

AMOS 9:11-15

"THE MESSIAH AS THE RESTORER OF DAVID'S COLLAPSING DYNASTY"

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The Scofield Reference Bible stated that "dispensationally, this [text of Acts 15:13-18 which quotes Amos 9:11-12] is the most important passage in the NT."<sup>1</sup> It went on in that same context to argue:

The verses that follow in Amos describe the final ingathering of Israel, which the other prophets invariably connect with the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant.

On the other hand, O. T. Allis, the late titular Dean of Evangelical Old Testament professors, if I might make such a new appointment and title, in that same earlier twentieth century generation when the above statement was being made, announced a somewhat different conclusion about this passage. Allis taught:

That James declares expressly that Peter's experience at Caesarea, which he speaks of as God's visiting 'the Gentiles to take out of them a people for his name' was in accord with the burden of prophecy as a whole and quotes freely from Amos in proof of it.<sup>2</sup>

So which analysis is correct? Were these two interpreters of Acts 15 both sounding the correct interpretation about the meaning of this prophecy, while

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<sup>1</sup> Scofield Reference Bible, p. 1343, however when this same reference tool stated later on p. 1169 what were the pivotal chapters in prophecy as a whole, this text was not included, but Deut 28, 29, 30, Ps 2, and Dan 2 and 7 were mentioned instead.

<sup>2</sup> O. T. Allis, Prophecy and the Church, Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1945, p. 147.

taking opposite points of view, or was one interpreter or both wrong in their interpretations? Accordingly, one interpretation seemed to stress an exclusive Judean nationalistic sense found in the Davidic Covenant for a future rule and reign of Israel with its promise of a kingdom, a throne and a dynasty for David and the nation of Israel, while the other interpreter gave pretty much a solely spiritual interpretation that focused on the expansion of the Gentiles and the blessing that was to come on the New Testament Church. Both could not be correct, so which sense was the authoritative meaning intended by the prophet Amos and by the leader of the early Church, named James? And were the Old and New Testaments in agreement on the meaning of this text or was there a dual meaning that could be assigned to the same text? These are the questions that this text presents to us. To best answer these questions, we need to go to the text itself!

#### THE "FALLING HUT" OF DAVID -AMOS 9:11A

Amos had previously just completed the section of his prophecy on the five visions that were communicated to him, each of which began with the introductory formula: "Thus the LORD Yahweh showed me" (7:1, 4, 7; 8:1; 9:1), but the paragraph that begins with 9:11, however, did not claim that it too was a vision. To be sure, there are items in 9:11 and following verses that repeat some aspects of the topics raised in the previous five visions concerning the future of Israel and God's future kingdom reign, but in the main, the prophet Amos had majored, at least thus far in his prophecy found in his book, on the theme of the

judgment that would fall particularly on Israel. Despite its emphasis on judgment for the people of God yet interspersed among these judgment themes were also concepts of a future hope for Israel and the nations of the world. For example, Amos 5:14 held out the promise of the presence of the LORD, just as Amos 5:18-20 likewise focused on the coming final and great Day of the LORD. In fact, there were a good number of promises that were attached to "that [coming] day" in 3:14; 4:2; 8:3, 9, 11, 13 as distinguished from some of the prophet's previous contemporary emphasis, which dwelt on the blackness of the night and certainty on death and God's judgment for the sin of the people. Therefore, we can affirm that the theme of future hope was not completely missing from Amos' previous words, so we should not think it strange that a concept of a future hope would be found in this text in Amos 9:11-15 as some have wrongly concluded!

The "day of Yahweh," as a matter of fact, looked forward to a time when God would establish his future kingdom. Some have argued that the origins of that "day of the LORD" had originated in the pagan celebration in the Near East of the secular "New Year's festival," in which the ruler of the nation was annually again recognized as king and his covenant as king was renewed for the coming new year. But there is scant evidence, if any at all, for such a syncretistic joining of a pagan festival with the Biblical theology of the "Day of Yahweh" discussed in the Old Testament!

