

5. AMOS

760-750 BC

Amos was a shepherd, called to be a prophet. From Judah, he nevertheless ministered to Israel. He vigorously spoke out for God's justice and righteousness. God would uproot his chosen people at the hands of a pagan nation. Even so, if they would repent, there was hope that God would have mercy on the remnant. In fact, the Lord had a glorious future for his people, beyond the impending judgment. The house of David would again rule over Israel, and Israel would once more be secure in the promised land, feasting on wine and fruit.

Amos also issues judgments on Israel's neighbors: Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, and Moab. "The Lord roars from Zion and thunders from Jerusalem" (Amos 1:2). Zion is the place of his throne and his voice roars like thunder in judgment. But Israel is also condemned for their sin. He prophesies the destruction of the kingdom of Israel and the scattering of her people: "For I will give the command, and I will shake the people of Israel among all the nations as grain is shaken in a sieve, and not a pebble will reach the ground" (Amos 9:9). No sparrow falls to the ground apart from the will of our Father. Israel was destroyed by the Assyrians and Judah by the Babylonians and Israel has been shaken in the sieve of the nations ever since. All the sinners will die, but the good seed (the elect) will not fall to the ground. The Jewish nation is destroyed, but the survivors maintain their Jewish identity and don't get absorbed by the nations among whom they live.

**God will restore the fortunes of his people Israel
and of David's kingdom**

Amos 9:11-15

Having prophesied the destruction of Israel in the earlier part of this chapter, Amos now finishes his prophecies with a declaration about the restoration of Israel to the promised land. God will restore the fortunes of Israel and plant them on their land. It is the time when the “booth of David,” the fallen hut that remained, would be restored to its former glory. Israel had rejected the family of David, having chosen Jeroboam as their king, but the restored nation would be united and ruled over by the Messiah, a descendant of David.

After Israel’s defeat by the Assyrians in 722 BC and Judah’s defeat by the Babylonians in 586 BC, the Jews who returned were finally dispersed from Judah and Jerusalem in 70 AD and have lived in many countries throughout the world ever since.

During the past one hundred years, millions of Jews have returned to the land of Israel and now constitute 75% of the population of 9 million (2019). They continue to return from all the continents of the world fulfilling the prophecies: “I will bring my people Israel back from exile” (vs. 14) and “I will plant Israel in their own land” (vs. 15).

Three thousand years after King David lived, there are many Jews alive today who claim to be his descendants, but they don’t have evidence to prove it. The Gospel writers give us two genealogies tracing Jesus’ genealogy back to David so that when he returns, there will be no argument about his credentials. He will be recognized as the awaited Son of David and the Son of God.

‘In that day’ (vs 11) refers to the last days when the Messiah will return. The sinful kingdom of Israel has been destroyed and cleansed of its idolatry by being dispersed among the nations. The fallen kingdom of David will be restored by the Messiah, a descendant of David, as emphasized in the Gospel accounts of Jesus’ birth. The wise men asked, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?” Gabriel told Mary that God would give her child the throne of his ancestor David and that he would reign over the house of Jacob forever. Jesus is presently seated on the Father’s heavenly throne which is to be differentiated from David’s earthly throne. The kingdom will be restored, never to be uprooted again. David is mentioned over fifty times in the New Testament, but a connection is

never made between David and the Church, so God's covenant with David should not be spiritualized. Prophecies connect the Messiah and Israel and the Messianic kingdom which Jesus commonly referred to as the 'Kingdom of God'. At Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the crowd shouted, "Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!" At that time the mountains will drip sweet wine as the Lord restores the fortunes of Israel. He will plant them in their land never again to be uprooted. As John Walvoord said, the spiritualization of OT prophecies is exegetical fraud.

The nation of Israel was to be rebuilt *as in the days of old*. Think now of the Messianic kingdom, with the Messiah as king in David's place, the temple rebuilt, and the surrounding nations that David conquered reincorporated into greater Israel. The Lord will restore David's fallen booth, *so that* Israel, as the unique people of the Messiah, will *possess* the remnant of their enemy Edom, and all the nations over whom the Lord's name had been called. This denotes ownership and refers to the Gaza Strip, Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria which were included in the promise to Abram of all the land from the river of Egypt to the great River Euphrates (Gen 15:19). Balaam also prophesied that Israel, in Messianic times, would possess Edom and Moab (Num 24:17).

