15 and Amos 9 are the glaring textual discrepancies between the MT and the Acts citation."¹

The arguments used to posit that the church is the fulfillment of the rebuilding of the "tabernacle of David" will be examined. This will involve arguments which are built upon certain words and phrases which are understood to be equating the church with Israel.

Dispensational views will also be examined. The weaknesses and strengths of these views will be evaluated. Since James' speech in Acts 15 has been claimed as a proof text by both of these groups, it is hoped that an interaction with the aspects of study in this paper will point out which has the

¹Michael A. Braun, "James' Use of Amos at the Jerusalem Council: Steps Toward a Possible Solution of the Textual and Theological Problems," The Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society, 20:2 (June, 1977), p. 113.

correct exegetical understanding.

It is the thesis of this paper that James' words in Acts 15: 14-18 do not support or teach a spiritualized or literal fulfillment in the church, but rather support a literal future fulfillment in the restored nation of Israel in the Millennial Kingdom.

CHAPTER ONE

CONTEXTUAL SETTINGS

An important matter in the study of any passage of Scripture is a consideration of its context. Often texts are lifted from their context and then used as a proof text to support a particular view of interest. This may result in making whatever assertion is arrived at invalid when the context is allowed to control the understanding of the passage. In light of the dangers which are involved in not taking the context into account, it is interesting that the context of Acts 15: 13-18 has often been neglected by those who seek to explain the intent of James in quoting Amos.

In fact, one of the major shortcomings of the main dispensational view of this passage is its silence on the context in which James makes his speech. Their view fails to explain how James' use of Amos 9 relates to the problem he was addressing at the Jerusalem council. To be fair to the text and consistent in interpretation the context must be taken into account.

This chapter will be concerned with presenting the context of Acts 15 and its relation to James' use of Amos 9. Since James quotes from Amos 9, this chapter will also be examined in its context. A proper understanding of Amos 9: 11-12 is vital for a proper understanding of how it is used

by James to speak to the problem he was facing.

The Context of Acts 15: 13-18

The book of Acts was written by Luke to Theophilus in order to confirm him in the faith. The book of Acts would instruct him about the lives and activities of the apostles by recording the geographical outreach of the gospel message. Acts follows the general outline of geographical movement expressed by the Lord in Acts 1:8 ". . . and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." The book of Acts is regarded as a transitional book. It fills the gap between the Gospels and the Epistles. Through the account given in Acts it is seen how a "movement that began among Jews, centered in a Jewish Messiah, and that was founded on the Jewish Scriptures became a religion espoused largely by Gentiles, as it is today."¹ The transition from the Jewish economy to the church age was one of the basic causes for the confusion which led to the Jerusalem council of Acts 15. Because of its unique character in this aspect of transition and introduction of a new age, "great care must be exercised lest one build his entire theological position of doctrine and practice upon what is found in its chapters."²

¹Merrill C. Tenney, New Testament Survey (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1961), p. 229.

²Robert G. Gromacki, New Testament Survey (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1974), p. 154.

In the process of recording the history of the early church, Luke preserves in Acts 15 the first instance of a doctrinal controversy which resulted in a council meeting to decide the issue. This controversy centered on the issue of whether circumcision was necessary for the Gentiles to observe for salvation. This situation grew out of the rapid spread of the gospel to the Gentiles and their response to it in large numbers. Many Gentiles were being saved who had no prior knowledge of the Jewish law and religion. They had entered the church by faith alone.

An early indication of the coming tension was the debate Peter had with the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem after his visit to the house of Cornelius to present him the gospel. Tenney notes that "only when he reported that the Holy Spirit came upon the Gentiles as He had come upon the Jewish believers at Pentecost did the Jewish believers admit that Gentiles might be saved at all (Acts 11: 18)."¹

It seems that this legalistic element remained active in the Jerusalem church for this issue is raised again in Acts 15: 1 "And some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." Such an assertion must have been shocking to the Gentile converts who had accepted Christ by faith. Paul and Barnabas contended with such men and debated with them on the issue. It was decided that Paul

¹Tenney, New Testament Survey, p. 237.

and Barnabas should go to Jerusalem and meet with the apostles and elders to solve the problem of whether Gentile believers needed to be circumcised in order to be saved. In Jerusalem some of the Pharisees who had believed in the Lord took the position that it was indeed essential for the Gentiles to be circumcised and to follow the Law of Moses for salvation. They no doubt could argue that not only was circumcision established by the Mosaic Law but that it was also a sign of God's covenant with Abraham. Concerning the significance of circumcision Tenney writes, "the outward significance of the rite was applied to the inward life even under the law, which speaks of being circumcised in heart (Deut. 10: 12-16), but in actual practice it had probably become a routine ceremony."¹

After much debate on the issue the apostle Peter stood and related how God chose him to speak the gospel to the Gentiles. He further pointed out that the Holy Spirit had been given to the Gentiles by God as He had been given to the Jews. As such, God made no distinction between the Jews and the Gentiles who had received salvation by faith. Peter states that the Gentiles were cleansed by faith and concludes that the Gentiles should not be placed under the Law. This is related in Peter's words in Acts 15: 10-11, "Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we are saved through the

¹Ibid., p. 259.

grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are." The result of Peter's speech was that all the multitude "kept silent" and gave their attention to Barnabas and Paul. Paul and Barnabas related to them the signs and wonders which God had done through them among the Gentiles. It was after these events that James stood and delivered the speech which is the subject of this study.

From the context it is seen that the issue at hand was the controversy over the need for circumcision for salvation. Many dispensationalists have been guilty of ignoring the issue at hand and have built arguments from James' words that do not relate to the context. Since those gathered at Jerusalem were concerned with a solution to the problem of Gentile salvation and circumcision, a meaningful interpretation of Acts 15: 13-18 must speak to this problem. In the events at the council, James speaks after all the others and it seems that his speech is taken as decisive on the circumcision issue. Allis accuses the dispensationalist of failing to relate James' words to the context of Acts 15:

That this is the logic of the Dispensational interpretation is shown by the fact that Scofield applies the quotation from Amos to the future and does not have a word to say as to its bearing upon the point at issue. This is the inevitable conclusion from Dispensational premises. . . . All of the difficulties involved in the Dispensational interpretation of this important passage in Acts are avoided, if it is simply recognized that the words quoted by James apply directly and definitely to the situation under discussion, the status of the Gentiles in the Church, and that this is the reason that James appealed to them.¹

¹Oswald T. Allis, Prophecy and the Church (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1945), pp. 147-148.

After he finishes his quote of Amos, James concludes that the Jewish Christians should not require the Gentile believers to keep the law, but he did request that they refrain from certain practices which are expressed in Acts 15: 19-20, "Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, but that we write to them to abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood." The council gathered at Jerusalem agreed with the decision and recommendation of James and sent Paul and Barnabas along with Silas and Judas to Antioch to inform them of the outcome of the meeting.

Recognizing the importance of the context and the problems it presents to understanding how James is using Amos, Rosscup builds a case for a wider context to attempt to give an adequate answer to the amillennial assertions. Recognizing the tension that the quote James gives from Amos 9 seems to be irrelevant to the circumcision debate at hand, he sees an eschatological issue in the wider context of Acts. Rosscup identifies the soteriological problem of Acts 15: 1,5 as one of the historical problems James sought to answer. He sees the eschatological problem of Acts 1: 6-8 and 3: 19-21 as the other problem in the Jewish mind which James also sought to answer by his speech. These two passages are taken to illustrate the Jews' continuing hope for a future national restoration of the nation. Rosscup contends that "to seek to interpret

Acts 15: 13-18 on the assumption that its context involves only the soteriological issue relating to circumcision and the law is to bind unnatural restrictions upon its possibilities."¹ He further adds that "It is a slight to the context of Jewish thought to rule out Israel's kingdom expectations as irrelevant to those sitting before James at the council."²

To support this eschatological aspect of the context, Rosscup details five factors which he feels must be considered in attempting to understand James' quote of a passage which relates to Israel's national future. First, the passage in Amos 9: 11-12 is seen to gather with it several similar Old Testament passages about the restoration of Israel. Some specific details are gleaned from these passages. The restoration will be national, territorial, peaceful, productive and lasting. Second, in the specific time frame of the Messiah's Kingdom, Israel will be preeminent among the nations of Gentiles. Third, the synoptic Gospels trace Christ's offer of a kingdom which is usually understood as an offer of the future Messianic Kingdom foretold in the Old Testament. That offer was rejected by Israel and postponed until the second coming of Christ. Fourth, Acts 1: 6-7 and 3: 19-21 illustrate the continuing hope of the Israelites for a national restoration and Messianic Kingdom. Fifth, James and the Jews at Jerusalem knew about

¹James E. Rosscup, "The Interpretation of Acts 15: 13-18" (Unpublished Th.D. dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1966), p. 33.

²Ibid.

the many Gentiles who were being saved but, "this was not occurring in the specific time context and as a consequence of Israel's national blessing in the Messianic Kingdom."¹ Rosscup sees these factors as supporting a definite and relevant eschatological setting for James' words. He concludes that:

If the re-establishment of the kingdom to Israel was the paramount topic of inquiry for the Jews in Acts 1, it is a good indication that the matter would be relevant to the Jews in Acts 15. And if Peter regarded this as a live issue in Acts 3, before Gentile conversion created Jewish fears about maintaining national features, then it was evidently a concern for Jews in Acts 15. Furthermore, it is not a valid argument to say that such Jewish hope would have been dulled by the passage of time before the Jerusalem meeting. In fact, Paul considered the problem of Israel's restoration a matter still crucial to Jewish thinking a good while later in A. D. 57-59 when he wrote the Epistle to the Romans.²

If this wider context be accepted it readily relieves the tension of how James could quote a passage dealing with the future Messianic Kingdom at the Jerusalem Council.

The Context of Amos 9: 11-12

Since James quotes Amos 9: 11-12 in his speech in Acts 15: 13-18, the context and meaning of this passage is important for this study. The intent of this passage is essential for understanding James' use of it. His handling of it has implications for hermeneutics as well as for the millennial issue in eschatology.

¹Ibid., p. 33.

²Ibid., p. 52.

The book of Amos was written by a herdsman and fig dresser from the small town of Tekoa. Tekoa was located southeast of Jerusalem, yet Amos was sent by God to the Northern Kingdom of Israel as a prophet with a strong message of judgment. Kaiser outlines the book of Amos in this fashion:

The record of Amos's ministry was neatly laid out in three sections:

- (1) in 1: 1-2: 16 he thundered against Israel and her neighbors for their lack of righteousness towards one another and towards God Himself;
- (2) in 3: 1-6: 14 he enjoined Israel to seek God (5:4, 6, 14) or to get ready for a face-to-face showdown (4: 12);
- (3) in 7: 1-9: 15 he received five visions offering at first some escape but then hardening into no way of escape except for God's eschatological offer of hope . . .¹

In the book of Amos before 9: 11 there is no prediction of future blessing for Israel, but only a severe judgment in store for Israel. Beginning in Amos 9: 11 to the end of the book, Amos reveals the future restoration and blessing awaiting the nation of Israel. Amos speaks of this event as the restoring of the tabernacle of David which has fallen. The word for tabernacle is actually a word which means a "booth" or "hut". Usually the Old Testament speaks of the "house" or "dynasty" of David but here that house is reduced to a hut that has fallen into ruin. It is as though Amos views the nation as a "damaged house, which will one day be built up again and improved, so that it becomes as it originally was."²

The restoration is to the conditions of the days of

¹Walter C. Kaiser, Toward an Old Testament Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), p. 193.

