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The Implications of a Post-Supersessionist Hermeneutic Applied to James's Use of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18

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Contents

ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations in this work follow the guidelines of *The SBL Handbook of Style for Biblical Studies and Related Disciplines*. 2nd ed. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014. Where a standard abbreviation was not available, one conforming to the spirit of the SBL Handbook is provided.

Significant Terms

BCE	Before the Common Era
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
NPP	New Perspective on Paul

Anthologies/Compilations

NPNF[1]	*The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 1*. Edited by Philip Schaff. 1886– 1889. 14 vols. Repr., Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994.

Reference Works

AYBD	*Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*. Edited by David Noelle Freedman, Gary A. Herion, David F. Graf, and John David Pleins. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
BDAG	*Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3rd ed. Edited by Walter Bauer, Frederick W. Danker, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000 (Bauer-Danker-Arndt-Gingrich).
EDNT	*Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*. Edited by Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider. 3 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990–1993.
EDBT	*Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*. Edited by Walter A. Elwell. 2nd ed. Paternoster, 2001.
LBD	*The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Edited by John D. Barry, David Bomar, Derek R. Brown, Rachel Klippenstein, Douglas Mangum, Carrie Sinclair Wolcott, Lazarus Wentz, Elliot Ritzema, and Wendy Widder. Bellingham: Lexham, 2016.
NDT	*New Dictionary of Theology: Historical and Systematic*. Edited by Martin Davie, Timothy Grass, Stephen R. Holmes, John McDowell, and T. A. Noble. 2nd ed. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2016.
NIDNTT	*New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*. Edited by Colin Brown. 4 vols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975–1978.
PL	*Patrologia Latina*. Edited by Jaques-Paul Migne. 217 vols. Paris 1844–1864
TDNT	*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–1976.

Journals

ATJ	*Ashland Theological Journal*
BECNT	Baker Evangelical Commentary on the New Testament
BBR	*Bulletin for Biblical Research*

BSac	Bibliotheca Sacra
BZAW	Beihefre zur Zeitschrift fur die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBQ	Catholic Bible Quarterly
CC	Cross Currents
EuroJTh	European Journal of Theology
HS	*Hebrew Studies*
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
Herm	*Hermathena*
IJST	International Journal of Systematic Theology
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JETS	Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JJMJS	*Journal of the Jesus Movement in the Jewish Setting*
JSQ	*Jewish Studies Quarterly*
JTS	Journal of Theological Studies
MC	Modern Churchman
MSJ	The Master's Seminary Journal
NovT	Novum Testamentum
RevExp	*Review and Expositor*
SBLSP	Seminary of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers
SCJR	Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations
SVTQ	*St. Vladimirs Seminary Quarterly*
VT	Vetus Testamentum
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WLQ	Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

Monograph/Commentary Series

AB	Anchor Bible
AYB	*Anchor Yale Bible*
BKC	The Bible Knowledge Commentary
BTNT	Biblical Theology of the New Testament
CCEWB	Commentary Critical and Expository of the Whole Bible
DJCR	Dictionary of Jewish-Christian Relations
HolBD	Holman Bible Dictionary
IB	Interpreter's Bible
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IVPBBC	IVP Bible Background Commentary
IVPNTC	IVP New Testament Commentary Series
LHBOTS	The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
NAC	New American Commentary
NCBC	New Cambridge Bible Commentary
NIB	*New Interpreters Bible*
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament

NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentary
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WW	Word and World

English Bible Translations

NASB	New American Standard Bible, 1998
NIV	New International Version Bible

ABSTRACT

The Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 marks one of the most critical moments in the life and development of the New Testament church as James set forth a scriptural response to the debate surrounding Gentile inclusion into the kingdom of God. The importance of James's response is encapsulated in his appellation and adaptation of Amos 9:11–12 which both brought closure to the Council's debate and clarified the identity and mission of the New Testament community. It is of note, however, that James did not directly quote Amos 9:11–12 but instead adapted its structure so that, in agreement with that set forth by Amos, the covenantal promises of renewal for the remnant of Israel were respected while also opening the door to Gentile participation in those covenantal privileges. James's declaration affirmed God's commitment to ethnic Israel while also defining the identity and mission of the church, which was to be inclusive of all peoples. The interpretation of James's appropriation of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18 will be most properly understood then, only when consideration is given to his Jewish mindset and perspective, as well as the variations found between the Septuagint (LXX) and Masoretic Text (MT).

The detailed examination of James's use of Amos 9:11–12, which demonstrates both a level of dependence on and differentiation from the LXX, reveals that there are textual and conceptual connections within the text which are critical to its interpretation, such as the affirmation that the Gentiles (*ethne*) are God's "people" (*λαόν*) (see Acts 15:14) "called by God's name" (Acts 15:17). The eschatological promise of Amos 9:11–12 which points to a future point in time in which the "tent of David" will be reconstructed, also indicates that there is a future hope for the nations (or Gentiles) "called by my name." Amos's declaration contributes to the theological unity and diversity of the prophetic corpus concerning the nations, which James

refers to more generally in terms of mankind (*anthropoi*). Amos prophetically declares, and James theologically affirms that Edom, which was the symbol of all the nations who had stood against God, would experience his future blessings. From the days of the patriarchs forward, it was clear that Edom was to play an essential role in the plans and purposes of God and the nation of Israel. Yet it is here where a level of tension emerges for some theologians concerning the inclusion of the Gentiles into God's redemptive plan and the church in relation to God's commitments to the faithful remnant of Israel. The canonical evidence, however, makes clear that the renewal of the covenant and the restoration of "David's fallen tent" would give dawn to the messianic era in which his eternal blessings would be experienced by both Israel and the nations.

As such, the parameters for describing the identity and relationship of the church and Israel in this age are most appropriately defined in terms of James's use of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18, which, when exhaustively analyzed, affirm, and undergird the premise of post-supersessionism, both resolving the exilic state of God's people and the place of the Gentiles in his plan. This argument will be supported through (1) the analysis and identification of the nature of James's use of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18; (2) the contextual background of both the prophetic oracle and the Jerusalem Council; (3) an examination of the Jewish use and interpretation of Amos 9:11–12; (4) comparison of the LXX, MT, and Qumran citations; and (5) the textual, interpretive, and theological analysis of James's use of Amos. In this analytical and interpretive process, special attention will be given to (1) Amos's general context, structure, and theological motifs; (2) the theological themes of Edom, the remnant, and the nations, within the prophetic corpus; and (3) the supersessionist and post-supersessionist constructs, towards the

express purpose of outlining and analyzing the implications of Amos 9:11–12 on the decisions made during the Jerusalem Council as well as the future post-supersessionist perspective.

Key concepts: Amos 9, Acts 15, Jerusalem Council, nations, remnant, Edom, Gentiles, Israel, progressive dispensationalism, covenant theology, supersessionism, and post-supersessionism.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Reasons for the Investigation

The New Testament (NT) church, with its local ministry and global mandate, exists to glorify the name of the Father through the teaching of biblical doctrine (Acts 2:42), fellowship among believers (Rom 12:10), prayer (Phil 4:6–7) and the proclamation of the Gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth (Matt 28:18–20; Acts 1:8).[1] These fundamental truths not only provide structure but purpose for both the local and universal church. The expression of these truths may vary from one congregation to another yet the essence of each provide unity within the living and functional embodiment of the kingdom of God. The role, function and mission of the church are clearly set forth by God throughout the canonical framework of the NT.[2]

Much in the same way, the Old Testament (OT) provides a clear set of parameters for understanding the role and function of God's chosen people, the nation of Israel. From the time of Abraham forward, the story of God's promise and provision for his nation stood as the center piece to the development of both redemptive and human history. Through the descendants of Abraham God promised to make a great nation through which he would bless the nations of the earth (Gen 12:1–3) and the prophets of old record the progressive fulfillment of that very promise. The nation of Israel was to be different from all others as they were to be a people set apart for the purposes of their Lord and worship of their Creator.[3] It was to be through Israel that God would providentially work in forming a "community of peoples" (Gen 28:3) who would be his own. God promised that of all the nations of the earth, Israel would be his "treasured

[1] Unless otherwise noted, all scriptural references are from the *New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

[2] Edward C. Dewick, "Church: Its Office and Function," MC 40 (1950): 314–15.

[3] Warren Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: The Complete Old Testament in One Volume*, 2nd ed. (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2007), 1036.

possession" … "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exod 19:5–6). The length and breadth of the OT records the unfolding development of this very promise. Interestingly, however, the NT articulates a promise for the church which echoes the covenantal promises of God to Israel: "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Pet 2:9).

Even with all that is clearly set forth in the OT concerning the nation of Israel, as well as that articulated in the NT concerning the role and function of the church, there has emerged an impassioned debate over the role, relationship, and function of the two in this age.[4] Scripture demonstrates that in the OT Israel had a special place within the redemptive plan of God. The canon centers on the story of redemption which revolves around God's dealing with his chosen nation in the OT and the church in the NT. Yet the question that exists centers on examining the relationship, role, and place of Israel and the church to determine if the two are to be viewed, both exegetically and theologically, as an either–or situation, or if God has provided a place for both within the development of redemptive history in this age.

The question of Israel's role and position in relation to the church is an important one given its soteriological, ecclesiological, missiological and eschatological implications. It is also important given that it leads to a biblical-theological response to questions concerning how Israel and the church are to interact, what standing each will have before God in the end times, and what distinctions exist between God's relationship with Israel and the church. There is a wide array of biblical passages which answer these questions yet given the varying hermeneutic

[4] For a detailed treatment of the different perspectives and arguments at the heart of this debate, see Chad Brand et al., *Perspectives on Israel and the Church: 4 Views* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2015).

frameworks and distinct presuppositions which may be applied to the process, differing opinions have emerged concerning their interpretation and subsequent application.

Articulation of Thesis

Whereas the breadth of the canon will be used in this research, focus will be placed upon describing the identity and relationship of the church and Israel in this age in terms of James's use of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18, which, when exhaustively analyzed, affirm, and undergird the premise of post-supersessionism, both resolving the exilic state of God's people and the place of the Gentiles in his plan. Detailed analysis of both Amos 9:11–12 and Acts 15:16–18 will be required, yet prior to doing so it is necessary to establish the investigatory framework within which this research will develop, including (1) an analysis of the hermeneutic frameworks of supersessionism and post-supersessionism, which encapsulate the primary opposing views surrounding the role and relationship of the church and Israel in this age; (2) the parameters of debate; (3) the level of importance surrounding these perspectives; and (4) the establishment of specific biblical, theological, and practical questions. Once these areas have been examined it will then be possible to move towards a defense of the post-supersessionist reading and interpretation of Acts 15:16–18 through (1) the analysis and identification of the nature of James's use of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18; (2) the contextual background of both the prophetic oracle and the Jerusalem Council; (3) an examination of the Jewish use and interpretation of Amos 9:11–12; (4) comparison of the LXX, MT, and Qumran citations; and (5) the textual, interpretive, and theological analysis of James's use of Amos. In this analytical and interpretive process, special attention will be given to (1) Amos's general context, structure, and theological motifs; (2) the theological themes of Edom, the remnant, and the nations, within the prophetic corpus; and (3) the supersessionist and post-supersessionist constructs, towards the

express purpose of outlining and analyzing the implications of Amos 9:11–12 on the decisions made during the Jerusalem Council as well as the future post-supersessionist perspective.

Initially it is important to define and apply theological parameters, which will be essential to correctly interpreting the biblical text within an accurate scope of time and culture. For the purposes of this investigation, this requires analysis into the distinction between the supersessionist and post-supersessionist perspectives. Even the most superficial exploration into these structures quickly reveals a vast array of opinions and perspectives, and as such it is essential to consider what each means for the individual interpreter and how they might be demonstrated in the contemporary context.

Investigatory Framework and Methodology

The opposing views concerning the role and relationship of Israel and the church in this age are best defined by the antithetical belief structures and hermeneutic frameworks of supersessionism and post-supersessionism. In general terms, supersessionism purports the need to read and interpret the biblical text assuming that the church has replaced, displaced, or superseded "ethnocultural Israel with the multiethnic followers of Jesus the Jewish *Christos*, that is, with the universal "church".[5] The supersessionist holds to the idea and belief that "the church has replaced Israel in the divine purposes and has inherited all that was positive in Israel's tradition."[6] The post-supersessionist, in contrast, "does not think that God's covenant with the Jewish people has been made obsolete or that the church has replaced Israel as God's people."[7]

[5] Ralph J. Korner, "Post-Supersessionism: Introduction, Terminology, Theology," *Religions* 13 (2022): 1195.

[6] Terence L. Donaldson, "Supersessionism and Early Christian Self-Definition," *Journal of the Jesus Movement in Its Jewish Setting* 3 (2016): 2.

[7] Brian J. Tucker, *Reading 1 Corinthians* (Eugene: Cascade, 2017), 7.

A post-supersessionist hermeneutic examines the biblical text towards the goal of determining how it "serves theologically, ideologically, socially, culturally, and/or politically to emplace Jews and Gentiles, who are followers of the Jewish Christos/Messiah, into God's eternal covenant with Israel."[8]

The Hermeneutic Frameworks of Supersessionism and Post-Supersessionism

Supersessionism, in its most extreme posture, holds to the idea that the Jewish people are no longer to be considered God's chosen people, generally referred to as *replacement theology*. The term "supersessionism" comes from the Latin words: *super* ("on" or "upon") and *sedere* ("to sit") and points towards the idea of "one person sitting on another's chair, displacing the latter."[9] As Richard Kendall Soulen explains, "to supersede means to take the place of someone or something, while to be superseded means to be set aside as useless or obsolete in favour of someone or something that is regarded as superior."[10] As such the supersessionist perspective "describes a situation where one entity, by virtue of its supposed superiority, comes to occupy a position that previously belonged to another, the displaced group becoming outmoded or obsolete in the process."[11] As this applies to the discussion of the role and relationship between Israel and the church, "promises and covenants that were made with the nation of Israel … now allegedly belong to another group that is not national Israel."[12] This idea of replacement or fulfillment theology teaches that the church is the replacement for Israel and that the many

[8] Korner, "Post-Supersessionism," 1195.

[9] Clark M. Williamson, *A Guest in the House of Israel: Post-Holocaust Church Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 268.

[10] Richard Kendall Soulen, "Supersessionism," DJCR, 413.

[11] Donaldson, "Supersessionism," 6.

[12] Michael Vlach, *Has the Church Replaced Israel?* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2010), 10.

promises made to the nation in the Bible are fulfilled in the Christian church. In this light, what is referred to in Scripture concerning the blessing and restoration of Israel are to be spiritualized into promises of God's blessing for the church.

Supersessionism is not a new perspective, yet it has been within the realms of contemporary theological debate that the term has been used to describe "the traditional Christian belief that since Christ's coming, the church has taken the place of the Jewish people as God's chosen community."[13] It is a premise built upon the perspective that there is a discontinuity between the OT and NT, thus leading to the conclusion that God's covenantal promises to the faithful remnant of Israel are no longer valid in this age.

Supersessionists build their argument on the interpretation of certain passages, which when woven together, provide an argument for the assertion that the church has superseded Israel in the plan of redemptive history. Yet it is necessary to go beyond the resulting argument and perspective and understand how and why supersessionists interpret Scripture towards this conclusion. The answer is found, according to Michael Vlach, in three fundamental aspects of the supersessionist hermeneutic framework: "(1) belief in the interpretive priority of the NT over the OT, (2) belief in nonliteral fulfillments of OT texts regarding Israel and (3) belief that national Israel is a type of the NT church."[14] As such, when read from the supersessionist perspective, removed from its immediate context, Romans 9:6, for example, is understood to place emphasis on the distinction between two Israels, one being those referenced in Romans 9:1-5 (ethnic Jews) and the other being 'true Israel' or the gathering of Jews and Gentiles into what is recognized as the church (Rom 9:24). The supersessionist argues that Paul is stipulating

[13] Soulen, "Supersessionism," 413.

[14] Vlach, *Has the Church*, 79.

that the church is the true, spiritual Israel, replacing national or ethnic Israel. Further, in Galatians 3:16, Paul is understood to teach that Abraham's covenant is fulfilled in and by Christ as he is the promised seed. This truth is interpreted as replacing the OT premise that the twelve tribes of Israel are the seed of Abraham and, as such, leads to the abrogation of the role of Israel. In the simplest of terms, supersessionism provides a theological perspective and posture that purports the premise that the church has superseded or replaced the nation of Israel in God's redemptive plan. As a hermeneutic framework, supersessionists read and interpret the Bible through a filter that views the promises of God to Israel as having been transferred to the NT church.

On the other side of the interpretive and theological debate are those who adhere to the premise of post-supersessionism, which stipulates and affirms the "present validity of God's covenant with Israel as a coherent and indispensable part of the larger body of Christian teaching."[15] Post-supersessionists reject any teaching which points towards the abrogation of God's covenant with the Jewish people. Both as a theological concept and hermeneutic framework, post-supersessionism "represents the most significant development in Christian teaching on the Jewish people since the second and third centuries," moving the church away from its traditional supersessionist framework.[16]

Post-supersessionism reads and interprets the same passages previously mentioned (Rom 9:6; Gal 3:16) yet concludes, quite differently than the supersessionist, that God has a role and a function for both Israel and the church in this age. Romans 9:6, examined from within the post-supersessionist framework, is understood to signal that Paul both indicates his love for Israel yet

[15] Soulen, "Supersessionism," 350.

[16] Vlach, *Has the Church*, 79.

recognizes their unbelieving condition. God's promises, while made to Israel, are not to be understood as an undated voucher to be redeemed in the future. Rather Paul argues that not all of Abraham's children would inherit his promises (Rom 9:6–8). Paul uses the term "Israel" to reference both national and true Israel, that remnant which will be saved (Rom 9:6). For the post-supersessionist, there is no indication that the church has replaced Israel. On the contrary, within the true kingdom, there will be both saved Jews and Gentiles. Also considering anew Galatians 3:16, the post-supersessionist perspective recognizes Paul's teaching that Abraham's covenant is fulfilled in and by Christ but rejects any imposition onto the passage that would indicate the obsolescence of God's promises to the twelve tribes of Israel.

The Parameters of the Debate over Supersessionism and Post-Supersessionism

Matters of soteriology and eschatology find themselves at the heart of most contemporary theological debates. This is never truer than when discussing the issue of the role and relationship of Israel and the church. Whether arguing as a dispensationalist or covenantal theologian, the issue of the relationship between Israel and the church is a central theme of impassioned debate. At the heart of this conflict is the question of the NT church having replaced, displaced, or fulfilled the role and function of national Israel as the people of God. If arguing in favor of this replacement or supersessionist perspective, then additional questions emerge about how this effects national Israel. If, however, the interpreter refutes the premise that the church has replaced Israel, the question emerges over the relationship that exists between the two as well as the role of each in this eschatological age.

The concept of replacement theology, or perhaps better stated, the title *replacement*, has been a topic of debate given its negative connotation, especially for those who approach this topic from the perspective of fulfillment or continuation rather than the either–or scenario which

emerges between supersessionism and post-supersessionism. Steve Lehrer, for example, rejects the use of the term "replacement theology" based on his belief that the church did not replace but rather fulfilled the role of national Israel, the true people of God.[17] Others, such as Marten Woudstra, address this aspect of the controversy, affirming the acceptability of both replacement and continuation, stating that "the question whether it is more proper to speak of a replacement of the Jews by the Christian church or of an extension (continuation) of the OT people of God into that of the NT church is variously answered."[18] For the purposes of this investigation the terms replacement theology and supersessionism are viewed as synonymous in nature, yet for clarity of argument and perspective, emphasis will be placed on supersessionism.

Given that post-supersessionism is in many ways a response to the hermeneutic framework and impact of supersessionism, the identification of the points of debate between the two may be logically and systematically examined according to the beliefs which drive the supersessionist narrative.[19] One of the principal points of debate centers on the question of the continuity and/or discontinuity between the OT and NT. The supersessionist perspective places interpretive priority upon the NT over the OT. Thus, in order to understand the prophetic and eschatological constructs of the OT, the interpreter is to place priority upon the meaning and message of the NT.[20] The importance of this premise comes into focus when it is understood that this interpretive priority opens the door to the idea that the NT writers occasionally changed or

[17] Steve Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered* (N.p.: Steve Lehrer, 2006), 203.

[18] Marten H. Woudstra, "Israel and the Church: A Case for Continuity," in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship between the Old and New Testaments: Essays in Honor of S. Lewis Johnson Jr*., ed. Johnson S. Lewis and John S. Feinberg (Wheaton: Crossway, 1988), 237.

[19] See Vlach, *Has the Church*, 79, in which the three fundamental aspects of the supersessionist belief system are explained: "(1) belief in the interpretive priority of the NT over the OT, (2) belief in nonliteral fulfillments of OT texts regarding Israel and (3) belief that national Israel is a type of the NT church."

[20] See Hans K. LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy: Principles of Prophetic Interpretation* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University, 1983), 3.

reinterpreted the original meaning of OT passages, including those that reference the restoration of national Israel. George Ladd was particularly articulate on this point, explaining that "the New Testament frequently interprets Old Testament prophecies in a way not suggested by the Old Testament context."[21] Ladd stood in the company of others such as A. A. Hoekema, who while addressing the use of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18 argued that Amos 9:11–12 "is being fulfilled right now, as Gentiles are being gathered into the community of God's people."[22] To him, this is a clear example of a figurative, nonliteral interpretation of an OT passage dealing with the restoration of Israel.

The stipulation that the NT signals that there are nonliteral fulfillments of OT prophetic oracles concerning Israel represents a second and equally crucial point of debate between the supersessionist and post-supersessionist perspectives. F.F. Bruce, for example, viewed the use of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18 as evidentiary in nature, pointing to the idea "that members of the church were being identified as Israel."[23] Delving even further into the issue he asserted that James's use of the Amos text "finds the fulfillment of its first part (the rebuilding of the Tabernacle of David) in the resurrection and exaltation of Christ, the Son of David, and the reconstitution of his disciples as the new Israel, and the fulfillment of its second part in the presence of believing Gentiles as well as believing Jews in the church."[24] R.W. Wall makes a similar assertion: "Amos´ promise of a rebuilt 'tent of David' is fulfilled by this David Messiah, and the prospect of Israel's eschatological purification and the conversion of all other peoples

[21] George Eldon Ladd, "Historic Premillennialism," in *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views*, ed. Robert Clouse (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1977), 23.

[22] Vlach, *Has the Church*, 84–85.

[23] F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts* (London: Marshall Morgan & Scott, 1954), 310.

[24] Robert W. Wall, "The Acts of the Apostles," in *NIB*, ed. L. E. Keck (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 10:219.

have been transferred to him."[25] Yet this is an untenable position to argue when so many OT passages point to a future restoration for ethnic Israel (Amos 9:11–15; Zech 13:8–-9; 14:16; Joel 3:17–18). In addition, there is a great deal of ambiguity over when to recognize a literal or non-literal fulfillment.[26] The supersessionist would most likely refute this assertion, however, arguing that passages such as Acts 2:16–21 and Acts 15:15–18 are, in fact, examples of NT writers using OT texts to point to a nonliteral restoration of Israel, or in other words, a spiritual restoration, in the NT church.

In addition to the interpretive priority of the NT over the OT and the assertion of the nonliteral fulfillment of the restoration of Israel, supersessionists also ground much of their argument within the construct of typological interpretation. Typology provides a construct in which aspects of what is recorded in the OT are viewed as a shadow or type of that which has faded away given a superior NT fulfillment. Robert Strimple argues, for example, that concepts such as the land, the temple, and even the people of Israel were all "typological images that found fulfillment in Jesus Christ."[27] With the coming of Christ, these former shadows have passed away, being eschatologically or spiritually completed in him. When applied to the topic of the nation of Israel, the supersessionist views the prophetic oracles concerning Israel's future restoration as having been spiritually fulfilled by the church in this age.[28] For the supersessionist, typological interpretation is critical to their argument because they see that OT national Israel

[25] Vlach, *Has the Church,* 85.

[26] See Anthony Hoekema, "Amillennialism," in *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1977), 172, in which the author states: "Many Old Testament prophecies are indeed to be interpreted literally, many others are to be interpreted in a nonliteral way."

[27] Robert Strimple, "Amillennialism," in *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond,* ed. Stan N. Gundry and Darrel L. Block (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 85–86.

[28] See Bruce Waltke, *Kingdom Promises as Spiritual* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1988), 282.

was a type of spiritual Israel or the NT church.[29] The resulting conclusion then is that national Israel, both in form and function, has been replaced by the church in this age.[30]

To this point, only the framework of debate has been set forth, articulating those positions which may be construed as supersessionist in nature, positing the church as the newly defined recipient of God's favor that had been reserved by covenant for Israel. With these elements in place, it then becomes important to consider the post-supersessionist response.

Returning to the issue of NT interpretive priority over the OT, post-supersessionists do not refute that the NT has priority over the OT, yet there is a difference in how they interpret its meaning and impact. To fully understand this difference, it is not sufficient to say that post-supersessionism simply rejects the supersessionist premise. Rather it is important to consider the specific elements of the post-supersessionist perspective. For example, within the post-supersessionist construct the NT is viewed as a more complete and fulfilled depiction of that set forth in the OT. There is no contradiction nor change in form and function but rather a progressive development that finds its culmination in the NT.

Additionally, post-supersessionism recognizes the superiority and completeness of the NT covenant over and above the OT covenantal constructs, thus making adherence to the OT law and sacrificial system obsolete. Further, the NT is recognized for the way it signals the progressive development and fulfillment of OT prophecy, as illustrated for example, in the prophetic message of Hosea 11:1, which is later cited in Matthew 2:15. The post-supersessionist argues that Hosea provides a historical reference to the exodus from Egypt, whereas Matthew points the reader towards Christ. The post-supersessionist perspective does not require that these

[29] See Augustine, *On the Gospel of St. John* 11.8 (*NPNF*[1] 7:77).

[30] See Mark Karlberg, "The Significance of Israel in Biblical Typology," *JETS* 31, no. 3 (1988): 259.

passages be read in an either–or, literal–non-literal manner but rather that there is both–and or literal and non-literal meaning to be considered. Vlach calls this a "literal plus typological connection," which moves the interpreter from an either–or perspective to that of a both–and scenario. In the case of Hosea 11:1 and Matthew 2:15, there is room to read and interpret both the historical–literal reference to the exodus and the non-literal spiritual fulfillment in Christ. The critical point to consider is that in recognizing and elevating the NT, supersessionism relegates the OT historical context as a secondary concern. In contrast, post-supersessionism recognizes the superiority of the NT while also respecting the historical-grammatical context of the OT as essential in the interpretive process.

To more fully appreciate the differences that emerge both because of the variations in perspective over NT superiority and the question of literal–non-literal fulfillment, consider anew the question of James's use of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18. For the supersessionist, the interpretive conclusion is based on this previously indicated either–or construct. The post-supersessionist, however, within the both–and perspective, sees that there is room to read and interpret the NT reference while still affirming the validity of God's covenant with Israel. The inclusion of the Gentiles into the church is not taken as an implication of the "abrogation or obsolescence of God's covenant with the Jewish people."[31] Vlach provides clarity on this point, explaining that the usage of Amos 9 in Acts 15 is not evidence of James declaring "that the salvation of Gentiles fulfills the Amos 9 prophecy."[32] Rather James indicates that what is

[31] Richard Kendall Soulen, "Post-Supersessionism," DJCR, 359.

[32] Vlach, *Has the Church,* 100.

occurring simply agrees with what had been prophesied about the Gentiles in the OT, that being that they "would someday be saved without becoming Jews."[33]

In addition, a close examination of the NT reference and its historical context is critical because the heart of the debate in Acts 15 was much more soteriological than eschatological. The contextual evidence of the passage highlights the inclusion of the Gentiles in the messianic plan. As Vlach stipulates, most likely, this is "a case of initial fulfillment of Amos 9,"[34] which, as Darrell L. Bock clarifies, does not equate with "exhausted fulfillment."[35] The issue of concern, however, is not over the salvation of the Gentiles, which Amos predicted, but rather that which is indicated in Acts 1:6 about "the future restoration of the Davidic kingdom to Israel which is still to come."[36]

There is little doubt that the Acts 15:16–18 appropriation of Amos 9:11–12 represents a complicated scenario that requires and will receive detailed attention as this investigation progresses. Initially, however, it is imperative to recognize not only the different interpretive conclusions drawn by both the supersessionist and post-supersessionist camps but also establish the parameters within which they construct these conclusions.

There remains, but one additional point to consider in establishing the parameters for debate between the supersessionist and post-supersessionist perspectives, and that is the question of typological interpretation. This area of study is complicated in and of itself, with little to no

[33] Vlach, *Has the Church,* 100.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Darrell L. Bock, "Evidence from Acts," in *A Case for Premillennialism,* ed. D. K. Campbell and J. L. Townsend (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), 197.

[36] Vlach, *Has the Church,* 100.

consensus over what is or how to classify a true type.[37] Regardless of the ambiguity that exists surrounding this topic, the matter of debate between supersessionists and post-supersessionists has been clearly defined. Supersessionism views OT national/ethnic Israel as a type or shadow that has been completed or fulfilled by the NT church, thus leading to the argument that the church has replaced Israel. Post-supersessionism, however, refutes this premise, not so much on the basis of any definition of Israel as a type but rather upon the continuity between the OT and NT concerning the future restoration of Israel. The argument, although somewhat linear in nature, simply asserts that if the church has replaced Israel, then there should be no reference to Israel's future restoration in the NT, which clearly there is (see Acts 3:19–21; Rom 11:1–36; Gal 3:29; 4:4–7). Post-supersessionism does not reject the presence and importance of typology but rather insists that the interpretation of such types must be conducted within the hermeneutic framework of the historical-grammatical context.

Given the parameters for the supersessionism vs. post-supersessionism debate, it is obvious that questions will arise over what implications these perspectives have on the reading and interpretation of specific passages such as James's usage of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18. These questions stem from differences of opinion over the continuity/discontinuity of the OT and NT, as well as issues related to literal–non-literal fulfillment and typological interpretation. Questions also arise concerning the implications these constructs have on how to view Israel and the church, which by extension impact soteriological, ecclesiological, missiological and eschatological perspectives.

[37] See Barry Chant, *Biblical Typology* (Ramona, CA: Vision, 2012); James M. Hamilton, *Typology: Understanding the Bible's Promise-Shaped Patterns: How Old Testament Expectations Are Fulfilled in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2022).

The Importance and Implications of Supersessionism and Post-Supersessionism

This stage of investigation requires a brief examination of the importance and implication of the opposing perspectives of supersessionism and post-supersessionism. Beyond the academic, which is in and of itself important, why should time and attention be given to these opposing perspectives, as well as specific passages such as that which stands at the center of this research, that being James's use of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18? There are answers to these questions which run the gamut from hermeneutics to missiology.

