

15:15–18¹

Although the quotation that follows 15:15 is essentially from Amos, James refers to “the words of the prophets.” The phrase might refer to the book of the twelve so-called Minor Prophets (cf. 7:42), or James may have implied that other passages could have been cited also (cf., e.g., Zech. 2:11; see Dahl 1957–1958); however, the reference may take account of the fact that the quotation includes allusions to other passages (Bauckham 1996: 165).

The citation from Amos 9:11–12 is closer to the LXX than the MT, but with some differences in wording. It is difficult to compare the texts of Acts and the LXX because in both cases there are variants that make it difficult to be sure of the original wording.

Amos 9:11–12 LXX	Acts 15:16–18	
¹¹ <i>en tē hēmera ekeinē</i>	¹⁶ <i>meta tauta anastrepsō</i>	cf. Jer. 12:15
<i>anastēsō</i>	<i>kai anoikodomēsō</i>	uses verb from omission below
<i>tēn skēnēn Daud</i>	<i>tēn skēnēn Daud</i>	
<i>tēn peptōkuian</i>	<i>tēn peptōkuian</i>	
<i>kai anoikodomēsō</i>		omission
<i>ta peptōkota autēs</i>		
<i>kai ta kateskammena autēs</i>	<i>kai ta katestrammena autēs</i>	shift of verb: “destroy/overturn”
<i>anastēsō</i>	<i>anoikodomēsō</i>	repeats verb used above
<i>kai anoikodomēsō autēn</i>	<i>kai anorthōsō autēn,</i>	change of verb
<i>kathōs hai hēmerai</i>		omission
<i>tou aiōnos</i>		
¹² <i>hopōs ekzētēsōsin</i>	¹⁷ <i>hopōs an ekzētēsōsin</i>	adds <i>an</i>
<i>hoi kataloipoi</i>	<i>hoi kataloipoi</i>	
<i>tōn anthrōpōn</i>	<i>tōn anthrōpōn</i>	
	<i>ton kyrion</i>	addition
<i>kai panta ta ethnē,</i>	<i>kai panta ta ethnē</i>	
<i>eph’ hous epikeklētai</i>	<i>eph’ hous epikeklētai</i>	
<i>to onoma mou ep’ autous,</i>	<i>to onoma mou ep’ autous,</i>	
<i>legei kyrios</i>	<i>legei kyrios</i>	
<i>ho theos</i>		omission
<i>ho poiōn tauta.</i>	<i>poiōn tauta</i>	omits <i>ho</i>
	¹⁸ <i>gnōsta ap’ aiōnos.</i>	cf. Isa. 45:21?

¹G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, UK: Baker Academic; Apollos, 2007), 589.

Much more important are the differences between the MT and the LXX.

Amos 9:11–12 MT	Amos 9:11–12 LXX	
¹¹ “In that day	¹¹ <i>en tē hēmera ekeinē</i>	
I will raise up	<i>anastēsō</i>	
the booth of David	<i>tēn skēnēn Daudid</i>	(“tent” or “tabernacle”)
that is fallen	<i>tēn peptōkuian</i>	
and repair	<i>kai anoikodomēsō</i>	
their breaches,	<i>ta peptōkota autēs</i>	
and raise up his ruins,	<i>kai ta kateskammena autēs</i>	
	<i>anastēsō</i>	
and rebuild it	<i>kai anoikodomēsō autēn</i>	
as in the days of old,	<i>kathōs hai hēmerai tou aiōnos,</i>	
¹² in order that they may possess	¹² <i>hopōs ekzētēsōsin</i>	
the remnant of Edom	<i>hoi kataloipoi tōn anthrōpōn</i>	object becomes subject: “Edom/Adam”
and all the nations	<i>kai panta ta ethnē,</i>	
who are called	<i>eph’ hous epikeklētai</i>	the LXX represents the Hebrew
by my name,”	<i>to onoma mou ep’ autous,</i>	relative construction
says the LORD	<i>legei kyrios</i>	overliterally
	<i>ho theos</i>	
who does this.	<i>ho poiōn tauta.</i>	

The MT citation comes from the last chapter of Amos, where the tone is more hopeful than in the earlier parts of the prophecy. Judgment has come upon the people, but there will be restoration, specifically of “the booth of David”; this odd phrase can hardly refer to the temple (which was not built by David) but could refer to the “house of David,” the term “booth” signifying its weakness and temporariness until God sees fit to restore it “as in the days of old.” Possessing the remnant of Edom implies the conquest of neighboring lands instead of the Israelites themselves being invaded and overcome. What nations are called by God’s name? The answer seems to be the nations that are conquered by him (cf. 2 Sam. 12:28). So the passage envisages that God will bring about a change in Judah’s fortunes expressed in the categories of the time.

In the LXX the first part of the prophecy is much the same. The claim that the text in Acts is closer to that in 4Q174 (de Waard 1965: 24–26; Wilcox 1965: 49; Hanson 1983: 17) is rightly rejected (Bruce 1990: 340; Barrett 1994–1998: 726; Stowasser 2001: 48–50). Nevertheless, some of the changes cause Ådna (2000: 136) to conclude that the citation is not dependent on the LXX.