²Erling Hammershaimb, The Book of Amos: A Commentary, translated by John Sturdy (New York: Schocken Books, 1970), p. 140.

old which were characterized by the glorious conditions existing in the time of David and Solomon. This restoration is accompanied with Israel becoming the head of all the nations. This must wait until the rightful king is on the throne of Israel. Amos predicts that Israel will possess the remnant of Edom, as well as all the nations that are called by the name of the Lord. The mention of the remnant of Edom here presents some problems in understanding James' use of the verse. The fact that in James' speech the remnant of Edom is expanded to "the rest of mankind" has been taken by some to support the hermeneutical practice of spiritualizing the Old Testament to see the church in the prophecies about Israel.

Feinberg identifies the remnant of Edom as referring to them as "representative of all the nations of the world."¹ Such an understanding would explain how James could give it the meaning of "the rest of mankind." It is explained that the reason for the specific mention of Edom by Amos is that they were the closest relation to Israel and yet they were also very hostile towards Israel. Cripps notes that "probably the Edomites were singled out because of their specially unbrotherly behavior when Judah was in distress before the final fall of Jerusalem in 586 B. C. (Obadiah 10-14)."²

¹Charles Lee Feinberg, Joel, Amos and Obadiah (New York: American Board to the Jews, Inc., 1948), p. 118.

²Richard S. Cripps, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Amos (London: S. P. C. K., 1969), p. 273.

Concerning this mention of Edom by Amos, Kaiser writes:

The interpretation of the Davidic promise in 2 Samuel 7 as a "charter for humanity" (2 Sam. 7: 19) was repeated here by Amos (9:12): "That they may possess the remnant of Edom, even all nations who are called by My name." For many, verse 12 is even more problematic than verse 11--especially with its "offensive" reference to "the remnant of Edom." Gerhard Hasel noted that Amos employed the remnant theme in a threefold usage: (1) to counter the proud claim that all Israel was the remnant (3: 12; 4: 1-3; 5: 3; 6: 9-10; 9: 1-4); (2) to describe a true remnant from Israel (5: 4-6, 15), an eschatological sense; and (3) to include the "remnant of Edom" along with the other neighboring nations as benefactors of the Davidic promise (9: 12). It was this representative role of Edom, which we saw in Obadiah, that is singled out again here. For the epexegetical note in verse 12, "and/even all the nations/Gentiles who are called by My name," surprisingly did not cast Edom in the role of being vanquished by David's or Israel's military machine; rather it speaks of its spiritual incorporation into the restored kingdom of David along with all those Gentiles who were likewise "called by His name."¹

Kaiser understands Edom to be a representative here of all the Gentile nations. Thus, God is promising that there will be a believing remnant from all the nations, even Edom. Some of the important textual differences with regard to this "remnant of Edom" will be considered in the next chapter which will deal with the textual problems of this passage.

The remaining verses of Amos 9 draw a striking picture of prosperity and blessing. They describe the conditions which will be existent when God rebuilds the "fallen hut" of David. Some of the conditions described are that the one plowing will overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes the one sowing seed. "The thought is that scarcely is the farmer finished plowing when the seed will be ripe, and hardly will he have

¹Kaiser, Toward an Old Testament Theology, p. 196.

completed treading the wine press when he will have to begin sowing."¹ The elements of the future kingdom as described by Amos are listed by Feinberg.

Let us summarize the remarkable prophecy of Amos to be fulfilled in the consummation of Israel's history: (1) the restoration of the Davidic dynasty, verse 11; (2) the supremacy of Israel over the nations, verse 12; (3) the conversion of the nations, verse 12; (4) the fruitfulness of the land, verse 13; (5) the rebuilding of their cities, verse 14; and (6) their permanent settlement in their own land after their return from captivity, verse 15.²

Since Amos 9: 11-12 is expressly dealing with the future millennial kingdom of Israel, it is difficult to understand how James uses it in dealing with the circumcision issue in Acts 15: 13-18. Some of the various attempts to solve this problem will be seen as the different interpretations are explored in the remaining chapters.

A further consideration with regard to both Acts 15 and Amos 9 is their shared broader context of the entire Bible. If James sees the church in the Amos passage concerning the rebuilding of Israel, then one should expect this interpretation to be supported by the rest of the New Testament. In the same way, if the New Testament teaches that the church is not Israel, but that the church is distinct from Israel in God's program, then this same distinction should be expected to hold true in the case of James' quote of Amos 9: 11-12.

¹Feinberg, Joel, Amos and Obadiah, pp. 118-119.

²Feinberg, Joel, Amos and Obadiah, p. 119.

CHAPTER TWO

TEXTUAL PROBLEMS

A matter of primary importance with respect to the Acts 15 passage in view is James' use of the Old Testament. In comparing Acts 15: 16-18 with the Masoretic text of Amos 9: 11-12, there are found some marked differences between the two. A comparison of Acts 15: 16-18 with the Septuagint text of Amos 9: 11-12 reveals a closer representation, but still there are some differences which need to be accounted for.

A study of the causes for the variations needs to be undertaken. Are the differences to be explained because the quotation was made by memory, or from another text which is not presently known? Certainly the Dead Sea Scrolls have intensified the study along these lines. If it can be determined that the difference is not due to another text, then one must consider whether the variation was intentional by the author for some theological or hermeneutical reason. Such textual considerations lay at the heart of hermeneutics of the Scripture.

Textual Differences

One of the most perplexing problems to be faced with respect to James' quote of Amos is, What was the textual source of his quote? There are a number of possible solutions

to this problem. James could have been quoting from the Masoretic text and intentionally changed certain words and added others to the quote. The resultant passage gives itself to two widely diverse interpretations. One is that James changes the quote to spiritualize the Old Testament prophecy about Israel to apply to the church. The other is that James adds certain "time words" to the Amos quote to set forth the dispensational periods and events.

It is possible that James was quoting the Masoretic text from memory and gave the sense of the passage but not a literal word for word rendering. Some have suggested that he did not intend to quote Amos specifically, but was expressing the general teaching of the prophets.¹ Those who make this assertion usually see here a conflation of two or more Old Testament passages.

A number of suggested possibilities center in the Septuagint version of the Old Testament. Some feel that the Septuagint in the case of Amos 9: 11-12 is to be considered superior to the Masoretic text and should be allowed to emend the Masoretic text.² Then it is posited that James quotes from

¹M. F. Sadler, The Acts of the Apostles (New York: James Potland Company, 1890), p. 288; John Dick, Lectures on the Acts of the Apostles (New York: Robert Cutler and Brothers, 1850), p. 210; A. J. C. Allen, The Acts of the Apostles (London: James Nisbet Co., 1891), p. 92.

²Allan A. MacRae, "The Scientific Approach to the Old Testament," Bibliotheca Sacra, 110:440 (October, 1953), pp. 314-315.

the Septuagint with some minor changes in wording but not meaning. Some feel that the Masoretic text is the correct text but the Holy Spirit directed James to use the Septuagint because it was sufficiently accurate and had a clearer application to the situation at hand in Acts 15.¹

It is possible that there was another Hebrew text that differed from the Masoretic that was used by the Septuagint translators and also by James. Some think that evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls supports this understanding.²

Some other possibilities look to Luke as the author of Acts. Luke may have used sources in compiling his book and used the Septuagint in writing Acts whether James quoted it specifically. These many possibilities point out the lack of consensus with respect to a solution to the textual problems of Acts 15: 13-18 and Amos 9: 11-12. Some of the specific supports given for the various views will be touched on as arguments favoring the different texts are explored.

The Importance of the Text Cited

The importance of the textual differences is seen in how they are used to argue for different positions maintained with respect to the Israel and church debate. Some suppose

¹Arno C. Gaebelin, The Acts of the Apostles (Neptune, New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers, 1912), p. 265.

²Michael A. Braun, "James' Use of Amos at the Jerusalem Council: Steps Toward a Possible Solution to the Textual and Theological Problems" (Hereinafter referred to as "James' Use"). The Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society, 20:2 (July, 1977). pp. 116-117; J. DeWaard, A Comparative Study of the Old Testament in the Dead Sea Scrolls (Leiden: Brill, 1965), pp. 79-80.

that James is dramatically changing the words of Amos as found in the Masoretic text in order to "spiritualize" it or "to raise it to a higher level."¹ From this supposition it is added that James is setting forth the principle of "spiritualization" as a proper hermeneutical method for interpreting the Bible. This principle then applies the promises given to Israel to the New Testament church.

Counter to this understanding, some have sought to show the Septuagint to be the best representative of the original text.² This being the case, then James was not spiritualizing the text but merely quoting the Septuagint.

The Septuagint Text Preferred

The possibility that the Septuagint could be better than the Masoretic text in some instances is expressed by Johnson as he writes, "As Old Testament textual critics know, the Septuagint in quite a few places appears to present superior readings."³ In dealing with the textual differences of the passages at hand, one option is that the Masoretic text is to be corrected by the Septuagint

¹Martin J. Wyngaarden, The Future of the Kingdom in Prophecy and Fulfillment (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1934), pp. 110-111.

²Wai C. Tan. "The Davidic Promise (Amos 9: 9-15) And The Gentiles (Acts 15: 13-18)" (Unpublished seminar paper in Dispensational Eschatology, Grace Theological Seminary, 1980), p. 7; Braun, "James' Use," p. 117; DeWaard, A Comparative Study of the Old Testament in the Dead Sea Scrolls, pp. 79-80.

³S. Lewis Johnson, The Old Testament in the New: An Argument for Biblical Inspiration (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1980), p. 17.

reading.¹ This possibility is preferred by some dispensationalists who suppose that such an understanding will do away with the spiritualizing argument that the church is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies to Israel.

Reflecting this thinking, Tan concludes:

A major problem with Acts 15: 13-18 has to do with the correct Amos text from which James cited. It was argued strongly, if not conclusively that James quoted from a text in Amos which was preserved in the LXX. If that be the case the amillennial interpretation that James in the New Testament raised Old Testament predictions to a higher level, making the kingdom the church; and conquest, conversion, is untenable.²

If the acceptance of the Septuagint would invalidate the application of the prophecy to Amos as Tan suggests, then it would provide a handy solution to the major problem of the passage. However, there are other arguments used to support the seeing of the church in the prophecies of Israel in this passage.

Wynngaarden presents the amillennial understanding which is based on the difference between the Masoretic text and James' quote of the Amos passage.