Beginning with matters of hermeneutics, one of the principle matters of concern is that of applying the allegorical method, or even vestiges of this method, to the interpretive process, assigning symbolic meaning to Israel and the church. At the textual level one of the primary issues of concern in examining the relationship between Israel and the church centers on both the *sensus literalis* and *sensus plenior* of the text. These are not new issues as Brevard Childs[38] indicated that from the time of the fourth century Jewish exegetes considered the plain, straightforward literal sense of Scripture (*peshat*) as compared to that of the applied or homiletical sense (*derash*).[39] History also records the important contribution of Origen to the field of hermeneutics, arguing that the interpretive process should include the determination of meaning in (1) the literal-historical sense; (2) the moral-psychological sense; and (3) the spiritual allegorical-mystical sense.[40] Origen postulated that the highest goal towards which the interpreter should aim is the determination of the spiritual sense, the secret and hidden wisdom of God.

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[38] See Brevard Childs, "The *Sensus Literalis* of Scripture: An Ancient and Modern Problem," in *Beiträge zur alttestamentlichen Theologie*, ed. H. Donner et al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977), 80–93.

[39] Richard Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1975), 31.

[40] Tibor Fabiny, "The Literal Sense and the '*Sensus Plenior'* Revisited," *Herm* 151 (1991): 10.

To speak of the *sensus literalis* is to speak of the interpretive path towards the determination of the meaning of the text defined by historical and grammatical considerations. It is the method of interpretation "which gives each word the same meaning as it has in normal usage, whether in writing, speaking, or thinking."[41] José M. Martínez explained this further stating that "the interpretation is carried out in accordance with the semantic and grammatical rules common to the exegesis of any literary text, within the framework of the situation of the author and the readers of his time."[42] As such, to understand the Bible within the construct of *sensus literalis* is to recognize that God says exactly what he wants to say and for this he uses literal and figurative (literary) language.

Sensus plenior by comparison points the interpreter to what Origen indicated as the main goal of exegesis, the determination of the *fuller sense* or *deeper meaning*. Within this construct, some passages are understood as referencing a single person or event while also encapsulating a deeper meaning. There is a demonstrable direct line between the *sensus plenior* of a passage and that of typological interpretation. As in the previous case of Hosea 11:1, the historical reference is understood to be a type which points to a deeper spiritual meaning. To quote Raymond Brown:

> The *sensus plenior* is that additional, deeper meaning, intended by God but not clearly intended by the human author, which is seen to exist in the words of a biblical text (or group of texts, or even a whole book) when they are studied in the light of further revelation or development in the understanding of revelation.[43]

As a hermeneutic filter, *sensus plenior* can open the door to the possibility of reading into the text a deeper, spiritual meaning, which in its most extreme presentation takes the form of

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[41] Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Wilde, 1956), 53; 89–92.

[42] José M. Martínez, *Hermenéutica Bíblica* (Terrassa: Clie, 1984), 121.

[43] Raymond E. Brown, *The Sensus Plenior of Sacred Scripture* (Baltimore: St. Mary's University Press, 1955), 92.

allegorizing or spiritualizing. The implication is that the interpreter can glean something from the text beyond what was originally intended if and when this fuller meaning is determined in isolation from its literal meaning. It is upon this point where the distinction between the supersessionist and post-supersessionist perspectives may be recognized, as the supersessionist places priority upon this deeper spiritual meaning, which is allowed to, in a sense, replace the original meaning. Post-supersessionists, however, uphold the premise that the original meaning is not replaced, but rather additional meaning is inferred on top of the original. The strictest application of the term *sensus plenior* allows for the extraction of a different meaning from the text than was originally intended, a premise that, depending on the presuppositions of the interpreter, can stand in contrast to the construct of historical-grammatical interpretation, which is one of the hallmarks of the post-supersessionist hermeneutic framework.

Moving beyond the textual and hermeneutic implications there are theological issues to be considered, not least of which within the realms of soteriology, ecclesiology, missiology, and eschatology. Issues that center on the covenantal promises of God to restore the faithful remnant of Israel as well as the salvation of the Gentiles and their subsequent inclusion in the unfolding story of redemptive history.

Within the realms of soteriology, eschatology, and even ecclesiology, Paul provides a demonstrable level of concern for the salvation of Israel. Paul sees a soteriological aspect to the plan of God for Israel which has obvious eschatological and ecclesiological implications, expressed, for example, in Romans 9–11, and his concern that 'only a remnant of them will be saved' (*σωθήσεται*) (Rom 9:27). Paul's desire was to see his own Jewish people coming to salvation, a truth expressed clearly in Romans 10:1 as he prayed "that they may be saved" (*σωτηρίαν*). Paul's hope of salvation for ethnic Israel was placed squarely on the person of Christ

as he declared, “if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (*σωθηση*). Galatians 4:4–5 underscores this salvific concern for Israel as Paul emphasizes that Jesus was the one who was “born under the law to redeem those under the law”. Paul sets forth a scenario in which ethnic Israel had both a place and function in God’s unfolding story of redemptive history.[44]

The supersessionist view concerning the blessings and restoration of Israel in terms of spiritual promises for the church is incompatible with the Pauline perspective. As premised in the post-supersessionist posture presented by, for example, Brian Tucker, Paul is depicted in terms of his identity as a Christ-following Jew who adhered to the teachings of the Torah as an expression of worship towards God. Tucker explains that particular passages contained in 1 Corinthians have, in the past, opened the door to interpretations which led to the idea that Paul had “ceased to be a Jew, or that he only identified himself as such in certain missional situations.”[45] Tucker argues, however, that instead, certain references, such as 1 Corinthians 9:20–21, should be seen in the light of Paul’s variety of practices as he relates to Diaspora ethnic Jews.[46] Implicit in the understanding of Paul’s ongoing identity as a Jew is the importance of God’s calling unto himself the nation of Israel. “Today, it is unusual for us to speak about the calling of a nation or ethnic group. But in first-century Jewish thought, Israel’s election was of paramount importance and a sense of national calling was normative.”[47]

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[44] Bruce Longenecker, “On Israel’s God and God’s Israel: Assessing Supersessionism in Paul,” JTS 58 (2007): 39.

[45] Tucker, *Reading 1 Corinthians*, 94.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Donald Rudolph, “Paul’s Rule in All the Churches (1 Cor. 7:17–24) and Torah-Defined Ecclesiological Variegation,” SCJR 5 (2010): 2.

Perspectives and lines of thought vary on the proper way to view Paul, an issue to both establish and develop as this investigation progresses. Examination of 1 Corinthians 9:20–21, for example, reveals the diversity of opinions and perspectives which surround this topic. Jamieson, Faussett and Brown stipulate that one can interpret this passage as supportive of the idea that "Paul himself belonged *nationally* to 'the Jews,' but did not in *creed* belong to the class of 'them that are under the law.'"[48] A.C. Thiselton defended the idea that "in his relation to the Jews, whom he sought to convert, he [Paul] behaved in Jewish fashion observing, e.g., Jewish customs (Acts 16:3; 21:26)."[49] This is, in and of itself, an interesting point to consider when seen in light of the posture held by Thiselton that "Paul is not alluding to behavior among Jewish Christians, but the Jews whom he is seeking to win."[50] What comes across as important given Paul's Jewishness is the radicalness of his new position in Christ, "a position transcending all cultural allegiances (cf. Gal 2:15; 3:28; and 1 Cor 12:13)."[51] Not all, however, embrace this perspective of Paul, as seen in David Prior's argument that Paul's "Judaism was no longer of his very being, but a guise he could adopt or discard at will."[52] Prior seems to build this position upon the idea that Paul was "ready to forgo the determinative power of his Judaism, if that would open a door for the gospel."[53]

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[48] Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and D. Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* (Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2005), 279.

[49] Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 702.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid.

[52] David Prior, *The Message of 1 Corinthians: Life in the Local Church* (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 160.

[53] Ibid.

How Paul is viewed, as well as, the subsequent interpretations of his writings, come to be greatly affected by both the supersessionist and post-supersessionist perspectives. At the heart of this discussion is the question over "whether Paul was a representative of first–century Judaism" and the relevance this question has to "his relationship to Jewish 'law' that is Torah."[54] As such, the question emerges as to whether Paul can be viewed as representative of the larger Jewish Christ-following community of the first century, including central figures such as James. Those who adhere to a more traditionalist interpretive stance often argue that "following his conversion Paul no longer attributed an intrinsic value to Jewish identity and no longer considered Torah to be binding."[55] This perspective stands in contrast to that held by those, such as Tucker, who adhere to the idea of Paul from his Jewish perspective, given that they "generally maintain that Paul remained a Torah observant Jew throughout his life."[56] Would Paul, the former defender of the Jewish tradition, have been so concerned over the salvation of Israel if there was no place for his people in redemptive history? Post-supersessionists would argue that this is but one more element to consider in favor of Israel's ongoing place and function in this age.

In addition to these factors, missiological concerns come into play within this area of debate. As it pertains to the *Missio Dei* there are two general points to be addressed: (1) Israel's commission to be a light to the Gentiles, and (2) the church's mission to the Jews. Prior to delving into the particulars of each point, it is necessary that a few fundamental factors be considered.

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[54] Karin Hedner Zetterholm, "The Question of Assumptions: Torah Observance in the First Century," in *Paul within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle*, ed. Mark D. Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm (N.p.: Augsburg Fortress, 2015), 7.

[55] Zetterholm, "Question," 7.

[56] Ibid.

First, it is critically important to establish a clear definition of the terms missions and/or missional as theologically based concepts that point to the believer's mandate to live in faithful obedience as God's ambassadors. Yet what are the biblical foundations in support of this concept? The answer to that question is summed up in the Latin term, *Missio Dei*, which translates as "God's sending" or "God's mission."[57] This term arises from John 20:21 where Christ, who was sent by the Father, in turn, orders the sending of those who have placed their faith in him.

To fully understand the *Missio Dei*, it is important to begin with God himself, who is the source and focus of this mission. This leads to the need to briefly consider trinitarian theology or the study of God revealed and demonstrated in his triune nature. God has revealed himself in the Scriptures as one God in three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Deut 4:35, 6:4, 32:39; 2 Sam 22:32; Ps 86:10; Mark 12:32; Rom 3:30; 1 Tim 2:5). The Trinity represents the way in which God has chosen to reveal himself to man. Each Person of the Trinity working in harmony fulfills a purpose and function within God's divine nature.

Humanly speaking it is difficult to understand the Trinity because of man's inability to reconcile the unity and trinity of God fully. God is singular in substance but plural in personalities, demonstrated by the use of plural nouns, pronouns, and verbs assigned to the one true God (Gen 1:26, 3:22, 11:6–7; Isa 6:8). Because of this difficulty, man's understanding of the Triune God must operate in what is concretely known about him and his sending actions in history. These actions can be theologically defined in terms of the processions and missions of the Son and the Spirit who proceeded from the Father, beautifully illustrated through his divine

[57] Thomas Schirrmacher, "*Missio Dei*: God's Missional Nature," *World of Theology Series* 10 (2017): 9–15.

work of redemption.[58] God the Father, from whom the other Persons proceed, began his work of redemption by sending his Son to accomplish redemption, while the Holy Spirit sent by both the Father and the Son applies redemption to the soul of man (John 15:26). It is at this point that the definition of God's mission comes into focus as his redemptive purpose and action in history leading humanity to salvation within the family of God. This sending image reveals God's mission and commitment to make himself known to all creation for the purpose of redeeming and restoring creation to its rightful relationship with him. Although man distorted God's perfect plan and purpose in creation, God's mission to restore that relationship is enhanced through the redemption of every nation, tribe, and tongue.

The internal relationships of the Trinity not only provide clarity concerning God's character and mission but also provide a picture of how God has and continues to act in the world, first using Israel during the period of the OT and later the church in this age, as his instrument of action. *Missio Dei* provides a means for Israel and the church to understand their missional nature and purpose. The term missional moves from simply describing specific actions to defining the purpose of Israel and the church. John Mark Terry states, "while it is common for people to say, 'the church has a mission,' a better way to talk about mission is 'God's mission has a church'"[59] (see Eph 3:7–12). The same principle may be applied to the nation of Israel as they were the instrument through which God worked during the OT.

The Bible demonstrates that man, the pinnacle of God's creative handiwork, has a role to play in his mission (Eph 2:10). In the Garden of Eden that role was as caregiver and steward of

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[58] Arnold Huijgen, "Traces of the Trinity in the Old Testament: From Individual Texts to the Nature of Revelation," IJST 19 (2007): 251–70.

[59] John Mark Terry, *Missiology: An Introduction to the Foundations, History, and Strategies of World Missions* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2015), 100.

the natural world (Gen 1:26); for the nation of Israel, it was as witness to the Gentiles (Deut 7:6–8; Isa 43:10). In the NT Jesus had a role to play in embodying and fulfilling the mission of Israel, bringing blessing to the nations through his provision of restoration and redemption (John 1:14; Phil 2:5–7). It is important to note that the church also has a role to play in God's mission (Matt 24:14; 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; John 20:21; Acts 1:8; 1 Pet 2:9–10).

Missio Dei, God's mission, is woven into the story of redemption, running through the OT and NT. The entirety of the canon is foundational to an understanding of God's mission and, by extension, Israel's mission to the Gentiles and the church's mission to the nations in this age. Based on these fundamental aspects of the *Missio Dei* questions emerge over the role and relationship of both Israel and the church in this age.

From Genesis 12 forward the OT highlights the relationship that existed between Israel and the nations. It was a complicated relationship, at least from the perspective of Israel, in that they were in essence, "related to all the nations through creation," but at the same time, "God had also called her to be separate from them."[60] The Abrahamic Covenant clearly established Israel as God's chosen people, special from all other nations, both in place and function within God's plan of redemptive history. Israel was in a place of privilege but also responsibility as both the sign and instrument of God's blessings to "all peoples on earth" (Gen 12:3). The OT makes clear that God chose Israel to be utilized in his redemptive plan for all humanity (Exod 19:4–6), serving as a witness, at times actively and others passively, of the power, providence, and provision of Yahweh.

[60] R. Bryan Widbin, "Salvation for People outside Israel's Covenant?," in *Through No Fault of Their Own?: The Fate of Those Who Have Never Heard*, ed. W. V. Crockett and J. G. Sigountos (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1991), 74.

The biblical record demonstrates, however, that Israel did not fulfill its role, often disregarding God's instructions, thus leaving them open to his judgment. In place of fulfilling their role as a light to the Gentiles, Israel found itself under the divine judgment of their Lord. Instead of living according to the tenets of the covenant relationship established by God, they opted for a path of disobedience and rebellion (Isa 13–23). Simply yet profoundly, Israel did not fulfill its role within God's mission. The question emerges then as to what happened to that mission.

This question of God's mission, which was initially entrusted to the nation of Israel is one where supersessionists and post-supersessionists disagree. Within the construct of supersessionism, Israel not only failed in fulfilling their covenantal commitment to God and, by extension, their role as a light to the nations, but that mission and purpose has been transferred to the church. No longer is Israel to be considered an instrument in God's plan as they forfeited their place within his mission, given their rebellion and disobedience. For the supersessionist, the church has assumed all that corresponded to Israel, even their place and function as a light to the nations. As Bruce Waltke explains, "the Jewish nation no longer has a place as the special people of God; that place has been taken by the Christian community which fulfills God's purpose for Israel."[61] Cornelius Venema carries this through even further, stipulating that:

> The gospel of Jesus Christ calls all nations and peoples to faith and repentance, but it leaves no room for any particular focus upon God's redemptive purpose for His ancestral people, Israel. Because the church is the true, spiritual Israel, any peculiar focus upon the question of God's saving intention for Israel is no longer permitted.[62]

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[61] Bruce Waltke, "Kingdom Promises as Spiritual," in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship between the Old and New Testaments: Essays in Honor of S. Lewis Johnson Jr*., ed. Johnson S. Lewis and John S. Feinberg (Wheaton: Crossway, 1987), 275.

[62] Cornelius Venema, "The Church and Israel: The Issue," *Ligonier*, 1 October 2012, https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/ the-church-and-israel-the-issue/.

There is little debate over "the nature of missions in the New Testament, but the same cannot be said for missions in the Old Testament."[63] Where there would be little to no argument from the post-supersessionist concerning the church's mission to the nations, there is, however, a recognition on their part of Israel's ongoing role in God's missional plan, which continues to unfold in terms of redemptive history. The point of division lies between the recognition of Israel's mission to the nations in the OT and what level of continuity may be found with the concept of NT missions.[64] Kevin Oberlin addresses this by stating that "the Old Testament's relevance to New Testament missions is found in its foundational prophetic passages, not Old Testament examples of missionary endeavors."[65] Christopher Wright carries this thought even further, stipulating that the "visibility of Israel was a deliberate part of its theological identity and role as the "priesthood" of Yahweh among the nations."[66] The obvious point of contention lies then in the supersessionist perspective that the place and role of Israel has been abrogated, including their function as a sign and instrument of God's redemptive plan, a perspective which is rejected by those who adhere to post-supersessionism.[67]

The other issue of concern within the area of missiology centers on the church's mission to the Jews. If but only for the general agreement that exists concerning the church's role in carrying the Gospel to the nations, this aspect seems to provoke much less discussion. The

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[63] Jim R. Sibley, "Was Ethnic Israel's Mission Transferrable?" in *The Future Restoration of Israel: A Reply to Supersessionism*, ed. Stanley Porter and Alan E. Kurschner (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2023), 308.

[64] Kevin Paul Oberlin, "The Ministry of Israel to the Nations: A Biblical Theology of Missions in the Era of the Old Testament Canon" (PhD diss., Graduate School of Religion, Bob Jones University Press, 2006), 2–3.

[65] Oberlin, "Ministry of Israel," 5.

[66] Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 51.

[67] See Sibley, "Ethnic Israel's Mission," 302–09.

question that emerges is not so much over the role of the church in carrying the Gospel to the Jews but rather over the level of intentionality and efficiency with which this is being accomplished. Scripture affirms that the church is mandated to carry the Gospel message to all peoples, whether Jew or Gentile, demonstrating his love, mercy, and grace to all tribes, tongues, and nations.

The Biblical, Theological, and Practical Questions at the Center of the Debate

The question must be addressed as to what implications the distinct perspectives of supersessionism and post-supersessionism have on the interpreter's view of Israel and the church, as well as the way in which he comes to see certain historical events in which Israel as a nation has played a role. The modern evangelical should take into consideration the filter through which he reads Scripture and the way it points to God's commitment to ethnic Israel through his covenantal love for his chosen nation even now in the church age. Looking at the events of the past and the way history has treated and interacted with the nation of Israel, perhaps history might have played out differently if the world had adhered to the idea of Israel's continual place of importance as God's chosen people. The Holocaust during World War II, for example, was a point in time in modern history when the powers of Satan were at work to destroy the Jewish race. Was this in part due to an improper view of who the Jews were as a people, or was this the result of a horribly distorted view of ethnic and racial superiority and prejudice? It is difficult to assume that supersessionism played a primary role in the Holocaust from the perspective of the authors of destruction who were at work. It is much more likely that the horrors of this dark period of Jewish history were the consequence of minds and hearts riddled and controlled by the power of sin rather than an improper view of God's covenantal relationship to Israel. Yet there

are some who argue that supersessionist tendencies and perspectives have been the foundation upon which these and other anti-Semitic postures have been formed.[68]

In the modern context, the question of Israel's role and position in the world in relation to the church continues to be an important one. What is the relationship that the church has with Israel? How are the two to interact, and what standing will each have before God in the end times? From the OT age forward, God has maintained a faithful remnant through whom he has continually demonstrated the outworking of his covenantal love for his chosen people. Israel has always played a particular role in God's redemptive plan. Is there, then, a distinction between God's relationship with Israel and the church? The distinction that exists is not related to the sacrificial offer of salvation to all humanity, but rather in the expression of the Jewish relationship, as well as that of the church's relationship to God. For the modern Jewish Christ follower, observance of the Torah still plays a significant role in the playing out of the covenantal relationship between God and nation, whereas it has little to no role in the relationship of the church to God.

What is to be understood then of specific passages that signal Israel's future salvation? What is to be understood of the salvific message embedded in Amos's prophetic declaration of an eschatological future hope for Israel in Amos 9:11–15? Within the context of the time and space of Amos, God demonstrated that there was a time to come following his judgment of Israel when she would be restored and, by extension, the nations be blessed. Is this not a depiction of the future restoration and blessing of the Davidic line, and if not, then what is to be understood? What is to be made of the covenantal promises of 2 Samuel? Are those too not to be eschatologically fulfilled "in that day" as the dynastic element is fulfilled in the Messiah and the

[68] See Timothy P. Jackson, "The Evils of Supersessionism," in *Mordecai Would Not Bow Down: Anti-Semitism, the Holocaust, and Christian Supersessionism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021).

national elements of his kingdom will be ushered in? How is the raising of David's booth to be interpreted? Is there an indication of the inclusion of both the dynastic line and the national restoration of the Jewish people? And what of the Gentiles? Will they also enjoy the benefit of this restoration as "God's grace extended to them in the blessings promised as God restores this lowly image of the fallen tent of David"?[69] What is to be understood of the depictions of destruction and judgment that awaited Israel? They clearly were central to the prophetic message of Amos and the other prophets, but what is their theological significance considering the specific oracle of salvation in Amos 9:11–15 and its implications for the faithful remnant? Who is the remnant, and what is their role in the unfolding plan of God's salvation as developed in the NT? How is this image of the remnant to impact our understanding and perception of God's interaction with a spiritually faithful people from the age of the OT forward to that of the NT? Was the prophetic message of Amos and others limited to Israel or is there a universal element to their proclamations? William Van Gemeren, for example, argues that "prophecy was never intended to be restricted to the historical context in Israel,"[70] but rather inclusive of all the nations. How does this affect our eschatological perspective? How does this affect the church's identity and mission? Where do the Jews fit into both this identity and mission? These questions stand at the very heart of this investigation and require an answer built upon the premises and promises of both the OT and NT.

[69] Michael Rydelnik and Edwin Blum, *The Moody Handbook of Messianic Prophecy: Studies and Expositions of the Messiah in the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2019), 1973.

[70] William Van Gemeren, *Interpreting the Prophetic Word* (Grand Rapids: Academic Books, 1990), 130.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

An important aspect of this investigation involves a review of the relevant literature which provides an overview of the research dedicated to (1) the NT use of the OT, and (2) supersessionist and post-supersessionist readings of Acts 15. These areas of study were selected given their relevance to the central question under investigation, that being the implications of a post-supersessionist hermeneutic applied to James's use of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18. This literature review primarily consists of peer-reviewed articles and volumes centered on the field of biblical exposition, all of which were examined with the goal of understanding the level of research into these relevant topics related to a post-supersessionist reading of Acts 15:16–18.

The New Testament Use of the Old Testament

Analysis of James's use of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18 begins with an examination of the early Christian perspective and use of Scripture. For James and his contemporaries, the scriptural foundation upon which their faith developed was that of the OT, that "portion of the Christian Bible that includes the Jewish Scriptures that the early Christians accepted as their own sacred books."[71] As such, the first step towards understanding the soteriological, ecclesiological, missiological and eschatological implications of including Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18 is the identification of the nature of the reference.

Sylvia T. Raquel provides context for this area of investigation, explaining that contemporary biblical-theological studies have focused a great deal of time and attention on understanding the "theological significance of the Bible regarding its unity as well as the

[71] Sylvie T. Raquel, "Canon, Old Testament," *LBD*.

interrelationship between the two testaments."[72] Whereas this has become an important contemporary area of study, it finds historical consideration as early as Augustine, who asserted that "the New Testament is concealed in the Old and the Old lies revealed in the New (*quamquam et in Vetere Novum lateat, et in Novo Vetus pateat*)."[73] Unfortunately, there is a lack of consensus among contemporary scholars on how to read and interpret the use of OT passages in the NT, especially those of a prophetic nature. Gleason L. Archer and Gregory C. Chirichigno explained that one of the difficulties surrounding this point is determining if an OT reference found in the NT can be read as demonstrating a parallel meaning. If the determination is made that there is no parallel meaning, then the general conclusion can be drawn that "unwarranted liberties were taken with the Old Testament text in the light of its context."[74] The question emerges, however, over the validity of such a perspective in general, and more specifically as applied to Acts 15:16–18.

Given the prophetic nature of the Amos 9:11–12 text it is important to consider the role and relationship of these types of OT prophetic passages which were later quoted or alluded to in the NT. As Jonathan Lunde explains, some OT passages that are later "fulfilled" in the NT don't originally appear to be predictive in nature.[75] By comparison, Lunde stipulates that there are other OT passages that are clearly predictive in nature and were fulfilled well before the time of

[72] Ranko Stefanovic, "James's Use of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15 in the Current Debate," in *Meeting with God on the Mountains: Essays in Honor of Richard M. Davidson*, ed. Jiří Moskala (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 2016), 224.

[73] Augustine, *Questiones in Heptateuchum* 2.73 (PL 34:623).

[74] Gleason L. Archer and Gregory C. Chirichigno, *Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament* (Chicago: Moody, 1983), xxviii.

[75] Kenneth Berding and Jonathan Lunde, *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 7.

Jesus.[76] Further, he explains that there are OT theological affirmations that, on a few occasions, were restated in the NT but "with a new and distinct reference."[77] The result of these various types and levels of usage can lead to the conclusion that the NT writers were employing OT passages in ways inconsistent with the original OT meaning and intent. This, according to Lunde, is to be understood, however, as "the interpretive distance that exists between the writers of the NT and us."[78]

Of critical importance are those examples of NT writers using OT texts to undergird or validate a particular point of view. In these cases, Lunde stipulates that it is essential to analyze the relationship between their meanings and that which their OT writers originally intended.[79] This requires the interpreter to make a determination concerning (1) the appropriateness of the concept of *sensus plenior* in explaining the NT use of the OT, (2) the meaning and employment of typology, (3) the NT writers' level of recognition, or lack thereof, of the context of the passage being cited, (4) the NT writers' use of Jewish exegetical methods, and (5) the nature and form of the text being quoted or alluded to by the NT writers.

Sensus Plenior

It is necessary to consider the implications of what has been set forth concerning the hermeneutic construct of *sensus plenior*, or the perspective that a fuller meaning may be assigned to the words of an OT prophet that go beyond his original understanding or intent. This point centers on the possibility of extracting more meaning than God "intended to communicate in an

[76] Kenneth Berding and Jonathan Lunde, *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 7.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid., 10–11.

OT prophet's words that goes beyond what the OT prophet himself could access but which a NT author brings to the surface."[80]

It is beneficial at this point to recall Brown's definition of *sensus plenior* as that "additional, deeper meaning, intended by God but not clearly intended by the human author."[81] By comparison, the "literal sense" is "that which the human author clearly intends to communicate by his words."[82] Brown is careful, however, to indicate that the *sensus plenior* is always to be seen as grounded in the "literal sense" of the text. The difference, according to Brown, between the literal sense and *sensus plenior* is that "the literal sense answers the question of what this text meant according to its author's intention as that author was inspired to compose it in his particular stage in the history of God's plan of salvation" while the *sensus plenior* "answers the question of what the text means in the whole context of God's plan," that which God knew and intended from the foundation of the world.[83] From the perspective of salvation history then, the NT writers were able to draw out a fuller meaning from the original OT text, a meaning applicable to their time and space within the development of said history. Brown employs the use of the term historical sense to bring this concept into focus, speaking to the meaning of a passage considering the historical development of God's redemptive plan.

Historically speaking, *sensus plenior* has been identified with Catholic hermeneutics and scholarship.[84] As such, it has often been rejected by Protestant theologians, given that it is a

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[80] Berding and Lunde, *Three Views,* 233.

[81] Brown, *Sensus Plenior*, 92. See also Brown, "History and Development," in *Sensus Plenior,* 141–62.; "The *Sensus Plenior* in the Last Ten Years," *CBQ* 25 (1963): 262–85.

[82] Brown, "*Sensus Plenior*," 278.

[83] Ibid.

[84] See also Bruce Vawter, "The Fuller Sense: Some Considerations," *CBQ* 26 (1964): 85–96.

construct that can easily pave the way towards eisegesis, importing meaning upon the text often beyond its original meaning. That is not to say that Protestantism wholly rejects the premise of s*ensus plenior,* as there are many such as Herman Bavinck,[85] Bruce Waltke,[86] Darrell Bock,[87] Peter Enns,[88] and others who have accepted some form of this hermeneutic perspective. George K. Beale offers an interesting yet arguably centered approach to this discussion:

> Old Testament passages contain thick descriptive meanings that are unraveled layer after layer by subsequent stages of canonical revelation. This means that Old Testament passages can be understood more deeply in light of the developing revelation of later parts of the Old Testament and especially of the New Testament. The Old Testament authors had a true understanding of what they wrote but not an exhaustive understanding. This means that a New Testament text's contextual understanding of an Old Testament text will involve some essential identity of meaning between the two, but often the meaning is expanded and unfolded, growing out of the earlier meaning.[89]

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[85] Herman Bavinck argues that because of Jesus's use of OT passages, it is reasonable to assert that "a word or sentence can have a much deeper meaning and a much farther-reaching thrust than the original author suspected or put into it." Herman Bavinck, John Bolt, and John Vriend, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 1 of *Prolegomena* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 614.

[86] Bruce Waltke, "A Canonical Process Approach to the Psalms," in *Tradition and Testament: Essays in Honor of Charles Lee Feinberg*, ed. John S. Feinberg and Paul D. Feinberg (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981), 7.

[87] Darrell Bock does not wholeheartedly reject the idea of *sensus plenior*, rather allowing for its limited use. Bock argues that regardless of the OT writer's ability to see or understand the future meaning of his prophetic message, God had perfect knowledge of its future meaning and use. Bock goes further in asserting that in analyzing the OT prophetic material, it is possible to identify what he refers to as a stable central idea among those passages which are later cited or alluded to in the NT. In other words, Bock recognizes that the original meaning of an OT passage does not change when cited in the NT, yet the passage may be used in a new context and, by extension, have meaning for a new audience. This perspective allows for the idea that with historical progression and distance from the original employment of a passage, a "fresh understanding" may develop different from its original context. Berding and Lunde, *Three Views*, 234.