In the case of Amos' text, he began by focusing on the "falling/collapsing hut/booth of David," whose present condition as David's sukka, i.e., his "hut," or "booth," was the focus and subject of this prophecy. What had previously been called David's "house" (bayit) was now being described as a house that had been reduced to a "collapsing/falling booth/hut." The royal "house/dynasty" of David (2 Sam 7:5, 11), had fallen now into its current dilapidated condition that could be viewed as being in a deplorable, collapsing, and needful state of disrepair – David's "house" had become a "falling booth."

Nevertheless, note that Amos' prophecy was set for a divine rectifying of this condition, for "in that day" a total fulfillment of God's ancient promise would occur at the time of the second coming of our Lord (9:11a). It would not remain in such a deplorable condition, but the Lord himself would raise up that "hut" once again to be the "house/dynasty" of David.

What followed in this context, we must carefully observe, were three verbs, each of which had the first-person pronoun attached to each of the three verbs, which designated what one day come to pass with some of the features that our Lord had already promised long ago. Our Lord himself declared (by the four "I will's") that he would perform the work of raising up and repairing the dilapidated "tent/hut" of David as the task of restoring it to its former status as a "house" or a royal dynasty that God intended it to be. Indeed, it would be nothing less than the celebrated "dynasty" of David once again! This reference to a "booth of

David" or a "hut" is an obvious substitute for the majestic pre-Solomonic term, "House of David" (2 Sam 7:11). David's "house" (i.e., what pertains to his throne, dynasty and kingly line of descendants) had now become, in the interim in the prophet Amos' day, reduced to little more than a crumbling "hut" or falling-down "booth" that acted as a shelter of branches piled on a simple framework structure, such as was used by Israel during her days of wandering in the wilderness of during the feast of booths. In light of this sad and decrepit state of collapse, the Lord had now stepped in and promised that that awful state would now cease, for he would rectify that poor state by the very work of his own hands in that coming "Day of the Lord". The text read this way:

"I will raise up the fallen booth of David,  
I will repair (its) [feminine plural: "their"] breaches/broken walls;  
I will raise up (its) [masculine singular: "his"] ruins,  
I will build (it) (feminine singular: "her") as in the days of old." (Amos 9:11).

The Hebrew participle used here (of the "falling/collapsing" booth) emphasized, by its use of the Hebrew participle, its present or impending state of near collapse of awful disrepair. Accordingly, the "dynasty/house of David," our Lord taught, would temporarily suffer shame and reproach, but he also promised that he would raise it from its despicable situation to a fully restored condition, for he had promised with his word that he would complete raising it up again in that grand future "day of the Lord." On such a repair of that "house/booth of David"

hung the very promises God had made in earlier covenant of David's future rule and reign of the kingdom of God in 2 Samuel 7 and 1 Chronicles 17!

#### GOD'S RESTORATIVE WORK ON THE DAVID'S DISHEVELLED HUT -Amos 9:11b-d

Most interpreters fail to notice the distinctive personal pronoun suffixes on the words that follow in Amos 9:11b, c, and d, which we have already briefly referred to above. The theology of this passage will be mightily affected by a correct understanding of each of these suffixes, as can also be seen from the agreeable context that follows vv. 11-12!

C. F. Keil is certain that "the plural suffix ('breaches *thereof*,' pirsehem) can only be explained from the fact that sukkah, "booth," actually refers to the present condition of the kingdom of God, which in Israel was by this time divided into two kingdoms ("these kingdoms," ch. vi. 2)." <sup>3</sup> In other words, God would repair and wall-up the rent or separation that had come between the two tribes of the southern kingdom of Judah and Benjamin at that time which separated them from the ten northern tribes of Israel that had bolted from the unified nation of Israel ever since the post-Solomonic date of 931 B.C., under the rebellious leadership of Jeroboam I. The Lord would heal "their breaches! Thus, this note of a future reunification of the separated nation into one unified nation was sounded again in the sixth century as the prophet Ezekiel also clearly predicted the future union of the ten northern tribes of Israel with the two southern tribes of

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<sup>3</sup> C. F. Keil, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament: Minor Prophets, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954, I:330.