That is the natural interpretation of these verses. Amos was not talking about all the nations of the world and he wasn't talking about Gentiles being incorporated into the Church. His context is future Messianic times when the throne of David is restored.

However, the Septuagint translation of Amos 9:12 has several differences, and it is the Septuagint translation that James quoted in Acts 15:17.

The Jerusalem Council convened around 48 AD to discuss whether Gentile converts needed to be circumcised, as some Jewish members of the Jerusalem church were advocating. James quoted this passage from Amos in support of them being accepted. He quotes from the Septuagint saying that the Lord will restore the booth of David as in days of old so that the rest of mankind might seek the Lord, that is, all the Gentiles over whom his name has been invoked (Acts 15:16-17). Instead of mentioning Edom, there is a reference to Adam (mankind), and instead of Israel inheriting certain nations, these nations are seeking the Lord.

James quotes the verse with one thing in mind, to support the acceptance of Gentiles into the Church. He supports the proposal made by Peter, Paul, and Barnabas that Gentile believers should be accepted without being circumcised or made to submit to the law of Moses. James believed that his half-brother Jesus was the Messiah and that he would restore the royal line of David. He believed along with Peter that Gentile converts would be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus and so be brought into his kingdom. The Amos text confirms that Gentiles will seek the Lord and have the Lord's name invoked over them, so he supported the motion that they should be accepted into the Church without having to be circumcised or subject to Moses' law. He was acknowledging that God was choosing Gentiles to be part of the Church.

The significance of Edom

Edom is the nation that descended from Esau, whose twin-brother Jacob was deprived of his birthright, and kingship over Abraham's descendants. Abraham's descendants are the chosen people, but the chosen line passes through Isaac, in preference to Ishmael, and Jacob (also known as Israel), in preference to Esau. The original Arabs trace their ancestry to Ishmael and Esau in contrast to the Jews who descended from Isaac and Jacob, creating an eternal rivalry. The hatred that Arab Muslims hold against the Jews is hereditary, because they know the biblical history of how the younger son, Jacob, won the birthright and the paternal blessing.

Here are the events that led to this situation.

1. Isaac's wife Rebekah was pregnant with twins and she inquired of the Lord about them. The Lord told her that two nations were in her womb. They would be divided and the older would serve the younger. So, Rebekah loved Jacob.
2. One day when Jacob was cooking, Esau came home exhausted from a hunting trip and requested some of Jacob's stew. Jacob, perceptive of his brother's character, made him swear that he would give him his birthright as the oldest son. Esau did so, he 'despised his birthright,' disregarding its significance.

3. Jacob is listed among the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11, whereas Esau is described as sexually godless (Heb 12:16). He sold his birthright for a single meal (Gen 25:29-34).
4. Rebekah, having been told by God that the younger Jacob would be superior to Esau, and being further alienated from Esau when he married two Hittite women, conspired to help Jacob win the paternal blessing, the right of possession and privilege (Gen 27:1-40).
5. After losing the blessing by Jacob's deception, Esau hated him and sought to kill him, and that sentiment remains with his descendants to this day.

If the story does not seem fair to us, Paul reminds us that it has to do with God's sovereignty, and his purpose in election (Rom 9:13). Before the twins had done anything, either good or bad, Rebekah was told that the older would serve the younger. In Malachi, the Lord said "I have loved Jacob but Esau I have hated," a rather harsh way of expressing God's preference for Jacob over Esau. Whatever Esau's descendants build, God will tear down. They will be called "the Wicked Land" and "a people always under the wrath of the Lord" (Mal 1:2-4). This history illustrates why Muslims hate the Jews and why they will do all possible to conquer Jerusalem and show that Allah is greater and Islam is the true religion.

Despite being twin brothers, Israel had the privilege of God's favor in the history of salvation and the bearer of the Messiah, while Esau was rejected.

The Septuagint

The Alexandrian Codex is a fifth-century Christian manuscript of the Greek Bible, containing the majority of the Greek Old Testament (the Septuagint) and the Greek New Testament. The Septuagint was translated in the third century B.C. and the Jews made use of it long before the Christian era. In the time of Christ, it was recognized as a legitimate text, being employed in Palestine by the rabbis. By contrast, the Leningrad Codex is the oldest

complete manuscript of the Hebrew Bible, dating to around 1008-1010 A.D. Manuscripts earlier than the 13th century are rare.

Jesus and the apostles mostly used the Septuagint when quoting from the OT, and the early church fathers had a high view of it as being the true word of God.