We note that in the New Testament this generalizing of the predicates of Edom reappears, in another form, but supporting the idea that this one enemy stands typically and spiritually for all the enemies of the Lord, and this virtually spiritualizes the concept of the enemies of the theocratic nation. For David's prophesied reign over the remnant of Edom, in Amos 9, is spiritualized into Christ's mediatorial kingship over the Gentile believers, by James in Acts 15: 17, where the military conquest makes room

¹Wai C. Tan, "The Davidic Promise (Amos 9: 9-15) And The Gentiles (Acts 15: 13-18)," p. 7.

²Ibid., p. 18.

for the spiritual.

This is clear from the quotation of James, in Acts 15: 16-18. He refers to the prophecy of Amos 9: 11-12, concerning the Messiah's conquest of Edom,--"that they may possess the remnant of Edom." Possessing the remnant of Edom is then spiritually understood by James, in that he sees illustrated here the purpose of God, "that the residue of men may seek after the Lord" (Acts 15:17). Here the Holy Spirit endorses, through James, the practical import of His own prophecy, instead of giving the exact words, since the practical application of the Messiah's kingship over the Gentiles at large was the matter to be considered at Jerusalem.¹

In favor of taking the Septuagint text as preserving the correct Old Testament text, MacRae writes:

Though the earliest Hebrew manuscripts of most of the Old Testament come from a time many centuries after the Jerusalem Council, their text is generally far more accurate than that of the Septuagint. Yet it cannot be denied that there may be cases where the Septuagint has preserved the correct Old Testament text, and where errors have crept into the later Old Testament manuscripts. There are strong reasons to suspect that this is such a case.²

One of the reasons used to support this position is that the original Hebrew texts were only consonantal texts and the variations between the Septuagint and the Masoretic are due to a mispointed word or a confused letter. Two of the variations are explained in that the Septuagint read יִדְרְשׁוּ as יִרְשׁוּ , and read אֲדָר as אֲדָם , which they took as the subject of the verb instead of the object and translated it "men" instead of "Edom," thus producing a prophecy of the conversion of the heathen out of a promise that Israel would possess their

¹Martin J. Wyngaarden, The Future of the Kingdom in Prophecy and Fulfillment, pp. 110-111.

²Allan A. MacRae, "The Scientific Approach to the Old Testament," pp. 314-315.

land.¹

Another reason used to support the priority of the Septuagint revolves around James' quote in Acts 15. The argument follows that James' use of the Septuagint in this important discussion with the Pharisees would have met with certain disapproval if the text were an inaccurate quote of the correct Hebrew text.

Strange as it may seem to those who are unfamiliar with the Hebrew language, the Hebrew text may be rendered this way, with little more than the change of one letter. The corruption of this letter must have occurred after the time of the apostles, for James thus quoted the verse at the Jerusalem Council, and based his decision upon it (Acts 15: 14-17). There were learned men present, some of them hostile to his view, who would have certainly shouted him down if he had based his decision upon a reading different from that which existed in the then current Hebrew manuscripts.²

Braun argues that the Septuagint is to be preferred over the Masoretic text by supposing that the Septuagint preserves the original Hebrew text which is different from the Masoretic.

It is the contention of this writer that the Vorlage to James' testimonia was a Hebrew text divergent from the MT and superior to it. . . . From the textual evidence, from the probable corruption, and from the sheer logic of the situation, we have ample warrant to emend the MT --and such an emendation need not be too severe.³

¹Kirsopp Lake and Henry J. Cadbury, "English Translation and Commentary," Vol. IV, The Beginnings of Christianity, edited by F. J. Foakes Jackson (London: MacMillan and Co., 1933), p. 176.

²The New Scofield Reference Bible (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 938.

³Michael A. Braun, "James' Use," p. 117.

Support for this understanding is sought in the materials found in the Dead Sea Scrolls. The argument from them will be presented further on in this chapter.

Another assumption is that the Septuagint is in some way authoritative in and of itself. This idea seems to be present in the thinking of Tasker when he writes:

This is one of the many passages in the New Testament where it was the Septuagint version, and not the Hebrew original, which enabled the Christians to find fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies in contemporary events. In reading the sacred writings in this manner, which many in our day would regard as very uncritical, they were not "wresting the truth of Scripture to their own advantage." The Septuagint was a product of that expansion of the Old Israel known as the dispersion, which in the providence of God paved the way for the coming of the new Israel. God had therefore, it was not unreasonably believed, inspired the translators in the changes they made.¹

Such an argument would be similar to saying that it would not be unreasonable to believe that God inspired the translators of the King James version in the same way since it accompanied the revival begun by the Reformation. One wonders in what sense Tasker thinks of the Septuagint as inspired in the changes that were made. Possibly he means that the Septuagint preserves the sense of the passage or reflects a sense which the Holy Spirit had put in the text. It would not be expected that he speaks of inspiration in the same way as the original texts were inspired. Since the Septuagint was a translation and not the original text, caution should be exercised in

¹R. V. G. Tasker, The Old Testament in the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1954), p. 78.

speaking of its inspiration, and such assertions should be explained as to the intent of such statements.

Tan argues for the superiority of the Septuagint over the Masoretic text on the basis of the dates of the respective texts that are extant today. "Harris points out that while the MT from which our Hebrew Bibles were printed were not copied before 900 A. D., the LXX was made hundreds of years earlier--around 200 B. C."¹ Thus, since the Septuagint is an earlier source it is thought to have more authority.² But those who favor the Masoretic text are quick to assert that the reason for the later date of the Masoretic texts available are due to the strict rules of destroying texts when they became old and worn.

Evidence From Qumran

From the Dead Sea Scrolls of Qumran there appears to be some additional evidence which may support the contention that the Septuagint reflects another Hebrew text different from the Masoretic text in Amos 9: 11-12. The evidence for this is that Amos 9: 11 is quoted in part in 4 Q Florilegium I: 12 in a similar manner to the quote by James in Acts.³

The relative importance of the Dead Sea Scrolls on

¹Tan, "The Davidic Promise (Amos 9: 9-15) And The Gentiles (Acts 15: 13-18)," p. 5.

²Ibid. Where he cites R. Laird Harris as maintaining the superiority of the LXX.

³J. De Waard, A Comparative Study of the Old Testament Text in the Dead Sea Scrolls, p. 26.

textual criticism is their earlier date in comparison with the Masoretic text. This is the stress of Geisler and Nix when they relate that:

There can be no reasonable doubt that the Qumran manuscripts came from the century before Christ and the first century A. D. Thus, they are one thousand years older than the Masoretic manuscripts of the tenth century. Before 1947, the Hebrew text was based on three partial and one complete manuscript dating from about A. D. 1000. Now, thousands of fragments are available, as well as complete books, containing large sections of the Old Testament from one millennium before the time of the Masoretic manuscripts.¹

Concerning the variants between the Masoretic and Septuagint texts and the value of the Dead Sea Scroll materials in determining the value of the Septuagint, Fitzmyer makes the following observations:

. . . recently published preliminary reports about the Qumran biblical texts indicate that we shall have to revise some of the notions commonly held about the relation of the LXX to the MT. Fragments from Cave 4 have revealed a Hebrew text of various biblical books that support the reading of the LXX against those of the MT. The text tradition of the LXX must be taken seriously and the differences between it and the MT can no longer be written off merely as "free" translations or as mistranslations. Theological opinions of the translators influenced their work at times, as is well known, but outside of such areas where this is obvious or proven, the LXX should be regarded as a witness of a different Hebrew recension, when it does not agree completely with the MT.²

With regard to the Acts 15/Amos 9 issue, Braun feels that "we have ample warrant to emend the MT . . ."³ He bases

¹Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, A General Introduction to the Bible (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), p. 260.

²Joseph A. Fitzmyer, Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1971), p. 87.

³Braun, "James' Use," p. 117.

this feeling in part on the theological bias of the Jews who were involved in the preservation of the Hebrew text. He thinks that Masoretic text in Amos 9: 11-12 was probably corrupted as a result of the hostility of the Jews toward the teaching of Gentile salvation. He explains this possibility in these words:

Tg. Jonathan shows that there was considerable theological difficulty with Amos 9: 11-12 in the Jewish community. It reads: "so that they shall possess the remnant of Edom and all of the peoples, even the house of Israel, upon whom my name has been called." The flagrant gloss, "even the house of Israel," was certainly added to exclude the Gentiles from any hope of salvation. Tg. Jonathan reflects a rabbinic conviction that grew in the evolution of Jewish apocalyptic literature and Talmudic exegesis and could even possibly be an attempt to circumvent Christian teaching on the subject. Within the growing Jewish bias against Gentile salvation as evidenced in the apocalyptic literature and in the hostility to early Jewish Christian arguments seen in the targums, one can find probable causes for a corruption in the MT. This is all the more persuasive when several textual authorities challenge the MT reading of Amos 9.¹

At the end of this quote, Braun mentions "several textual authorities" that challenge the Masoretic text on Amos 9: 11-12. What are these "several authorities" which he makes reference to? One would be the Septuagint text and probably another would be the Greek New Testament. The other "authorities" are the Dead Sea Scrolls and a possible Hebrew text which they are thought to represent. It is thought that this other Hebrew text served as the basis for the Septuagint translators and James as he made reference to Amos in Acts 15. Much has been written on the Dead Sea Scrolls on this matter. There are two instances in the Dead Sea

¹Ibid., pp. 116-117.

Scrolls in which part of Amos 9: 11 is quoted. One is found in CD (the Cairo Damascus Document) and the other is found in 4 Q Florilegium, also entitled "Eschatological Midrashim."

CD 7: 15-16 contains a quote of Amos 9: 11a and is translated, "the books of the Law are the hut of the king, as it said, "and I will raise up the fallen hut of David" In this instance the "hut of David is allegorized as the books of the Law, and the text of Amos is thereby modernized."¹

4 Q Florilegium was published by Allegro from a fragment out of Qumran cave four. The passage in it which quotes Amos 9: 11a is identified by Fitzmyer as part of a pesher on the dynastic oracle of 2 Samuel 7: 11ff.² F. F. Bruce speaks of 4 Q Florilegium as an anthology of biblical passages which describe the future restoration of the house of David, and offers this translation:

The Lord declares to you that he will build you a house; and I will raise up your seed after you, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son (II Sam. 7: 11-14). He is the shoot of David, who is to stand up with the Expounder of the Law . . . in Zion in the last days, as it is written: and I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen (Amos 9: 11). That is David's fallen booth, but hereafter he will stand up to save Israel.³

Fitzmyer relates his understanding of this citation and its

¹Fitzmyer, Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament, p. 25.

²Ibid., p. 54. A pesher is a sort of running commentary on a continuous text of a prophet.