[88] Peter Enns stipulates that *sensus plenior* "is a helpful theological construct" given that it allows for greater understanding into the question of the double authorship of the text, that is, both the divine inspiration of the text and the human participation in its recording. Enns understands this to indicate that "the original purpose of an OT passage does not exhaust its meaning," and as a result, there are occasionally differences between the original OT prophetic meaning and the NT employment of the passage. Berding and Lunde, *Three Views*, 205. Enns offers a word of warning important to the analysis of those passages where it appears that a NT writer incorporated into the text a new meaning of an OT passage. His concern is that the interpreter must safeguard against becoming misdirected and focusing his attention on explaining "hermeneutical tensions" in these examples. Enns's perspective is built upon the belief that the NT authors were driven by the conviction that "Christ is somehow the end (telos) to which the OT story is heading" (214).

[89] George K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 27.

Here it is critical to affirm the unity of Scripture, a truth that requires a faithful reading and interpretation of the text in such a way that honors and safeguards the theological coherence of the canon.[90] Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen speak to this asserting that:

> The Bible narrates the story of God's journey on that long road of redemption. It is a unified and progressively unfolding drama of God's action in history for the salvation of the whole world…. Every part of the Bible-each event, book, character, command, prophecy, and poem-must be understood in the context of one story line.[91]

This very perspective will allow the interpreter to read and recognize that later NT revelation is key to understanding the fuller meaning of the OT. From the perspective of a canonical reading of the text, which recognizes the centrality of Christ to all interpretation, the exegete will be able to identify the historical development of redemptive history in its fullest sense. Whereas the human writer would not have known this fuller meaning, it was known and demonstrated by God in the development of the canon.

Waltke asserts an approach that affirms this perspective, as he argues that the intention of the text came into sharper focus as the canon developed. It is a process similar to what is understood in the progression of redemptive history.[92] This affirms the very premise of what has traditionally been referred to as *sensus plenior*.[93] It is within this construct of canonical s*ensus plenior* where the interpreter may affirm the human authorship of the text while respecting the

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[90] Peter Jensen explains that the question of the canonical unity of the Bible is a key interpretive principle directly related to the divine quality of the biblical text. Peter F. Jensen, *The Revelation of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 183.

[91] Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 12.

[92] Waltke, "Canonical Process," 7.

[93] David Dockery argues that "because of the canonical shape and divine nature of the biblical text, a passage may have a surplus of meaning or a full depth of meaning, which by its very nature can never be exhausted. It is with humility that we approach the text, recognizing that the meaning of a text may actually exceed the conscious intention of the original authors or the understanding of the original readers." David S. Dockery, *Christian Scripture: An Evangelical Perspective on Inspiration Authority and Interpretation* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2004), 160.

divinity of its source and remain faithful to the meaning of the biblical text.[94] It is within this scenario that the centrality of the person of Christ is understood as critical to every interpretive endeavor. D.A. Carson highlights this point in signaling the way Jesus himself emphasized that the Scriptures (speaking of the OT) testified about him, what he calls a critical comprehensive hermeneutic key ... "by predictive prophecy, by type, by revelatory event and by anticipatory statute, what we call the Old Testament is understood to point to Christ, his ministry, his teaching, his death and resurrection."[95]

Yet there are others, such as Walter Kaiser, who disregard the possibility of *sensus plenior*, indicating that the only concern of the interpreter should be that which is clearly written in the text. Upon this premise, the only point of concern is the determination of the original meaning identifiable through grammatical analysis and exegesis. Kaiser's perspective safeguards the premise that there is but one meaning in a passage while allowing for a variety of applications depending on the time and space in which it is utilized. Kaiser's is a perspective which purports that the OT prophets were divinely gifted to understand both the present and future fulfillments of their messages. As such, the NT writers cited and alluded to OT passages, especially prophetic ones, in terms of the predetermined meaning expressed by the OT writers. To consider any other interpretive path is to open the door to eisegesis. Yet, Kaiser's construct disregards that the very process of exegesis itself requires a canonical perspective, as neither the OT nor the NT can be read or interpreted in isolation from one another. Reading and analyzing from a canonical perspective allows the fuller sense to emerge, leading to the correct interpretation of the original meaning. Further, when read and interpreted from within a

[94] See also William Van Gemeren, *The Progress of Redemption: The Story of Salvation from Creation to the New Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995), 38.

[95] Don A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 263–64.

canonical *sensus plenior* framework, the interpreter is less likely to commit interpretive errors such as spiritualizing or allegorizing a passage.

Kaiser sets forth a rather convoluted question, asking, "what is it that the whole or unity of Scripture teaches that is not also in the individual books or in the grammar and syntax of individual passages?"[96] Any attempt at answering his question leads to the conclusion that only in examining a passage in light of the canon itself will it be possible to ascertain the divinely intended meaning embedded in the text. The interpreter does not approach the text from within a timeless vacuum but rather with the awareness and knowledge of the chronology of redemptive history. It is this very awareness that leads to the fuller meaning of a text, identifying the specific time and place of the passage within the timeline of redemptive history and then analyzing its place and function considering the whole of canonical revelation.

Typology

In addition to the questions surrounding *sensus plenior* the interpreter should also take into consideration the question of typology, that being "the study of patterned correspondences in Scripture," or the study of the persons and events that point towards Christ and the church.[97] The importance of typology lies in understanding the way these types build out or contribute to Scripture's progressive revelation. Examples of this principle can be seen in Adam as a type of Christ (Rom 5:14) or even the tabernacle as a type of heaven (Heb 8:5). It is an interpretive

[96] Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006), 109.

[97] Beale, *Handbook*, 27.

framework that indicates how the biblical writers viewed these historical types as leading or pointing to later antitypes.[98]

Kaiser, for example, embraces the premise of typology, inasmuch as he identifies repeatable patterns in the OT that find fulfillment in the NT. Yet he stipulates that in analyzing questions of typology, the interpreter must be able to identify a "divine indication that it was a type."[99] Any prediction, including a type, "must be seen ahead of time and not added after an alleged fulfillment takes place."[100]

Bock goes further than Kaiser in establishing "typological patterns in history" as essential to the interpretation of OT prophetic passages utilized in the NT. His perspective is built upon the premise that God progressively revealed himself through history.[101] Many of these typological patterns have a predictive nature, yet there are others where "the pattern is not anticipated or looked for until the fulfillment makes the pattern apparent."[102]

Typology is also understood in terms of its employment of prophetic symbols in the prophet's divine task of preparing the way for Christ and his church, symbols that Beale views as identifiable only in retrospect.[103] It is within the typological framework that the interpreter comes to see and understand God's providential working in redemptive history.[104] This is a key point to this investigation as the supersessionist perspective purports that Israel stands as a type of the

[98] For further commentary: Richard M. Davidson, *Typology in Scripture: A Study of Hermeneutical TYPOS Structures* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1981).

[99] Berding and Lunde, *Three Views*, 60.

[100] Ibid.

[101] Ibid., 114.

[102] Ibid., 120.

[103] Beale, *Handbook*, 40.

[104] Ibid., 13–27.

church. Yet for the post-supersessionist this is an untenable position, as Brent Parker explains that it is Jesus who should be identified as the antitype for Israel.[105]

There are important questions that surround this point, questions within the realm of biblical theology that demand a determination over who fulfills the OT promises about Israel's salvation. Is it Israel, or is it the church? For the supersessionist the typological hermeneutic is key as it is upon this foundation that the premise is then set forth that Israel, in fact, stands as a type of the church.[106] Yet to refute this premise, passages such as Romans 9–11 may be considered where Paul indicates that the OT promises concerning Israel's salvation are in essence, fulfilled by Israel as they form part of the church. In Israel, God established various types to prepare the way for Jesus, and as such, through a forward-looking view of Israel, God's redemptive plan is demonstrated as complete in Christ.

Context and Exegetical Methods

Another relevant point of consideration surrounds the way the NT authors understood and viewed the original OT context of the passage alluded to or quoted. The question of concern centers on determining if the NT writers utilized OT passages recognizing and honoring the original broader context of a particular passage, or did they, in a sense, remove the passage from its original context. Again, there is no consensus on this point. Turning anew to Kaiser, he recognizes that the NT writers contemplated matters of context but placed emphasis on the literary context as well as "the divine revelation found in the books that preceded the selected

[105] Brent E. Parker, "The Israel-Christ-Church Relationship," in *Progressive Covenantalism: Charting a Course between Dispensational and Covenantal Theologies*, ed. Stephen J. Wellum and Brent Parker (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2016), 47–52.

[106] Michael Horton, "Covenant Theology," in *Covenantal and Dispensational Theologies: Four Views on the Continuity of Scripture*, ed. Brent E. Parker and Richard James Lucas (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2022), 56.

text."[107] Bock by comparison, views the NT writers as recognizing both the exegetical context, inclusive of both the literary and canonical context. The point of concern for Bock is that the NT writers should be understood as producing a synthesis of the text, incorporating the whole of the canon and its demonstration of progressive revelation. Enns, by comparison, seems to place little importance on the issue of context, indicating that contextual matters will not ultimately lead to an understanding of the NT writer's employment of an OT passage.

Advancing even further into the question of the NT writers use of OT passages, it is necessary to analyze the interpretive methods utilized by the NT writers in comparison to the methods of other Second Temple interpreters. Kenneth Berding explains that there must be a determination over the extent to which "the NT authors share in the interpretive environment, assumptions, and methods of their contemporaries who also utilize or interpret the OT."[108] Kaiser takes a rather firm stand against the possibility of identifying any sort of interpretive parallels between the NT writers and those found beyond the confines of Scripture. He defends his perspective based on the preservation of the power and authority of the biblical text. He stipulates that there is no value to be found in asserting that the NT writers employed approaches such "as midrash, pesher, or allegory" given that these methods would have led to a degradation of the "confidence and hope" embedded in the text.[109] Bock does not share Kaiser's perspective, arguing rather that the NT writers did, in fact, demonstrate commonalities with the interpretive methods of their contemporaries.[110] Yet Bock takes care in asserting that certain commonalities

[107] Berding and Lunde, *Three Views*, 235.

[108] Ibid., 237.

[109] Ibid.

[110] Ibid.

may be found, resisting "any appeal to Jewish methods that involves a rupture in the essential unity between OT and NT meanings."[111]

On this point, Enns goes well beyond that set forth by Bock and emphasizes the critical importance of understanding Second Temple literature as the foundation upon which to understand then the methodology employed by the NT writers. Enns argues that the NT writer's "hermeneutical behavior overlaps with that of their Second Temple contemporaries," yet is still distinct because of the "NT authors' inspired conviction that the OT all points to Christ."[112]

Textual Form

One last point to consider within this discussion of the NT writer's use of OT passages focuses specifically on James's usage of Amos 9:11–12 within the Jerusalem Council discourse. The issues of concern within contemporary research are not so much centered on the historical significance of the Jerusalem Council, which Michael A. Braun highlighted as a crucial development in the NT church given the relevance of the Amos 9:11–12 reference.[113] George H. C. MacGregor, however, provided a perspective that may aid in understanding why this passage has found itself at the center of such theological discussion. He explained that Acts 15 has "raised more problems than any other in the book of Acts" given that "every kind of error and confusion has been attributed to the author."[114] The problematic nature of the interpretation of the passage and its appropriation of Amos 9:11–12 has thus been built upon the lack of consensus

[111] Berding and Lunde, *Three Views*, 238.

[112] Ibid.

[113] Michael A. Braun, "James's Use of Amos at the Jerusalem Council: Steps Toward a Possible Solution of the Textual and Theological Problems," *JETS* 20 (1977): 113.

[114] George H. C. MacGregor, "The Acts of the Apostles," *IB* (New York: Abingdon, 1954), 195.

surrounding "the credibility of Luke's report with regard to what really happened at the council."[115]

As James A. Sanders asserted, Luke is generally recognized as the "most explicit of the evangelists in insisting that to understand what God was doing in Christ one had to know Scripture."[116] Yet as he explained, this should not be interpreted to mean that Luke limited himself to direct quotations of OT passages as he often used allusions. In the case of Luke's record of James's citation of Amos 9:11–12, the author appropriates the text in such a way that he "highlights God's return and work of the divine rebuilding of the tent of David that fundamentally resolves the exilic state of God's people and the place of the Gentile inclusion in his plan."[117]

Yet this topic has provoked much debate given differences in opinion over the credibility of the textual record and questions concerning the source text upon which James built his argument. David M. King stipulates that James quotes from the LXX rather than from the MT, yet for the interpreter separated by time and space from James, there is a problem that emerges. The LXX version of the passage is based upon a flawed reading of the Hebrew, which at first glance, seems to be entirely unrelated to James's argument.[118] Yet the question must be addressed if this is, in fact, what is occurring.

King agrees that the Acts 15:16–18 passage demonstrates the usage of the LXX, but a version based upon a misreading of the Hebrew text. He goes on to explain, however, that this

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[115] See Martin Dibelius, "The Apostolic Council," in *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles*, ed. Heinrich Greeven (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1956), 100.

[116] James A. Sanders, "Isaiah in Luke," in *Luke and Scripture: The Function of Sacred Tradition in Luke-Acts*, ed. Craig E. Evans and James A. Sanders (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2001), 18.

[117] Sanders, "Isaiah in Luke," 191.

[118] David M. King, "The Use of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18," *ATJ* 21 (1989): 8.

should not be taken to mean that James somehow disregarded or misconstrued the original intended meaning of the prophet. In other words, James's emphasis on Gentile inclusion does not violate the original usage as this very concept was part of the Amos 9:11–12 oracle.[119]

Not all interpreters, however, have viewed this point in the same light. Johannes Munck, for example, argued that instead of a misreading or slight variation, "the words of James have been thoroughly reworked."[120] Kirsopp Lake and Henry Cadbury offered a completely different perspective, arguing that "either the whole source of this chapter was Greek, or the speeches at least are due to a Greek editor."[121]

Agreement is found with King's premise that examination of the LXX demonstrates that Amos 9:11 is, in fact, closely translated in the MT. He argues that the variations are minor, highlighting the substitution of the more general "I shall build up again those things which have fallen" for "I shall wall up their breaches" and the practice of changing all suffixes to the feminine singular and relating them all back to "tent".[122] It is in Amos 9:12, however, where the variations may be read as discrepancies. In the MT, "the subject is the people of Israel, the verb is 'to possess,' and the objects are Edom and the nations."[123] In the LXX, however, the subjects are Edom and the nations, the verb is "they shall seek out" and employs no objects.[124] Richard

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[119] David M. King, "The Use of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18," *ATJ* 21 (1989): 8.

[120] Johannes Munck, *Acts of Apostles,* AB (Garden City: Doubleday, 1967), 39.

[121] Kirsopp Lake and Henry J. Cadbury, *The Beginnings of Christianity Part I*, vol. 4 of *The Acts of the Apostle*s (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1979), 176.

[122] King, "Use of Amos 9:11–12," 10.

[123] Ibid.

[124] For further commentary, see Earl Richard, "The Creative Use of Amos by the Author of Acts," NovT 24 (1982): 44–52.

Bauckham indicates however that there is a new understood object present in the translation, deemed as "me" i.e., "the Lord" (supplied *as ton kyrion* in Acts 15:17).[125]

King offers that where this obviously alters the Hebrew, the change "can probably be best explained as a misreading of the Hebrew rather than a deliberate editorializing."[126] The interpretive conclusion based on King's perspective is that "the MT states in verse twelve that the restored Israel will possess the nations, while the LXX suggests that Israel's restoration will initiate the nations' own seeking of God."[127] There are differences, but neither the MT nor the LXX abrogates the idea of Gentile inclusion as God's people. King goes so far as to indicate that not only is the idea of Gentile inclusion present in both the MT and LXX, but it is amplified in the LXX reading.[128] Additionally, C. C. Torrey emphasizes the importance of Gentile inclusion in both the Hebrew and Greek text, also sensing that the LXX is more emphatic in this point. He stipulates that the "Masoretic Hebrew could have served the present purpose admirably, since it predicted that the 'tabernacle of David,' i.e., the church of the Messiah, would gain possession of all the nations which are called by name (of the God of Israel)."[129] The premise of Gentile inclusion is not presented as a new concept, particular to the age of the NT, but rather something which had been an integral aspect of God's plan pronounced by the prophets. Kaiser's analysis of the passage indicates his belief that the phrase "for His name" was the trigger that brought to the

[125] Richard Bauckham, "James and the Gentiles (Acts 15.13–21)," in *History, Literature, and Society in the Book of Acts*, ed. Ben Witherington III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 161–62.

[126] King, "Use of Amos 9:11–12," 10.

[127] King, "Use of Amos 9:11–12," 10.

[128] Ibid.

[129] C. C. Torrey, cited in F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of the Acts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), 310.

mind of James the words of Amos.[130] Bauckham stipulates however that in fact the text reflects a version of the LXX "arising from a different version of the Hebrew text of Amos, with similar words being substituted for the original text," a type of change referred to as *ʾal tiqrēʾ* in rabbinic sources.[131]

Howard Marshall offered yet a different viewpoint in examining these variations, indicating that the differences between Amos 9:11–12 MT and LXX are, in fact, more important than the differences between Amos LXX and Acts 15.[132] W. Edward Glenny indicates that the prophecy that is referenced in Acts 15, describes the restoration of the "booth of David" and the possession of the "remnant of Edom." Marshall explained that the meaning of the "booth of David," is then best understood in terms of the weakened Davidic dynasty and kingdom.[133] While some such as Anthony Gelston see the LXX as being based on a *Vorlage* that differs from the MT,[134] Marshall argued that there is no real evidence of this *Vorlage* in the Hebrew textual tradition.[135] He goes on to indicate that the only other early textual evidence containing this passage is *4Q174 (4QFlor)* … and the scroll of the *Twelve from Wadi Murabbac at*" which while only containing a few words from Amos 9:11–12 , agree with the MT.[136] As such, the idea of "a

[130] Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), 184.

[131] Bauckham, "James and the Gentiles," 161–62.

[132] I. Howard Marshall, "Acts," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 589–90.

[133] W. Edward Glenny, "Finding Meaning in the Text Translation Technique and Theology in the Septuagint of Amos," *VTSup* 126 (2009): 218–20.

[134] See Anthony Gelston, "Some Hebrew Misreadings in the Septuagint of Amos," *VT* 52 (2002): 498.

[135] W. Edward Glenny, "The Septuagint and Apostolic Hermeneutics: Amos 9 in Acts 15," *BBR* 22 (2012): 5.

[136] Glenny cites David L. Washburn, explaining that the Scroll of the Twelve from *Wadi Murabbac at* "follows the MT" and *4Q174* has only four words in 9:11, all of which agree with the MT. David L. Washburn, *A Catalog of Biblical Passages in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Atlanta: Atlanta Society of Biblical Literature, 2002), 145.

difference in *Vorlage*" as the foundation upon which to reconcile the differences between the MT and the LXX in Amos 9:11–12 can be deemed as nothing more than speculation.[137]

Examining James's usage of Amos 9 in Acts 15, Bruce stipulates that except for only minor alterations, James typically quoted from the LXX. [138] His usage demonstrates the surety of God's intended plan to take for himself a people from the Gentiles. The Amos 9:11–12 reference is ultimately utilized to support his argument made in verses 13–14. James provides a canonical perspective on this matter, building out his argument in terms of its foundation in Amos and agreement among the prophets.

Important voices in the theological arena, such as Kaiser and Bauckham, questioned in the 1970s and 80s why so little attention had been placed on the analysis of these passages. Kaiser stipulated that "little hard exegetical and contextual work has been done on these key passages,"[139] and Bauckham reiterated the point arguing that the "study of the speeches in Acts has unfortunately paid little attention to the speech of James."[140] Perhaps in response to such critical observations, research began moving towards the analysis of these passages as evidenced by the work of, for example, Earl Richard who provided a valuable body of research focused on textual and interpretive factors related to the Amos 9:11–12 citation in Acts 15.[141] Yet this and many other investigative efforts have only focused on the question of the Gentile mission as

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[137] For further commentary in agreement with this position, see Karen H. Jobes and Moisés Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 195. For an opposing view, see Jostein Âdna, "James's Position at the Summit Meeting of the Apostles and Elders in Jerusalem (Acts 15)," in *The Mission of the Early Church to Jews and Gentiles*, ed. J. Âdna and H. Kvalbein, WUNT 127 (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 131.

[138] F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Chicago: InterVarsity Press, 1952), 298.

[139] Walter C. Kaiser Jr., "Davidic Promise and the Inclusion of the Gentiles (Amos 9:9–15 and Acts 15:13–18): A Test Passage for Theological Systems," JETS 20 (1977): 100.

[140] Bauckham, "James and the Gentiles," 155.

[141] See Earl Richard, "The Divine Purpose: The Jews and the Gentile Mission (Acts 15)," *SBLSP* 19 (1980): 267–82; "The Creative Use of Amos by the Author of Acts," NovT 24 (1982): 37–53.

central to the Jerusalem Council itself and the context of Acts 15.[142] This focus is of course warranted given the historical implications of the resulting decision declared by James in Acts 15:16–18. Yet with such concentrated emphasis on the Gentile mission and Gentile inclusion, a concentrated emphasis on the role and function of Israel in light of this Gentile mission is equally important.

Hermeneutic and Eschatological Relationships

An additional area that is foundational to this investigation is that of the supersessionist and post-supersessionist hermeneutic frameworks in relation to specific eschatological perspectives. Much of the research focused on both supersessionism and post-supersessionism is built upon the belief structures of either dispensational or covenant theologies. As Vlach explains, dispensational theology sets forth the idea that there "is a distinction between Israel and the church, and a future salvation and restoration of the nation Israel in a future earthly kingdom under Jesus the Messiah as the basis of a worldwide kingdom that brings blessings to all nations,"[143] yet covenant theology refutes any such distinction and subsequent implications. Important to this point are the implications of this type of perspective on that of both supersessionism and post-supersessionism. As has been established, supersessionists believe that "the church has replaced Israel in the divine purposes and has inherited all that was positive in Israel's tradition."[144] The post-supersessionist, however, does not believe that God's covenant with the Jewish people has been canceled, nor has Israel been replaced by the church. The post-supersessionist looks to passages in 1 Corinthians, for example, as foundational to supporting

[142] See Bauckham, "James and the Gentiles," 155–84.

[143] Michael J. Vlach, *Dispensationalism: Essential Beliefs and Common Myths* (Los Angeles: Theological Studies Press, 2018), 93.

[144] Donaldson, "Supersessionism," 2.

their belief (*see* 1:22–24, 5:8, 7:17–24, 9:19–23, 10:1, 18, 32, 12:13 and 16:8). Yet for the supersessionist, these questions of blessing and restoration are viewed as spiritualized into promises of God's blessing for the church. At this juncture, it is important to examine the meaning of these theological structures given their foundational relationship with the supersessionist and post-supersessionist perspectives.

In examining the interpretive framework of dispensationalism, Vlach explains the critical nature of literally interpreting Scripture, a point of particular importance when examining OT prophetic passages dealing with ethnic and national Israel. Dispensationalists argue that "the people of Israel are a specific people who received specific national promises" and that … "God keeps His promises to those whom the promises were made."[145] This classical or traditional perspective is built upon the premise of literal interpretation, which in turn provides the foundation upon which it is asserted that the church is solely a NT entity distinct from Israel. As such, "the church cannot be identified as the new and/or true Israel."[146]

Dispensationalism is generally recognized as a post-reformation perspective built upon the teaching of John Nelson Darby (1800–82), and the construct of seven dispensations or distinctive periods in redemptive history in which God progressively revealed his plan of salvation.[147] It is a belief structure that emphasizes the pre-tribulation rapture of the church as well as Israel's receipt of earthly blessings in a future dispensation different from that of the church. Charles Ryrie emphasized the importance of the dispensational perspective through his

[145] Vlach, *Dispensationalism*, 37.

[146] Ibid., 41.

[147] Donald G. Bloesch, *The Last Things: Resurrection, Judgment, Glory* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 94–95.

identification of what he deemed to be three essential conditions (*sine qua non*):[148] (1) the distinction between Israel and the church, (2) the hermeneutic framework of literal interpretation, and (3) Scriptures' emphasis on the glory of God in both the OT and the NT.[149] Of particular interest is the relationship between the first two of these essential conditions and the manner in which a "consistent-literal" or "grammatical-historical" interpretation affirms the importance yet distinction between ethnic/national Israel and the church.[150] Dispensationalism is a belief structure in which there is clear continuity between the OT and NT in that the expectations of the OT are fulfilled in the NT. Whereas dispensationalism is built upon the premise of literal interpretation, it does not disregard typology as irrelevant to the interpretive process. Most classical dispensationalists acknowledge the employment of certain typological features, yet they are generally understood in limited terms when applied to the question of Israel. More specifically, the use of typology in examining Israel does not allow for the removal or transference of ethnic/national Israel's place and function towards that of a spiritual construct.[151] Parker explains that whereas Jesus is recognized as the true Israel, "in that he typologically fulfills all that the nation of Israel anticipated and hoped for," this does not allow for the conclusion that the OT promises made to ethnic/national Israel as a corporate entity are not to be

[148] Parker, "Israel-Christ-Church Relationship," 40.

[149] It is interesting to compare Ryrie's list of essential conditions with that of John Feinberg, who identified six key factors that highlight and emphasize the significance of ethnic/national Israel. Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 2007), 46–48. See also Vlach, *Dispensationalism*, 23.

[150] Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, 39, 41.

[151] All the spiritual, physical, and national promises made by God to His people in the OT covenants must be fulfilled literally according to dispensational theology. In other words, the OT promises made to ethnic/national Israel must be fulfilled with ethnic/national Israel. As such, for the dispensationalist, there is no foundation upon which to argue then that the church may somehow have replaced Israel and is now receiving the blessings once promised to God's chosen nation and people.

fulfilled as they were originally stated.[152] Jesus, the ultimate son of Israel, will save and restore ethnic/national Israel in addition to bringing blessing to the Gentiles (Isa 49:3–6).

Scripture demonstrates that God has always had a people whom he has called his own. The OT affirmation of this truth was exemplified in terms of the people and nation of Israel, an entity specific to the OT, whereas in the NT, it was expressed in terms of the uniquely NT entity of the church.[153] The distinction between Israel and the church is thus understood to underscore the surety of the fulfillment of God's promises to ethnic/national Israel, as God must fulfill his promises with those whom he originally entered into covenant. In the simplest of terms then, the promises and covenants made with Israel cannot find complete fulfillment in the church, as the church is not Israel. This is the perspective of those who adhere to classic or traditional dispensationalism, a perspective which both aligns with and undergirds the post-supersessionist construct.

Dispensational theology has developed over the years, beginning with that of the classical structure (1830-1940) then the revised perspective (1950–1986) and finally the idea of progressive dispensationalism (1986 to present).[154] Jason Meyer explains that whereas all three variations assert and defend the idea of a future for ethnic/national Israel as well as a distinction between Israel and the church, classic dispensationalists argue that there are no promises to Israel that find their fulfillment in the church. By comparison, progressive dispensationalists allow for what they deem to be partial fulfillment of some promises.[155]

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[152] Parker, "Israel-Christ-Church Relationship," 40.

[153] Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 965.

[154] Jason C. Meyer, "The Mosaic Law, Theological Systems, and the Glory of Christ," in *Progressive Covenantalism: Charting a Course between Dispensational and Covenantal Theologies*, ed. Stephen J. Wellum and Brent E. Parker (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2016), 74.

[155] Ibid., 75.

Vlach brings all these factors into one single point, explaining and defending that the church is distinctly new in God's plan and, by extension, is different from Israel.[156] As such, the salvation of the Gentiles and their inclusion into God's redemptive plan is not classified as fulfillment of the promises made to Israel in the OT. The church, composed of both Jews and Gentiles, will be joined together with the faithful remnant of national Israel as well as the Gentile nations in the future eschatological plan of God. Thus, the premise of the Israel/church distinction is understood and sustained.

Progressive dispensationalism, the contemporary development of traditional dispensationalism, asserts that Christ will come again and establish his earthly kingdom, during which time ethnic Israel will finally be viewed with the honor God always intended. Progressive dispensationalism, however, is not replacement theology because progressive dispensationalists argue that God will keep his promises made to ethnic Israel. As Robert Reymond explains, "Israel is an ethnic people who constitute a nation among nations that bears a unique relationship to God—a nation created by God in fulfillment of his salvation promise."[157] Progressive dispensationalism differs from traditional dispensationalism in that it views the church as being blessed through Israel, thus not literally fulfilling so many of the OT prophecies.

Robert Saucy presents progressive dispensationalism as "a mediating position between non-dispensationalism and traditional dispensationalism" which "seeks to retain a natural understanding of the prophetic Scriptures that appear to assign a significant role to the nation

[156] Vlach, *Dispensationalism,* 25.

[157] Robert L. Reymond et al., "The Progressive Dispensational View," in *Perspectives on Israel and the Church: 4 Views* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2015), 167.

Israel in the future, in accordance with a dispensational system."[158] This progressive dispensationalist posture also views "the program of God as unified within history, in agreement with non-dispensationalists, and it denies a radical discontinuity between the present church age and the messianic kingdom promises."[159]

The question must be addressed as to what implications these perspectives have on our view of Israel and the church. Thoughtful consideration should be given to the way Scripture points to the idea that God continues to uphold his commitment to ethnic Israel through his covenantal love for his chosen nation even now in the church age. In the modern context, the question of Israel's role and position in the world in relation to the church continues to be an important one. Are the dispensationalists correct in their affirmations concerning the relationship between the church and Israel? How are the two to interact and what standing will each have before God in the end times? Dispensationalists adhere to the idea that "spiritual unity between believing Jews and Gentiles in Jesus does not cancel God-ordained functional distinctions between Jews and Gentiles in the coming kingdom of Jesus."[160] Vlach argues, and agreement is found in his assertion, that "both groups are saved the same way – by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone."[161]

Dispensationalism is best understood as a hermeneutical perspective and filter which utilizes a plumb line centered on the distinction between Israel and the church. Yet not all agree with the tenets of dispensationalism. The non–dispensationalist is found normally within the

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[158] Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism: The Interface between Dispensational and Non-Dispensational Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 26–27.

[159] Ibid., 27.

[160] Vlach, *Dispensationalism*, 44.

[161] Ibid.

realm of covenant theology or replacement theology, although not all agree over this classification or generalization. R. Scott Clark argues that those who criticize Reformed covenant theology, normally dispensationalists and progressive covenantalists, have misunderstood the foundations of historic Reformed covenant theology. He goes further in asserting that these critics "are imputing to Reformed theology a way of thinking about redemptive history that has more in common with dispensationalism than it does with Reformed theology."[162] Clark explains that the very idea of "replacement" is "foreign to Reformed theology because it assumes a dispensational, Israeleo-centric way of thinking" and "it assumes that the temporary, national people was, in fact, intended to be the permanent arrangement."[163] Covenant theologians argue on the basis of Genesis 3:15, that God promised a Savior and a Redeemer, one who would be of the lineage of national Israel. The nation of Israel was to be the means through which the Savior would come, nothing more and nothing less.