Judah and Benjamin in Ezekiel 37:15-28. But Amos, in the eighth century B.C., had already anticipated this reunification by his prediction for a long time prior to Ezekiel's promise, thus Amos was not alone in preaching this future action of reunification by our Lord.

The second suffix attached to a noun, a masculine suffix, ("his ruins," harisotayw) must refer to no one other being than to David himself, and not to the "hut," which would require a feminine pronoun for the matching antecedent. Even if it was antecedent to the word "breaches," it too would likewise require a feminine plural pronoun. Consequently, under the new coming of David (as the Messiah) the dilapidated hut of David would be raised from the ashes of destruction and disrepair to provide for God's sovereign rule and reign over the entire globe in that day of the Lord.

Accordingly, what had affected the nation of Israel, had also had an impact on the Davidic person himself. Thus, when these first two acts of correctly identifying the attached pronouns had been noticed, then a third clause with a third pronominal suffix of "rebuilding her" (benitiha) appeared. It could be identified as referring to the temple, as C. F. Keil contended, for banah in this connection meant "to finish building, to carry on, enlarge, and beautify the building."<sup>4</sup> However, the feminine singular pronominal suffix used here could better refer, of course, to the "falling hut/booth." But it is also worth noting,

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<sup>4</sup> C. F. Keil, *ibid.*, p 330.

especially in light of the important phrase that completes this clause, "as it was in days of old," for it is one of the keys to this passage, as it also pointed back to the promise contained in 2 Samuel 7:11, 12, 16, where God promised he would raise up David's seed after him, and give to him a "throne, dynasty/house, and kingdom" that would endure "forever." The resurrecting of David's dilapidated "booth" would involve raising up a kingdom, a seed, and a dynasty. In fact, v 12 added "in order that they might inherit the remnant, which in this case clearly was the people of God in Israel. The restoration of the Jewish people to their Messiah clearly was a part of God's plan for the coming kingdom and reign of God!

Therefore, what is decisively taught here is this: "David" and his "house," i.e., his dynasty and his Jewish people, called here the remnant, are indissolubly linked together as part of the total picture of what God would do "in that day," especially as it relates to his kingdom rule and reign.

#### THE REMNANT OF EDOM AND ALL THE NATIONS – AMOS 9:12

Amos's reference to "the remnant of Edom" seemed to some interpreters to be a most troublesome insertion in this prophecy. However, this allusion to "Edom" should not be viewed in a negative, retaliatory, or even in an interruptive way, as if it meant that there was a punishment to be visited on Edom as one of Israel's rivalries. On the contrary, this time the prophecy about "Edom" in Amos was meant to show that this nation, along with the other nations, would be brought under that coming rule and reign of David, who was soon to appear as

none-other than king Messiah. This would be part of the larger remnant of the Gentiles who would also share in the covenant promises made to King David.

It was no one less that the late Gerhard Hasel who demonstrated that the word “remnant” was used in Amos in a threefold manner: (1) “to refute the popular remnant expectation which claimed all of Israel was to be the [redeemed] remnant” (Amos 3:12; 4:1-3; 5:3; 6:9-10; 9:1-4). Rather, instead of the bleak descriptions of doom, with little hope for Israel, there was a core of the redeemed; (2) “to show there will indeed be a remnant from Israel” (Amos 5:4-6, 15) in that great future day located in eschatological time; and (3) “to include also the ‘remnant of Edom,’ along with the neighboring nations, who also would be recipients of the outstanding promises in the Davidic tradition” (Amos 9:12).<sup>5</sup>

Amos singled out the nation of Edom because of their persistent hostility to the people of God, similar to the role that the Amalekites had played in the earlier days of Israel (Exod 17:8ff; Deut 25:17-19), and who likewise opposed the kingdom of God most violently.