³F. F. Bruce, Biblical Exegesis in the Qumran Texts (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1959), p. 47.

difference in meaning from the quote of Amos 9: 11a in CD and in the New Testament in Acts 15:

The "seed" to be raised by God in the future is identified as the "scion of David" and in him the promise of the ultimate restoration of Israel is to be accomplished, by applying to him the words of the oracle of Amos. The Qumran author related the two texts as an expression of his messianic hope, that Yahewh will yet save Israel by raising up the fallen hut of David in the end of days. Both of the Old Testament texts involved here are actually given an eschatological twist. This text of Amos is unique in that it occurs twice in the Qumran literature and also in the New Testament (Acts 15: 16). There is, however, no similarity in the use of this text in the three places. In the Damascus Document it occurs in a passage which is not too clear and in which the books of the Law are said to be the "hut of the king," and this hut is related to the "fallen hut of David." In 4 Q Flor. the scion of David is associated with the interpreter of the Law, but he is to bring about the salvation of Israel. In the New Testament James uses the text in his speech to the assembly in Jerusalem; without any reference to a scion of David he asserts the fulfillment of the verse in the conversion of the Gentiles to the Gospel He thus has extended the sense of the text far beyond the original intention seeing in the conversion of the Gentiles the fulfillment to possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations over whom my name is called.¹

Of the two instances of Amos 9: 11a in the Dead Sea Scrolls, the most significant one is that found in 4 Q Florilegium. In light of the similarities between it and Acts, De Waard remarks, "But apart from the historical questions, 4 Q gives a Hebrew text, which corresponds exactly to Acts! And it would be preferable if a modern commentator, even of Haenchen's stature, would take note of this fact."² The

¹Fitzmyer, Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament, p. 54.

²De Waard, A Comparative Study of the Old Testament Text in the Dead Sea Scrolls, p. 26.

significance of this quote in 4 Q Florilegium is the possibility that it points to a common Hebrew text shared with the quote by James. There is agreement between the Greek New Testament and the quote in 4 Q "against the LXX and MT, although the rest of the quotation clearly depends upon the LXX, or something very like it."¹

De Waard states that "the text of the Amos quotation in Acts differs from that of the MT and the LXX, but is exactly identical with that of 4 Q Flor."² From this he postulates that a Hebrew Vorlage was behind the LXX reading which accounts for the differences with the Masoretic text. Asserting this possibility De Waard continues:

The Hebrew text of 4 Q Flor., and not the LXX, may underlie the quotation of Am. 9:11 in Acts 15: 16, for it has been proven that the quotation of Amos 9: 11 in Acts 15: 16 literally follows the reading of the Amos text in 4 Q Flor. This identity nullifies all triumphant exclamations that a reasoning by James according to the LXX must point to a composition by Luke. It is true that James' argument follows the reading of the LXX in Amos 9: 12, but the LXX obviously had a Hebrew Vorlage which differed from the MT, as even Haenchen must admit. Although a Qumran text of Amos 9: 12 has not yet been published, it would not be surprising if the future would show that exactly this Vorlage was used in Qumran.³

It should be noted that the quote in 4 Q Florilegium contains only the first part of the verse of Amos 9: 11. It does not contain the controversial verse 12 with the switch in the

¹Max Wilcox, Semitisms of Acts (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1965), p. 177.

²De Waard, A Comparative Study of the Old Testament Text in the Dead Sea Scrolls, p. 25.

³De Waard, A Comparative Study of the Old Testament Text in the Dead Sea Scrolls, pp. 79-80.

Septuagint and New Testament from Edom to mankind. Hopefully a Scroll will be found that will include Amos 9: 12 that may be very helpful in deciding one way or the other in favor of the Masoretic or Septuagint text.

Concerning the correct understanding of James' use of Amos 9, Bruce believes that the 4 Q document gives the natural understanding.

The natural explanation of David's fallen booth is given in the document 4 Q Florilegium, where its restoration is the work of the expected "shoot of David." And this interpretation of the passage in terms of the Davidic Messiah underlies the application which it is given by James the Just in Acts 15: 15ff.¹

The Masoretic Text Preferred

There is strong opinion that the Masoretic text is the text which preserves the original words of Amos 9: 11-12 and should, therefore, be preferred over the Septuagint in this passage. A strong case can be built for the Masoretic text based on its general good quality which is widely recognized. Factors which attest to the quality of the Masoretic text include the few variants in the texts available. The reverence for the text and the regulations on the scribes who copied it are also factors which attest to the good quality of the text overall. Also supporting evidence is seen in the comparison of duplicate passages, the confirmation of its accuracy from archaeology and evidence from the Septuagint and the Dead

¹Bruce, Biblical Exegesis in the Qumran Texts, p. 73.

Sea Scrolls.¹ Noting the similarities between the Masoretic text and the Dead Sea Scrolls, it has been observed that, "The scrolls give an overwhelming confirmation of the fidelity of the Masoretic text."²

Among those who write in support of the Masoretic text of Amos 9: 11-12, there are few supporting arguments given. Usually it is simply asserted that the Masoretic text has priority. This is evidenced in the words of Hammershaimb after he points out the variants between the Septuagint and Masoretic texts:

LXX (Codex B) reads ὅπως ἐκζητήσωσιν οἱ κατὰ λοιποὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, i.e. it reads אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁׁרְשְׁ in place of אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁׁרְשְׁ and מִן הַיָּם in place of מִן הַיָּם, and omits וְהָיָה before הָיָה אֵלֶיךָ. Acts 15:17, which quotes this passage, adds the object τὸν κύριον, which is also found in Codex A in the LXX. MT is of course the original text.³

Mentioning also the change from direct object to the subject as noted by Hammershaimb, Cripps notes, "But in an important particular they both depend on a faulty reading (different from the Masoretic text) by which reading the grammatical object in the Hebrew became the subject in the Greek translation thus, "the remnant of men will seek . . .,"

¹Geisler and Nix, A General Introduction to the Bible, pp. 252-263, where they detail these supporting factors. Bruce also notes that the Targum of Jonathan and the Peshitta agree with the Masoretic Text. F. F. Bruce, The Acts of the Apostles (Chicago: The Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, 1952), p. 298.

²Ibid., p. 261.

³Hammershaimb, The Book of Amos: A Commentary, p. 141.

in place of "they may possess the remnant of Edom."¹

One argument in favor of the Masoretic text is found in the difficult reading of suffixes in Amos 9: 11. This would come under the heading of internal evidence as the more difficult reading is to be preferred in the doing of textual criticism, especially if it is sensible. The tendency of Scribal emendations is to produce a superficially improved reading.² Braun reflects this reasoning in the case of Amos 9: 11 and concludes it best to maintain the Masoretic text in this instance. Braun adequately explains the details involved:

A number of textual problems arise within Amos 9: 9-12. To begin with, the MT confronts the reader with a perplexing and unnatural reading in v 11. There is an unusual collection of pronominal suffixes which seem to disagree in number and gender with their antecedents. The MT reads: "In that day I will cause to stand the booth of David, the fallen one, and I will wall up their (f. pl.) breaches, and his (m. s.) ruins I will cause to stand. And I will build her (f.s.) as the days of old." The LXX reads all three third-person pronouns as feminine singulars. BH3 and BH4, following the LXX, suggests a similar emendation. It would seem best, however, to retain the differing pronouns on the basis of the more difficult readings. This is aided by the fact that Tg. Jonathan, before lapsing into an obscure explanatory gloss, gives evidence that it too retained the difficult pronoun.³

¹Cripps, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Amos, pp. 322-323.

²Geisler and Nix, A General Introduction to the Bible, p. 368.

³Braun, "James' Use," p. 114. It seems a bit inconsistent to maintain the Masoretic text should be maintained in verse 11 due to the difficult reading of the pronouns, and then argue later that the Masoretic text should be emended by the Septuagint based on a possible Hebrew Vorlage that might be behind the Septuagint. If the Septuagint reading in verse 12 is preferred because of the underlying Hebrew text, then one would expect the suffixes to be emended by the Septuagint based on the same Hebrew Vorlage.

Hayward in his study on Acts 15: 16-18 recognizes the possibility that the Masoretic text is to be corrected by the reading of the Septuagint in Amos 9: 11-12. He then concludes to the contrary, "But the evidence from textual criticism is too strong to allow that. Upon examination we conclude that the LXX rather is to be corrected by the Masoretic Hebrew text."¹ If the Masoretic text is assumed to be reflective of the correct text of Amos 9: 11-12, then there are a number of possible explanations with regard to James' quote of it. Briefly listed these explanations are:

1. The amillennial "spiritualizing" method of interpretation is correct.
2. James is using the Septuagint as sufficiently accurate for his purpose. He uses this quote realizing that elsewhere in the Old Testament Edom is used to refer to the Gentiles as a whole.
3. Luke when he wrote Acts was using sources and quotes from the Septuagint whether James used it or not. It is noted that all the Old Testament quotations in Acts appear to come from the Septuagint.
4. James is quoting from memory and does not give a literal word for word quote.
5. James did not quote Amos specifically, and did not intend to do so. James uses the plural "prophets" to point to the fact that he did not specifically quote Amos.²

The Conflation Theory

When faced with the problem of trying to harmonize the textual differences of Acts 15: 16, 17 with Amos 9: 11, 12, some have opted to see James' quote as a conflation. A conflation is a fusing together of two or more passages drawn from

¹C. E. Hayward, "A Study in Acts 15: 16-18," The Evangelical Quarterly, 8 (1936), 162-166.

²W. K. L. Clarke, "The Use of the Septuagint in Acts," Vol. II, The Beginnings of Christianity, edited by F. J. Foakes Jackson (London: MacMillan and Co., 1922), p.94.

different contexts.¹ Such an understanding is believed to resolve the differences between the words of James and those found in the Amos passage supposedly quoted. The most commonly suggested conflation is that Acts 15: 16-18 is a bringing together of elements taken from Jeremiah 12: 15 and Amos 9: 11-12. Such an idea is contained in the margin of the text of Nestle's Novum Testamentum Graece on the Acts passage. The idea connecting Jeremiah 12: 15 is also espoused by Swete² and Clarke.³

The first words of Acts 15: 16, "μετὰ ταῦτα ἀναστρέψω " are the words generally considered to be from Jeremiah 12: 15. However, it is questionable since the only word which Acts 15:16 "has in common with Jeremiah 12: 15 is μετά. ἐπιστρέψω is added to this only if we follow the D-text in Acts . . ."⁴

Other verses than Jeremiah 12: 15 have been suggested as possible conflations in the Acts quote by James. Many of these suggestions are based on the assumption that James used the plural "prophets" because he was not quoting Amos only but was combining the words of other prophets as well in his quote. Sadler observes that, "It may be that St. James purposely used the plural, "the words of the prophets," in order to

¹Ibid.

²Henry Barclay Swete, An Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek (Cambridge: University Press, 1902), p. 399.

³Clarke, "The Use of the Septuagint in Acts," p. 94.