Covenant theology is identified with the Reformation and Post-Reformation eras, finding its clearest expression in the content and construct of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1643–49).[164] Michael Horton explains that at its core, covenant theology is a belief system built upon the recognition of three general covenants: (1) the covenant of redemption; (2) the covenant of works; and (3) the covenant of grace.[165] Covenant or Reformed theologians acknowledge the presence of the biblical covenants, such as that which God established with Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David, as well as the *protoevangelium* of Genesis 3:15, yet these biblical covenants

[162] Robert Scott Clark, "Covenant Theology Is Not Replacement Theology," *The Heidelblog: Recovering the Reformed Confession*, 21 August 2013, https://heidelblog.net/2013/08/covenant-theology-is-not-replacement-theology/.

[163] Ibid.

[164] Daniel G. Reid et al., *Dictionary of Christianity in America* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1990).

[165] See Horton, "Covenant Theology," 35–73.

are understood to be encapsulated in the covenant of grace, all of which point to Jesus Christ.[166] Upon this affirmation, covenant theologians such as Horton recognize both the unity and continuity of the OT and NT and as such, argue that Israel and the church are essentially one in Christ. Further they view the church as receiving the OT promises made to Israel while also recognizing that the church includes Jews whom the blood of Christ has redeemed.

Within the construct of Reformed theology, the church is defined in terms of having always existed as the Israel of God, and the Israel of God has always existed as the church. It is a perspective built upon the premise of the unity and continuity between the OT and NT.[167] If there is in fact, unity and continuity as the Reformed tradition purports, then it is illogical to argue, as the dispensationalist do, that Israel and the church are distinct entities. Rather, according to the Reformed perspective expressed by Horton, it is both logical and scriptural to recognize that the church was, during the period of the OT, administered through the typological people of Israel.[168] The church then is recognized as having existed throughout the OT period, rejecting the premise that it is wholly and solely a NT entity and by extension rendering it impossible to declare that the church has replaced the nation of Israel. Rather, covenant theologians argue that God "grafted" the Gentiles into the people of God, adding to, not replacing Israel. Most covenant theologians such as Lehrer refute the premise that they purport replacement theology on the basis of this very point, preferring rather to speak in terms of fulfillment theology.[169]

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[166] See Horton, "Covenant Theology," 35.

[167] Brent E. Parker and Richard James Lucas, *Covenantal and Dispensational Theologies: Four Views on the Continuity of Scripture* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2022), 10.

[168] Horton, "Covenant Theology," 56.

[169] Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology*, 203.

This entire area of study, however, is not limited to these particular views. Equally important to this discussion is the perspective of progressive covenentalism set forth by Stephen J. Wellum and Brent E. Parker. [170] Progressive covenentalism recognizes the value of both the dispensational and covenantal theologies but argues that there is a better way to deal with the conflicting issues that arise between them. It is a belief structure which attempts to describe the progressive, or *"*unfolding nature of God's revelation over time" through the covenants, which "find their fulfillment, *telos*, and terminus in Christ." [171] The perspective is built upon "the unity of God's plan–promise culminating in the new covenant,"[172] all the while maintaining the importance of all the covenants. Progressive covenentalists argue that the interpreter can only truly understand the importance and significance of each covenant and its relationship to Christ by placing each one "in its own covenantal location and then placed in terms of what covenant(s) preceded it and follow it."[173] Ultimately progressive covenentalism argues that through the multitude of covenants, running from Adam to Christ, one can progressively see how God has revealed his plan through redemptive history for his people. Wellum and Parker see the covenants not just as a unifying theme in Scripture but the very backbone of the entire scriptural narrative. This unifying view stands in stark contrast to covenant theology which in essence divides history according to the covenant of works and covenant of grace. As to the all-important question about the relationship between Israel and the church, in progressive covenentalism the stipulation is made that God has one people, although there is clearly a redemptive and historical

[170] See Stephen J. Wellum and Brent E. Parker, "Introduction," in *Progressive Covenantalism: Charting a Course between Dispensational and Covenantal Theologies*, ed. Stephen J. Wellum and Brent E. Parker (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2016).

[171] Wellum and Parker, "Introduction."

[172] Ibid.

[173] Ibid.

difference between Israel and the church which is illustrated through the covenants. The church is understood then as the true New Covenant community comprised of both believing Jews and Gentiles, yet it is not replacing Israel.

Parker asserts that "Jesus does not just identify with Israel and assume her role; he is the fulfillment of Israel's eschatological hopes in accomplishing the new exodus, drawing the nations to himself, and ratifying the promised new covenant (Jer. 31:29–40; Ezek. 36:24–38; Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25; 2 Cor. 3:3–18; Hebrews 8–10)."[174] Given this assertion, Christ then is "the agent of restoration who brings to fruition Israel's promises and fulfills the covenants" and as such the church "is the one and only new covenant community (Jer. 31:26–40; Ezek. 36:22–36)."[175] John Meade explains that Philippians also provides evidence of this new covenant community through Paul's exhortations "to think the same," (*φρονεῖν τὸ αὐτό*; 2:2; 4:2), "to think the one thing," (*φρονεῖν τὸ ἕν*; 2:2) and "to stand in one spirit, with one soul/mind contending together" (*στήκειν ἐν ἑνὶ πνεύματι, μιᾷ ψυχῇ συναθλοῦντες*; 1:27)."[176] This new covenant community is the assimilation of the people of God who have experienced the deep internal transformation, or heart circumcision that is mentioned in Ezekiel. The people of God have experienced "heart circumcision" and this points to…

> Christ's work and ensuing metaphors in the NT, which describe the new creation of the people of God: regeneration (Titus 3:5; cf. born again/from above/from God in John 3:3; 1 Pet 1:3; 1 John 5:1; etc.), Spirit baptism (1 Cor 12:13; etc.), the Spirit poured out (Joel 2:28; Acts 10:45; etc.), and the indwelling of the Spirit (John 14:16–17; cf. John 7:39).[177]

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[174] Parker, "Israel-Christ-Church Relationship," 63.

[175] Ibid.

[176] John D. Meade, "Circumcision of Flesh to Circumcision of Heart: The Typology of the Sign of the Abrahamic Covenant," in *Progressive Covenantalism: Charting a Course between Dispensational and Covenantal Theologies*, ed. Stephen J. Wellum and Brent E. Parker (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2016), 148.

[177] Ibid., 153.

Ezekiel's reference to circumcision of the heart points not to a literal circumcision but rather a change or transformation of the condition of the heart (Ezek 11:16–21; 18:30–32; 36:22–36). Meade goes on to explain that Paul's theological argument provides for "complete continuity with the OT development of circumcision that Yahweh would circumcise the hearts of the people upon the return from the second stage of the exile" (see Deut 30:6).[178] It will be in this time when God "would write the law on their hearts (Jer 31:31–34) and replace their stony hearts with fleshly ones (Ezek 36:22–36), resulting in a people of God who would be loyal to him and obey him."[179]

Supersessionism vs. Post-Supersessionism

Upon the foundation of the issues related to the interpretive relationship between the OT and the NT, as well as the distinctive theological frameworks which offer insight into the progressive nature of God's redemptive plan, attention may now turn to the specific questions of supersessionism and post-supersessionism. Both perspectives highlight and encapsulate belief systems which by extension, affect the hermeneutic and exegetic process.

As has been indicated, "supersessionism" is normally understood in terms of "replacement theology" which Kaiser defines as the church replacing national Israel, "in that it had transcended and fulfilled the terms of the covenant given to Israel, which covenant Israel had lost because of disobedience."[180] Soulen builds upon this definition, indicating that God chose the nation of Israel "to prepare the world for the coming of Jesus Christ" but once He came "the special role of the Jewish people came to an end and its place was taken by the church, the new

[178] Meade, "Circumcision of Flesh," 151.

[179] Ibid.

[180] Walter C. Kaiser Jr., "An Assessment of 'Replacement Theology: The Relationship between the Israel of the Abrahamic–Davidic Covenant and the Christian Church," *Mishkan* 21 (1994): 9.

Israel."[181] There are others such as Rinaldo Diprose, who offer further commentary on this construct, stipulating that "the church completely and permanently replaced ethnic Israel in the working out of God's plan,"[182] as well as Waltke who offers an emphatic defense, arguing that the NT highlights the "hard fact that national Israel and its law have been permanently replaced by the church and the New Covenant."[183] Vlach in comparing and analyzing these arguments concludes that supersessionism is founded upon the idea that Israel no longer has a role as the people of God, having been replaced by the church as the true Israel. It is this belief that provides the foundation for the assertion that the church has superseded Israel and, as such, will be the recipient of all that was promised to this ethnic/national entity.

Soulen and Vlach indicate that supersessionism has historically been recognized according to three categories, those being (1) punitive, (2) economic, and (3) structural.[184] Vlach, however, provides further differentiation between what he classifies as "strong" and "moderate" supersessionism.[185] What distinguishes the latter of these classifications is that "strong" supersessionism purports that there is no future hope for the restoration of ethnic Israel, while

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[181] Richard Kendall Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1996), 1–2.

[182] Rinaldo Diprose, *Israel in the Development of Christian Thought* (Rome: Instituto Biblico Evangelico Italiano, 2000), 2.

[183] Waltke, "Kingdom Promises as Spiritual," 274. Waltke also stipulates that "the Jewish nation no longer has a place as the special people of God"; rather, Israel's place has been "taken by the Christian community which fulfills God's purpose for Israel" (275).

[184] According to Vlach, "punitive" or "retributive" supersessionism emphasizes Israel's disobedience and punishment by God as the reason for its displacement as the people of God; economic supersessionism "focuses on God's plan for the people of God to transfer from an ethnic group (Israel) to a universal group not based on ethnicity (church)"; and citing Soulen, he explains that structural supersessionism "refers to the narrative logic of the standard model whereby it renders the Hebrew Scriptures largely indecisive for shaping Christian convictions about how God's works as Consummator and as Redeemer engage humankind in universal and enduring ways." Vlach, "Various Forms," 60–64; Soulen, *God of Israel*, 33.

[185] See Soulen, *God of Israel*; Vlach, "Various Forms," 57–69.

"moderate" supersessionism accepts that there is a future salvation that awaits Israel, but there is no foundation upon which to hope for national restoration.[186]

As has been indicated, supersessionism is often referred to as replacement theology and subsequently linked with covenant or Reformed theology. The Reformers refute this classification at least partly because they believe that the church existed in the OT and continues in the NT. They are typically more willing to speak in terms of "fulfillment" than "replacement" given their view that the church has always been the Israel of God and the Israel of God has always been the church. The belief is that those who have been united with Christ in the church age now form part of the new spiritual Israel.

According to R. Todd Mangum, one of the points which causes great consternation within this field of study is the question of national Israel's role in the plan of God.[187] There are of course, a wide array of responses to this point of concern, but in analyzing the more prominent voices within covenant theology, it is easy to see why parallels are often drawn between supersessionism, replacement theology, and covenant or reformed theology. For example, Waltke argues that "the Jewish nation no longer has a place as the special people of God; that place has been taken by the Christian community which fulfills God's purpose for Israel."[188] What stands out is that the church now occupies a role that ethnic/national Israel once held, illustrating the very essence of supersessionism.

What can be said though about non-supersessionists or more specifically post-supersessionists? The *Society for Post-Supersessionist Theology* provides a starting point in

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[186] Vlach, "Various Forms," 57.

[187] R. Todd Magnum, "A Future for Israel in Covenant Theology: The Untold Story" (paper presented at the 52nd National Conference of the Evangelical Theological Society, 16 November 2000), 20.

[188] Waltke, "Kingdom Promises as Spiritual," 275.

addressing this question by outlining the general beliefs and perspectives of those who reject the tenets of supersessionism:

> Post-supersessionism designates not a single viewpoint but a loose and partly conflicting family of theological perspectives that seeks to interpret the central affirmations of Christian faith in ways that do not state or imply the abrogation or obsolescence of God's covenant with the Jewish people, that is, in ways that are not supersessionist. Positively expressed, a theology is post-supersessionist if it affirms the present validity of God's covenant with Israel as a coherent and indispensable part of the larger body of Christian teaching.[189]

Soulen expands on this definition explaining that in the strictest application of the term, post-supersessionism "applies to theological viewpoints that emerge out of ecclesiological contexts that once espoused supersessionism."[190] He asserts that this then requires that post-supersessionism "be distinguished from the views of dispensationalist Christian movements that originated in the 19th century" even though some of the latter group "also affirm in some fashion the present validity of God's covenant with the Jewish people."[191]

Vlach, who strongly refutes all aspects of supersessionism, provides the following list of reasons for embracing what may be generally classified as post-supersessionism: (1) the explicit biblical teachings concerning the restoration and perpetuity of national Israel, (2) the NT reaffirmation of "a future restoration for the nation Israel" as well as her possession of "OT promises and covenants", (3) the fact that NT "prophecy affirms a future for Israel", (4) the NT emphasis on the "distinction between Israel and the church", and (5) the doctrine of election as proof that God has a future for Israel.[192] It is interesting to compare Vlach's listing with that of Joel Willitts, who also argues in favor of a post-supersessionist interpretation of Scripture on the

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[189] "FAQ: What Is Supersessionism?" *Post-Supersessionism*, https://www.post-supersessionism.com/.

[190] Soulen, "Post-Supersessionism," DJCR, 350–51.

[191] Ibid.

[192] Vlach, *Has the Church*, 177.

basis of: (1) "God's covenant relationship with the Jewish people (Israel)," which is present and future, (2) Israel's "distinctive role and priority in God's redemptive activity through Messiah Jesus", (3) the continuing distinction between Jew and Gentile in the church today, and (4) the Jewish understanding that this "distinction takes shape fundamentally through Torah observance as an expression of covenant faithfulness to the God of Israel and the Messiah."[193]

According to Willitts, a post-supersessionist interpretation of the NT seeks "to correct a deep–seated sin within Christian tradition: the exclusion of a fundamental element of its basic definition."[194] He goes further in explaining that a comprehensive examination of the NT will lead to the conclusion that "the *ekklesia* of Yeshua the Messiah is a community of difference," and the essence of this difference centers on ethnicity.[195] For Jesus as well as his disciples, the burgeoning Christian community was to consist of both the circumcised and uncircumcised or, in other words, both Jew and Gentile. It is Willitts conclusion that only through the employment of a post-supersessionist reading of the NT will it be possible for the church today to recapture the vision and image of the first-century church.

Robert Chisolm is another voice to be considered within this discussion given his treatment of the NT presentation of Jesus as the servant of Isaiah's servant songs.[196] Chisolm argues that in a similar way to what is demonstrated in the servant songs, the work of redemption wrought by Jesus is inclusive of both Israel and the nations. Citing Romans 9–11 and Paul's

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[193] Joel Willitts, "Conclusion," in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism: Its Ecclesial Context a Foundations*, ed. D. Rudolph and J. Willitts (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 317.

[194] Joel Willitts, "The Re-Newed Perspective: Post-Supersessionist Approach to the New Testament," *HS* 57 (2016): 378.

[195] Ibid.

[196] Robert Chisholm, "The Servant of the Lord Covenant Mediator and Light to the Nations," in *The Future Restoration of Israel: A Response to Supersessionism*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Alan E. Kurshner (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2023), 46.

clear distinction between Israel and the nations, Chisolm highlights the manner in which Paul signals that Jesus was a "light to his own people [the Jews] and to the Gentiles" (Acts 26:23). There is an interesting parallel to be drawn between Paul and Isaiah according to Chisolm, as both recognize that salvation was available to the Jews and the Gentiles through Jesus.[197] Yet in recognizing the inclusive manner through which salvation was to come to both, their individual identities are never compromised.

Kaiser adds a very interesting point to this line of thinking, stipulating that "if the promises to the patriarchs were "irrevocable," then who says that the original Jewish recipients of those promises had now been replaced by the church?"[198] He recognizes the failings of Israel in fulfilling the expectations of God, but in doing so, he does not see the nation as disqualified from enjoying the blessings which God promised. Rather he offers that in the midst of Israel's disobedience, room was made for the "Gentiles in the same household of faith."[199] Particularly relevant to this investigation is Kaiser's recognition of the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 in providing a means for the Gentile believers to be accepted into this household without being obligated to "be circumcised in obedience to the law in order to be saved and be a part of Abraham's spiritual seed (Gal 3:29)."[200] Kaiser's point is that within the economy of God there was room for both a disobedient and unfaithful people as well as the new Gentile believers. God's promises once made to Abraham and his descendants were to be fulfilled just as God had established.

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[197] Chisholm, "Servant of the Lord," 46.

[198] Walter C. Kaiser Jr., "The Christian Church Built on the Foundation of the Abrahamic, Davidic, and New Covenants," in *The Future Restoration of Israel: A Response to Supersessionism*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Alan E. Kurshner (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2023), 75.

[199] Ibid.

[200] Ibid.

Additionally, the contribution of Michael G. Vanlaningham to this discussion should not be overlooked as he emphasizes the eternality of God's promises in passages such as Genesis 15:5–21 and Jeremiah 31:31–37. His argument is built upon the premise that God's promises "should not be considered transient" because in doing so the danger exists to imply or even accuse God of not being faithful to his promises.[201] Vanlaningham insists that for God's promises to stand, "they must come to fruition for the people to whom they were spoken, otherwise the promise formally would be broken."[202]

Craig A. Blaising applies these questions directly to the area of ecclesiology, stipulating that "when we realize that Israel does indeed have a future in the plan of God, we must lay aside the ecclesiology of supersessionism."[203] He argues that whereas there are clear comparisons made between OT Israel and the NT church and "the church's relationship to God covenantally through the covenants of Israel," this provides no basis upon which to support the tenets of supersessionist reductionism "which simply identifies the church as the replacement of Israel."[204]

Upon the foundation of the varying interpretive differences that surround the relationship of the OT and NT, as well as the opposing views of dispensational and covenant theology, in addition to the distinctive perspectives of both supersessionism and post-supersessionism, attention may now be directed towards the matter of James's use of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18. Yet prior to doing so a word of caution is required. The purpose of the following information is not to demonstrate a set of fixed rules with which one is to be forcibly labeled as

[201] Michael G. Vanlaningham, "A Response to the Progressive Covenantalists (and Others) View of the Land Promises for Israel," in *The Future Restoration of Israel: A Response to Supersessionism*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Alan E. Kurshner (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2023), 131.

[202] Ibid.

[203] Craig A. Blaising, "The Future of Israel as a Theological Question," *JETS* 44 (2001): 44.

[204] Ibid., 446.

supersessionist or post-supersessionist. As such, care will be given to avoid the use of circular reasoning. For example, whereas it is reasonable and correct to stipulate that all dispensationalists are naturally premillennialists, it would be incorrect to then assume that all premillennialists are by extension dispensationalists. In the same sense, to assert that all dispensationalists are post-supersessionists, or even that all those who reject supersessionism are by default post-supersessionists, is to draw conclusions beyond what can be supported. What follows is rather a demonstration of the general conclusions that can be drawn considering the particular belief system or hermeneutic framework being employed, whether that be dispensationalism, covenant theology, supersessionism, or post-supersessionism.

Saucy, for example, provides a distinct progressive dispensationalist interpretation of Acts 15:16–18 valuable to this investigation.[205] He cites James's usage of Amos 9:11–12 as a critical point of analysis between traditional dispensationalists and non-dispensationalists. Based on the prophetic nature of the passage, Saucy explains that "non-dispensationalists hold that James was forthrightly declaring that the messianic kingdom has come" and, as such, is evidence that the "New Testament sees the present church fulfilling the Old Testament promises as the new Israel."[206] By comparison, dispensationalists argue that "James was clearly portraying a future inauguration for the Davidic messianic kingdom."[207] He further clarifies this distinction, signaling that the traditional dispensational perspective supports the premise that James intentionally structured his discourse in such a way that assures "the *future* fulfillment of Israel's

[205] Saucy, *Case*, 76.

[206] See Oswald T. Allis, *Prophecy and the Church* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1945), 145–50; Anthony Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 209–10.

[207] Saucy, *Case*, 76.

promises despite the present work of God among the Gentiles."[208] In the current age, God is "taking from the Gentiles a people for himself," and "after these things" are completed, "God will again begin to fulfill the Old Testament promise of rebuilding David's tent."[209]

Saucy's explanation is built upon a detailed treatment of textual concerns and questions surrounding James's apparent divergence from "both the Hebrew Masoretic text and the Greek Septuagint."[210] He asserts that "both the Hebrew and Greek texts of Amos read "in that day," whereas James says, "after these things." The traditional dispensationalist perspective sees this as a deliberate change made by James to set up a time sequence to assure the *future* fulfillment of Israel's promises despite the present work of God among the Gentiles" although other interpreters argue that "James intended no essential difference in meaning from the Old Testament language "in that day."[211] Saucy's conclusion is that Amos was speaking "specifically to the time of the rebuilding," and James was simply relating "this act to certain prior events."[212]

The question then emerges over James's intention in appropriating Amos's passage. Dispensationalists have traditionally maintained that James was attempting to show that "God's plan ultimately included the Gentiles and that their inclusion in the church is in harmony with this purpose."[213] Saucy, however, argues that a straightforward reading of the passage leads to a different conclusion. From the progressive dispensationalist perspective, James is understood as viewing the salvation of the Gentiles as a fulfillment of Amos's prophecy, which looked forward

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[208] Saucy, *Case*, 77.

[209] Ibid.

[210] Ibid.

[211] Ibid., 78.

[212] Ibid.

[213] Ibid.

to the time of the Messiah and included the salvation of Gentiles without their becoming part of Israel. To be clear though, the progressive dispensational perspective, which recognizes the partial fulfillment of some OT promises in the NT,[214] affirms that James is proclaiming only a partial fulfillment of Amos 9:11–12 because all the messianic promises, including that of Amos, will be completely fulfilled only in the future. "The restoration of the kingdom awaits the salvation of Israel in relation to the return of Christ."[215] It is a description of initial fulfillment in and through the church, which will come to complete fruition only in the second coming of the Messiah. James is then to be understood as indicating through his appropriation of the Amos 9 passage that "the restoration of the Davidic kingship reveals only an initial fulfillment of the covenant promises during the present age."[216]

In contrast to that of the dispensational and progressive dispensational perspective, covenant theologist Michael Horton offers a vastly different interpretation. Based on the premise of the hermeneutical priority of the NT, Horton and other covenant and Reformed theologians identify the ways in which "the Gospels interpret Jesus's ministry, pointing out the ways in which Jesus fulfills Israel's Torah, ceremonies, feasts, sacrifices, and priesthood."[217] Moving into the text of Acts, Horton asserts that there is a clear "pattern for apostolic preaching in terms of OT promise and fulfillment in Jesus Christ."[218] He also indicates that the focus of the Hebrew

[214] See Meyer, "Mosaic Law," 74.

[215] Saucy, *Case*, 79.

[216] Ibid., 80.

[217] Horton, "Covenant Theology," 66.

[218] Ibid.

Bible is the seed of Abraham, that is, "his spiritual family from Israel and all nations" thus removing the idea of national Israel as a central theme.[219]

He further explains and defends this point in stipulating that Amos 9:11–15 indicates "no signs of a restoration of the Sinai covenant."[220] Horton recognizes that this is a point of divergence with dispensational theology given their understanding that "this prophecy and others like it as referring to a millennial age with a restored theocracy and temple worship in Jerusalem."[221] He points to J. Dwight Pentecost's argument in which he signals the dangers of spiritualizing the biblical text, stipulating that in accordance with "established principles of interpretation, the Davidic covenant demands a literal fulfillment" and as such "Christ must reign on David's throne on the earth over David's people forever."[222] In addition, he signals the manner in which Pentecost interprets Amos 9:15 to mean that God has promised "the restoration of Israel in the land," a truth which he encapsulates in the premise of a "Palestinian Covenant."[223] As such "Israel must be converted as a nation, regathered from her worldwide dispersion, installed in her land, witness the judgment of her enemies, and receive the material blessings vouchsafed to her."[224] Horton rebuts this, by asking if spiritualizing is required in order to "interpret the prophecy as fulfilled in the era that began with the apostles."[225] His conclusion is that if it is required, then James himself is to be found guilty of doing this very thing in his

[219] Horton, "Covenant Theology," 66.

[220] Ibid., 67.

[221] Ibid.

[222] John Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1965), 112.

[223] Ibid., 231.

[224] Ibid., 112.

[225] Horton, "Covenant Theology," 67.

Acts 15 discourse. This is, however, not what Horton sees James doing in his speech. He explains that James's appropriation of Amos 9:11–12 is to be read and interpreted as a present, literal, and complete fulfillment, "with a remnant of Israel and the nations called out to belong to Christ."[226] Horton defends this interpretive stance on the lack of commentary in Amos 9 and Acts 15 of a "future millennium or a restored theocracy in the land of Israel."[227]

Stanley Porter, however, is critical of this level of interpretation and particularly that of the progressive covenantal perspective given what he views as their overemphasis of "the effect of Israel's apostasy and the finality of God's judgment against it."[228] He recognizes the gravity of Israel's failure before God but also recognizes that "the same Israel who fails in apostasy is promised restoration by God so that it might yet fulfill his original design for it to be a light to the nations (Lev 26:43–44; Isa 11:11–12; 48:9; Jer 30:3, 10, 11; 31:8; compare Ezek 20:9, 13, 16, 21–22 with 20:33–44; 34:11–16; Amos 9:11–15)."[229] Porter stipulates that in agreement with the testimony of the OT record, God is "both to judge Israel and subsequently restore it in order to mediate his blessings to the rest of the world."[230] According to Porter progressive covenantalists "have failed to deal adequately with these features."[231]

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[226] Horton, "Covenant Theology," 68.

[227] Ibid.

[228] Stanley E. Porter, *The Future Restoration of Israel: A Response to Supersessionism* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2023), 138.

[229] Ibid.

[230] Ibid.

[231] Ibid.

Interpretive Perspectives on Acts 15:16–18

Turning now to the passage of interest within the context of this investigation, what is to be understood concerning the interpretive conclusions surrounding Acts 15:16–18, conclusions driven and affected by the hermeneutical approaches examined to this point?

Bock provides the first of several important perspectives to be considered. His interpretation of Acts 15:16–18 is built upon what he defines as Luke's viewpoint concerning both Israel and the church. As he rightly points out, Luke highlights the central role of Israel (Ἰσραήλ, *Israēl*) in both his gospel account and the book of Acts.[232] There is a certain parallel to be found between Luke and Paul on this point, as both perpetuate the idea that "the entire story of Jesus is Israel's story."[233] Luke's understanding of redemptive history is built upon the premise that God originally entered into a covenantal relationship with Israel, a relationship built upon promises which continued to be applicable in the NT era. As to the church, Luke presents a scenario in which the church was not founded on the premise that "Jesus's followers would become something distinct, but they were forced to become distinct when significant Jewish rejection set in."[234] Bock also signals how Luke employs the "term "Jew" (Ἰουδαῖος, *Ioudaios*)" as it would become synonymous with "a divided people with many opposed to what God has done in Christ."[235]

He argues that upon entering the text of the book of Acts, the theme of a divided people comes to the forefront within God's plan and purposes:

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[232] Darrell L. Bock, *A Theology of Luke and Acts: Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 279–80.

[233] Ibid.

[234] Ibid.

[235] Ibid.

> It is dividing Israel as we know her, but it is also forming a new people made up of Israel and the nations. This new thing is what Luke will refer to as the church, a church that still has roots in God's old promises because of the faithful in Israel who respond to Messiah. What is new also is really old.[236]

Luke's gospel presentation and subsequent historical narrative record the events of the Messiah in terms of the nation of Israel. In other words, all that is recorded concerning Jesus and his church are related to the nation of Israel, including the incorporation of the Gentiles, which "is rooted in promises to her."[237] Throughout Luke-Acts the message being proclaimed centers on Israel and her God. As Bock astutely states, "nothing in any of this shows that Israel has been set aside" … "Israel is still to be reached, and her restoration is a hope yet to come, even as God reaches out and turns to Gentiles."[238] Looking to the place and function of the Gentiles, Luke places special emphasis on those outside of Israel who were to become part of the kingdom through his use of the term *ἔθνος*. According to Bock's accounting, "this term appears fifty-six times in the two volumes: thirteen times in the gospel, and forty-three times in Acts."[239] The predominance of the term in Acts is understood to indicate a clear shift of focus moving forward from Luke's gospel.[240]

Approaching Acts 15, this theme becomes even more evident as both Paul and Peter speak of their roles in reaching the Gentiles who "are now incorporated into the name and community of God."[241] It is upon this point where the text demonstrates James's usage of Amos

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[236] Bock, *Theology of Luke and Acts*, 282.

[237] Ibid., 289.

[238] Ibid.

[239] Ibid., 291.

[240] Ibid.

[241] Ibid., 298.

9:11–12 , which Bock interprets as highlighting the fact that what has occurred amongst the Gentiles is a part of the prophetic promise to rebuild the "tent of David, leading the rest of humanity (i.e., all Gentiles who are called by God's name) to seek the Lord (Acts 15:17)."[242] To ensure the continued inclusion of the Gentiles in terms acceptable to the Jewish Christ–followers, James offers his declaration of the four prohibitions which is then to be communicated to the churches throughout the area.

Similar to Bock, John Goldingay recognizes the magnitude of these events, highlighting how "God intervened to take from the Gentiles a people for his name" … "a people over whom God's name is called (Acts 15:14–17, quoting Amos 9:11–12)."[243] In a similar sense to the action of God taking "hold of Abraham in Babylon" or even taking "hold of Israel as a people to be a special possession, known by Yhwh's name (e.g., Ex 6:7; Deut 4:34)," God has now taken hold of the Gentiles.[244] Goldingay, in agreement with Bock, asserts that "the context shows that James does not mean the new people replaces the old people."[245] The Gentiles, taken from amongst the nations, are now to be recognized as belonging to God. "They are given an inheritance among the people who are made holy (Acts 20:32)."[246]

John Stott offers additional clarity on the interpretation of Acts 15:16–18, reminding the reader that Luke's usage of "'people' (*laos*) and 'for himself' (literally, 'for his name')" are all

[242] Bock, *Theology of Luke and Acts*, 298.

[243] John Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology: Israel's Gospel* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 1:853.

[244] Ibid.

[245] Ibid.