But even beyond these background statements, Edom’s representative role was stressed in the ep-exegetical note that appeared in v 12 – “and/even all the nations/Gentiles who are called by my name.” Therefore, the point of this passage is not about Edom coming under Israel’s military subjugation and conquest; instead, it is best understood to mean that Edom’s spiritual

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<sup>5</sup> Gerhard Hasel, The Remnant, Berrien Springs, MI, Andrews University, 1972, pp 393-94.

incorporation in the people of God was possible, along with the other Gentiles to form an enlarged kingdom of David, as the view that the prophet had in mind here! For, just as the ancient promise of God had been made to Abraham that the people of Israel would act as the channel for "all the families of the earth to be blessed by Abraham and his seed," so this passage agreed as it made the same point (Gen 12:3). But was this reading of the Hebrew text the most accurate, or had the translators of Amos 9:11-12 failed to detect a few important nuances?

WHICH TRANSLATION IS CORRECT? "POSSESSION OF THE REMNANT OF EDOM" OR "IN ORDER THAT THE REST OF MANKIND MAY SEEK THE LORD?" -Amos 9:12

The result of our Lord's restoring the kingdom of Israel and his raising up the dilapidated booth of David would be that Israel's military and political power would first of all be that the territory that God had originally promised to them as one that would be given back to them. The Hebrew text of v 12 is a linguistic continuation of v 11. To be sure, if the verb "to take possession of" (yirshu) was the original reading in Amos 9:12, then it was chosen by Amos because of an earlier statement in Balaam's prophecy of Numbers 24:17-18. There Balaam had predicted that a "star" and a "scepter" (i.e., symbols for the Messiah) would arise in Israel "to take possession (yerasha) of Edom .... while Israel [nevertheless] did valiantly." Accordingly, the Man of Promise, i.e., the Messiah, would arise from within Israel and he would exercise dominion over the nations, prophesied Balaam, for his kingdom would spread over all the earthly kingdoms, such as Moab, Sheth, Edom, Amalek, and Asshur. God would take from these middle

eastern nations, and here particularly the nation of Edom, as territory belonging to his own possession as he simultaneously extracted a believing “remnant” from all the nations of the world, including, as we note again now in the Amos passage, some of those from hostile Edom.

However, if the recently discovered alternative text from the Dead Sea Scrolls text found in Qumran of Amos 9:12 (4Q174) was the preferred text, according to this reading, then, Amos did not refer in the Amos passage to the Lord’s “possessing Edom,” but instead that text referred to a “seeking of the Lord by a remnant of humanity.” Thus, the object of “possess” in the MT has now become the subject of this phrase. The “remnant of Edom” has become “the remnant of humanity,” in which 'edom is now read as 'adam, which of course involves the same Hebrew consonants. How these two different readings could have come about is very plain once one views the ancient form of the Hebrew text. For, instead of reading Hebrew yod, which began the Hebrew word for “possessing,” and which rendered the root yrsh, “to possess,” it read an initial dalet, giving the root drsh, “to seek,” the difference in the orthography in the Hebrew script of that time was indeed very small, for it was only the length of the downstroke of the pre-Massoretic Hebrew letter yod that made the difference between the yod and the daleth! In that case, v 12 would now read: “in order that the remnant of humanity may seek the Lord, even all the nations/Gentiles that are called by my name.” In fact, that is exactly how James quoted this verse in Acts 15:16-17. Both points about Messiah’s future work are made in Scripture, of

course, but the DSS reading seems to be the authoritative rendering of Amos since the next phrase that follows this reading about the “remnant of humanity” is : “even all the nations that are called by my name” ((:12b). Moreover, that is how the Septuagint also read this text in Amos. Likewise, the New Testament reading in Acts 15:16-17 agreed with the DSS word to “seek,” instead of the Massoretic rendering of “possess.” Thus, we now have a Hebrew reading for Amos that agrees with the New Testament rendering of Amos, both making the same point.