⁴De Waard, A Comparative Study of the Old Testament Text in the Dead Sea Scrolls, p. 24.

include together with the prophet Amos, other prophets who had foretold the same thing."¹ Identifying some of the verses considered as part of the conflation, Peirce writes, "The conversion of the Gentiles was agreeable to the predictions of several prophets; a specimen of which James proceeds to quote (compare Isaiah 2: 2-4; 49: 6; Micah 4: 1-4)."²

Although this conflation idea is an interesting one, it should be noted that it is difficult to trace in any prophet the introductory phrase "after these things I will return" (v. 16). The use of the plural "prophets" probably is not because James was referring to two different prophets, but probably is best explained by the Hebrew Bible's designation for the Minor Prophets. This is made clear as Cripps explains:

The vagueness of the phrase, "the words of the prophets," cannot be due to doubts existing in the New Testament times as to ultimate authorship of the particular verses taken from the book of Amos. What are now called "the Twelve Minor Prophets" were massed together by the Jews into one volume, styled in the colophon in the Hebrew Bible "The Book of the Twelve" . . . That in ancient times so great a work as that of Amos could be cited without a name supplies an illustration of how slightly was the individuality of each several prophet considered.³

Also, the plural "prophets" is used in Acts 7: 42-43 where the quote made is from Amos 5: 25-27. Though such a proposition that the plural "prophets" means the quote was not to be one

¹M. F. Sadler, The Acts of the Apostles, p. 24.

²Bradford K. Peirce, Notes on the Acts of the Apostles (New York: Carlton and Porter, 1848), p. 253.

³Cripps, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Amos, p. 322.

strictly from Amos may relieve some of the tensions, it should be regarded as improbable unless some more substantial evidence can be formulated in its support.

Summary

There is strong opinion favoring both the Masoretic and Septuagint texts of Amos 9: 11-12. The Dead Sea Scrolls material may suggest a possible Hebrew Vorlage shared in common with the James Quote in Acts 15: 16. But the quote is not long enough to give definite support for either the Masoretic or Septuagint text. It is assumed by those who favor the Septuagint that the similarity of 4 Q Florilegium with Acts 15: 16a might suggest a common Hebrew text which would support the Septuagint based on the similarity of Acts 15: 17 with the Septuagint of Amos 9: 12. The evidence for either view is found to be inconclusive, leaving the Bible student to make a subjective choice based on his own interpretation of the evidence available.

It should be noted that while the acceptance of the Septuagint text would eliminate the argument that James changed the wording of the Masoretic text in order to spiritualize it, it does not eliminate the interpretation that James sees the church as the fulfillment of the prophecy concerning Israel in Amos 9. It just eliminates one of the arguments behind that interpretation.

Conclusion

The conflicting evidence on the textual problem of Amos

9: 11-12 makes it difficult to support either text dogmatically. Carter appropriately evaluates the situation when he comments, "In the present state of textual studies, it appears impossible to give a satisfactory solution for this problem."¹ Based on the evidence currently available, this writer prefers to accept the Masoretic text as the correct text until some conclusive proof to the contrary can be found.

¹Charles W. Carter and Ralph Earle, The Acts of the Apostles (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1959), p. 215.

CHAPTER THREE

ARGUMENTS FOR FULFILLMENT IN THE CHURCH

A common interpretation of the Amos quote found in Acts 15 is that "James sees the spiritual fulfillment of the prophecy in the kingdom of Christ erected on the Day of Pentecost, and in the ingathering of the Gentile nations to it."¹ This fulfillment is taken to be either a complete or a partial fulfillment. This view is based by some on a hermeneutic which spiritualizes the Old Testament prophecies to be fulfilled in the church. Others arrive at the same conclusions while following a straight literal interpretation. This chapter will present the most common arguments used to support this position.

A Technical Term For Israel

Support for a fulfillment of Amos 9: 11-12 in the church is drawn from the use of the word λαός in Acts 15: 14. Two methods of interpretation are used with respect to this word and its use here. One method is a literal interpretation, which views the occurrence of this word with ἔθνων as very significant. In the Old Testament Septuagint version these two terms designate peoples who are almost always contrasted.

¹R. J. Knowling, "The Acts of the Apostles," Vol. II, The Expositor's Greek Testament, edited by W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), p. 321.

The Jews alone are said to be the people of God. Now James states that God is calling out a people from the Gentiles for His name.¹ A spiritual interpretation is given by Bruce when he writes, "The Church is the legitimate continuation and fulfillment of the Old Church of Israel; this is implied in the use of the terms *λαός* vs. 14 and *ἐκκλησία* . . ."² Epp adds these thoughts:

λαός in Acts always refers to the Jewish people, with two exceptions (15: 14; 28: 10). . . . In the two cases where *λαός* does not refer to the Jews, it is, though including Gentiles, actually describing the new people of God, the New Israel . . . The result, then, is that the term *λαός* in Acts represents in every case a technical term for Israel, the people of God . . .³

His understanding is built largely on the Septuagint's use of it for Israel the elect people of God. However, some exceptions are found in the Septuagint. In Genesis 26: 11 the Philistines are a *λαός* , in Exodus 9: 16 the Egyptians and in Ruth 1: 15 the Moabites. Thus, the term is in some instances in the Septuagint referring to Gentiles specifically and not to the nation of Israel.

Contrary to Epp's conclusion that *λαός* in Acts is a technical term for Israel, Strathmann sees a figurative meaning of *λαός* which equals the Christian community in Acts 15: 14

¹Carter, The Acts of the Apostles, p. 214.

²Bruce, The Acts of the Apostles, p. 297.

³Eldon Jay Epp, The Theological Tendency of Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis in Acts (Cambridge: University Press, 1966), pp. 76-77.

and 18: 10. He explains the significance of the use of
by James:

Simon has told how God for the first time was minded
λαβεῖν ἐξ ἐθνῶν λαὸν τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ
(with the conversion of Cornelius, Acts 10). This was
for the Jewish ears an astounding and even a revolution-
ary saying, though the way had been prepared for it in
the OT prophecy. Thus far λαός and ἐθνη had been mutually
exclusive terms. Now there rises up to God's name from
the ἐθνη a λαός independent of all national preconditions.
The circle of the word λαός is given a new centre. Only
faith in the Gospel decides. The title is not herewith
taken from Israel. But another λαός now takes its place
along with Israel on a different basis. This means, of
course, that within Israel only those who meet the deci-
sive conditions belong to this λαός. Thus a new and
figurative Christian concept arises along with the Old
biological and historical view and crowds it out. This
transposition of the term is found in Acts 18: 10.¹

Possibly some of those who see the use of λαός as an
argument for the fulfillment in the church of the promises
to Israel would refer to the λαός of God in 2 Corinthians 6:
14ff., where "the quotation from Lev. 26: 12 and Ezek. 37: 27
refer in the original setting to Israel, but are here applied
to the Christian church."² With respect to such passages in
the New Testament where Old Testament passages are alluded to
with reference to the church, the following should be kept in
mind:

This means that by faith in Jesus Christ as the Lord,

¹H. Strathmann, "λαός," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. IV, ed. by Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), p. 54.

²H. Bietenhard, "λαός," The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Vol. II, edited by Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1975), p. 800.

the church becomes the people of God, irrespective of the national background of its members (Gal. 3: 26ff.; 1 Cor. 12: 13; Col. 3: 11). That is not, of course, to say that in the New Testament the church has simply taken the place of Israel as the people of God, as if Israel had lost the priority given to her by God (cf. Rom. 9-11, especially, Rom. 9: 4f.; 11: 1f.).¹

A Return Of Favor

The word ἀναστρέψω does not occur in the Septuagint text of Amos 9:11, nor is there any equivalent to it in the Masoretic text. Typically, dispensationalists refer this word to the second coming of Christ. Against such an understanding this view argues that this Greek word is never used in the New Testament of the second coming of the Lord and this passage is no exception.² Alexander understands ἀναστρέψω to be an indication of returning favor, stating that it is "neither in the Hebrew nor in the Septuagint, but supplied by the Apostle in perfect keeping with the sense of both, as an introductory suggestion that the prophecy is one of restoration and returning favour."³ Barnes relates the same idea as he comments, "When the people of God are subjected to calamities and trials, it is often represented as if God had departed from them. His return is an image of their restoration to his favor and prosperity."⁴

¹Ibid.

²Hayward, "A Study in Acts 15: 16-18," p. 165.

³Joseph A. Alexander, Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1956), p. 543.

⁴Albert Barnes, Acts of the Apostles (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953), p. 230.

It is maintained by some that "I will return" is the common Hebrew idiom for "I will do a thing again."¹ Hackett comments, "the expression implies a restoration of favor after a temporary alienation; comp. Jer. 12: 15. Some recognize here the Hebrew which converts the first two verbs into an adverb qualifying the second: I will build again."² Against this adverbial sense, Thayer notes of the use of ἀναστρέφω in Acts 15: 16, "here ἀναστρέφω has not like the Hebrew בָּרַח the force of an adverb, again, but God in the Messiah's advent returns to his people, whom he is conceived of as having previously abandoned."³

Allis gives the typical amillennial understanding of "I will return" in Acts 15 when he explains:

The words "After these things I will return and build" do not refer to a time which was still future when James used them. In the Amos passage the words used are simply, in that day, which is the most general formula used by the prophets to introduce an utterance regarding the coming Messianic age. "After these things I will return and build" is a slightly more emphatic form of the statement. Viewed in the light of their context in Amos, they refer to a time subsequent to the complete destruction of the Northern Kingdom, which had ceased to exist centuries before the New Testament age in which James was living. The words "I will return and build" are simply an emphatic way of saying, "I will build again." There is no warrant for making them refer directly to the second advent. They naturally refer to the first advent and to the whole redemptive work of which it was the beginning and which will

¹Leo H. Eddleman, An Exegetical and Practical Commentary on Acts (Dallas: Books of Life Publishers, 1974), p. 210.

²Horatio B. Hackett, A Commentary on the Original Text of the Acts of the Apostles (Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1858), p. 244.

³J. H. Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1901), p. 42.

culminate in the second advent. The only natural interpretation of this passage is that it refers to the Church age and to the ingathering of the Gentiles during that age, as a signal proof of the world-wide sovereignty of the Son of David.¹

In response to this understanding of "I will return," certain observations are in order. The assertion that the Greek word ἀναστρέψω is never used in the New Testament for the second coming of Christ may be contradicted by this one instance of its use in Acts 15: 16. It is true that the word is nowhere else used with this designation in the New Testament, but Acts 15: 16 could be its only use for the second coming. It should be noted that the same line of reasoning behind the assertion that it is not used in the New Testament to signify the second coming can be used to argue against the meaning of a return of favor. It can be argued that nowhere in the New Testament does ἀναστρέψω have the meaning of a return of favor apart from the Acts 15: 16 use. Therefore, either understanding can be argued against based on the usage of the word in the rest of the New Testament.

However, there are some factors which might tend to support seeing here a return in the sense of a turning again of the Lord to rebuild the Tabernacle of David. Given the Jewish setting of the speech of James, this could be an idiomatic expression similar to the Old Testament expressions of the Lord who would return to fulfill His kingdom promises after having turned away from Israel in the past.