[246] Ibid.

terms that were frequently used in the OT in reference to Israel.[247] According to Stott, James's discourse indicates his own level of understanding and "belief that Gentile believers now belonged to the true Israel, called and chosen by God to belong to his one and only people and to glorify his name."[248] Stott stipulates that James's declaration in v.15 that "*The words of the prophets are in agreement with this"* should be understood as underscoring the necessity of agreement between the Council's decision and Scripture, which was and is the authoritative rule of faith. James's usage of Amos 9:11–12 was employed, according to Stott, to substantiate his claim. His interpretation of this quotation indicates that James was highlighting both God's promise "to restore David's fallen tent and rebuild its ruins (which Christian eyes see as a prophecy of the resurrection and exaltation of Christ, the seed of David, and the establishment of his people)" … and "a Gentile remnant will seek the Lord."[249] As such, "through the Davidic Christ, Gentiles will be included in his new community."[250] Stott recognizes James's decision as a declaration to be upheld by the church, thus providing for the Gentiles to be accepted "as brothers and sisters in Christ."[251] As for the Gentiles, the four prohibitions were to be respected in order to maintain fellowship with their Jewish brothers and sisters.[252]

Brandon Crowe is another voice to be considered in examining the question of interpreting James's usage of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18. Crowe's ultimate concern is in

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[247] John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Acts: The Spirit, the Church and the World* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 247–48.

[248] Ibid.

[249] Ibid.

[250] Ibid.

[251] Ibid.

[252] Ibid.

determining the relationship between the Amos 9 quotation and the context of Acts 15, a question which he indicates is "the rationale for the actions taken by James and the apostles."[253] As previous interpretations have indicated, it was clear that God was at work amongst the Gentiles. The question that the Jerusalem Council was struggling with centered on "how practically Jews and Gentiles will coexist in the messianic community," a question which James answers through his use of Amos 9.[254]

In addressing the difficulties of the differences between the original occurrence of Amos 9 and its usage in Acts 15, Crowe stipulates that the best way to understand "the reception of the Masoretic Text tradition in the Septuagint (which assumes they can be reconciled) is to correlate *seeking the Lord* to *being possessed by the people of God*—or perhaps better, being incorporated into the people of God."[255] As he indicates, the context of Amos supports this premise, given its emphasis on both the nations and the people of Israel and Judah, all who were to experience God's judgment.

In addressing the question of the identity of the rebuilt tent of David, agreement is found with Crowe that it is a reference to the restoration of the Davidic dynasty. As he points out, "this is rather close to *4QFlorilegium*, which also relates Amos 9 to 2 Samuel 7, and refers to the rebuilt tent of David as the Davidic Messiah who would arise to save Israel (*4QFlor* 1 I, 10–13)."[256] Luke sees the Davidic dynasty as being restored through the resurrection of Christ, who has been established on his throne. Crowe takes this point even further, asserting that Luke's

[253] Brandon D. Crowe, *The Hope of Israel: The Resurrection of Christ in the Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020), 88.

[254] Ibid.

[255] Ibid.

[256] Ibid., 90–91.

language is reminiscent of that found in the OT. He explains that "in 2 Samuel 7:13 the Septuagint employs both *oikodomeō* and *anorthoō*: "He will build [*oikodomēsei*] for me a house for my name, and I will raise up [*anorthōsō*] his throne forever [*heōs eis ton aiōna*]."[257] These verbal parallels provide more evidence that James is speaking of the reestablishment of the Davidic kingdom by means of the resurrection of Christ."[258]

Crowe highlights the eschatological implications of this language as pointing to both "restoration to the land but also the inclusion of gentiles in a fuller way."[259] Crowe citing Beale, asserts that "Jesus's resurrection marks the beginning of the fulfillment of Amos 9:11–12, which speaks of Jesus as the eschatological temple who is the locus of worship for believing Jews and Gentiles."[260]

Upon the definition of the identity of the rebuilt tent of David, Crowe then addresses the purpose of its rebuilding, that being "the inclusion of the gentiles among the eschatological people of God."[261] Crowe signals that this is indicated in yet an additional difference "between Amos 9:12 LXX /Acts 15:17 and Amos 9:12 MT."[262] He stipulates that in Amos 9:12 MT the text signals "God's people possessing the remnant *of Edom* (*ʾĕdôm*)" yet in the Septuagint and Acts, "it is the remnants *of the people* (*tōn anthrōpōn*) who seek the Lord."[263] Whereas from a modern context, this may sound like an odd modification to the text, Crowe argues that it in fact

[257] Crowe, *Hope of Israel*, 91.

[258] Ibid.

[259] Ibid.

[260] Ibid.

[261] Ibid., 90–92.

[262] Ibid.

[263] Ibid.

makes a great deal of sense when read from within the context of Amos 9. It is from the perspective of Amos 9 that Edom is understood as standing "synecdochically for the nations" and as such with a "couple of minor changes in vowel pointing (though excluding a consonantal vowel [*mater lectionis*])—changing Edom (*ʾĕdôm*) to Adam (*ʾādām*)—simply make explicit the universal reference to Edom already present in Amos."[264] Thus returning to the NT context and the understanding that Christ is the Savior of all peoples and nations, "the more universal reference to "peoples" in Acts 15:17 fits with the emphases of both Amos and Luke."[265]

David Peterson also contributes to this interpretive discussion, highlighting the manner in which the Jerusalem Council offers evidence of God's work to form and maintain "an international movement consisting of Jews and Gentiles through the preaching of the gospel of grace and the work of the Holy Spirit (15:7–12)."[266] He recognizes James's usage of Amos 9 "to explain how God has been faithful to Israel through the raising up of the Messiah and has also 'intervened to choose a people for his name from the Gentiles'."[267]

An important factor to consider is the perspective of John Polhill given a specific factor of James's speech which he examines. He agrees with several of the previously examined interpretive conclusions that James uses the word *laos* to describe the Gentiles, although he also points out that it is a term normally used to reference Israel.[268] He sees this as comparable to Zechariah 2:11 (LXX 2:15), in which "the Septuagint also applies the term *laos* to the Gentiles

[264] Crowe, *Hope of Israel*, 93.

[265] Ibid.

[266] David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 95.

[267] Ibid.

[268] John B. Polhill, *Acts*, NAC 26 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 329–31.

who will in the final days come to dwell in the renewed Zion and be a part of God's people."[269] He understands that a similar meaning may be extracted from James's discourse. "In Christ God brings Jew and Gentile together into a single *laos*, a single people "for his name."[270]

Polhill also recognizes the importance of James's discourse, indicating the level of agreement between his own words and that of the OT prophets, then quoting from "the Septuagint text of Amos 9:11–12, with possible allusions from Jer 12:15 and Isa 45:21."[271] He identifies how the Hebrew text of Amos 9:11–12 highlights the prophetic emphasis on the coming restoration of Israel and the rebuilding of the house of David, thus leading to "Edom and all the nations over which David ruled" being gathered into Israel. He sees this as being clearly different from that expressed in the Greek text, which "speaks of the remnant of humankind and all the nations seeking the Lord."[272] Although different textual expressions, there is a commonality in the concept of "the nations which are called by my name," which links directly with "a people for his name" ("for himself," NIV) in v. 14.[273] According to Polhill, what James was ultimately emphasizing was the fact that "God was choosing a people for himself, a new *restored* people of God, Jew and Gentile in Christ, the true Israel."[274] From the Jewish Christ follower's perspective, "the promises to David were fulfilled in Christ," promises which James recognized as foretold in Amos which were to include the Gentiles.[275]

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[269] Polhill, *Acts*, 329–31.

[270] Ibid.

[271] Ibid.

[272] Ibid., 330.

[273] Ibid.

[274] Ibid.

[275] Ibid.

One final perspective to consider is that of Eckhard J. Schnabel, who emphatically confirms that James's discourse was intended to demonstrate that the Gentile believers were "bona fide members of the people of God."[276] He builds out his interpretation around the identification and analysis of several key terms, including James's use of "the demonstrative pronoun 'this' (*τούτῳ*)," which he understands to refer "to God's intervention in the conversion of Gentiles in Caesarea and their reception of the Holy Spirit (vv. 7–9), which James has accepted as such (v. 14)."[277] Further he indicates the importance of James declaration that his words found agreement with "what the prophets have written (γέγραπται)" … "their words and thus their teaching—'agree[s]' (συμφωνοῦσιν) with this interpretation of God's intervention in the conversion of Gentiles."[278] James's employment then of Amos 9:11–12 supports this claim as it is a passage which "reflects what the prophets teach and confirms the conviction of Peter, Paul, and James that uncircumcised Gentiles become members of God's people, marking it as a fulfillment of God's promises."[279]

Schnabel looks to the Qumran community for further understanding of the meaning and usage of Amos 9:11–12, signaling that they would have seen this prophecy as having been "fulfilled when God established the law, i.e., the proper study and observance of the law, within the Essene community, and as a prophecy that will be fulfilled when the Messiah restores the Davidic dynasty in the last days."[280] He also recognizes the manner in which the LXX is

[276] Eckhard J. Schnabel, "Acts," in *Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 638–41.

[277] Ibid.

[278] Ibid.

[279] Ibid., 639.

[280] Ibid.

different from the Hebrew text, specifically in that "the prophecy that Israel will possess 'the remnant of Edom' (MT) becomes a prophecy that 'the rest of humanity' will seek the Lord."[281] Schnabel also sees this as evidence of James astute and competent exegetical work, "which draws on other Old Testament texts through similar content and wording."[282] His argument is that although there are variations in the text, they "belong to a consistent interpretation of Amos 9:11–12 with the help of related texts that refer to the building of the eschatological temple (Jer 12:15–16; Hos 3:4–5) and the conversion of the Gentile nations (Isa 45:20–23; Jer 12:15–16; Zech 8:22) in the messianic age."[283]

> The modified and conflated text expresses the close connection between these two themes: In the messianic age, when Davidic rule is restored to Israel, God will build the eschatological temple, as the place of his presence on earth, *so that* (ὅπως) all the Gentile nations may seek his presence there, as he has purposed and predicted throughout history.[284]

Schnabel interprets the conversion of the nations combined with the use of the building metaphor to mean that "in the messianic period Gentiles will form together with Israel a community (the 'temple' of the last days) where God is worshiped—both ideas to which Amos 9:11 refers."[285] The premise of rebuilding the tent of David expressed in v. 17 is interpreted to mean that "the eschatological temple in the messianic age will prompt "the rest of humanity," i.e., the Gentiles, to 'seek' the Lord."[286] James's meaning is then clear, "once the rebuilding of

[281] Schnabel, "Acts," 639.

[282] Ibid.

[283] Ibid.

[284] Ibid., 640.

[285] Ibid.

[286] Ibid.

the ‘temple’ of the messianic age has begun, the ‘rest of humanity,’ i.e., not only Jews but also Gentiles, will seek the Lord.”[287]

The quotation, albeit modified, of Amos 9:11–12 highlights the fact that there will be Gentiles over whom the name of the Lord will be invoked.[288] This idea was well known in the OT context, specifically related to God’s place and function over Israel, “over whom the name of Yahweh has been invoked.”[289] Within the context of the OT, the Gentiles were a people who “have not been called by your name” (Isa 63:19). Schnabel stipulates that James viewed the prophetic message of Amos to indicate that “the covenant status and the privileges of Israel will be extended to the Gentile nations.”[290]

His conclusion is that James utilizes the Amos 9:11–12 text, “interpreted with other Old Testament texts such as Isaiah 45:21 which refer to the building of the temple of the messianic age, in order to provide the exegetical foundation for the theological position that Peter, Barnabas and Paul, and he himself are advocating.”[291] Thus the conclusion can be made that God’s plans and purposes include the incorporation of the Gentiles “into his people *as Gentiles*, without having to become Jewish proselytes.”[292] His understanding of the restored tent of David is best expressed in terms of the messianic temple which is viewed as “the community of all people who believe in Jesus as Israel’s Messiah and Savior, people who as a result of their faith

[287] Schnabel, “Acts,” 640.

[288] Ibid.

[289] Ibid.

[290] Ibid.

[291] Ibid., 641.

[292] Ibid.

in Jesus belong to Yahweh."[293] In essence, agreement is found with the interpretive work of Schnabel to this point, yet there is a conclusory remark upon which there is a difference of opinion offered. He presents the idea that based on the fact that the messianic community has been established, James could be understood to communicate "that the fallen 'tent of David' has been restored in the conversion of thousands of Jews to faith in Jesus as Israel's Messiah and Savior" and "Gentile believers may now be added" thus "one may conclude that for Luke, Israel's restoration is *in principle* complete by Acts 15."[294] On this point, though, the more logical conclusion is that which Vlach proposes, stating that the text is most likely "a case of initial fulfillment of Amos 9,"[295] which again, as Bock clarifies, does not equate with "exhausted fulfillment."[296]

Based on the interpretive conclusions examined, there is compelling evidence in support of a post-supersessionist reading of Acts 15:16–18, given that it allows for the recognition of both the Jewish identity in the Messiah and their place within Christianity. This reading allows the modern interpreter, separated by time and space from the NT world, to view and interpret the NT canon in general, as well as specific examples such as Acts 15:16–18, from within a Jewish context. The importance of James's discourse at the close of the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 is found both in the inclusion of the Gentiles, as well as the acceptance of two culturally distinct groups. Both Jews and Gentiles alike could become part of the Christian community without having to set aside their cultural identity. Just as Paul was a Torah-observing Jewish Christ–follower, other Jews could become part of this new faith community without being forced to

[293] Schnabel, "Acts," 641.

[294] Ibid.

[295] Ibid.

[296] Bock, "Evidence from Acts," 197.

deny their cultural and national identity. David Rudolph provides a conclusive perspective on this point through his quotation of Michael Wyschogrod: "the verdict of the first Jerusalem Council then is that the church is to consist of two segments [Jew and Gentile], united by their faith in Jesus."[297]

Conclusion

What conclusions can be drawn then concerning the place and function of Israel and the church? Following the overview of perspectives, opinions, and interpretive frameworks relevant to this investigation, it is concluded that in terms of eschatological perspectives, progressive dispensationalism offers the most centered approach for examining the Israel-church relationship, given its "holistic and unified view of eternal salvation."[298] Within progressive dispensationalism, the fundamental precept of dispensationalism concerning the distinction between Israel and the church is preserved, yet in such a way that allows for defining the place and function of the church, which is, in this age, partially enjoying the blessings promised to Israel. The key factor is the distinction between the current partial fulfillment and that of complete and literal fulfillment in the next dispensation when "all the blessings of the new covenant will be realized, including a literal fulfillment of the promises to ethnic Israel."[299]

The progressive dispensationalist argument is built upon a hermeneutic framework which views the NT writers taking the original OT promises and making "complementary changes to them without exhausting the original promises," thus undergirding the premise that they will

[297] David Rudolph, "Messianic Judaism in Antiquity and in the Modern Era," in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism: Its Ecclesial Context and Biblical Foundations*, ed. David Rudolph and Joel Willitts (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 23.

[298] Meyer, "Mosaic Law," 75–76.

[299] Ibid.

"find their spiritual fulfillment in the church and their more literal fulfillment in Israel's future."[300] This has practical and concrete implications as progressive dispensationalists stipulate, for example, that God's promise of land will be literally fulfilled for ethnic Israel in the future. It should be recognized that whereas the differences between dispensationalism and covenant theology are well-defined, they are less so between progressive dispensationalism and progressive covenantalism. Yet one clear and important distinction should be noted: progressive dispensationalists refute the progressive covenantalist denial of a literal interpretation of OT promises to Israel, a key point of debate between supersessionists and post-supersessionists.

How does a progressive dispensationalist / post-supersessionist perspective then impact the reading and interpretation of Acts 15:16–18? One of the key elements to consider is that from within the progressive dispensationalist perspective, Acts 15 demonstrates that there is a place for both Israel and the church while maintaining that "God will keep his promises to national Israel."[301] It is critical to remember with whom the new covenant was made according to Jeremiah 31:33, that being "the house of Israel." "In the heart of Jeremiah's context of the promise of a new covenant of forgiveness and faith, God reaffirms his unconditional promise to the nation of Israel (Jer 31:35–37, NRSV)."[302]

This aligns with the perspective of Paul expressed in Romans 11:1 where he affirmed that God has not rejected his people. In the mind of Paul, the Gentile believers in no way superseded or usurped the place and role of Israel. Paul clearly understood that there was a future salvation and restoration awaiting the Jewish nation (Rom 11:26–27), yet at the same time, he understood

[300] Meyer, "Mosaic Law," 75–76.

[301] Porter, *Future Restoration*, 26.

[302] Ibid., 27.

that God's blessing of grace was to be extended to the Gentiles as well. This extension of grace was and is best understood in terms of inclusion, not "nullification or supersession," because what God promised to Israel could never be revoked (Rom 11:29).[303]

Thus, what can be concluded about James's discourse in Acts 15:16–18? Was he stipulating that Gentile believers were taking the place of the Jewish Christ–followers? Can his words be interpreted to mean that the church was to receive the spiritual blessings once promised to Israel? Were either Luke or James attempting to draw a line between Judaism and Christianity? Or did they recognize the Jewish foundation of the new Christian faith?

To answer these questions, recall that the issue of circumcision stood at the center of the Acts 15 debate. Circumcision was a central aspect of Jewish life and identity, and as such, any compromise in its meaning and practice would have been seen as a rejection of Jewish identity itself. Jewish failure to comply with the requirements of circumcision was understood as leading to "wrath on all Israel for apostasy."[304] It was also the sign which established a dividing line between Jew and Gentile.[305] For the Jewish Christ–follower, circumcision was both a physical sign and a reminder of their salvation and Jewish heritage. However, for the Gentile Christian who had no foundation of a covenantal relationship with God, the practice of circumcision was one which held no place of religious significance. It was James's response to this conflict, which not only addressed the matter of circumcision but demonstrated the level of continuity/discontinuity between Judaism and the church.

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[303] Porter, *Future Restoration*, 27.

[304] Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 3:211.

[305] Molly Whittaker, *Jews and Christians: Graeco-Christian Views* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 80–85.

In Acts 15 James made clear that it was unacceptable to cause the Gentiles needless difficulty in turning to God (Acts 15:19). However, at the same time, as a compromise acceptable to all parties, he asserted that the Gentiles should follow four basic expectations related to table fellowship to maintain unity with the Jewish believers (15:20), in essence respecting the most important elements of the law. It was a proposal that would allow for the acceptance of Gentile Christians without the requirement of circumcision, yet at the same time respected the "idea" of the law and its place among the Jewish Christ–followers.

What then does this indicate concerning the question of continuity/discontinuity between Israel and the church? Both Luke and James maintained balance, recognizing the place of the Jewish Christ follower while at the same time demonstrating the clear and dramatic shift towards Gentile inclusion in the church. There is no sense that Luke or James was proffering an either–or scenario but rather pointing towards what Paul himself argued in Romans 10:12, stating that "there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him." This was a fundamental point of concern for Paul given his identity and context as a Jew, a perspective built around the premise that he arguably "remained a Torah observant Jew throughout his life."[306]

Acts 15 was not only important to the initial stages of the development of the church but is key to understanding God's plan for unity and diversity within his kingdom. The Jerusalem Council highlights the way the early church wrestled with the question of Gentile inclusion into this plan, examining whether it was necessary for Gentiles to become Jews in order to be part of the people of God. The Jerusalem Council established that Gentile believers were exempt from circumcision and, by extension, the essential requirement of Jewish identity. Yet the four

[306] Zetterholm, "Question," 7.

prohibitions demonstrated that the "Gentile believers were expected to keep universal Torah ethics."[307]

However, what can be said about what this meant for the Jews, especially the Jewish Christ–followers? Porter explains that perhaps it was "easier for some to presume that God's purpose had passed from the Jews because they were presumed to have shut themselves out from his blessings, and could thus be regarded as rejected by God, with all the resultant social and political consequences that this entails."[308] Yet, the question remains as to if this is what was understood by those identified as ethnic and national Israel. To answer this, a bit of logical reasoning is required. If the leadership of the NT church was only concerned about Gentile inclusion into the church, why then was there any consideration given to maintaining certain key aspects of Torah law and tradition? Was this not also for the benefit of the Jewish Christ–followers? Including the prophetic promise of Amos 9:11–12 and the listing of the specific prohibitions in the Council discourse clearly indicated the importance and role of both Jew and Gentile. If the church were to usurp the place of Israel in God's redemptive plan, then why include any reference to prophetic hope or essential aspects of the law?[309]

William Campbell provides a concise response to this point, offering a perspective that aligns with the proposed necessity to read and interpret Acts 15 from a post-supersessionist perspective, one which aligns with Paul's "affirmation of the continuation of social and ethnic

[307] Markus Bockmuehl, "The Noachide Commandments and New Testament Ethics," in *Jewish Law in Gentile Churches: Halakhah and the Beginning of Christian Public Ethics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 167–71.

[308] Porter, *Future Restoration*, 353–54.

[309] See David Rudolph, "Was Paul Championing a New Freedom from—or End to—Jewish Law?," in *Understanding the Jewish Roots of Christianity: Biblical, Theological, and Historical Essays on the Relationship between Christianity and Judaism*, ed. Gerald R. McDermott (Bellingham: Lexham, 2021), 38–50.

identity among the diverse followers of the Jewish *Christos*."[310] Campbell asserts, and agreement is found with his position, that "the church and Israel [are] related but separate entities which should not be dissolved or merged in such a way that the sub-group identity of the one is lost or unrecognized."[311] He goes on to explain that the Jewish Christ-followers "would not have seen themselves as some sort of new, a-cultural, universal association which is disconnected from its Jewish roots."[312] Campbell rightly sets forth that these members of the burgeoning church "would have viewed themselves as remaining Jews and other ethnicities who, while ethnically diverse, are united under the transforming influence of Christ and who express that diverse unity within their individual cultures."[313] What Campbell sets forth is a scenario in which, through a balanced *sensus plenior* reading of the text, both the OT and NT contexts are considered and preserved without forcing the interpreter to employ a spiritualized hermeneutic dependent on the all too complicated and irreconcilable premise of typology. It is an interpretation that aligns with and is undergirded by both progressive dispensationalism and the post-supersessionist hermeneutic framework and perspective.

[310] William S. Campbell, *Paul and the Creation of Christian Identity* (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 99.

[311] Ibid.

[312] Ibid.

[313] Ibid.

CHAPTER THREE: ANALYZING AMOS 9:11–12 IN ACTS 15:16–18

Having established the investigatory framework within which research will be conducted, as well as examining some of the more relevant literature related to this field, progression is now made toward defining and employing the methodology used in developing said research. The methodology utilized will be developed in terms of the justification for research into the following areas: (1) analysis of the contextual background surrounding Acts 15 and the Jerusalem Council; (2) investigation into the occasion of the passage; (3) its place and function in the overall flow of thought of the text; (4) the contextual background of Amos 9:11–12 ; (5) the examination of any correlations and parallels between Amos 9:11–12 and the prophetic corpus; (6) the identification and analysis of specific theological terms and concepts, including but not limited to that of Edom (*אֱדוֹם, אֲדוֹמִי*), booth (*סֻכָּה*) and tabernacle (*σκηνή*), nations (*גּוֹי*), mankind (*ἄνθρωπος*), Gentile (*ἔθνος*), and the remnant (*שְׁאֵרִית*); (7) examination of the early Jewish understanding of Amos 9:11–12 ; (8) comparison and analysis of the LXX, MT, and Qumran references, identifying and interpreting any identifiable differences or variations; and (9) the formulation of conclusions about the interpretive and theological use of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18. Only once this foundational research has been set forth will it be possible to analyze the correlation of the post-supersessionist perspective with the identified implications of the decisions of the Jerusalem Council.

The Nature of James's Use of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18

In the context of the burgeoning Christian church, there were times of great growth as well as insurmountable challenges. It was incumbent upon the Jerusalem leadership to find a scripturally based approach to dealing with their challenges and thus maintain the forward movement of the Gospel. Such a challenge is found in Acts 15, as Luke records the events that

led to the intense debate over Gentile inclusion in the Christian church. The issue of concern centered on the Gentile adherence to the Mosaic law, with special concern over the requirement of circumcision.[314] An impassioned debate ensued, yet the resulting decree articulated by James (Acts 15:16–18) was not only a statement concerning Gentile adherence to the law but also a guide towards the principles of Christian fellowship, which was to stand as one of the hallmarks of the faith.

The religious context of the first century is an important element to consider within this analysis, specifically the level of debate over general adherence to the Mosaic law and adherence to the requirement of circumcision.[315] Although the Council itself is identified most directly with Jerusalem, it is important to consider the wider religious context of places such as Antioch, which was the center of the Gentile mission at the time. The Gospel had been preached with great effectiveness in Antioch for close to ten years when then, rather unexpectedly, the influence of conservative Judeans began to infiltrate and disrupt what had been a truly fruitful work. It was a moment in which the very heart of soteriology was confronted with the theological paradox of law and grace.

The level of impact that the Gospel had in Antioch is remarkable, placing it at the forefront of the Gentile mission (11:20–21; 13:1–4), a mission which had been approved by the Jerusalem church (11:22–23) "especially because the Antioch church had continued to demonstrate faithfulness for the poor in Jerusalem (11:27–29; cf. Gal 2:10)."[316] However, as time progressed and Judea became more and more culturally conservative, tensions grew

[314] See Kaiser, "Davidic Promise," 97–111.

[315] Thomas D. Lea, *The New Testament: Its Background and Message* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 312.

[316] Keener, *Acts*, 205.

between the two churches. It is upon this background that Luke records Barnabas arriving from Jerusalem to review the work in Antioch (11:22) only to be sent back to Jerusalem with Paul, in a sense looking for "a reaffirmation of their previously accepted mission (15:2)."[317] At the very center of these tensions between Jerusalem and Antioch was the issue of circumcision "according to the custom of Moses as a condition of salvation."[318]

Many Jews accepted the idea that "righteous Gentiles could be saved without full conversion to Judaism."[319] Yet, it is difficult to find agreement on this point as "some Tannaitic sources" point to the idea that some Jews, in particular the Pharisees, actually adhered to a stricter and narrower view.[320] Josephus records that some Jews insisted on circumcising Gentile refugees as a condition for living among them.[321] There was also the desire of some of the Christian population of Jerusalem to "identify with the most nationalistic elements among their people."[322] It is not difficult to imagine any or all of these perspectives arriving in Antioch, leading to the great debate over circumcision as a requirement for entrance into the faith.[323] James's declaration, which brought closure to this debate, interestingly incorporated a portion of the salvation oracle found at the close of the book of Amos. Given the inclusion of the Amos

[317] Keener, *Acts*, 205.

[318] Ibid, 207.

[319] Ibid., 208.

[320] Terence L. Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles: Remapping the Apostle's Convictional World* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), 275.

[321] Craig Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 365.

[322] Keener, *IVP Bible*, 209.

[323] Lea, *New Testament*, 312.

9:11–12 reference within the decree of the Jerusalem Council, it is necessary to establish a few fundamental points concerning the occasion and function of this passage as well.

The book of Amos opens a window into the OT by means of the prophetic office and voice of God's chosen messenger, who declared warnings of grave consequences to those who rejected his sovereignty. This message was intended for both the nation of Israel and the surrounding pagan nations. The prophetic declaration of impending judgment rang out with passion but sadly fell upon hearts hardened by sin and idolatry. As Amos´ message found no home in the heart of the people, it would have been logical to think that all hope had been abandoned. Yet there was still hope for the faithful remnant who was promised a renewal of God's covenant.[324] Through Amos, God assured the world that there was an eschatological future scenario in which the Davidic dynasty would be renewed and restored. The prophetic message of Amos contained not only certain judgment but assured hope for the restoration of Israel and the admittance of "Gentiles to enjoy a full share in the covenant privileges."[325] This extension of hope to the nations set the stage for the formation of the NT church, which was to be inclusive of all peoples, both Jew and Gentile. Although God was to bring judgment and destruction upon the nations in response to their rejection of his sovereignty, his covenantal promises would never be forsaken, and he would bring a future eschatological restoration to his people and nation. Following the weight of his prophetic message and oracles of woe and judgment, Amos concludes his writings in 9:11–15, pointing towards this very future hope and salvation.

[324] Van Gemeren, *Interpreting the Prophetic Word*, 157.

[325] Ibid., 137.

Considering the wealth of OT textual references available to James, the question emerges as to why Amos 9:11–12 was specifically employed. It is a question that emerges because within the context of the debate of Acts 15, which centered on Gentile inclusion and, by extension, the Gentile mission, why was Amos 9:11–12 cited and not a more Gentile exclusive passage such as Isaiah 2:2–4, 9:1–2, 4–5, 11:10, 12, or 40:5.

The Canonical Place and Function of Acts

Acts is an integral part of the NT text, and as such, it is difficult to imagine it without the insights and historical aspects contained within this portion of the canon. From the perspective of Acts as a continuation of Luke's writings contained in the Gospel bearing his name, Acts demonstrates important aspects of life during the church's infancy, in addition to providing a broad panorama of the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the first believers in their endeavor to give form to their new identity as the Body of Christ.[326]

The book of Acts finds its place among the canonical books of the NT, providing a continuation of the story of the emerging church following the gospel accounts of the life and ministry of Jesus. Luke, the author of both the gospel which bears his name and the book of Acts, describes the ministry of Jesus Christ and that of the Holy Spirit.[327] The insights and historical aspects contained in this vital element of NT literature demonstrate critical aspects of life during the church's infancy while providing a detailed narration of the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the first believers.

Acts demonstrates the importance of the events surrounding the birth of the first–century church and how Christianity came to be a movement expanding throughout the reaches of the

[326] Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, 39.

[327] Lea, *New Testament*, 290.

Roman Empire. Acts bridges the gap between the life and ministry of Jesus Christ and his believers who, in obedience to him, came to form what is known as the church. From a strictly canonical perspective, Acts additionally bridges the gap between the text of the gospels and that of the epistles, ultimately providing a framework in which it is possible to understand the purpose and meaning of the epistles more aptly. Without the insights contained in Acts, the impact and meaning of the epistles would, in many ways, be diminished because there would be significant gaps in historical information needed to properly link the events of the gospels and the teachings contained in the epistles.[328] In addition, Acts demonstrates the way the early church captured the vision of the Great Commission and put into action the command of Christ to carry His message to the uttermost parts of the world, both to Jew and Gentile alike. On this point, it is important to recall the overriding emphasis and prominence of the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the early church. Acts 1:8 points to the importance of the missionary task laid before the early church and the way it was completed through the power and aid of the Holy Spirit.

Further, Acts provides a level of insight into the transformation of several apostles who came to form the leadership of the burgeoning church, such as the Apostle Paul.[329] Prior to the recorded events of Acts, Paul, originally known as Saul, the great persecutor of the followers of Christ, was known throughout the land for his cruelty and singularity of purpose in destroying anything that did not align with his Jewish faith and tradition. Without the events recorded in Acts, it would be almost impossible to understand how this man transitioned from his mission of destruction of the early church to becoming one of its greatest advocates and leaders. In Acts,

[328] Lea, *New Testament*, 42–43.

[329] Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, 51–52.

however, the author provides not one, but three accounts of the way Christ called Paul to himself through his conversion experience.