In the second part, however, the LXX diverges from the MT. The object of “possess” in the MT has now become the subject, the new object is understood to be “me” (Bauckham 1996: 161–62), i.e., “the Lord” (supplied as *ton kyrion* in Acts 15:17), and the verb has changed from “possess” to “seek,” a difference of one consonant in Hebrew (*yāraš/dāraš*). The remnant “of Edom” has become “the remainder of men,” probably through reading the Hebrew consonants differently: *ʿēdôm/ʿādām*. We can thus understand the LXX text as arising from a different version of the Hebrew text of Amos, with similar words being substituted for the original text. This type of change is known in rabbinic sources as *ʿal tiqrē*. Bauckham (1996: 160–61) and Ådna (2000: 131) follow earlier scholars in assuming that this is what is happening here, but Barrett (1994–1998: 728) is skeptical of the possibility (though he does not offer an alternative explanation).

Which version is more likely to be original, the MT (which is followed by the Targum) or the Hebrew presupposed by the LXX? Evans (1993c: 222–23) notes that “Edom” was often understood as Rome in the Targumim, and therefore it is possible (though beyond proof) that an original “Adam” was repointed by the Masoretes as “Edom” to reflect Jewish hopes at this time, and consequential changes were made to the rest of the text (“they may possess” replacing “they may seek”). Archer and Chirichigno (1983: 155), followed by Larkin (1995: 223n), propose that the MT is corrupt and should be amended, but there is no adequate reason for doing so (Jobes and Silva 2000: 194–95).

Some light may be shed on the situation by the fact that there are two allusions to the text in the Dead Sea Scrolls, where the prophecy is applied to the current situation of the sect. In CD-A VII, 12–18 we read,

When the two houses of Israel separated, Ephraim detached itself from Judah, and all the renegades were delivered up to the sword; but those who remained steadfast escaped to the land of the north. As he said, “I will deport the Sikkut of your King and the Kiyun of your images away from my tent to Damascus” [Amos 5:26–27]. The books of the law are the Sukkat of the King, as he said, “I will lift up the fallen Sukkat of David” [Amos 9:11]. The King is the assembly; and the plinths of the images and the Kiyun of the images are the books of the prophets, whose words Israel despised. (García Martínez 1996: 37–38).

It may be only coincidence that CD-A cites the same two texts from Amos that we find cited in Acts (7:43; 15:16–17). CD-A takes “Sikkut” in Amos 5 to refer to the Sukkat or tabernacles and then understands them as the book of the law. The “King” is understood as David in the light of Amos 9:11, but then the King is identified as the assembly or community itself. Once the Sikkut is understood as the books of the law, the Kiyun could easily be understood as the companion books of the prophets. Evans (1993b: 207) takes the passage to mean that “Amos 9:11 was fulfilled when the Essenes restored the correct interpretation of the Law.”

The other citation is in 4Q174 1 I, 10–13. Here we have a set of OT texts with a broadly messianic reference:

And “YHWH declares to you that he will build you a house. I will raise up your seed after you and establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be a father to him and he will be a son to me” [2 Sam. 7:12–14]. This refers to the “branch of David,” who will arise with the interpreter of the law who will rise up in Zion in the last days, as it is written, “I will raise up the hut of David which has fallen” [Amos 9:11]. This refers to the “hut of David which has fallen,” who will arise to save Israel. (García Martínez 1996: 136).

Here the messianic reference is maintained with the arising of “David” understood as the Messiah. Later rabbinic interpretation preserved this understanding in giving the name “Bar Naphle” (“Son of the fallen [tabernacle]”) to the Messiah (*b. Sanh.* 96b–97a). (However, Qumran also has “the interpreter of the law,” who is unknown to the early church, playing a role.) The Targum of Amos also interprets the passage in terms of the powerful restoration of the Davidic dynasty and empire (Evans 1993b: 207–8).

In the present context in Acts it seems that God is to restore the fallen dynasty of David and all that appertains to it, with the aim that the remainder of humankind will seek the Lord—that is, the nations over which God’s name is called. The prophecy, however, has an addition at the beginning that appears to reflect Jer. 12:15 LXX: “And it will be after I have cast them out *I shall return [epistrepsō]* and have mercy on them, and I shall make them dwell each in their inheritance and each in their own land.” “After these things” is a common enough phrase in prophecy (e.g., Joel 2:28 [3:1 LXX]; see commentary on Acts 2:17 above); here it may refer simply to the judgments described earlier in Amos (cf. Acts 7:42–43).

At the end of the citation James adds “known from of old,” signifying that what God does is in accordance with his predetermined purpose; the words resemble Isa. 45:21 LXX (*tis akousta epoiēsen tauta ap’ archēs*) and may be either a deliberate echo (Bauckham 1996: 164–65) or a coincidence (Barrett 1994–1998: 728). Dupont (1979: 145) notes that the rest of the passage is concerned with God’s activity as Savior, issuing his appeal to the ends of the earth, which fits in nicely with the theme of James’s speech.