¹O. T. Allis, Prophecy and the Church (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1945), p. 149.

Those who see a fulfillment in the church assume that if it does not refer to the second coming, but to a return of favor, then it must refer to the church age and the building of a new Israel, the church. Such reasoning is faulty, for it does not necessarily follow that if it is not the second coming a fulfillment in the church is supported. In fact, a literal understanding of the Lord's return of favor on Israel in the Millennial Kingdom places the fulfillment of this prophecy at the second advent. Therefore, even if "I will return" is not a reference to the second coming from the New Testament perspective, understanding it as a return of favor to Israel places its beginning at the second advent.

Tabernacle Of David

The difficulty in interpreting the expression "tabernacle of David" is that it has been regarded as referring to Christ Himself, the Christian church, the Davidic dynasty, the restored nation of Israel during the tribulation period and the Millennial Kingdom. Denton identifies four various senses which he thinks "tabernacle" could have.

1. The tabernacle of our body: man's nature, which was utterly overthrown by sin, and which Christ restored or rebuilt when He took our flesh. This, however, can hardly be spoken of as the tabernacle of David.
2. The decayed splendour of the family of David in the person of Christ, who made illustrious the house of David. This, again, hardly seems to meet the requirements of the text.
3. The Body of Christ, which He had taken of David, and which when overthrown by death was restored by resurrection.
4. The Church of God, the Body of Christ the Son of David, the Spiritual Israel, lifted from the dust and re-erected

by the preaching of Christ and of His Apostles. This seems to be the strict meaning of the prophecy. This Church began to be re-erected when men were converted to be the disciples of Christ, it grew when multitudes of the Jews were converted to the faith, and was set up when the Holy Spirit was given to the Apostles for the evangelization of the world. One name by which the Jews were accustomed to speak of the Messiah was Bar-Naphti, He who shall build again.¹

The "rebuilding of the tabernacle of David" is taken to be fulfilled in the church. This is connected to the person and mission of Jesus, who was the seed of David. "The result was the building of His church, a church which at the beginning had been composed of the sons of Israel, but which now was opening itself to include also many Gentiles."² Illuminating on the part Christ played in the rebuilding of the tabernacle, Hengstenberg states, "That event, with which the conversion of the Gentiles is here immediately connected, had already taken place in Christ, at least as to the germ, which contained within itself the whole substance which afterward displayed itself."³

Hayward adds this explanation of the rebuilding of the tabernacle of David:

Plainly in this connection it refers to the Davidic kingdom . . . So to build again the tabernacle of David means to restore the Davidic line to dignity and power in the person of the Messiah. It has no possible connection with

¹W. Denton, A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles, Vol. II. (London: George Bell and Sons, 1876), p. 69.

²Everett F. Harrison, Acts: The Expanding Church (Chicago: Moody Press, 1975), p. 234.

³E. W. Hengstenberg, Christology of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1970), p. 396.

a supposed restoration of the Mosaic tabernacle, nor with a temporal reign of David's line upon the earth at any time. . . . To put this Scripture entirely in the future is to contradict the teachings of the present exaltation of "great David's greater Son."¹

Bruce admits that "the literal reference of the prophecy in Amos is to the restoration of the undivided kingdom of Israel, as in the reign of David."² But then sees a different application of the passage by James as he sees "the presence of believing Jews in the Church fulfilled the prediction of the rebuilding of the tabernacle of David . . . the presence of believing Gentiles fulfilled the next part of the prophecy."³ O'Neill also suggests that "James must have cited Amos because he believed that the coming of the Messiah and the conversion of the Gentiles was part of the restoration of the tabernacle of David."⁴

From the first chapter it was seen that the tabernacle of David in the context of Amos 9 referred to the Davidic dynasty and kingdom which would be restored gloriously by Christ in the coming kingdom. There are several considerations which support this understanding. First, the "hut of David" in Amos 9 is a graphic picture of the Davidic dynasty in its lowly condition which resulted from their sin and disobedience

¹Hayward, "A Study in Acts 15: 16-18," p. 166.

²Bruce, The Acts of the Apostles, p. 297.

³Ibid., p. 298.

⁴J. C. O'Neill, The Theology of Acts in its Historical Setting (London: S. P. C. K., 1970), p. 128.

to God. Secondly, some of the Targums understood the expression to refer to the "kingdom of the house of David."¹ Thirdly, the raising of the fallen hut of David is pictured by Amos as an end of the dispersion and downtrodden state of Israel. Therefore, this prophecy should not be considered fulfilled until the dispersion of Israel comes to an end in a literal sense as was predicted. This means the tabernacle of David is not a reference to the incarnation of Christ or the building of the Christian church in this age. Fourthly, this restoration of Israel is confirmed by other Old Testament prophecies. Fifthly, the fact that Jesus did not take the throne of David and establish His kingdom at His first advent supports this understanding. In Luke 19: 12-27 and 21: 31, Jesus presented the kingdom as being future when He would return. "Though He qualified for the throne of David and was resurrected so that He could occupy it (Acts 2: 20), He is not now on that throne but is seated with the Father in His throne (Heb. 1: 3; Col. 3: 1; Rev. 3: 21)."² Sixthly, the view is confirmed by other New Testament passages which maintain a yet future national restoration of Israel and then a Messianic kingdom rule.³ Thus, it is best to understand the tabernacle of David as referring to the future dynasty and kingdom of David that will be restored in the Millennium.

¹Rosscup, "The Interpretation of Acts 15: 13-18," p. 225.

²Ibid., p. 226.

³Ibid.

Gentiles Identified By Phrases

Used Of Israel

It is maintained that "remnant of men" or "rest of mankind" is a phrase which identifies the Jewish believers. Then it is said to be epexegetically connected by *καί* to "all the Gentiles who are called by My name." Kaiser uses this reasoning to conclude that this verse is showing the continuity of the one people of God who are included in the "promise" of his promise theology scheme.¹ Braun counters this view saying:

It is true *καί* could be functioning epexegetically here; there is no grammatical reason against it. But if this is so, then the Gentiles are not included in the remnant--they are the remnant. The title "the rest" in this passage would not be given to the Jews at all! Moreover, nowhere in the OT, or the NT for that matter, is the word "remnant" applied to Gentiles in any soteriological sense.²

The problem with Braun's reasoning is that he has assumed that the word *κατάλοιπα* here is to be understood in some sort of technical way as the remnant of Jews. It is probably better understood as simply "the rest of mankind."

The phrase "called by My name" is used to argue for a spiritual fulfillment. This phrase is represented as often applying to Israel, as Jehovah's consecrated or peculiar people.

That the conquest here foretold is a spiritual one, is clear from the last clause, "upon whom My name is called," which is often applied to Israel, as Jehovah's consecrated or peculiar people. (See Deut. 28: 9, 10; Is. 63: 19; Jer. 7: 10, 11; 14: 9 and comp. Deut. 12: 5; Jer. 15: 16; 33: 2). The essential meaning of the passage, therefore, is that

¹Kaiser, "The Davidic Promise and the Inclusion of the Gentiles" (Amos 9: 9-15 and Acts 15: 13-18), pp. 102-104.

²Braun, "James' Use," p. 120.

the restoration of the kingdom of David was to be connected with the spiritual conquest of the Gentiles . . .¹

Spiritualization Of Edom

As mentioned in the last chapter on textual problems, the change from "remnant of Edom" in the Masoretic text to the "remnant of mankind" in Acts is seen as a major support for seeing the promises to Israel fulfilled in the church. The argument is built on the supposed spiritualization of Amos by James to see the fulfillment of the possession of the remnant of Edom in the conversion of the Gentiles in the church. Thus, it is taken that James as an early church founder gives the spiritualization method of interpretation his support. This view is presented by Wyngaarden, who attributes the spiritualization to the Holy Spirit ultimately.

However, the unauthoritative spiritualization of Edom, in the Septuagint, receives authoritative support, as the correct interpretation, in the above New Testament quotation of James. Thus, the Holy Spirit gives an infallible interpretation of His own figurative language, in Amos 9, quoting from the Septuagint. To the textual student, it is evident that the Septuagint looked upon Edom as adam (man), and upon yarash (possess) as darash (seek), meanwhile completing the sense in its usual free but intuitive and brilliant manner! Yet this particular interpretation could be owned by the Spirit, as the practical import of the prophecy, and, therefore, as the infallible truth intended to be conveyed,--the Holy Spirit having, naturally, the right to interpret his own inspired prophecy, in a "spiritual" manner.²

Wyngaarden sees the application of the spiritualization to apply to the church. Rosscup answers this spiritualizing view

¹Alexander, Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles, p. 544.

²Wyngaarden, The Future of the Kingdom in Prophecy and Fulfillment, p. 113.

with the following observations:

There are two approaches possible for the dispensationalist in answering the above argument. First, it is distinctly possible that the original Hebrew text of Amos 9 said "men" and "seek" just as the LXX and James. In such a case, the two would not have changed the wording of Amos and thus spiritualized it. Secondly, the Septuagint and James could have changed the wording without spiritualizing it. Edom is generally regarded as representative of other groups which it represented. The fact that the Septuagint and James expand the idea to "men" does not therefore preclude fulfillment to Edom, the singular group. In fact, other Old Testament passages also predict an existence of a literal Edom in the eschatological "day of the Lord" when Israel is exalted.¹

Conclusion

The arguments for a fulfillment in the church of the Amos prophecy as quoted by James in Acts 15 are found to be wanting. None of the arguments present offer conclusive support. An alternate understanding can be offered for each support which allows for a literal interpretation which maintains dispensational distinctives between Israel and the church. Even if "I will return" does not refer to the second coming, but to a return of favor to Israel, it does not support a fulfillment in the church, but rather a fulfillment in the future Millennial Kingdom as is indicated by the reference to "the tabernacle of David." Therefore, it is concluded that based on the supports offered, the position of fulfillment in the church is untenable.

¹Rosscup, "The Interpretation of Acts 15: 13-18," p. 220.

CHAPTER FOUR

DISPENSATIONAL VIEWS AND ARGUMENTS

Among dispensationalists there are a variety of views presented to interpret the Acts 15 speech of James. This chapter will present some of these views and the arguments used in support of them.

Fulfillment in Time Sequence

The most typical and widely accepted view among the dispensational writers is the one which sees James setting up an outline of the Christian era.¹ This view is dependent for its support on certain "time" words found in the Acts passage. It is maintained that these "time" words set forth the time periods in God's program. This view will be set forth by looking at these "time" words.

"First"

The word "first" is taken to represent the period of the Christian era, the church age. The word πρῶτον is taken

¹For representative presentations of this view see: Arthur W. Kac, The Rebirth of the State of Israel: Is It Of God Or Of Men? (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), pp. 361-365; Charles Caldwell Ryrie, Biblical Theology of the New Testament (Chicago: Moody Press, 1959), pp. 127-128; Dwight D. Pentecost, Things To Come (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1964), pp. 110-111, 132-133; John F. Walvoord, The Millennial Kingdom (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1974), pp. 204-207.

to imply a succession. "If a first visitation is stated, then a second is implied. We should expect the second to be found in the passage."¹ This first period, the church age, is identified in verse 14 as the visitation of the Gentiles.