Further, Acts records some of the first and most important ecclesiastical decisions made under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, decisions that gave form to the church then and stand as precedent for the church today. Looking to Acts 15, for example, and the Jerusalem Council, Luke describes the way in which key leadership "was called together to address details related to the inclusion of Gentiles within the Jewish–orientated early Jesus movement."[330] The implications of this Council were monumental as the decisions they arrived upon led to the formal inclusion of the Gentiles within the expansion of the church. The full meaning of these decisions came to fruition as the Gospel was spread amongst the Gentiles who were no longer in a position of fulfilling the Mosaic law to gain entrance into the church. No longer was it necessary for one to demonstrate faithfulness to the Jewish tradition to be considered part of the Body of Christ. As the Gospel spread and missionaries such as Paul reached into more Gentile communities, the fulfillment of Acts 1:8 came to be seen as a reality, providing full inclusion for all nationalities and races, all of which came to be demonstrated through the writings of the epistles.

One of the foundational canonical implications to be noted when examining the book of Acts is its role and relationship with the Gospel of Luke and what their single author sets forth using two very different literary genres. The significance of reading and analyzing Luke–Acts as a composite narrative should not be overlooked, as Luke both establishes and develops critical soteriological, historical, missiological, and eschatological principles. Further, Luke–Acts represents a highly significant portion of the NT canon, constituting 27.5 percent of the text, thus

[330] John P. Sweeney, "Chronology of the New Testament," *LBD*.

standing as its largest sub-corpus. The canonical positioning of the Gospel of John, in a sense, limits the reading and subsequent analysis of Luke and Acts, one in harmony with the other. Further, there is, in truth, no historical evidence to support the idea that Luke–Acts was written as a single volume. Yet it is valuable to read and analyze Luke–Acts as a composite narrative, canonically structured in two books.

Analysis of Luke–Acts from this singular perspective leads to greater insight into the overall structure and theology of Luke's writing. There is a literary structure that comes to light when examined from this singular perspective, with three major sections of text identifiable: (1) Luke 1–19 and its focus on Israel, (2) Luke 20–Acts 7 and its emphasis on Jerusalem and the Jewish people, and (3) Acts 8–28 which focuses on the movement towards and inclusion of the Gentiles. The resulting outline highlights Luke's emphasis on Jerusalem and, by extension, the Jewish people.[331] For Luke, the genesis and later expansion of the Gospel found its foundation in this place and people, a most noteworthy point given that Luke himself was a Gentile.[332]

Although Luke did not come from a Jewish context, he clearly demonstrated knowledge of Judaism, yet he placed great emphasis on the universal reach of Christ's message and ministry as the Savior of all peoples and nations, including but not limited to the Jews. In analyzing even closer the Luke–Acts narration, his depiction of Jesus as the prophetic Messiah comes to the forefront, as well as his emphasis on the Holy Spirit and the initial stages of growth of the

[331] The overwhelming percentage of references to the city of Jerusalem in the NT are in Luke−Acts.

[332] There is debate concerning Luke's ethnicity, however the premise affirmed here within is that Luke was in fact a Gentile, based on the textual and semantic reading of Colossians 4:10-11.

church,[333] as well as his elevation of prayer and ministry to the poor as critical elements to this development and mission.

Additionally, it is important to consider Luke's use of OT quotations and allusions, which are markedly few when compared to the works of Matthew and Mark.[334] Although fewer in number, his references are fundamentally important as he grounded his historical narrative upon the foundation of the developing story of salvation history set forth in the OT. In addition to using Amos 9:11–12 within the Acts 15 Jerusalem Council discourse, other references are of note. One example is found in Luke's narration of the events surrounding Christ's appearance to two disciples on the Emmaus Road, a narration that demonstrates the way in which Jesus himself referenced and situated his life and ministry in terms of the OT (Luke 24:42–48).

In both Luke and Acts, Jesus Christ is the central figure, as it is Christ and Christ alone in whom salvation is found (Acts 4:12). The unfolding story of salvation history centers on both Christ's initial coming and fulfillment of the messianic prophecies but also the fact that his coming signals both the beginning and the culmination of God's eschatological plan, which Israel had known of through the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants. The continuity of God's promises to Israel is highlighted in the church's mission to carry his message of future hope and blessing to the nations. Luke describes the continuing role of Israel in terms of the faithfulness of God to fulfill his covenantal promises to his people while also being inclusive of the nations of the world. Embedded in the soteriological and historical emphasis of Luke–Acts, Israel sits center stage.[335] The centrality of the Jewish people to Luke's theological perspective is

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[333] David A. DeSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods and Ministry Formation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 647–49.

[334] Helmer Ringgren Uppsala, "Luke's Use of the Old Testament," *HTR* 79 (1986): 227–29.

[335] Gerald R. McDermott, *Israel Matters: Why Christians Must Think Differently about the People and the Land* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2017), 21.

evidenced in passages such as Luke 1:39–45, 1:46–55, and 2:25–27 through to portions such as Acts 15 as well as Acts 28:20 and Paul's explanation that it was due to his hope for the Jewish nation that he found himself imprisoned.

Without the historical information and theological precepts contained in Luke–Acts, the NT would quite simply be incomplete. How important it is to have this historical record of the actions of the first–century church under the direction and guidance of the Holy Spirit, coming to function in the way Christ designed. The expansion of the Gospel to the Jews and the Gentiles had its beginnings in what is recorded in Luke and developed in that recorded in Acts, providing critical insight into many of the teachings and references contained in the remainder of the NT.

Contextual Background of Acts 15

Acts 15 stands as a turning point in the events of the life of the early church, advancing the Gentile cause to be included among those dedicated to following the teachings of Jesus. The biblical record of the Jerusalem Council, sometimes referred to as the *apostolic council*,[336] highlights the way in which the first–century leadership confronted issues related to the inclusion of Gentiles within the Jewish–oriented early church. Matters of Jewish tradition and law were being forced upon the Gentiles, a people who found little to no meaning within the Jewish tradition and identity.

The implications of the decisions made during the Jerusalem Council led to the formal inclusion of the Gentiles within the church. The full meaning of these decisions came to fruition as the Gospel spread amongst the Gentiles, who no longer were required to wholly fulfill the Mosaic law to gain entrance into the church. No longer would it be necessary to demonstrate

[336] Charles B. Cousar, "Jerusalem, Council of," *AYBD*, 766.

faithfulness to the full Jewish tradition to be considered a follower of Jesus.[337] The theme of inclusion is an important one to consider, one which is highlighted not only in the events of Acts 15 but also through the teachings of Paul, who demonstrated that "there is no difference between Jew and Gentile" (Rom 10:12). God's offer of salvation was and is to all humankind, regardless of nationality or ethnic origin.

Through the decree of the Jerusalem Council, the Gentile mission was ratified by means of the stipulation of four prohibitions, the abstention of (1) food polluted by idols, (2) sexual immorality, (3) meat of strangled animals, and (4) blood.[338] These prohibitions were established as the only requirements for Gentile participation in the church. The question emerges though as to the importance of these prohibitions and precisely why matters related to strangulation and blood were important enough to isolate out from the general prohibition of idol foods. Two possible answers emerge to this question. The first is tied to those general natural laws which applied to all mankind as descendants of Noah.[339] The second reason, although not divorced from the first, more specifically relates to the context of Acts 15 and points to factors related to table fellowship (Acts 11:3).[340] Food, especially in relation to table fellowship, was an important aspect of the first–century Christian–Jewish–Gentile context.

Table fellowship within the context of Judaism incorporated factors beyond the simple selection of the food to be served or even how it was to be prepared. It was an aspect of Jewish heritage and tradition central to the life and religious expression of the first–century Jew,

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[337] Lea, *New Testament,* 312.

[338] Ibid.

[339] See Bockmuehl, "Noachide Commandments," 72–101.

[340] Craig C. Hill, *Hellenists and Hebrews: Reappraising Division within the Earliest Church* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1992), 143–46.

especially those associated with the Pharisees.[341] Jacob Neusner explains that of the 341 regulations directly tied to the Pharisees, 229 concern table fellowship.[342] It was a social dynamic that was intricately related to issues of purity, the separation of the clean from the unclean.[343] This was a point that dominated Jesus's teaching ministry as he often associated himself with those the Pharisees classified as unclean (i.e., tax collectors and other sinners).[344] Jesus not only associated with the unclean but also spent time around the table with them, eating and sharing in fellowship.[345] James's prohibitions in the Jerusalem Council decree established a foundation upon which Jews and Gentile Christians alike could establish and maintain this table fellowship.[346]

Thus, in analyzing the resulting decree of the Jerusalem Council, it is essential to not only consider the implications for the Gentile believers and the Gentile mission but also consider the impact this decision would have on the Jew–Gentile–Christian relationship. Yet, in making this assertion, recognition of both the Jewish and Gentile place within the identity and mission of the NT church is required. If, as most supersessionists argue, the nation of Israel no longer occupies a place or function within the redemptive plan of God, forming part of the burgeoning church, then why was there a need to establish parameters within which both groups could enjoy Christian community expressed in terms of table fellowship?

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[341] William A. Simmons, *Peoples of the New Testament World* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2008), 61.

[342] See Jacob Neusner, *From Politics to Piety: The Emergence of Pharisaic Judaism* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1973).

[343] DeSilva, *Introduction*, 111–12.

[344] Simmons, *Peoples*, 62.

[345] David Brack, "Table Fellowship," *LBD*.

[346] Robert H. Gundry, *Commentary on the New Testament* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2010), 325.

The Place and Function of Acts 15:16–18

Addressing the question of James's selection of Amos 9:11–12 requires an understanding of the role and function of Acts 15:16–18 in the progressive development and narrative of the book of Acts. What function and impact does this passage have on and within the text? To answer this question, it is necessary to examine the overall progression and expansion of the reach of the Gospel, placing special emphasis on the developing Gentile mission.

The Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 is recorded as occurring well after the Gentile mission had begun. For at least ten years, Gentile believers had been welcomed into the Christian faith by means of baptism. As Stott points out, the recorded history of this progressive movement began with "that God-fearing centurion in Caesarea, Cornelius," who was received into the faith, leading to some among the Jerusalem leadership to praise God (Acts 11:18).[347] The power of the Gospel took hold in the regions in and around Jerusalem in places such as Syrian Antioch where many believed (Acts 11:20). Paul and Barnabas went about their missionary work being used by God in bringing both Jews and Gentiles into the church (Acts 14:1). Yet it was the rapid growth of the Gentile mission that began to cause difficulties for the Jewish leadership. Their concern was not over the inclusion of Gentiles into the faith but rather the means of that inclusion. Prior to the events recorded in Acts 15, "it had been assumed that they would be absorbed into Israel by circumcision, and that by observing the law they would be acknowledged as *bona fide* members of the covenant people of God."[348] Yet as Luke records, Gentiles were, in fact, being brought into the faith by baptism without circumcision and without any recognition of the Jewish

[347] Stott, *Message of Acts*, 421.

[348] Ibid., 423.

tradition. As such, "they were retaining their own identity and integrity as members of other nations."[349]

For many faithful Jewish believers, this was simply not acceptable, and as such, the need emerged to address the issue in a formal manner, thus leading to what was the first recorded ecumenical council of the early church. Ernst Haenchen brings into focus the critical nature of what Luke records in Acts 15, stating that it is "the turning point, "centerpiece," and "watershed" of the book, the episode which rounds off and justifies the past developments, and makes those to come intrinsically possible."[350]

The history of the early church can be defined in terms of that which came before and that which followed the Jerusalem Council, as there is a marked change in both the protagonist and setting described in the text. Before the Council, Peter dominated the historical narrative, yet afterward, it would be Paul. Prior to the Council, Jerusalem was at center stage, but afterward, the focus shifted to Asia and Europe. From the time of the Jerusalem Council forward the church was to be known as a unified body of believers where both Jew and Gentile were to be accepted in like manner.

From the contemporary vantage point, it is not difficult to recognize the importance of the Jerusalem Council, yet equally important are the specifics of the decree as articulated by James. Within the plan of redemptive history, why was it important that the specific prophetic message of Amos 9:11–12 be included in his declaration, and what was the meaning of the prohibitions included in his speech? These questions play a significant role in understanding not

[349] Stott, *Message of Acts*, 423.

[350] Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary*, trans. B. Noble and G. Shinn (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 1971), 461.

only the Council's impact on the Gentile mission but also the role and function of the nation of Israel.

The Textual Form and Function of the Acts 15 Debate

To understand Acts 15:16–18 more fully the passage should be examined from within the larger textual unit in which it is situated (Acts 15:1–21), as well as in terms of its intertextual relationship to the canon. Luke records that following a long discussion and subsequent debate, and just prior to James's declaration in Acts 15:16–18, Peter stood to address the council (Acts 15:6–11). Peter's speech stands as a portion of a larger literary unit that is best understood in terms of its relationship with that of the conversion of the Gentiles recorded in Acts 10:1–11:18. Peter seems to follow the example of Paul in Acts 13 in which he brought to memory and evaluated aspects of Israel's history. Peter also evaluates events, but ones related to the conversion of the Gentiles, pointing out that "God gave the Spirit to uncircumcised Gentiles (*τα έθνη*, 15:7) just as he had done previously to Jews."[351] The gifting of the Spirit at this point is "evidence that God accepts Gentiles as Gentiles (15:8); he has purified their hearts by faith (*τη πίστει καθαρίσας τας καρδίας αυτών*, 15:9), just like he purified Jews."[352]

Both Peter and James elevated past events as relevant to the present context and conflict. In the case of Peter, though, this is not the first time he has brought attention to the events of Acts 10, as he previously did so in Acts 11. Yet there is a difference to be noted between the two references. In Acts 11, Peter's argument focused on the acceptance of a specific group of Gentile Christians, whereas in Acts 15, there is a clear sense that his focus goes beyond a small group of

[351] Glenny, "Septuagint," 2.

[352] Ibid.

individuals, now signaling a larger inclusive spirit towards all Gentile believers.[353] God's work through Peter in bringing the word of salvation to Cornelius was the inauguration of the eschatological fulfillment of God's inclusion of the Gentile nations. It is also worth noting the relationship between God's testimony in Acts 15:8 and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in both Acts 2 and Acts 10:44. These distinctive outpourings highlight the ethnic, geographic, and missiological progression which delineates the literary structure of Acts. As Acts 2 describes the day of Pentecost for the church in Jerusalem, Acts 10:44 marks the day of Pentecost for the Gentiles.

Peter's discourse in Acts 2 is highly relevant to this discussion as he brought to the forefront several key references to Davidic fulfillment first recorded in the book of Psalms (i.e., 132:11; 16:10; 110:1), thus signaling and affirming that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, "enthroned at God's right hand in fulfillment of Davidic promises" and that "Jesus administers salvation in this age to 'whoever' calls on his name (2:21) and 'pours out God's Spirit on all flesh' (2:33)."[354] It is important to note this progression in which the Spirit of God was given first to the mainly Jewish–Christian church of Jerusalem, followed by that of the Gentiles. Again, the sense of inclusivity of both groups, Jews and Gentiles, is highlighted.

An additional point to be examined is that of Peter's words to the Council, in which he demonstrates a parallel between burdening the Gentiles with the law with that of tempting God. The Jewish leaders would have been well versed in the theme of tempting or testing God as it formed part of their historical narrative.[355] Yet what did Peter mean by this reference to testing

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[353] Peter Roennfeldt, "Holy Spirit Praxis: A Frame for Contextualization," in *A Man of Passionate Reflection: A Festschrift Honoring Jerald Whitehouse* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 2011), 77–78.

[354] Glenny, "Septuagint," 19.

[355] See Deut 6:16.

God? In what sense could burdening the Gentiles with the law be compared to testing God? The idea of testing is best understood in terms of a disregard for the power and work of God. In the case of Peter, he was sure of God's power and work among the Gentiles, as were Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:12). The Gentiles had been presented with the same Gospel truth as the Jewish believers and had been brought into union with Christ via the same path of grace. To insist that they, or anyone, should adhere to the law as a path toward salvation was to be seen as a total disregard for the power and work of God. There was one way to be brought into communion with God, regardless of ethnic origin or religious persuasion, and that was the path of grace. This singular path of grace also brings forward the idea of inclusivity, as all peoples and nations are brought into union with Christ and, by extension, one another.

Progressing further into the unfolding description of the Jerusalem Council, it is important to examine James's discourse in Acts 15:13–18. James's participation in the Council marks the third speech delivered before the leadership which had gathered. The discourse presented by James is viewed as the most significant of the three, given that his declaration brought closure to the debate.[356] There is an interesting balance found in James's discourse as he brought forward issues that would have been relevant to all involved. James demonstrated conviction over the inclusion of the Gentiles while also demonstrating sensitivity to critical aspects of Jewish life and tradition, yet doing so in such a way that the law was removed as both an option and requirement for salvation.

Within James's discourse two essential elements should be noted. The first relates to Gentile inclusion as James demonstrates agreement with and acceptance of Peter, Paul, and Barnabas's evaluation of God's work among the Gentiles, placing special emphasis on that

[356] See Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 860–981.

which Peter presented. James clearly says that Peter's account finds agreement (*συμφωνοῦσιν*) with the prophets, thus leading him into the Amos 9:11–12 quotation found in Acts 15:16–18. It is important to note the way in which "the salvation of the nations was placed within the context of Tanach prophecy and the will of God, which was to serve as the alternative to human compulsion forcing people to do things."[357]

Most often, emphasis is placed only on the importance of and relationship of the Amos 9:11–12 quotation in Acts 15:16–18, but it is equally important to consider other OT prophetic passages which speak to the very theme of James's discourse, such as Isaiah 2:23; 45:20–23, Jeremiah 12:15–16, and Zechariah 8:22.[358] James uses the Amos 9:11–12 text interpreted with these and other OT texts to indicate the rebuilding of the Davidic line "in order to provide the exegetical foundation for the theological position that Peter, Barnabas and Paul, and he himself are advocating."[359] Agreement is found with Schnabel's explanation that the events of Acts 15 "reflects what the prophets teach and confirms the conviction of Peter, Paul, and James that uncircumcised Gentiles can become members of God's people, marking it as fulfillment of God's promises."[360] In addition, the particular prohibitions outlined in Acts 15:19–20 parallel both Genesis 9:4–6 and *Jubilees* 7:20–21.[361]

Further, analysis of James's language concerning the visitation of God upon the Gentiles demonstrates an interesting level of intertextuality. James's assertion in Acts 15:14 that "God

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[357] John K. McKee, "Acts 15:19–21: Answering: The Verses Given against Torah Validity," in *New Testament Validates Torah Maximum Edition: The New Testament Does Not Abolish the Law of Moses* (McKinney, TX: Messianic Apologetics, 2017), 147.

[358] Schnabel, "Acts," 639.

[359] Ibid., 640.

[360] Ibid., 638.

[361] Ibid.

first visited the Gentiles, to take from among them a people for his name" is reminiscent of language used by Luke throughout his corpus (i.e., Luke 1:68, 78; 7:16; 19:44; Acts 7:23). In addition, the language concerning the choosing of a people is reminiscent of OT passages such as Deuteronomy 7:6, although there is a distinction to be made between the OT and NT references. In the context of the OT, the theme of choosing or taking was used in reference to God's calling of Israel, while in Acts 15, this choosing and calling are extended to the Gentiles. As God has taken a people for himself in the nation of Israel, he has also taken a people for himself from among the Gentiles. Agreement is found with Bock's assertion that this is highly reminiscent of what the OT prophetic corpus signals concerning the inclusion of the Gentiles into the people of God in passages such as Isaiah 2:2, 45:20–23; Jeremiah 12:15–16; Hosea 3:4–5; and Zechariah 2:11, 8:22.[362] As such, Acts 15:16–18 employs an intricate level of intertextuality, utilizing the singular reference to Amos 9:11–12 yet incorporating the larger OT prophetic themes of salvation, inclusion, and restoration.

The Meaning and Impact of James's Discourse and Decree in Acts 15

Following the rebuttal arguments of Peter, Paul, and Barnabas to the pharisaical insistence over circumcision, it was James who provided both a compromise and a decree upon which the church could continue to function and grow. In Acts 15:19–21 James made clear that it was unacceptable to cause the Gentiles needless difficulty in turning to God (Acts 15:19). Then, as a compromise acceptable to all parties, he asserted that the Gentiles should follow only four basic expectations for table fellowship to maintain unity with the Jewish believers (15:20), in essence respecting the most important elements of the law. It was a proposal that would allow for

[362] Bock, *Acts*, 503.

the acceptance of Gentile Christians without the requirement of circumcision.[363] Yet it was also a proposal that took into consideration Jewish sensitivities related to table fellowship, sensitivities which, if left unaddressed, would have left the church in a scenario in which the tenets of Acts 2:42–47 would have been impossible to realize. The inclusion of the specific prohibitions was indicative of not an either–or but rather a both–and perspective of the church in which both Israel and the Gentile nations were to enjoy fellowship having been grafted together into the singular Body of Christ. From the contemporary viewpoint, the four prohibitions may seem of little significance. Yet to fully understand the meaning and implications of these prohibitions, it is important that each one is examined from the perspective and context in which they were decreed. To that end, there are various opinions on how the prohibitions should be examined.

The first perspective centers on the idea that the prohibitions are tied to the basic ethical principles of rabbinic literature concerning idolatry and immorality. This idea emerged from the time of the Hadrianic revolt, which established that "Jews need not submit to martyrdom for minor issues, but held that three tests were nonnegotiable: idolatry, bloodshed, and sexual immorality."[364] Presumably, this is the weakest of the four perspectives, given that it is founded upon Western interpretations that do not consider that the textual evidence supports a reading of all four elements rather than three.

The second perspective identifies the prohibitions as being related to activity in pagan temples. This perspective, not unlike the first, focuses on the ethical questions of idolatry, immorality, and ceremonial defilement.[365] This perspective arguably has more merit than the

[363] Bock, *Acts,* 503.

[364] Keener, *Acts,* 274.

[365] Julius Scott Jr., *Jewish Backgrounds of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1995), 347.

first, given that it focuses on "temptations that appeared together at pagan temple festivals," the setting where "many Gentiles would encounter these temptations together."[366] However, this also misses the mark because if pagan temple activity had been the primary focus intended by James, he could have been more direct in speaking to this point. In addition, idol food was widely available well beyond the context of temple activities, so ultimately this perspective is deemed too narrow in scope.

A third view is linked to Leviticus 17–18, which "provided Israelites clear biblical guidance for how to live with Gentiles among them."[367] This is an interesting view given that the listing of the prohibitions textually follows James's employment of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18.[368] It is important to note the appropriation of Amos 9 and how the issues of the exilic state of God's people and Gentile inclusion in his plan are addressed. A level of eschatological awareness is needed here, giving consideration to the fact that "if Gentiles would be '*among* God's people' in the end time … perhaps the eschatological ingathering of Gentiles should be regulated by rulings in the Torah for Gentiles."[369] It is upon this consideration then that Leviticus 17–18 comes into play as it also lists four commands concerning (1) idol food in 17:8–9, (2) "blood" in 17:10–12, (3) "strangled" in 17:13 and (4) sexual immorality in 18:26.[370] The form and function of each of the prohibitions mentioned in Acts 15:29 should be noted.

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[366] Keener, *Acts*, 276.

[367] Ibid.

[368] Lea, *New Testament*, 312.

[369] Keener, *Acts*, 277.

[370] Chad Brand, Charles Draper, and Archie England, eds., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville: Hollman Bible Publishers, 2003), 88.

Beginning with "food sacrificed to idols" (*εἰδωλοθύτων*), there is correspondence with Leviticus 17:8–9, "which forbids offering a sacrifice whose meat could be eaten and not bringing it to the temple,"[371] which, when read considering Leviticus 17:7 clearly connects these meats with idolatry. Secondly, the prohibition of "blood" (*αἵματος*) corresponds to both 17:10 and 12. Third, the prohibition of "meat of strangled animals" (*πνικτών*) is a clear correspondence to Leviticus 17:13, "which is actually a positive prescription to drain the blood from animals."[372] Lastly, "sexual immorality" (*πορνείας*) corresponds to Leviticus 18:26 and the prohibition to participate in all classes of illicit sexual behavior. Glenny stipulates that the inclusion of these specific prohibitions is directly related to Jewish Christian exegesis of Scripture.[373] While this perspective is much stronger than the previous two, it could also be viewed as too narrow in scope as Leviticus 17–18 "offers guidance only for life in Eretz Israel, not in the Diaspora."[374]

The fourth perspective indicates that the prohibitions listed by James in Acts 15:19–20 echo the Noahide laws, or the rabbinic understanding of what God required of the non-Jewish descendants of Noah. These were general laws that applied to all men yet were distinct from those applied to Israel. The understood principle behind these laws, the six commandments given to Adam, plus the prohibition of meat with blood given during the time of Noah,[375] indicated that a Gentile who kept the Noahide laws could be declared righteous. Genesis 9:4–6 undergirds this potential perspective as it demonstrates that God forbade the Noahides to eat blood or murder

[371] Glenny, "Septuagint," 21.

[372] Ibid.

[373] Bauckham, "James and the Gentiles," 175–78.

[374] Keener, *Acts,* 278.

[375] Ibid., 279.

people,[376] as does *Jubilees* 7:20–21 which speaks to the Noahic teaching of righteous laws.[377] The listing of the Noahide laws includes more items than those listed by James in Acts 15:19–21 yet there is an obvious level of parallelism.[378] This may be due to the fact that James simply listed the most critical elements of the law, or it was an expression of his own level of awareness that God had established certain expectations concerning idolatry and immorality from the time of Noah forward.

Examining the list of prohibitions, the question immediately emerges as to what was meant by idol food in the context of the first–century practices in which it was involved. This is a rather broad area as it included food offered to idols, food prepared for festivals and banquets, ceremonial meals related to Roman burial rituals, and even some social obligations.[379] All these practices involved the use of sacrificial meat, the surplus of which was often "gifted" to the poor. The critical concern for the Gentile and Jewish Christians considering this first prohibition was avoiding these surplus foods, especially meat that had not been killed and prepared properly.[380]

The next prohibition is found in Acts 15:20 and the specific use of the term *πορνεία* which "originally meant prostitution but came to apply to any sexual immorality."[381] The debate ranges over the meaning of the term from the narrow interpretation of incestuous marriage to adultery, prostitution, and even lust. Some Gentiles of this period practiced incestuous marriage and other sexually immoral acts, but "most Gentiles in the Pauline geographic sphere" opposed

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[376] Keener, *IVP Bible*, 366.

[377] *Sib. Or.* 4.24–34.

[378] Keener, *IVP Bible*, 365.

[379] Gundry, *Commentary*, 534.

[380] Brand, Draper, and England, *Holman*, 590.

[381] *Tob* 4:12; 8:7.

incest, as did Paul.[382] The general Jewish perspective of Gentile life, however, included all levels of sexual immorality. It was a perspective riddled with a lack of trust over the purity of Gentile sexual behavior. Their suspicions were not without foundation, yet their standards could be classified as extreme given, for example, one later stipulation that suggested: "that one should assume a female proselyte to be a virgin only if she is under the age of three years and one day."[383] Jewish concern over sexual purity applied to both Jews and Gentiles alike as they detested premarital sex, adultery, prostitution, and even lust.[384] According to *Jubilees* 20:3, it was imperative to keep oneself sexually pure, avoiding all the previously mentioned activities.

The final two prohibitions will be considered collectively, given their overlapping elements. The reference to "blood" in Acts 15:20 recalls the OT laws against meat with blood remaining in it (see above reference to Noahide laws). To be clear, both in the OT and in the decree of Acts 15:20, meat was not prohibited as a food product in and of itself. Meat could be consumed as long as it had been drained of all its blood.[385] The prohibition was against the eating of blood, although some strictly interpreted the law also to mean even avoiding getting blood on oneself.

Acts 15:21 brings the decree to a close with a reference to the fact that since the time of Moses, each city had received the teaching of the law as read in the synagogues every Sabbath.[386] Although it was necessary to establish and communicate a written decree applicable to the Gentiles, this was not the case as applied to the Jews because they had the benefit of

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[382] Keener, *Acts,* 290.

[383] Ibid., 291.

[384] Ibid.

[385] *Jub*. 6:6–7.

[386] Stott, *Message of Acts*, 436.

knowing the law established by Moses for many generations. The law had been preached (*κατα, πολιν*) even in Antioch, and as such, those Jewish Christ followers had the knowledge of that which was applicable to them for maintaining their heritage and identity. The Jews had not been without knowledge of the specific requirements necessary for inclusion within the faith, and now the Gentiles would also know what applied to them.

The issue of circumcision was not directly addressed in the Council's decree but rather, the focus was provided on what was required to establish and maintain fellowship among Jewish and Gentile Christians.[387] Whereas the regulations concerning idolatry and immorality were obviously important to the religious and social construct of the emerging church, even more so was what the adherence to these actions signaled. Just as Jesus maintained these aspects of the law, he also broke the social barriers many Jews held in high esteem, interacting and fellowshipping with Gentiles. Reflecting upon this larger context, it becomes clear that the real issue of concern was not only over the salvation of the Gentiles as prophesized by Amos but also that which is indicated in Acts 1:6 about "the future restoration of the Davidic kingdom to Israel which is still to come,"[388] that kingdom which was to consist of Jew and Gentile, a kingdom in which there was to be no difference between Jew and Gentile, a truth which was to be beautifully illustrated through the exercise of table fellowship formally ushered into the church under the guise of Gentile inclusion into the faith.

Upon the foundation of what has been examined to this point, what may be concluded concerning the matter of continuity/discontinuity between Judaism and the church in Acts? Luke maintained balance, recognizing the place of the Jewish Christ follower while at the same time

[387] Lea, *New Testament*, 313.

[388] Ibid.

demonstrating the clear and dramatic shift towards Gentile inclusion in the church. There is no sense that Luke is proffering an either–or scenario but rather pointing towards what Paul himself argued in Romans 10:12, stating that "there is no difference between Jew and Gentile— the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him."

The Relationship and Function of the Prophets in Acts

At this juncture, attention must begin to shift towards the analysis of the NT usage of the OT as demonstrated in the appropriation of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18. Yet prior to looking specifically at the contextual and textual nuances of the passage, it is important to consider Luke's usage of OT prophecy in general in his corpus. The argument could be made to analyze Luke's general usage of the OT canon in Luke–Acts, yet, given the prophetic nature of the passage under investigation, the specificity of focusing on OT prophetic references is deemed to be of principal concern.