The major discussion of the passage by Bauckham (1996: 156–70), closely followed by Ådna (2000: 126–42), makes the following points:

1. The avoidance of the use of *anastēsō* in Acts shows that the passage is not being interpreted of the resurrection of Jesus or of the restoration of the Davidic dynasty to the throne in the messianic rule of Jesus (Strauss 1995: 187–92), but rather of the restoration of a building: the temple of the messianic age (for *skēnē* in this sense, see Tob. 13:11 LXX [13:10 ET]). Bauckham argues that this could mean that God would build the eschatological temple through the agency of the Messiah. Here Bauckham differs from Barrett (1994–1998: 725–26), who suggests two possibilities: (a) the restoration of the kingdom is the appearing/resurrection of the Messiah, after which the way is open for Gentiles to enter the people of God; (b) the restoration of the kingdom is the conversion of Israel, only after which can the Gentiles enter. Barrett thinks that Luke would have

held the former view, but the latter may have been held by some groups in the church. Stowasser (2001: 54) argues that the use of *anorthoō* reflects 2 Sam. 7:13; that is, the Amos prophecy is linked to the Nathan prophecy, just as in 4Q174 1 I, 10–12.

2. “I shall rebuild its fallen parts” is omitted because this could refer to the broken walls of a town rather than a temple; likewise, “as in the days of old” is omitted because the new temple will in fact be better than the old one.

3. The treatment of Amos 9:12 would not be strange for an exegete familiar with both the MT and the LXX versions. It is not possible to decide whether the differences between the texts are the result of accidental misreading or of deliberate interpretation, but Jewish exegetes of the time would “have welcomed the exegetical potential of the LXX text ... as a legitimate way of reading the Hebrew text” (Bauckham 1996: 161).

4. The insertion of the object *ton kyrion* (“the Lord”) rather than the expected *me* (“me”) reflects influence from Zech. 8:22 LXX, which prophesies that “many peoples and many nations shall come to seek the face of the Lord Almighty in [the temple] in Jerusalem.”

5. The opening “after these things” (*meta tauta*), instead of the LXX’s “in that day” (*en tē hēmera ekeinē*), suggests that the fulfillment of this prophecy takes place after something else has happened: the turning away of God from judging Israel. Bauckham proposes that the phrase comes from Hos. 3:5, where the Israelites will “return” (*epistrephō* [used in Acts 15:19 of the Gentiles turning to God!]) and seek the Lord and David their king.

6. The “return” (*anastrepsō*) of the Lord reflects Jer. 12:15, which speaks of Yahweh’s return to his people after judging them and goes on to refer to the Gentiles being built in the midst of God’s people. A reference to Zech. 8:3 is possible but less likely. Hanson (1983: 85) notes that the LXX always uses *epistrephō* in this sense and concludes that a different Greek version is being used here.

7. The end of the citation includes words from Isa. 45:21, from yet another passage that refers to the nations drawing near to God and being saved.

8. All this makes it clear that the restored temple is in fact the Christian community. The hope of the Gentiles coming into the restored temple is widely attested in prophecy. But did this mean that they had to become Jews?

9. Finally, the phrase “all the nations over whom my name has been called” expresses God’s ownership of the peoples; it is used frequently of Israel as God’s special people (contrast Isa. 63:19, where the Gentiles are “those over whom your name has *not* been called”), and its use here indicates, remarkably, how the Gentiles are now understood as God’s people, without any mention of the need for them to become Jews: “the nations

qua Gentile nations belong to YHWH” (Bauckham 1996: 169). But this phrase is also used in James 2:7, probably with reference to Christian baptism; if so, Christian baptism suffices to recognize Gentiles as the people of God.

Opinions differ regarding the provenance of this citation. Barrett (1994–1998: 727–28) is typical of many scholars who hold that it was composed on the basis of the LXX by a Greek-speaking Christian and therefore cannot go back to James. Bauckham (1996: 182–84 [whose arguments evidently were unavailable to Barrett]) strongly disagrees and, in my opinion, has the better of the argument. Ådna (2000: 142–43) argues for the possibility that the citation is a Greek rendering of a Hebrew original independent of the LXX but, in my view, does not demonstrate this point sufficiently. The use of a collection of *testimonia* that included both this and the earlier citation of Amos in Acts 7 is defended by Stowasser (2001) on the grounds that both texts are cited in the Qumran texts and that there may be some signs of redaction of the quotation here at a pre-Lukan stage; the texts could well have been linked together by the catchword “tent” to describe judgment followed by restoration; the argument is delicate and, though falling short of proof, feasible.

The use of the citation establishes that “the Gentiles do not have to become Jews in order to join the eschatological people of God and to have access to God in the Temple of the messianic age” (Bauckham 1996: 178).