Accordingly, there was a real hope in Amos for the coming Messiah beyond the present disaster of the fall of Samaria in 721 B.C. Amos concluded his prophecy in 9:11-15 by promising that God would rebuild David’s house/dynasty, which at the moment that Amos spoke, was currently in a dilapidated condition, one which could only be likened to a “collapsed hut” or “fallen booth of David” (sukkah David hannophelet). Thus, what normally, under better circumstances, would have been styled “the house (bet) of David” (2 Sam 7:5, 11; 1 Kgs 11:38; Isa 7:2, 13), i.e., David’s dynasty, was at that time until the coming future, in a tragic state of disrepair with “breaches” or “ruins” about it. The Hebrew active participle (hannophelet) stressed either its present state of collapsing, or that it already was in the process of “falling” into ruin, and about to fall down. Thus, the dynasty of David would suffer, but thanks be to God, he would bring it back from its deterioration, for God himself had promised that this house of David was an eternal house.

Under a new, but coming David, Messiah himself declared that he would rebuild David's dynasty "as it was in the days of old," a phrase that clearly pointed back to the antecedent theology of 2 Samuel 7:11-12, 16. Moreover, the pronouncement of 2 Samuel 7:19, where David was sure that what God had given to him in the Davidic Covenant was nothing less than "a charter/law/instruction for all humanity" (torat ha'adam). Amos seems to repeat the substance of that same promise in Amos 9:12 by saying: "in order that the remnant of humanity (she'erit 'adam) may seek the Lord, even all the nations that are called by my name."<sup>6</sup>

The usage of the phrase "called by my name" in the Old Testament always placed each of the objects so designated under divine ownership. What God named, he thereby owned and ruled over, whether it was a city (2 Sam 12:28; Jer 25:29; Dan 9:18-19), or a man or a woman (Isa 4:1; Jer 14:9; 15:16; 2 Chron 7:14). Thus, when Israel walked by faith, Moses promised "All the peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the LORD" (Deut 28:10). But when they refused to believe, they were "like those who [were] not called by your [God's] name" (Isa 63:19). This phrase is very much like Joel 2:32 [Heb. 3:5]; "All who call upon the name of the LORD."<sup>7</sup>

#### FUTURE AGRICULTURAL BLESSING, RETURN, AND REPOSSESSION OF THE LAND - Amos 9:13-15

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<sup>6</sup> For further elaboration, see Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "The Davidic Promise and the Inclusion of the Gentiles (Amos 9:11-15 and Acts 15:13-18: A Test Passage for Theological Systems," JETS 20(1977):97-111.

<sup>7</sup> For a full study of this phrase and concept, see Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "Name," in Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, ed. M. C. Tenney, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975, vol 4:360-70.

Two images of agricultural blessing are given in Amos 9:13 – (1) the reaper (gotser) will be overtaken by the one plowing (horesh) the ground, and (2) the one sowing seed (moshek hazara') would overlap the one treading grapes. These agricultural hyperboles mentioned here emphasize the enormous bounty that the anticipated harvest would produce, so that the farmers of that day would hardly be finished one aspect of harvesting the crops from the previous season, when the time for sowing the next season's crops would have overtaken them. Accordingly, the promise was that the time was coming when the earth would be so fertile and so abundant in its production that there would be no time elapsing between harvesting from one season's super abundance of crops and the season for planting of the seed for the next season!

Thus, the enormity of the grape harvest would be so plentiful, to use another hyperbole, that it would be as though the mountains and hills of the vineyards were dripping and flowing over the hillsides with new wine (13b). Israel would be up to their necks, so to speak, with grape juice and wine!

This message from God ends with the fulfillment of the restoration promised in Deuteronomy 30:3-5, when Israel would return to the land of Canaan to repossess their ancient land (14a). In that future day, Israel will rebuild her ruined cities in a land that apparently will have been previously razed by war. Nevertheless, Israel will live in their cities once again. They will plant vineyards and

drink its wine. They will make gardens and eat from its produce. The blessing of God will be poured out on them as never before!

Just as Israel will plant gardens, so God will replant the people of Israel in their own land once more, but what is different about this time is that Israel will never again be later uprooted and dispossessed out of the land God had originally given to them (15b-c). There would be no more exiles taken into foreign countries and no more serving as captives to one or another foreign government. Israel would be once more at home, never to be dispossessed of the gift that had been given to his people in this land.

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