The foundation upon which this portion of the research is built is the uniquely Jewish tone found in many passages throughout Luke–Acts, beginning with Luke 1:46–55, the *Magnificat*, in which Mary offered her prayer of thanksgiving for being chosen as the mother of the Messiah, a prayer which concluded with a focus on Israel. From the very outset of his life, Jesus, the Incarnate Lord, was to come as a "remembrance of his mercy" to Israel.[389] His coming was in fulfillment of all that had been promised in covenantal surety to the patriarchs and foretold by the prophets. There had been a clear and direct line drawn from Adam to Christ, a line defined in terms of the Jewish people, a great line of descendants in whom the Gentiles would be grafted (Rom 11:17–24). Gerald McDermott makes an interesting observation concerning Mary's prayer, stipulating that if, as the supersessionists argue, "the purpose of the

[389] McDermott, *Israel Matters*, 21.

incarnation was to turn attention away from the particularities of Israel and to focus exclusively on the gentile world,"[390] then her prayer and focus on Israel seems oddly out of place. Yet as Luke–Acts unfolds, it becomes increasingly evident that the Incarnation was a capstone moment in the history of salvation, important to both Jew and Gentile alike. However, Jesus's mission was primarily focused on the people of Israel (see Luke 1:16, 68, 80; 2:25, 32, 34; 24:30; 24:21).

Upon this foundation, attention now turns to Luke's use of OT prophetic material in Acts. The initial question of concern centers on the level of inclusivity and frequency with which Luke cited prophetic material.[391] As the following list demonstrates, considering the length and breadth of Acts, the number of prophetic references, quotations, and allusions is but a fraction of the whole. However, even in this small number of references, there is a concentrated focus on the Messianic promise, first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles.

NT Reference	**OT Reference**	**Thematic/Topical/Theological Focus**
Acts 2:17–21	Joel 2:28–32	The outpouring of the Holy Spirit
Acts 7:42–43	Amos 5:25–27	The disobedience of Israel
Acts 7:49–50	Isaiah 66:1–2	The greatness of God
Acts 8:32–33	Isaiah 53:7–8	The Suffering Servant and Messiah
Acts 13:34	Isaiah 55:3	The Messiah of Davidic descent
Acts 13:41	Habakkuk 1:5	The righteous judgment of God upon the nations
Acts 13:47	Isaiah 49:6	The one Messiah for all peoples
Acts 15:16–18	Amos 9:11–12	The salvation of the Gentiles
Acts 28:26–27	Isaiah 6:9–10	The condemnation of the Jews

In examining this list, it is important to note that Luke's usage of the prophets was limited in the strictest sense of prophetic material. However, as Glenny stipulates, references to the "prophets in Acts 15:15 ('the words of the prophets') could include material from Samuel and Chronicles," as well as the references to the "prophets" in Acts 3:24 "which are described as

[390] McDermott, *Israel Matters,* 21.

[391] See Uppsala's treatment of "Luke's Use," 227–35.

beginning with Samuel."[392] Specific to the usage of Amos, however, in addition to the Amos 9:11–12 quotation, Luke cites Amos only on one other previous occasion, Acts 5:25–27, a passage that is Israel–centered. Focusing on the Amos 9:11–12 usage by Luke in Acts 15:16–18, it is imperative that the question be asked if this specific OT prophetic passage has any correlation to or with any other passage from within the larger prophetic canon. The answer to this question, to be expanded upon in the following list, is that it does find a correlation beyond the confines of the closing chapter of Amos:

Amos 9:11–12	**Prophetic Corpus**	**Correlating Themes**
"After this"	Hosea 3:5	Israel's return to Yahweh and the Davidic king.
"I will return"	Zechariah 8:3	The nations will learn the ways of God.
	Jeremiah 12:15	
"will seek"	Zechariah 8:22–23	The nations seek Yahweh in Jerusalem.
"nations"	Zechariah 2:14–17	The nations become the people of God
"makes these things"	Isaiah 45:21	An allusion to the inclusion of the nations.

What these correlations indicate is that within James's speech and specific usage of Amos 9:11–12 there is an intricate presentation of a larger prophetic theme and message concerning Yahweh and the nations. These word connections are recognized as a likely use of *gezerah shavah*, an aspect of Jewish hermeneutics known to be used during this period.[393] Yet what is to be understood through these correlations? Considering the entire narration of the Jerusalem Council,

[392] Glenny, "Septuagint," 20.

[393] "The exegetical principle of *gezerah shavah* (גזרה שוה; lit., "equal ordinance") is an argument from analogy: one text is interpreted in the light of another text with which it shares a word or a phrase. This principle is one of Hillel's seven principles (middot) that describe the techniques of rabbinic exegesis." Hermann L. Strack and Günter Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1996), 16–20.

including the three speeches, James's argument and specific use of Amos 9:11–12 is to be read and understood not only in terms of the immediate context of Amos 9 but in terms of the prophetic corpus, which according to Luke, agreed with the witness of Paul, Barnabas, and Peter.

The Function of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18

An additional aspect of research necessary to the development of this investigation is the question of the intertextual relationship and function of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18 and its implications for the debate over the interpretation of the Law of Moses ("custom of Moses," 15:1) concerning the place of Gentiles in the eschatological people of God.[394] As has been established, this point of debate led to the need for the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 and James's discourse in which he quoted from "Amos 9 LXX, which differs markedly from the MT."[395] As Glenny points out, there are questions about the passage's meaning and the "exegetical method employed in interpreting the OT, and its historical credibility,"[396] all of which are critical elements to the development of this research. At this juncture, however, it is necessary to examine in detail the interpretive questions surrounding the rebuilding of the tent of David as alluded to in the employment of Amos 9:11–12.

There are generally five approaches to interpreting the "tent of David," those being either a reference to the Messiah, the city of Jerusalem, the Temple, a combination of both city and sanctuary or the Davidic kingdom and its return to prominence. Yet beyond the recognition of these basic correlations, consideration should be given to the implications of what they mean in terms of the Jewish–Gentile / Israel–church relationship. Haenchen, who is a proponent of the

[394] Marshall, "Acts," 588–89.

[395] Glenny, "Septuagint," 2.

[396] Ibid., 3.

idea that the "tent of David" corresponds to the Messiah, insists that the reference must be read through a Christological filter, thus leading to the idea that the rebuilding and restoration of the "tent of David" correlates to the resurrection of Jesus, in which the Davidic covenant is fulfilled.[397] Glenny while accepting the theological attractiveness of this argument, refutes its exegetical soundness given the replacement of "the verb *ἀνίστημι* in the LXX Amos text with *ἀνοικοδομέω*" not once but two times.[398] Glenny views this as an odd grammatical choice to make, stipulating that if, in fact, the focus of the passage was on the resurrection of Jesus, it would have been preferable to use the verb *ἀνίστημι* to signal the resurrection.

For others, such as Jacob Jervell, the "tent of David" refers to a "restored Israel made up of Jews who have accepted Jesus as their messiah."[399] The implications of Jervell's perspective is that it signals that the salvation of Gentiles, which is to follow the salvation of the Jews (Acts 15:16-17), is "what the restoration of the fallen tent of David refers to."[400] Carrying this thought through, the argument could be made "that restored Israel remains a group distinct from the Gentiles within the church, the people of God."[401] This is, however, an interpretation that is in contextual disharmony with the NT in general and Acts 15 in particular, in addition to forcing the phrase "tent of David" to say something that it never was intended to mean.

It is within this type of perspective that theological presuppositions become evident concerning the relationship between the Jews and the Gentiles, as well as Israel and the church.

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[397] Haenchen, *Acts of the Apostles*, 448.

[398] Glenny, "Septuagint," 3.

[399] Jacob Jervell, *Luke and the People of God* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2002), 92–93.

[400] Ibid.

[401] Mark L. Strauss, *The Davidic Messiah in Luke-Acts: The Promise and Its Fulfillment in Lukan Christology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 188.

For example, Mark Straus stipulates that a commonly accepted interpretation of rebuilding the tent of David is defined in terms of "the restoration of true Israel," which is, in fact, the "church as a whole" formed by both Jews and Gentiles.[402] This is a perspective that finds support in Bauckham's argument that the "*exegete* reflected in Acts 15 understood the "tent of David" to refer to "the Temple of the messianic age," which is the Christian community.[403] Yet again, this seems to force the text to say something not originally intended. Glenny argues "that the rebuilt tent of David in Acts 15:16 be differentiated from the Gentiles' seeking the Lord, as Gentiles, described in 15:17."[404] On the premise of this interpretation, at least part of the purpose of the tents rebuilding is argued as coming into focus, that being, "so that"[405] the Gentiles may seek the Lord and become his people (15:16–17). Yet it is this very point which is problematic because the Gentiles seeking after the Lord is something distinct from the purpose of the rebuilding of the tent. It is a perspective that disregards the Davidic covenant and God's promise to "raise up your offspring," … "establish his kingdom," … "build a house for my name," … "establish the throne of his kingdom forever" (2 Sam 7:12–16). This is a critical point to take into consideration in analyzing this Temple–Christian community interpretation, as well as the idea that the "tent of David" refers to "the whole plan of God accomplished through Jesus' resurrection and the establishment of the church."[406] This is the stance of Bruce who views Acts 15 as evidence that members of the church were being identified as Israel:

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[402] Strauss, *Davidic Messiah*, 188.

[403] Bauckham, "James and the Gentiles," 181.

[404] Glenny, "Septuagint," 6.

[405] Analysis of the Greek text demonstrates the use of *όπως αν* with an aorist subjunctive at the beginning of Acts 15:17.

[406] Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of the Acts*, 310.

> James's application of the prophecy finds the fulfillment of its first part (the rebuilding of the tabernacle of David) in the resurrection and exaltation of Christ, the Son of David, and the reconstitution of His disciples as the new Israel and the fulfillment of its second part in the presence of believing Gentiles as well as believing Jews in the church.[407]

These interpretations demonstrate a definite supersessionist hermeneutic yet fail to take into consideration certain logical questions surrounding Gentile inclusion. If the rebuilt tent is representative of the whole plan of God or even the entire Christian community, then by extension, the Gentiles are already involved in a scenario in which they are coming to God. If that is the case, then how can the argument be made that the result or purpose of the rebuilding of the tent is Gentile inclusion? Whereas these supersessionist perspectives may sound theologically attractive or even reasonable, they disregard both the covenantal relationship of God with Israel as well as that which the NT purports concerning a future ingrafting or inclusion of the Gentiles. Thus, the previous stipulation that the restoration or rebuilding of the "tent of David" is a reference to "the restoration of the Davidic dynasty accomplished through the life, death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus" is upheld.[408] This, in turn, is an essential element to be used in defense of the post-supersessionist hermeneutic, as the "tent" is not the church nor Israel but the restored Davidic line and reign. This is arguably the most reasonable interpretation given its alignment with the Amos 9:12 reference in *4QFlorilegium* which presents 2 Samuel 7:10–11 in terms of "God's promise to David regarding the eternal rule of his descendants."[409] This is the most appropriate interpretation of the MT and LXX Amos 9 reference and is one which is consistent with Peter's mentioning of Davidic fulfillment in his sermon in Acts 2 and by extension, is compatible with Luke's theological framework.

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[407] F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 310.

[408] Strauss, *Davidic Messiah*, 188.

[409] Reed Carlson, "A Structure for the End of the World: *4QFlorilegium* and the "'Latter Days'," *Early Jewish Tradition, Word & World* 40 (2020): 250.

Brandon Crowe provides an interesting interpretive perspective on this point, focusing on "the textual differences between Acts 15, the Old Greek, and the Masoretic Text."[410] As has been established, Luke does not follow an exact duplication of the LXX, although there are many similarities. In addressing the textual differences, Crowe examines the way the MT aligns and/or deviates from the LXX. In doing so, it becomes clear that there is a critical point of difference found in "the change from "possess" (*yāraš*) in Amos 9:12 MT to "seek" (*ekzēteō*) in the Septuagint (which Luke follows in Acts 15:17)."[411] Yet why is this important? In truth, it has great relevance because "in the Masoretic Text the remnant of Edom … will be possessed by the people of God," and in the LXX as well as Acts, "the remnants of all the nations will seek (the Lord)."[412] Crowe provides an interesting perspective for understanding these differences asserting that "the best way to understand the reception of the Masoretic Text tradition in the Septuagint" … "is to correlate seeking the Lord to being possessed by the people of God—or perhaps better, being incorporated into the people of God."[413]

The conclusion that can be made is that there is a connection or bond between the Israelite remnant and the Gentile nations. The remnant, or the remnant of Edom, indicates that Edom and the other Gentile nations "will come under the reign of this coming Davidic–King, the Messiah."[414] The idea of the OT remnant "builds a bridge between the outworking of divine

[410] Crowe, *Hope of Israel*, 176.

[411] Ibid.

[412] Ibid.

[413] Ibid.

[414] Walter Kaiser Jr., *The Messiah in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 147.

judgment and the possibility of salvation,"[415] sometimes pointing to Israel as a whole while also indicating that even some outside of Israel will form part of the faithful remnant (Isa 49:3–6).

The covenantal promises made to David and Israel would be shared with a non–Jewish element, the Gentile nations. Given the eschatological nature of this passage, it is reasonable to argue that the renewal of the Davidic dynasty will not only consist of those peoples formerly under Israelite control but extend to all the nations, notably a critical aspect of Lukan missiology as outlined in Acts. The universality of the mission of God comes to the forefront in Luke's description of the Jerusalem Council and the subsequent decisions which emerged from this context.

The Contextual Background of Amos 9:11–12

Amos 9:1-10 establishes the background upon which 9:11–15 is to be read and understood as a verdict of destruction upon Israel is announced through the Lord's vision to Amos. Throughout the book, the prophet depicts how far Yahweh's chosen people have strayed. As a nation they had come to experience great wealth and power (Amos 3:15; 6:4–7), yet they no longer recognized their covenantal commitment to their sovereign Lord.[416] They oppressed the poor (Amos 2:6; 5:11; 8:4–6), distorted justice (Amos 5:7), and turned to idolatry (Amos 5:21–26).[417] Against such flagrant rejection and disobedience, their holy and righteous God would act in bringing judgment upon his chosen people. God provides Amos a prolific image of the

[415] Leslie C. Allen, "Images of Israel: The People of God in the Prophets," in *Studies in Old Testament Theology: Historical and Contemporary Images of God and God's People*, ed. Robert L. Hubbard Jr., Robert K. Johnston, and Robert P. Meye (Dallas: Word, 1992), 163.

[416] Frank H. Seilhamer, "The Role of Covenant in the Mission and Message of Amos," in *A Light unto My Path: Old Testament Studies in Honor of Jacob M. Meyers*, ed. Howard N. Bream et al. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1974), 447–48.

[417] Paul E. Eickmann, "Exegesis of Amos 9:11–15 with an Outline for an Advent Sermon," WLQ 102 (2005): 263–4.

judgment which awaits Israel, an image that crescendos into a climactic expression in 9:1–4 as Yahweh appears at the altar to call for the destruction of those who have sinned against him.

Although the book of Amos does not contain the word "covenant," the concept, framework and relational aspects dominate and undergird both the theme of judgment found in much of the text, as well as the promise of salvation and restoration in 9:11–15. To read Amos through any filter other than that of covenant relationship and commitment will lead to an incomplete and inaccurate interpretation of the text.[418]

God demonstrates his intent to deliver judgment and wrath, first instructing Amos to initiate the destruction of Israel and then destroying those who attempted to hide and avoid justice (9:1–4). Against this background of destruction and judgment, God's authority is announced as his power over the heavens and earth is declared (9:5–6). God makes clear the authority with which he has both pronounced judgment and will bring forth woe and condemnation upon all who have rejected his sovereignty. The Lord's verdict of destruction is then further emphasized as Amos compares Israel to the surrounding nations, promising destruction upon those and only those who have sinned against him (9:7–10), metaphorically shaking Israel through a sieve, purging, and purifying in the process.[419] It is upon this background of judgment and purification that Amos then portrays ultimate hope through the maximum expression of God's faithfulness to his covenantal agreement, the promise of a future restoration of his people.

Speaking generally to the genre of Amos 9, the poetic nature of the metaphorical language used by the prophet shines through. However, it is insufficient to classify the chapter

[418] Pierre Berthoud, "The Covenant and the Social Message of Amos," EuroJTh 14 (2005): 104–06.

[419] See John Barton, *The Theology of the Book of Amos* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

generally, and v. 11–15 specifically, as poetry without also recognizing the prophetic message woven into the framework of the passage. This is established from 9:1 forward as the text records what Amos *saw* (רָאִיתִי) and *heard* (וַיֹּאמֶר) from the Lord concerning the future. Amos's use of phrases such as "in that day" (9:11) and "declares the Lord," (9:7, 8, 12) are highly recognizable elements of prophetic literature that qualify its classification as such.

The closing verses of chapter nine, which subsequently close out the book, shine a defining light on the judgment prophesied against Israel in Amos 9:1–6. The passage can easily and naturally be divided into two subsections, 9:7–10 and 9:11–15. Amos 9:7–10 further explains the meaning of the imminent judgment declared in the opening verses of the chapter, while 9:11–15 portrays a future hope and salvation which lies somewhere and sometime beyond God's judgment, a depiction of restoration of "my people Israel". The eschatological hope lies in seeing and understanding that salvation lies beyond judgment.[420] "The description of hope is brief and vague, a hyperbolic portrayal of peace and the provision of a different social image."[421] From 9:11 forward to the end of the chapter, the tone is distinctive from that which comes before, pointing to God's intended plan for restoration, ultimately signaling the coming of the Messiah.

Throughout the prophets, there are many messianic promises couched within literary problem-solution structures (i.e., Isa 9:6-7; 53; Mic 5:2-5; Zech 9:9-10). The recurring problem, as cited by the prophets, including Amos, "was that the righteous remnant of Israel would suffer alongside the apostates,"[422] but there was also a solution extended to the faithful remnant, in that

[420] Tchavdar S. Hadjiev, "The Context as Means of Redactional Reinterpretation in the Book of Amos," JTS 59 (2004): 666.

[421] M. Daniel Carroll, *The Book of Amos* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020), 931.

[422] Grant Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 53.

God promised that he would "not totally destroy the house of Jacob" (Amos 9:8). "While the sinners would die (Amos 9:10), God himself would "raise up the fallen booth of David."

Integration of Amos 9:11–15 into the Larger Message of Amos

The portrayal of salvation embedded in the restoration oracle of 9:11–15 is quite an abrupt change in theme and purpose from the rest of Amos, yet it springs forth like a phoenix from the ashes of destruction in 9:1–10. While Amos has focused on disseminating the message of God's impending judgment throughout the text, in these last five verses, he "reversed the irreversible."[423] God's burning anger will be appeased, and the covenantal promises made by Yahweh concerning the eternality of the Davidic line will come to fruition. Even though the oracle of salvation abruptly ends the book of Amos, there is nothing inconsistent in its message and purpose. Stephen Bramer states that Amos "conveys a message that is consistent with itself in the sense that all of the aspects of it relate logically to each other."[424] The logical construction and design of the book lend to the defense of a unified prophetic message. This is reinforced by looking at 9:7–10, which serves as a transition from "uncompromising judgment and total destruction (9:1–4 + 5–6) to an emerging hope for restoration."[425] 9:11–15 should not be viewed as an unexpected appendage but rather "an essential part of the book of Amos viewed as a literary composition."[426]

One critical and unifying element between Amos 9:11–15 and the larger context of the book is the recurring theme of the remnant. This is evidenced through several factors, including

[423] Stephen J. Bramer, "Analysis of the Structure of Amos 9," *BSac* 156 (1999): 161.

[424] Ibid., 174.

[425] Göran Eidevall, "Visions (7–9)," in *Amos: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 239.

[426] Ibid.

(1) the ominous descriptions of doom for Israel, which seem to reject the idea that all of Israel would form the remnant (Amos 3:12; 4:1–3; 5:3; 6:9–10; 9:1–4); (2) the fact that there was to be an eschatological remnant from within Israel (Amos 5:4–6, 15); and (3) the inclusion of "the remnant of Edom" and by extension other Gentile nations in receiving the blessing of the promise of the Davidic tradition (Amos 9:12). Amos was pointing to the idea of a "spiritual incorporation into the restored kingdom of David" as "that was the mediated promise God made to Abraham and David, that the "blessing" would come to the Gentiles as a result of God's using their offspring as a channel."[427]

Finally, the prophet's utilization of the phrase and theme of *the day of the Lord* is another important focal point of Amos and the passage under investigation. The *day of the Lord* refers to an eschatological event important to the message of Amos as well as the other prophets. This prophetic image points to a climactic event when God will establish his sovereign rule over all (see Zeph 1:14–18), understood as initiated in the first coming of Christ and fully completed in his second coming. It is the *day of the Lord* to which redemptive history is moving, that day in which God will be exalted through the Messiah (see Isa 9:6–7; 11:1–10). It is the moment in history when the remnant of Israel will fully enjoy God's presence and peace (Amos 9:11–15), and God will exercise final judgment on the nations while also bringing into his kingdom a remnant from among the Gentiles (see Zeph 3:8–10). It is the prophetic image and future hope for the coming Messiah upon which Amos concludes, that future day when Christ's death and resurrection would be recognized as the inaugurating moment bringing forth the *day of the Lord*.

[427] Kaiser, *Messiah*, 148.

Correlations between Amos 9:11–12 and the Prophetic Corpus

Whereas the central focus of this research is on the use and meaning of Amos 9:11–12 within the decree of the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15:16–18, it is arguably important to examine the relationship of the salvation oracle found at the close of Amos with that of the larger corpus of prophetic literature. The message of the salvation oracles found throughout the OT predicted "blessing, deliverance, or restoration," whether directed towards the nation of Israel or the nations in general.[428]

In the context of the book of Amos, the salvation oracle of 9:11-15 is placed after a long and detailed presentation of oracles of woe and judgment. Analysis of the structure of the OT salvation oracles demonstrates the inclusion of three common elements: "a messenger formula, a prediction of hope, and an emphatic restatement," all of which point to the Lord's singular intervention in fulfilling his covenantal promises.[429] It is a logical point to consider as the prophets were functioning as "covenant enforcement spokesmen," reminding the people that no human invention could bring about the enjoyment of covenantal blessings. [430] The salvation oracles of the prophetic corpus provide a sense of balance when compared to the oracles of woe and destruction, not unlike the balance found between "the curse and blessing of Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26." [431] Amos is an interesting case to consider within this point as in just five short yet descriptive verses, he demonstrates the glorious promise of God to redeem and restore the line of David. The shift is a radical one in the text, following more than eight chapters of woe

[428] Stephen J. Bramer, "The Literary Genre of the Book of Amos," *BSac* 156 (1999): 55.

[429] William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids; Zondervan Academic, 2017), 465.

[430] Bramer, "Literary Genre," 55.

[431] Ibid.

and judgment, yet the gloriousness of what God has promised through his restoration far outweighs the sense of impending doom depicted in the text.

Amos, as well as each of the works of the Minor Prophets, should be examined both for their individual context and meaning but also for the identification of the unifying theological themes found throughout the canonical unit of the Book of the Twelve. The reference to the Book of the Twelve is based upon the Jewish perspective that the individual literary units of the Minor Prophets (as designated within the Protestant canon) were originally viewed as a single literary work.[432] As Richard Fuhr and Gary Yates indicate, contemporary research into the Book of the Twelve has focused primarily "on the literary unity of the Twelve as a single collection rather than twelve separate writings."[433] Emphasis has been placed on identifying key terms and ideas which provide a basis for recognizing the "shared themes and motifs found in these books."[434] The resulting benefit of this research has been the recognition of unifying theological messages within the Book of the Twelve, albeit described and depicted in unique forms in each of the individual literary units. It is this canonical interconnectivity and relationship which signals the importance of examining the place and function of Amos generally, and the salvation oracle of 9:11–15 more specifically, alongside and as part of the larger prophetic corpus.

Close examination of the book of Amos reveals that its content echoes the other prophetic works dated to the eighth century BCE (Hosea and Micah) as related to history, theology, and ethics. The unifying emphasis on the Assyrian threat on Israel and Judah, and the various causes of this threat are found throughout Hosea, Amos, and Micah. These factors, as well as "the

[432] Richard Fuhr and Gary Yates, *The Message of the Twelve: Hearing the Voice of the Minor Prophets* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2016), 69.

[433] Ibid.

[434] James Nogalski, "Literary Precursors to the Book of the Twelve," *BZAW* 217 (New York: de Gruyter, 1993), 13.

internal dating of these books to the Assyrian era" situated in their superscriptions, as well as "similar forms, generally featuring phrasing such as "the words of Yhwh which came to N.N." (although Amos 1:1 has a slightly different form, as "the words of Amos"),[435] provide a strong foundation upon which to examine their relationship and interconnectivity.

Looking to the book of Hosea, for example, and its opening, the stage is set for a well-developed and unifying theme of Israel's restoration as part of Yahweh's covenantal promises (Hos 1:9–11). Hosea signals that there was to be a future "reunion of the northern and southern kingdoms under 'one head' which is a probable reference to a future Davidic king" (Hos 3:4–5).[436] Amos develops this theme even further through his prophetic messages concerning the coming day of the Lord and the "promise of the restoration of the 'falling booth of David'."[437] This is a critical point to consider, because if, as the supersessionists stipulate, there is no current place and function for Israel, then why reference the future promise of a restored state of the Davidic line?[438]

Not only does Amos find a correlation with those works explicitly dated within the same period but beyond to works such as Joel. Joel brings his work to a conclusion declaring judgment upon the nations and future deliverance for the nation of Israel, stating that "The Lord will roar from Zion and raise His voice from Jerusalem" (Joel 3:16). It is this description of the Lord as "a roaring lion and a devastating storm which opens the book of Amos (Amos 1:2)" as well as parallel references to the judgment of Tyre and Philistia (Joel 3:4; Amos 1:6, 9) and the depiction of the future restoration of Israel in terms of mountains dripping with sweet wine, and hills

[435] Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer and Jakob Wöhrle, eds., "The Book of the Twelve," VTSup 184 (2020): 139.

[436] Douglas K. Stuart, "Hosea–Jonah," *WBC* 31 (Waco: Word, 1987), 68.

[437] Stephen J. Bramer, "The Structure of Amos 9:7–15," *BSac* 156 (1999): 276.

[438] Bramer, "Structure," 276.

flowing with milk (Joel 3:18; Amos 9:13), which further undergird the thematic and theological unity of Amos with the larger prophetic corpus. [439]

The canonical intertextuality of Amos 9:11–15 with that of the other prophetic works is thusly set forth as a critical aspect of this investigation. This is an essential aspect of research, as it demonstrates that the salvation oracle included at the close of Amos was not an isolated and unrelated declaration but rather one additional and important stitch in the interwoven tapestry of salvation history, which was understood from the times of old as inclusive of Israel and the surrounding nations.

Relevant Theological Concepts

Building upon the foundation of the canonical place and function of Amos within the prophetic corpus and, by extension, the OT as a whole, investigative progress into the identification and analysis of specific theological themes is a natural next step in the methodology employed in this research. The delineation of these themes is built upon the identification of key terms in Amos 9:11–12 which are deemed to have a direct impact upon the interpretation and meaning of its reference in Acts 15:16–18, including but not limited to that of Edom (*אֱדוֹם, אֲדוֹמִי*), booth (*סֻכָּה*) and tabernacle (*σκηνή*), nations (*גּוֹי*), mankind (*ἄνθρωπος*,, Gentile (*ἔθνος*), and the remnant (*שְׁאֵרִית*).

Amos 9:11–15 opens a new and final pericope within the book of Amos as the prophet points to a promised era "in the future when God would intervene in the history of the world and bless the nation of Israel after a time of his judgment."[440] The eschatological future hope contained in this prophetic text points to a time in which the "tent of David" would be raised,

[439] Fuhr and Yates, *Message of the Twelve*, 73.

[440] Aaron W. White, *The Prophets Agree: The Function of the Book of the Twelve Prophets in Acts* (Boston: Brill, 2020), 184.

thus providing the people of God something to seek after. The futuristic overtones are noted in the manner in which the prophecy generally is read "as "in that day" the Lord will act "so that" what is promised to you, Israel, will be fulfilled."[441] There is an obvious emphasis on the "booth" or "tent of David that is "fallen," which points to the perceived motivation for God's promise in Amos 9:11. The assumption is made that the "tent of David" is in disrepair, yet in v.11 the Lord promises to "raise" and "rebuild" the tent from its fallen state.[442] The metaphorical language used in the text describes a future time of God's blessing and restoration. This last section of text may be generally divided into two smaller units, that of v. 11–12 and v. 13–15 considering the following structural devices according to which examination of the text will proceed.

	Amos 9:11–12	Amos 9:13–15
Opening phrase	"*in that day*" v. 11	"*behold, days are coming*" v. 13
Closing reference	"*declares the Lord*" v. 12	"*says the Lord your God*" v. 15

Amos had called for Yahweh's chosen nation to turn away from their covenantal infidelity, yet his word fell upon the hardened hearts of the nation, leading to the promise of judgment. That was until the final verses of Amos, where the prophet offered a portrayal of salvation through his reference to a future raising of "the fallen booth of David" (9:11). David's "house" (בַּיִת, a "dynasty" in 2 Sam 7:11) is here called a סֻכָּה to indicate the wretched state into which the Davidic dynasty and empire had fallen."[443] The use of the terminology *booth* in this verse echoes that of Isaiah 16:5 where it was proclaimed that "a *throne* will even be established in lovingkindness, and a judge will sit on it in faithfulness in the tent of David."

[441] White, *The Prophets Agree*, 184.

[442] Ibid.

[443] Duane A. Garrett, *Amos: A Handbook on the Hebrew Text* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2008), 238.

The words of the prophet signaled "the long-delayed fulfillment of the Davidic covenant,"[444] God's promise of unconditional commitment to uphold the Davidic line (see 2 Sam 7:10–16). God's divine assurance of the continuance of the Davidic line extended to and included the continuance of Israel. In addition, fulfillment of God's covenantal promises would bring about "his goal for mankind's history, his goal of restoring to rebellious mankind the goodness and blessing given at creation."[445] It would be through a descendant of David that God would bring restoration and blessing to Israel and all the nations.

Each of the OT covenants is uniquely important to salvation history, however the Davidic covenant is particularly important given God's unconditional promises to David: "Your house and kingdom will endure before Me forever, and your throne will be established forever" (2 Sam 7:16). David was promised a "house"—a dynasty; a "kingdom"—a nation/land; a "throne"—given the right to rule forever."[446] These promises were not fulfilled though until well after the time of David with the coming of the Messiah (Isa 11:1–5; Matt 1:1). "It is from the Davidic covenant that Amos offers comfort in his prophecy,"[447] which came in the form of his word of eschatological hope declaring that "in that day I will restore the fallen booth of David" (9:11).