Kac explains the first period in this fashion:

The first period of the Christian era is often referred to as the Church age. "Church" in the Greek language is "ecclesia" which literally means an assembly, or a called-out body. James therefore states that in the first, or Church age, period of the Christian era God is calling out an assembly of people from the Gentiles. Only a partial ingathering of the Gentiles is to take place in the first period. The Gentile world as a whole--James informs us--is to be converted to God in the third period.²

Kaiser offers this objection to the use of "first" as a time word which designates an entire period of time:

To obtain the dispensational view one must assume that the "first" of v. 14 signified the "first" (era) (a clear interpolation) while the second reference was given a sequential meaning: "after this (gospel dispensation)" God would come again and restore Israel. But on these grounds neither phrase is a literal, grammatical or natural interpretation of James. Dispensationalism has thereby yielded any hermeneutical edge it possessed by so arguing.¹

Kaiser probably has a valid point in his assertion that the word "first" has been given a force which it is not clearly intended to have. However, contrary to Kaiser's conclusion, there is reason to see the church age in the context. In verse fourteen the phrase which immediately comes

¹Kaiser, "The Davidic Promise and the Inclusion of the Gentiles (Amos 9: 9-15 and Acts 15: 13-18)," p. 106.

²Willard M. Aldrich, "The Interpretation of Acts 15: 13-18," Bibliotheca Sacra, 111 (October-December, 1954), p. 320.

³Kac, The Rebirth of the State of Israel: Is It of God or of Men, p. 362.

after the word "first" is that which designates the church age. This phrase states that God is "taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name." Thus, apart from the word "first" it is seen that dispensationalism can present a literal, grammatical and natural interpretation and thereby maintain its "hermeneutical edge."

By way of further explanation, an alternative understanding of the word "first" is available. It could be answering to ἀπὸ ἡμερῶν ἀρχαίων in verse seven.¹ As such it would mean that before Paul and Barnabas had gone to the Gentiles with the Gospel, Peter had been the first to be directed by God to present the Gospel to the Gentiles.² Thus, the word "first" is not referring to a time period, but to the first presentation of the Gospel to the Gentiles by Peter. Such an understanding fits the context and does not negate a dispensational understanding. It is the phrase "taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name," in verse 14 which identifies the church age and not the word "first."

"After These Things"

The words μετὰ ταῦτα do not appear in the text of the Septuagint or Masoretic text of Amos 9: 11-12, but James uses them to introduce his quote of Amos. In the Masoretic text the

¹Hackett, A Commentary on the Original Text of the Acts of the Apostles, p. 243.

²Alexander, Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles, p. 542.

words introducing the prophecy are **אִּהְיֶה מִבְּיֹמֵי**, while in the Septuagint the words are **ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ**. Both of these could be translated "in that day." Adherents of this dispensational time view have understood James to be changing the introductory formula "in that day" to "after these things," to relate the quote to their time period view. Thus, "after these things" refers to events that will transpire after the first period. Concerning these words Aldrich writes:

"After this" is the second time-word in the passage. It introduces the second visitation implied by the word "first." "After this" would be meaningless if it did not sustain a temporal relation to "first."¹

That "after these things" is dependent on "first" for its meaning is not clear from the context. The church age is clearly indicated in verse 14 apart from the word "first" and "after these things" could indeed mean after the church age, but his understanding is not dependent on a time relation with the word "first."

There are some other possible understandings of the words "after these things." One is that James was making a citation from memory which was virtually synonymous with the expression found in Amos 9: 11, "in that day." Accepting this option would not change the time element from the future to the present church age, for the words "in that day" in Amos are referring to the future Messianic kingdom which has not yet begun. Rosscup explains why such an understanding is

¹Aldrich, "The Interpretation of Acts 15: 13-18," p. 321.

preferable to him:

By his expression, Amos meant the eschatological "day of the Lord" which is beyond the church age. This is attested by a number of factors. The more notable are: (1) the fact that the "day" in view could refer to an imminent visitation of divine judgment and blessing in connection with the preparation for and coming of the Messianic Kingdom, as in Zechariah 12--14; (2) the fact that the phrase in Amos 9: 11 points to a time of solution for Israel's dispersion which is the great problem of the context; (3) the fact that other details in Amos 9: 13-15 help to date the fulfillment in a yet future time; and (4) the fact that the "day of the Lord" is always future in the New Testament. . . . The conclusion which suits the evidence best is that which views the expression "after these things" as pointing to a time when Israel's dispersion and Gentile domination will be brought to an end. Positively, it will be a time when God will rebuild the fortunes of Israel.¹

Another option is that the words "after these things" were used by James to refer to the context from which the words of Amos had been taken. The sense then understood is that after the judgments and dispersion of the Jews as described in Amos 9: 7-10, the restoration of the Davidic kingdom would come. Kaiser suggests that "after these things" probably has reference to the Amos context which James consciously included in his citation. "Both the Hebrew and LXX clearly read "in that day"--i.e. in the Messianic times--yet James purposely departed from both!"² Braun agrees with Kaiser that "after these things" refers to after the outpouring of judgments

¹Rosscup, "The Interpretation of Acts 15: 13-18," p. 3 of abstract.

²Kaiser, "The Davidic Promise and the Inclusion of the Gentiles (Amos 9: 9-15 and Acts 15: 13-18)," p. 105.

described by Amos, rather than referring to after the first period of the church age.¹

While these two options which relate the words "after these things" to the Amos context are possible, it would not appear from the context of Acts that they are readily apparent. In the context of Acts 15 they seem to relate to the church age identified by the phrase "taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name." If James was indeed referring to the context of Amos 9 by the use of these words it is a very abrupt transfer made in his speech. Whichever view is accepted the resulting time perspective is the same. If it is referring to the Amos context it is after the dispersion of the Jews up to the time of the restored kingdom in the Millennium. If the Acts context is in view then it refers to the time after the present church age.

"I Will Return"

The word translated "I will return" in Acts 15: 16 does not appear in the Septuagint text of Amos 9: 11-12, nor is there any word which corresponds to it in the Hebrew Masoretic text. There are two possible understandings of the word within this dispensational view. It is commonly understood to be added by James along with "after these things" to refer to the second coming of Christ after the church age. Concerning "I will return" in this passage, Kent writes that

¹Braun, "James' Use," pp. 120-121.

it "makes clear that fulfillment of Israel's blessing must await Christ's return."¹

The other understanding of this word is that the return is to be taken from the standpoint of the Old Testament. "Amos predicted the Lord would turn away from Israel in judgment, allow world dispersion and then return as in Deut. 30: 3 and Jer. 32: 40, to exalt Israel."²

As presented in the last chapter, either view could be right. There are arguments for each one. The view of a return from the perspective of the Old Testament may better fit the Amos context and the quote taken from it, but no dogmatic stance is advised. Whichever position is taken, however, the resulting understanding is the same in that the time referred to by both views is the same, as the second advent marks the beginning of the Millennial kingdom.

The Tabernacle of David

In the time sequence view the "tabernacle of David" is the period of time known as the Millennial kingdom, which follows the return of the Lord. In this period God resumes His dealings with the nation Israel. "Jesus Christ causes the full and permanent national restoration and spiritual

¹Homer A. Kent, Jr., Jerusalem to Rome: Studies in the Book of Acts (Winona Lake: B. M. H. Books, 1972), p. 126.

²Rosscup, "The Interpretation of Acts 15: 13-18," p. 4.

regeneration of the Jewish people."¹ Arguing from the understanding that the tabernacle of David refers to national Israel and not the church, Walvoord correctly observes:

After this period, which is the period of Gentile opportunity, God will raise up the tabernacle of David, give Israel supremacy over Edom and the nations, bless their crops, regather Israel, restore their cities, and assure them that they will never again be dispersed. The entire passage confirms that the "tabernacle of David" is an expression referring to the whole nation of Israel and that in contrast to the Gentile nations. By no possible stretch of the plain meaning of the passage can the "tabernacle of David" be made to be an equivalent of the New Testament church. The prophecy concerns the rebuilding of that which was fallen down. The "ruins" are to be rebuilt "as in the days of old." The nature of the blessings are earthly, territorial, and national, and have nothing to do with a spiritual church to which none of these blessings has been promised.²

"Agree"

A word which is given much significance in the dispensational time view is "agree" in verse 15. It is argued that James' use of the word reveals that he did not mean that the prophecy was being fulfilled in the church. Rather he meant that the action of God in calling Gentiles was in agreement or harmony with the statements of His prophets.

James points out that this was in harmony with that which will happen during the kingdom age (as predicted by the prophet Amos) when there will be both Jewish believers and Gentile believers (cf. vs. 16-17). The fact that James uses the words "to this agree the words of the prophets"--an introductory formula never used in the Bible to introduce an actual fulfillment--is evidence that he

¹Kac, The Rebirth of the State of Israel: Is It of God or of Men?, p. 361.

²Walvoord, The Millennial Kingdom, p. 205.

did not mean to quote Amos' prophecy as an actual fulfillment."¹

Based on his study, Rosscup concludes:

This dissertation has presented evidence to show that the Greek word for agreement had the meaning of concord, harmony or compatibility. A thorough investigation of the lexical sources solidly substantiates this sense. The word is never used with the meaning of fulfillment, nor is it ever employed elsewhere in a Scriptural formula designating a fulfillment. Therefore, the evidence is strongly in favor of the meaning involving harmony, while the sense of fulfillment is not at all necessary and is quite arbitrary. The prophets "agree" with the present Gentile salvation in the sense that they were in harmony with it.²

What specifically then is the agreement that James is speaking of? Rosscup details two aspects of the agreement. First, the prophets are in harmony with the present salvation of Gentiles as Gentiles apart from the observance of circumcision. "The fact that God had indicated blessing for Gentiles at the future time of Israel's restoration, and that this blessing would be available without the necessity of circumcision, was a powerful argument against requiring circumcision for Gentiles now."³ Second, there is harmony in the sense that the church age, an unexpected program of Gentile blessing from the Old Testament perspective, did not annul the promises of God to Israel of a future restoration and blessing.

¹Paul Lee Tan, The Interpretation of Prophecy (Winona Lake: B. M. H. Books, 1974), p. 129.

²Rosscup, "The Interpretation of Acts 15: 13-18," pp. 217-218.

³Ibid., p. 218.

There was harmony between Gentile blessing at the present time and Israel's future blessing, for God could accomplish each in its respective time. . . . The present program among Gentiles could not disrupt, threaten or be incompatible with God's plan for Israelite blessing on a national scale, but was rather in smooth harmony with it.¹

These considerations by Rosscup afford the dispensationalist with a reasonable explanation of the agreement which James was showing by the use of the Amos quote he chose.

Evaluation Of The Time Sequence View

One criticism of the time sequence view as it is presented by most dispensational writers is that it puts too much emphasis on "time" words which may not support the meaning they are given. It has been seen that the passage is capable of supporting a dispensational distinction between Israel and the church and that this is not reliant upon the "time" words. The advantage of the time sequence view is that it maintains a distinction between Israel and the church. It reserves for Israel the Old Testament promises of God for a future national restoration.

Other Approaches

There are a number of other approaches to the Acts 15 passage which have been suggested by those who wish to reflect a dispensational understanding. A brief survey of some of these will be presented.

¹Rosscup, "The Interpretation of Acts 15: 13-18," p. 219.

James Was Soothing The Pharisees

This view begins with the assumption that Peter's testimony had already settled the issue of circumcision that was under debate. Thus, it was James' intention to sooth the Pharisees with his quote of the prophets. It is pointed out that the church is a concept that was first revealed to Paul and teaching on it was absent from the Old Testament. For this reason the Old Testament could not be brought to bear on the issue at hand.¹ This view stresses the silence which followed Peter's speech. From this silence it is inferred that Peter had settled the circumcision issue. It is posited that James' intention in quoting the Old Testament to show "that all Scripture which the Pharisees might cite in favor of Jewish superiority and supremacy, was relevant, but not at this time--not relevant in the state of things which God's Spirit had now surely brought about, putting Jew and Gentile on the same level."²

This understanding affords some possible explanation as to why the quote James makes does not seem to say anything to the issue of circumcision at hand. If the testimony of Peter, Barnabas and Paul had settled the circumcision issue, then James was not directly addressing that issue, but showing that the present dealing of God with the church did not contradict or disagree with the Old Testament promises to Israel.

¹J. M. Stifler, An Introduction to the Study of the Acts of the Apostles (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1892), pp. 137-138.

²Ibid.

James Stresses "The Lord Doing This"

This view builds on the previous one's supposition that Peter's testimony had settled the circumcision issue before James spoke. The main point of this view is that James is saying the present work of calling Gentiles is a work of God, just as in the future the rebuilding of the kingdom will be the work of God. It is maintained that James gives a clear hint that this was his intention by adding the words *κύριος ποιῶν ταῦτα* after the quote from Amos.

We see from this that the Apostolic speaker wishes it to be understood, that the chief weight of his demonstration lies in the prophetic declaration that "the Lord will do this." . . . It is accordingly manifest, that in what is said about the Gentiles the Divine causality is intended to be regarded as the principle point. The prominence given to this point of view is perfectly justified by the prophetical passage.¹

James Stresses The Believers Present At Lord's Return

MacRae sees the main force of James' argument to be that God had predicted that Jesus would find Gentiles called by His name when he returned to the earth to set up His kingdom.

In this view James did not mean the Amos passage was being fulfilled, but that it was in agreement with God taking out from the Gentiles a people for His name. Concerning James' use of Amos MacRae writes:

It was not his contention that Amos predicted the event which Peter had described, but that Amos had looked forward to a time when such people would already be in existence. This, he said, agrees with the fact reported

¹M. Baumgarten, The Acts of the Apostles: or The History of the Church in the Apostolic Age (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1863), pp. 42-43.

by Peter and Paul, that God began to "visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name" . . . The force of James' argument is this: "If God, who knows all His works from the very beginning, has predicted through Amos that when Jesus comes back to this earth to set up His kingdom He will then find awaiting Him, not only believing Jews, but also "Gentiles upon whom my name is called," this fact of prophecy should enable His people to understand the fact of experience that Peter and Paul have described, that God received Gentiles into the church, by giving them the Holy Spirit, without requiring that they first become Jews by being circumcised."¹

Double Fulfillment

Some prefer to view Acts 15 as an instance of double fulfillment prophecy. In this view the prophecy from Amos is thought to have a partial fulfillment in the church age and the ultimate fulfillment in the future kingdom age. The case for this view is built on the New Testament application of Old Testament millennial passages to the church. Gundry espouses this view:

It would be difficult for a premillennialist who recognizes a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy in this age to deny double fulfillment and retain premillennialism. For many of the Old Testament passages applied in the New Testament to the Church age have clearly millennial settings. See for example, Is. 11 (Rom. 15: 12); Jer. 31: 27-37 (Heb. 8: 8-12; 10: 15-17); Joel 2: 21-3: 21 (Acts 2: 16-21); Amos 9: 11-15 (Acts 15: 15-18). To affirm exhaustive past or present fulfillment of these prophecies is to retreat into an amillennial denial of their future millennial setting or to wrest them from their context. On the other hand when we recognize the validity of double fulfillment and see that there remains for Israel a period of unprecedented distress unfulfilled by the northern invasions described in the Old Testament intolerable stress

¹MacRae, "The Scientific Approach to the Old Testament," pp. 318-319.

afflicts the theory of potential fulfillment at the present moment.¹

While defending premillennialism at this point, it should be noted that Gundry sees this double fulfillment use of Acts 15 and similar passages to lead into posttribulationism.

For if we aver that the Church is wholly other from anything foreseen in the Old Testament and at the same time admit the full force of citations of fulfilled Old Testament passages in Acts and the pre-prison epistles of Paul, we can only deduce that the present dispensation began not until the close of Acts. To avoid such a conclusion, we must either minimize New Testament citations of fulfilled Old Testament Scriptures--an invalid procedure--or we must acknowledge that the Church is not entirely unrelated to Old Testament prophecy which pertains to Israel. Such an acknowledgment opens a dispensational door to posttribulationism by allowing, in principle, the possibility of the Church's presence on earth during a period of time predicted in the Old Testament, such as the tribulation.²

Also expressing the double fulfillment view, Sauer contends that the initial fulfillment in this age is on the individual level, while the second fulfillment in the Millennium will be on the national level. He sees this understanding as an argument against spiritualizing away the literal reference to the future conversion of national Israel and the other nations in the future.³

¹Robert H. Gundry, The Church and the Tribulation (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1973), p. 196.

²Ibid., p. 18.

³Eric Sauer, From Eternity to Eternity (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1954), p. 177.

An appropriate observation concerning this view is given by Zimmerman:

How does a prophecy concerning "all the Gentiles" agree with what Peter had just said? Peter's words were not nearly so inclusive. He only said that God visited the Gentiles to take "out of them" (not "all of them") a people for His name. The writer does not wish to appear pedantic, but when it is said in Scripture that a certain thing is being fulfilled, who has the authority to suggest that part of it isn't being fulfilled? This is the position and dilemma into which one is forced if this view is accepted.¹

Correspondence With Deuteronomy 32

Peters, in his work The Theocratic Kingdom, sees a correspondence between a prediction made by Moses in Deuteronomy 32 and the order of events described by James in Acts 15. He believes that his understanding argues convincingly against taking Acts 15 as being partially or completely fulfilled in the church. He details his understanding as follows:

. . . Moses after the delivery of the ceremonial law and after the establishment of the Theocratic ordering, predicts, Deut. 32, the restoration of the nation (e.g. vs. 36-43) after the call and gathering (v. 21 comp. with Rom. 10: 19) of the Gentiles. This exactly corresponds with James' declaration (Acts 15: 16) that after the Gentiles are gathered out then the Davidic house or Kingdom will be restored. Here we have conclusive evidence (fully sustained by the general analogy of prophecy) that all efforts to apply these predictions to the Christian Church, in part or in whole, are seriously defective, and opposed to the most decisive (chronological) statements. Indeed our argument unmistakably shows, supported by abundant testimony of Scripture, the fulfillment is associated with the Second Advent of Jesus, David's Son.²

¹Charles L. Zimmerman, "To this Agree the Word's of the Prophets," Grace Journal, 4 (Fall, 1963), pp. 33-34.

²George N. H. Peters, The Theocratic Kingdom, Vol. II. (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1952), p. 74.

Conclusion

The time sequence view places too much stress on what they see as "time" words placed there by James. A proper dispensational understanding can be arrived at apart from the "time" words and such an understanding fits the context and grammar of the passage. In this view the word "first" would apply to Peter being the first sent by God with the Gospel to the Gentiles. "After these things" could refer to the Amos or Acts context. Whichever is assumed the result is the same as far as the time element involved. If the Amos context is in view then the rebuilding of the "tabernacle of David" will occur after the time of dispersion and judgment on Israel that Amos describes in the early part of chapter nine. If the Acts context is in view, then the time of the rebuilding of the tabernacle of David will be after the present church age. Similarly there are two possible understandings of "I will return." One is the second coming from the perspective of the New Testament and the other is a return of the Lord's blessing on Israel which will begin with the second advent of the Lord. Therefore, either understanding places the time at the Lord's coming to set up the Millennial kingdom. The harmony which James speaks of is best understood that the current work of God in calling the Gentiles did not contradict or disagree with the Old Testament prophecies for Israel. The church was a new thing which was unknown to the Old Testament prophets. This new thing, the church, James declares is not in contradiction to the prophets.

CONCLUSION

From the preceding material one thing becomes clear, there is no widespread agreement as to the correct teaching of Acts 15: 13-18. It is the contention of this paper that a dispensational view best fits the context and allows for a literal interpretation which maintains the distinction between Israel and the church. In this interpretation James is seen to relate that the present church age is God's work calling from among the Gentiles a people for His name which will be followed by God's return to deal with the nation of Israel as He had promised to do in Acts 9: 11-15.

The context of Amos 9 identifies the rebuilding of the tabernacle of David as the yet future restoration of the nation of Israel in the Millennium. James' use of Amos was a restating of Amos' directly predictive prophecy concerning the restoration of Israel.

It is concluded that the amillennial interpretation that the prophecy is fulfilled in the church is not able to be supported from this passage.

The textual problems explored are thought by some to be unsolvable. From the materials now available to the textual critics it appears as if there is no certain conclusion. There is some evidence to support the Septuagint and some to support the Masoretic text. Whichever text is accepted, a dispensa-

tional interpretation can be maintained. In the final analysis it is certain that the Holy Spirit did direct Luke to record the Acts 15 speech in the words which appear in the Greek New Testament, and if there is a change in them from the original text, it was at the direction of the Holy Spirit who can bring out of the passage the meaning which He put in it. So that if the Masoretic text was the original text and James changed the wording, he is getting no more out of the passage than the Holy Spirit lead him to. He did not spiritualize the prophecy and apply it to the church, but he related the spiritual results of the details given by Amos. Whereas the Old Testament Jew may have only thought of the Amos 9 passage as describing the future conquest of the nations by a restored Israel, James knew that this conquest in the Millennium would be accomplished by the Messiah and that the rule of Israel over the nations would be on the basis of a spiritual regeneration that Israel and the Gentile nations would reflect.

The vast differences of interpretation which are offered on this passage should be an indication that this is not the best passage to build a system around such as the dispensational time view adherents have done in the past. Because of the many areas of dispute caution should be exercised in using Acts 15: 13-18 as a main proof text for dispensationalism. On the other hand, neither should the dispensationalist allow the dispute to disqualify this as one of many passages which support a dispensational distinction between Israel and the church.

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