Throughout the OT the theme of a promised future deliverer, the Messiah, occupies a place of prominence. However, the Davidic covenant is central to a proper understanding of this promise. To speak of the Davidic covenant is to first and foremost speak of the covenantal relationship which existed between Yahweh and his people, a relationship described through "the term covenant (בְּרִית, *berith, διαθήκη, diathēkē*)" which generally describes "a relationship

[444] Rydelnik and Blum, *Moody Handbook*, 1973.

[445] John Mauchline, "Implicit Signs of a Persistent Belief in the Davidic Empire," VT 20 (1970): 287.

[446] Rydelnik and Blum, *Moody Handbook*, 1973.

[447] Ibid.

established by oaths and/or promises between God and his people."[448] 2 Samuel 7:8–16; 23:5, Psalms 89:3–4 and 132:1–18 all speak to God's commitment to rule over his people through the promised Messiah. The importance of the Davidic covenant is illustrated through the extensive treatment of the topic in the OT, which stands second only to that of the treatment of the Mosaic covenant.[449]

Upon this understanding of the place and prominence of the Davidic covenant, the essence and meaning of Amos 9:11 may be examined through the interpretation of the Hebrew terminology and phraseology utilized in this passage. Amos 9:11 indicates that God will raise up a Messianic king *in that day* (*bayyom hahu*)[450] "an expression referring to the eschatological times that began in the New Testament era and will climax in the second coming of Christ."[451] Earlier in the book, this same phrase was used to pronounce impending judgment (2:16; 8:3) however, now the prophet begins to develop a new theme, one of future hope for restoration. There is a reversal from the theme of judgment to that of salvation.

God declared that he would raise up or restore קוּם[452] what was currently falling or fallen, a reference to the state of the Davidic dynasty at the time of Amos. However, the interpretation of this verse is open to much debate and discussion. Daniel Carroll outlines what he has identified as seven interpretive approaches to the reference to *the fallen booth of David (sukkat*

[448] Gregory R. Lanier, "Davidic Covenant," *LBD*.

[449] Jon D. Levenson, "The Davidic Covenant and its Modern Interpreters," *CBQ* 41 (1979): 206.

[450] James Swanson, *A Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

[451] Kaiser, *Messiah*, 145.

[452] Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages: Hebrew*.

dāvîd). The following list provides an overview of each of these interpretive perspectives in which *the fallen booth* is determined to be or equated with:

1. The Messiah, "a clearly confessional position."[453]
2. The city of Jerusalem which is defended by the later reference to the repair of the breaches and ruins and its correlation to a reference to Jerusalem (*sukkâ*) in Isaiah 1:8.
3. The Temple which also is defended by the later reference to the repair of the breaches and ruins.[454]
4. A combination of both city and sanctuary given that the Temple was in Jerusalem. This point could be seen as "an *inclusio* for the book, as Jerusalem and Zion appear in 1:2."[455] The weakness of this perspective, as explained by Carroll, is that the specificity with which Amos 1:2 and 6:1 name Jerusalem and Zion compared to the less precise title of *the booth of David* opens the door to doubt over the reference given that the future restoration may not necessarily be pointing to a literal reconstruction but rather a metaphorical one.
5. "*Sukkat* is a *scriptio defectiva* of Succoth (*sukkôt*)" which was a former military outpost (Judg 8:5–16) understood to be in ruins at the time of Amos's prophetic message (2 Kgs 10:32–33).[456] This perspective is built upon the idea that the

[453] See Calvin, 404–47; C. F. Keil, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament: Minor Prophets* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), 1:331.

[454] See John Anthony Dunne, "David's Tent as Temple in Amos 9:11–15: Understanding the Epilogue of Amos and Considering Implications for the Unity of the Book," *WTJ* 73 (2011): 363–74.

[455] Carroll, *The Book of Amos*, 935.

[456] H. Neil Richardson, "SKT (Amos 9:11): 'Booth' or 'Succoth'?," JBL 92 (1973): 375–81.

reconstruction of the outpost symbolizes "the restoration of the Davidic kingdom and its return to prominence."[457]

6. The Davidic kingdom[458] or the dynasty of David.[459] Agreement is found with Carroll in that this is the preferable interpretive option, yet the strongest defense of this perspective is found in the original language of the text itself, both the reference to the *booth of David* and the surrounding words and phrases.

The proper interpretation of this debated reference is presented as attainable only considering the fuller context of the verse. Amos establishes that *the fallen booth of David* would be raised up or restored קוּם (*aqûm*), a verb found in "critical moments when God intervenes to demonstrate his glory and his salvation" (see Deut 18:15).[460] The specific reference to the raising of the booth or tent encapsulates the idea of something which was in a deteriorated state (given the Hebrew participle with the definite article, *hannopelet)*.[461] For those who interpret this as a present active participle, emphasis would be on the fact that either its present state ("falling") or its impending state ("about to fall") indicated a serious decline in the state of the line of David in the days of Amos.[462] However, it is important to remember that the restoration of the Davidic line would involve the unification of the northern and southern tribes, which forces a retrospective look back to the division of the united monarchy in 931 BCE, which is recognized

[457] Carroll, *The Book of Amos*, 935.

[458] Ibid.

[459] Keil, *Biblical Commentary*, 1:329–31.

[460] Kaiser, *Messiah*, 145.

[461] See Kaiser, "Davidic Promise," 177–94.

[462] Kaiser, *Messiah*, 145.

as the historical moment when *the booth of David* fell. As such it is more reasonable to interpret the participle in the past tense (fallen).

Further, the reference to the *booth* is one that warrants comment, especially given its reference in the larger phrase, "booth of David." A booth was a temporary shelter that the Israelites were known to have "woven together" during the Feast of Tabernacles (root noun סֻכָּה *(sŭk·kā(h)).*[463] OT references to the "house of David" point to the prosperity of David's family, whereas this less dignified term "booth" was a reference to the demise of the family line. The classification as a less dignified term stems from the OT usage of *sukka* to depict "ruin experienced by Israel as a result of God's judgment."[464] Descriptions of this level of judgment are found in Amos as well (3:11–15), descriptions which pointed to exile and suffering, a truly deteriorated state of the Davidic line highlighted, for example, through *its broken places* and *its ruins*.[465] Amos's classification of the Davidic line reduced to a *sukka* in need of reconstruction and renewal depicts just how far the monarchy had fallen from its divine place and purpose. What is to be understood as the reason for God's raising of the fallen booth of David? The answer is embedded in 9:12a: "so that they may possess the remnant of Edom, and all the nations who are called by My name." However, just as certain grammatical questions are important to the proper interpretation of 9:11, so too is this the case in 9:12.

Beginning with the opening participle *ləmaʿan* (*so that*) there is a clear continuation of thought flowing from 9:11. It is important to note that the pronoun *they*, is a clear reference to *My people Israel* (9:14), indicating that this is a message specific to Israel. The message includes

[463] Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages: Hebrew*.

[464] Rydelnik and Blum, *Moody Handbook*, 1975.

[465] Garrett, *Amos*, 283.

the possession (*yîyrəšû*) of the remnant of Edom. In the context of the description of relationships between different peoples, there are two possible underlying implications given *vry*: (1) possession of an opposing group's territory and/or (2) "dispossession of its former occupants."[466] These implications are built upon the interpretation of "the *qal* which often focuses on the territory that is "possessed'' and the *hiphil* on the people group that is "dispossessed," even though each stem can convey either sense."[467] As Daniel C. Timmer argues though in this case "the consistently anthropological referent of *tywav* when in construct with a proper noun" points to people groups over that of territories.[468] The Edomite remnant referenced in 9:12 could be understood as a reference to those who remained following the oracle of judgment against them in Amos 1:11. However, given the second direct object in 9:12b, "all the nations over whom my name is called" it is impossible to limit the interpretation in this way. The reference in 9:12 warrants special consideration as it corresponds to the prophecy made by Balaam in Numbers 24:17–18 in which a "star" and a "scepter" would arise (or be "raised up") in Israel "to take possession of Edom."[469] What is clear coming to the close of Amos is that there is a time to come when Israel will overtake or supplant Edom. Considering the oracles against Edom, both within Amos and beyond to Joel and Obadiah, there was a time to come when the sins Edom visited upon God's chosen people would be judged and punished.[470]

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[466] Daniel C. Timmer, "Possessing Edom and All the Nations over Whom Yhwh's Name Is Called: Understanding ירש in Amos 9:12," *BBR* 29 (2019): 472.

[467] Ibid.

[468] Ibid.

[469] Kaiser, *Messiah*, 148.

[470] Anselm C. Hagedorn and A. Mein, *Aspects of Amos: Exegesis and Interpretation, LHBOTS* (New York: T&T Clark, 2011), 57.

Whereas the concept of possession often carried with it the idea of forceful control, this is somewhat softened in 9:12 by the idea that in this case possession is connected to being called by Yahweh's name. This is a common theme and concept in the OT in referencing the people of God, the nation of Israel. Yet here, that same reference and identity extend beyond Israel to other peoples. Here there is a clear sense of the positive implications of Yahweh calling his name over a people group, bringing both the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by Yahweh's name into relationship with him.

Why though, the reference to Edom and no other nations? Edom is highlighted because of the level of violence between Edom and Israel. Edom stood as a representative of all the nations who had opposed God's chosen nation. This is undergirded by the genitive construction of the phrase, which points to something even beyond Edom itself, that of all the surrounding nations.[471] The conclusion that can be made is that there is a connection or bond between the Israelite remnant and the Gentile nations. The remnant, or the remnant of Edom, indicates that Edom and the other Gentile nations "will come under the reign of this coming Davidic–King, the Messiah."[472]

Speaking generally to the concept and dynamic of a remnant (שְׁאָר) is to speak of a portion of a people or nation that stands following some level of tribulation, especially that associated with divine judgment. [473] Like the theme of covenant, that of the remnant also occupies a place of prominence in both the OT and NT. The prophets generally and Amos specifically speak of the remnant in terms of that percentage of God's chosen nation who

[471] Carroll, *The Book of Amos*, 935.

[472] Kaiser, *Messiah*, 147.

[473] Paul A. Nierengarten, "Remnant," *LBD*.

remained faithful to him and awaited his ultimate restoration and salvation. The idea of the OT remnant "builds a bridge between the outworking of divine judgment and the possibility of salvation,"[474] sometimes pointing to Israel while also indicating that even some outside of Israel will form part of the faithful remnant (Isa 49:3–6).

The covenantal promises made to David and Israel would be shared with a non–Jewish element, the Gentile nations. Given the eschatological nature of this passage, it is reasonable to argue that the renewal of the Davidic dynasty will not only consist of those peoples formerly under Israelite control but extend to all the nations. Given the use of the phrase "declares the Lord" and the specific use of נְאֻם, it is understood that the words of the prophet have been a direct declaration or oracle of the Lord. The terminology used is understood "as a marker of the origin and authority of the message in the discourse."[475] This is a definitive word, as declared by God, a word of divine authority, as this future restoration had been both purposed by Yahweh and would be brought forward by his power. The analysis of these theological terms and concepts is critical to a proper interpretation and application of the salvation oracle of Amos 9, both within its immediate context and later appropriation by James in the Jerusalem Council decree.

Early Jewish Understanding of Amos 9:11–12

To fully comprehend the meaning of any portion of Scripture, the interpreter must attempt to analyze the text from the interpretive perspective of both ancient Judaism and the early church. Applying contemporary hermeneutic methodologies alone may create a scenario in which the full scope of the meaning of the text may be skewed or even misinterpreted. To remedy these potential interpretive frustrations, it is important to examine the text with an

[474] Allen, "Images of Israel," 163.

[475] Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages: Hebrew*.

awareness of the hermeneutical and exegetical practices of first–century Judaism. Thus, by avoiding the application of "modern expectations of hermeneutics to the study of ancient Jewish interpretive methods,"[476] it will be possible to guard against an inaccurate understanding of the ancient Jewish interpretation of Amos 9:11–12.

Towards this objective, it is important to recall something of the historical context of first–century Judaism within the context of the Roman empire, a time in which most Greeks and Romans had negative feelings towards the Jews. These feelings were in no small part built upon the perception that "the Jewish religion and customs were strange according to Greek standards…and…the Jews were resented for their privileges and their efforts to secure further political advancement."[477]

From 37 to 4 BCE, the region known as Judea was a vassal state of the Roman Empire ruled by Herod the Great. After Herod's death, the territory was divided and occupied, which led to revolt by the Zealots who sought Jewish independence, as well as, the Sicarii, an extremist Zealot group. Flavius Josephus, author of *The Antiquities of the Jews*, provided an account of a century of Jewish revolts against Rome in which he outlined the role of the five sects of Jews at the time of Jesus: Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Zealots and Sicarii.[478] However, not all took the path of active resistance, as many took the position of pacifism, particularly the poorer class, who accepted the beneficial albeit somewhat intrusive role of the Romans.

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[476] Robert Sloan Jr. and Carey Newman, "Ancient Jewish Hermeneutics," in *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Introduction to Interpreting Scripture*, ed. Bruce Corley, Steve Lemke, and Grant Lovejoy (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 108.

[477] Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 428.

[478] Anthony J. Tomasino, *Judaism before Jesus: The Events and Ideas That Shaped the New Testament World* (Nottingham: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 285–89.

The Jews were facing a situation in which they had no way of escaping Roman control, yet they had great hope in a coming chosen deliverer, the Messiah, who was to come and restore the nation of Israel to its proper standing. In their waiting, some searched the Scriptures for clues as to when and how the Messiah would arrive, while others considered the possibility that they themselves were the awaited Deliverer.[479] The messianic prophecies, however, emphasized the character of the Messiah and the nature of his anticipated rule as reflected in texts such as 1 Enoch 46:3-4…

> This Son of man, whom thou beholdest, shall raise up kings and the mighty from their couches, and the powerful from their thrones; shall loosen the bridles of the powerful, and break in pieces the teeth of sinners. He shall hurl kings from their thrones and their dominions; because they will not exalt and praise him, nor humble themselves before him, by whom their kingdoms were granted to them. The countenance likewise of the mighty shall He cast down, filling them with confusion. Darkness shall be their habitation, and worms shall be their bed; nor from that their bed shall they hope to be again raised, because they exalted not the name of the Lord of spirits.[480]

Further, consideration should be given to the format in which the Hebrew Bible was written, that being the text to which the early Jewish Christ followers turned. Here it is crucial to recall that substantial portions of the Bible were written as either historical narrative or prophecy, which in the case of the latter, was directed to specific audiences in specific contexts. Keener points out that the contemporary interpreter should maintain this point in mind, recognizing the concrete manner in which the first–century Jewish believers read the biblical text.[481] The first–century perspective of Scripture was quite different than what is recognized today as the canon, with a very different construct and grouping of the Law, Prophets and Writings.[482] Many of the

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[479] Tomasino, *Judaism Before Jesus*, 289.

[480] *The Book of Enoch: With Linked Table of Contents* (Lanham: Dancing Unicorn Books, 2016).

[481] Keener, *IVP Bible*, 27.

[482] Steve Mason, "Josephus and His Twenty-Two Book Canon," in *The Canon Debate*, ed. Lee Martin MacDonald and James A. Sanders (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2002), 110–27.

texts, both those of the OT era, as well as those being produced during the first century, were often circulated in different versions."[483]

Additionally, it is important to recall the four main "collections" of Jewish documents from the Greco–Roman era—the Apocrypha, the Pseudepigrapha, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the Mishnah" in addition to "the works of individual authors, like Philo and Josephus" which may affect the interpretation of the text.[484] Each collection represents a variety of "different perspectives and methods of interpretation" as well as literary genres.[485] What is of note is that all of these texts were recognized for their historical and authoritative nature, even though in the contemporary context these same texts are designated as either apocryphal or pseudepigraphical. There are examples of these texts which have been found amongst the Dead Sea Scrolls alongside examples of Scripture. What can be noted through the presence of these examples is that both the NT writers, as well as their audiences, were privy to a plethora of texts presented in an array of formats and versions. It is also clear that the NT writers relied heavily on Greek translations of the Jewish scriptures.[486] Yet at this point in the history of the formation of the canon, there was no one single Greek text used in translation. There were textual and translation variations which led to different readings and interpretations of the Hebrew text. As such, the contemporary interpreter should take care in not forcing the commonly accepted Hebrew translation used today onto the NT writers.

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[483] For more information, see Hanne von Weissenberg, Juha Pakkala, and Marko Marttila, eds., *Changes in Scriptures: Rewriting and Interpreting Authoritative Traditions in the Second Temple Period* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011).

[484] Sloan and Newman, "Ancient Jewish Hermeneutics," 106.

[485] Ibid.

[486] See R. Timothy McLay, *The Use of the Septuagint in New Testament Research* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

Yet how were these texts interpreted? Robert Sloan Jr. and Carey Newman describe four ways Jews interpreted their sacred texts, utilizing either intertextual, allegorical, charismatic, or applied exegesis.[487] In the case of Amos 9:11–12 the use of charismatic exegesis is evidenced in one of the Dead Sea Scroll fragments found in Khirbet Qumran. Bruce explains that among the fifteen manuscripts devoted entirely to Scripture interpretation (*pesharim)* there are some interesting similarities to be noted with other Jewish interpretive strategies.[488] However, there is one marked difference that should be taken into consideration.[489] Whereas the other interpretive strategies "move from text to life" in the case of pesher exegesis, movement is from "current event to text."[490] Sloan and Newman indicate that this sets apart charismatic exegesis from the other hermeneutic methodologies used during the same time period. A specific example relevant to the analysis of Amos 9:11–12 is that of *4QFlorilegium*,[491] a Qumran fragment important to this research, given what it demonstrates concerning the Jewish interpretation of the salvation oracle.

Whereas this research is not dedicated to the exclusive analysis of ancient Jewish hermeneutics it is, however, important to analyze the Jewish perspective of the meaning of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18, especially given the eschatological and soteriological elements already identified. This particularly Jewish perspective will come to impact not only the contemporary interpretation of the text but also the interpretation of its usage within the context

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[487] See Sloan and Newman, "Ancient Jewish Hermeneutics," 108–25.

[488] Bruce, Frederick Fyvie (F. F.). *Biblical Exegesis in the Qumran Scrolls* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 88.

[489] Sloan and Newman, "Ancient Jewish Hermeneutics," 115.

[490] Ibid., 116.

[491] Ibid.

of the NT. As has been previously mentioned, Luke demonstrates a high level of dependence upon the LXX, highlighted through many quotations from and parallels with the Pentateuch, Psalms, Isaiah, and the Minor Prophets. Looking specifically at the Hebrew version of Amos 9:11–12 and comparing it to James's quotation, differences come to light. Comparing the versions, James refers to the "residue of men" instead of the "remnant of Edom," which demonstrates a difference in reading of *אדום* (Edom) *as אדם* (humanity). Also, the other key variation is found in the fact that the verb "possess" has been changed to "seek after," which demonstrates a difference in reading of *ירשו* (they will possess) as *ידרשו* (they will seek after). In addition to these variations, the LXX also creates a grammatical conflict as in the Hebrew text the direct object of the verb "possess" is "the remnant of Edom" but the LXX omits the use of a direct object, presenting the "residue of men" as the subject of the transitive verb "seek after." The Acts 15:17 reference indicates then that the "residue of men" will seek after "the Lord." Clearly the two readings produce two different meanings. The Hebrew version of Amos 9:11–12 points to the conquest of Edom and other nations around Israel, a factor which would seem oddly out of place within the context of James's discourse. By comparison however, the Greek version, which is arguably quoted in Acts 15 fits with the overall context and perceived intent of James. Mindful of the conflictive context surrounding the Jerusalem Council, how then did the Jewish Christ followers of the first century interpret James's discourse? Given the dispute to be resolved concerning the Gentile inclusion into the household of faith, James's words provided the foundation upon which he could demonstrate that the prophetic foretelling of the extension of the Gospel found in Amos 9 was to go beyond the nation of Israel, thus being inclusive of the Gentiles.

LXX, MT, and Qumran References

The relevance of research into the textual and intertextual use and meaning of the salvation oracle of Amos 9 leads to the need for an even deeper examination of the Hebrew text as recorded in the LXX, MT, and Qumran references. The deeper examination will reveal further details which are critical to the proper interpretation of the text.

Examining for example, Amos 9:11, Kaiser stipulates that an examination of the MT use of specific suffixes on three phrases is key to the interpretive process: (1) the feminine plural suffix, *pirsehen,* on the phrase *its broken places,*[492] a reference to the divided northern and southern kingdoms; (2) the masculine singular suffix, *harisotayw,* on the phrase *its ruins,*[493] understood as a reference to David, arguably not his "hut" or "booth" because this would cause a conflict between the masculine and feminine suffixes*;* and (3) the feminine singular suffix, *benitiha,* on the phrase *build it,* [494] which points to the idea of "finish building, to carry on, enlarge, and beautify the building."[495] The complicated nature of the interpretation of this passage springs from the MT use of these "three incongruous suffixes which seemingly defy explanation."[496] They refer back to the *fallen booth of David,* but care must be given in defining the terms of this reference. This is particularly interesting to examine given that the use of the suffixes is presented differently in the LXX, MT, Syriac, and Vulgate versions of Amos 9:11.

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[492] Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages: Hebrew*.

[493] Ibid.

[494] Ibid.

[495] Keil, *Biblical Commentary,* 1:330.

[496] James Nogalski, "The Problematic Suffixes of Amos Ix 11," VT 43 (1993): 411.

The following is a recreation of the summary chart of these differences offered by James Nogalski:[497]

	Breaches Suffix	Ruins Suffix	I will rebuild "it" Suffix
MT	FP	MS	FS
LXX	FS	FS	FS
Syriac	MP	MP	FS
Vulgate	NS	NP	MS

Examining each of these versions demonstrates that only the LXX offers a consistent construction. However, "the principle of *lectio difficilior* suggests that the LXX merely smoothes over the problems of a very difficult MT."[498] The most judicious path toward understanding the use of these apparent incongruous suffixes is an examination of the MT and its employment of four actions in synonymous parallelism. The combination of raise, wall up, raise, and rebuild "twice articulates YHWH's action of lifting and repairing in beautifully constructed synonymous parallelism."[499]

Following the rules of grammatical gender agreement, the feminine plural suffix is recognized as a reference to the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel who, through God's promised eschatological restoration, would bring the northern tribes back into unity with the Davidic line. Further, the masculine suffix can only reasonably be a reference to David, although dead at the time of the prophecy, thus is an assumed reference to "that second David mentioned in Hosea 3:5."[500] God would in time raise up from a state of destruction the new David, the Messiah. God would build back the Davidic line, the "fallen booth," building it back "as it used

[497] Nogalski, "Problematic Suffixes," 414.

[498] Ibid.

[499] Ibid., 106.

[500] Kaiser, *Messiah*, 146.

to be, or as it was in days of old," pointing to the promise of 2 Samuel 7:11, 12, 16, where God promised to raise up one from the line of David and give him an eternal throne and dynasty. What is clear is that this will be a divine work, as Amos illustrates throughout this section with his use of four finite verbs in the first person singular (*קוּם*, I will raise used twice in v. 11; שׁוּב, I will restore in v. 14; and נָטַע, I will plant in v. 15), a direct reference to the work of the God of Israel.[501] The reason for this divine restoration of the Davidic line comes into focus moving forward into 9:12.

Further, renewed attention should be given to the *4Q174* fragment, or the *4QFlorilegium*, which "reflects the interests of a community that believes itself to be living in the latter days and articulates these ideas primarily through commentary on Scripture."[502] It is a source that includes a great deal of biblical content given that it quotes from "Deuteronomy 33, 2 Samuel 7, Exodus 15, Amos 9, Psalm 1, Psalm 2, Isaiah 8, Ezekiel 37, Daniel 11, Daniel 12, Psalm 5, and Isaiah 65."[503] Of particular importance to this research is what *4QFlorilegium* records concerning the "interpretation of Nathan's oracle concerning God's promise to David in 2 Samuel 7."[504] The text conserves the textual order of 2 Samuel 7 and then is followed by:

> a comment of the type that usually includes the citation of another passage from somewhere else in the Bible: [. . . damaged . . .] [and no] evildoer [shall afflict him] as before and as from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel (≈MT 2 Sam 7:10b–11a). This is the house which [. . . damaged . . .] in the latter days as it is written in the book of [. . . damaged . . .] [The sanctuary, O Lord, which] your hands have

[501] Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages: Hebrew*.

[502] See George J. Brooke, "Exegesis at Qumran: *4QFlorilegium* in Its Jewish Context," *JSOT* 29 (1985): 176–77.

[503] Jonathan G. Campbell, "4QFlorilegium (4Q174)," in *The Exegetical Texts, Companion to the Qumran Scrolls 4* (New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 39–40.

[504] Carlson, "Structure," 249–52.

established. The Lord will rule forever and ever (≈MT Exod 15:17b–18). This is the temple . . .[505]

In this excerpt, *4QFlorilegium* interprets 2 Samuel 7:10–11 in terms of "God's promise to David regarding the eternal rule of his descendants," which is "being read through the lens of another popular passage, the Israelite song of victory after the defeat of Pharaoh's army at the sea (Exod 15)."[506] As Reed Carlson points out, these may seem at first glance totally unrelated passages, yet there is a key word used in the text which unlocks its meaning, that of the repetition of "to plant" (√נטע), which appears in both 2 Samuel 7:10 and Exodus 15:17.[507] It is not an obvious link but one which when identified indicates "that the "house" that God will establish, referenced in 2 Samuel 7, does not refer (only) to Solomon's temple but to an eternal eschatological "sanctuary" (מקדש, cf. Exod 15:17) that is fulfilled and embodied within the sectarian community itself."[508] Upon this foundation, further analysis of the fragment points to additional connections with Scripture, including a citation and interpretation of 2 Samuel 7:12 using Amos 9:11, relating the two passages via the word "raise up" (√קום).[509] The text indicates that the promised future offspring of David will be "raised up" (2 Sam 7:12), that is, "a messianic figure who will "raise up" the tabernacle of David (Amos 9:11) and "save all of

[505] Donald W. Parry and Emanuel Tov, eds., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Reader: Part 2 Exegetical Texts* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 3–8.

[506] Carlson, "Structure," 250.

[507] Ibid.

[508] Brooke, "Exegesis at Qumran," 178–93.

[509] Carlson, "Structure," 252.

Israel" (*4Q174* frag. 1 col. i ln. 13)."[510] Critically important to note is Carlson's observation that "this same association between these two passages is also made in Acts 15:16."[511]

The comparison of the textual references to Amos 9:11–12 requires analysis not only into questions of intertextuality and intratextuality but beyond to analysis of the varying versions and interpretations of the text as illustrated thus far. These factors will continue to play a significant role in the proper interpretation and analysis of the text in its original usage and application as well as its NT reference.

Interpretive and Theological Use of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18

The portrayal of salvation embedded in Amos's prophetic declaration of an eschatological future hope for Israel in Amos 9:11–15 is clearly messianic in focus and purpose. In these five short verses, God explains through his messenger that there is a time to come following his judgment of Israel when she will be restored and, by extension, the nations blessed. It is a depiction of the future restoration and blessing of the Davidic line. The covenantal promises of 2 Samuel will come to be eschatologically fulfilled "in that day" as the dynastic element is fulfilled in the Messiah, and the national elements of his kingdom will be ushered in. The raising of David's booth is to include both his dynastic line and the national restoration of the Jewish people. Gentiles will also enjoy the benefit of this restoration as God's grace will extend "to them in the blessings promised as God restores this lowly image of

[510] Carlson, "Structure," 250.

[511] Ibid.

the fallen tent of David."[512] The blessing of salvation as experienced by the Gentile today is but a foreshadowing of "the future restoration of all things."[513]

Through the prophetic message of Amos, God assures his people that the King will come, and his kingdom will be established. It is a message which points to the inauguration of Christ's kingdom, which for Israel, will be marked by three important characteristics: (1) supernatural abundance; (2) a return from exile to the fertile and productive land promised by Yahweh; and (3) permanence in his promised land. These were promises of great significance to the nation of Israel but ones that would not come to fruition until "the Son of David "comes to make his blessings flow far as the curse is found."[514]

The depictions of destruction and judgment that awaited Israel while central to the prophetic message of Amos are secondary to the theological significance of the oracle of salvation in 9:11–15 and its implications for the faithful remnant.[515] The theme of the remnant in the OT and its application to the unfolding plan of God's salvation as developed in the NT is a key factor in understanding the redemptive and salvific work of God. In examining this dynamic, it is important to consider God's participation in the restoration of a faithful and historical remnant seen both in the OT and NT.

The history of Israel, as recorded in the OT, clearly demonstrates that only a small percentage of God's chosen nation followed him in faithful obedience, yet it would be this small, faithful remnant with whom he would continue to relate in the future. God demonstrated through

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[512] Rydelnik and Blum, *Moody Handbook*, 1981.

[513] Ibid.

[514] Eickmann, "Exegesis of Amos 9:11–15," 274.

[515] Alison Lo, "Remnant Motif in Amos, Micah and Zephaniah," in *A God of Faithfulness: Essays in Honour of J. Gordon McConville on His 60th Birthday*, ed. Jamie A. Grant, Alison Lo, and Gordon J. Wenham (New York: T&T Clark, 2011), 131.

Amos that he was expecting nothing less than conformity to his will, exhorting his people to leave behind all sinful practices and vestiges of religiosity. Nothing less than this would afford them a place among the remnant who would enjoy the renewal of the covenant as "David´s fallen tent" would be restored, giving dawn to the messianic era in which blessings would be experienced by Israel and the nations.[516] It is through this image of the remnant that it is possible to visualize God's interaction with a spiritually faithful people from the age of the OT forward to that of the NT.

Central to understanding Amos is the theme of God's universal judgment. Van Gemeren argues that "prophecy was never intended to be restricted to the historical context in Israel,"[517] but rather is inclusive of all the nations. Turning then to the closing verses of Amos, this same level of universality is noted in the reference to the inclusion of other nations in the remnant. This is a theme that comes into greater focus in the NT through passages such as Romans 9:24–29; 11; and Acts 15:16–18 which address the question of the remnant, both from the perspective of Israel as well as the Gentile nations. It is a theme that stands as the basis of much study and debate centering on the relationship between Israel and the church and, by extension, the debate between supersessionists and post-supersessionists.

Romans 11 is offered as important to consider at this juncture, given that it provides a balanced response to this question. Paul, employing the use of analogous language, speaks of Israel, God's covenant people, in terms of an olive tree whose broken branches represent the unfaithful element of Israel (v. 17a) while also speaking of the Gentiles in terms of branches of a wild olive tree which have been grafted into the original one (vv. 17b–19). Through this analogy,

[516] Van Gemeren, *Interpreting the Prophetic Word*, 136.

[517] Ibid., 130.

the Gentiles, understood in terms of the NT church, do not replace Israel. Rather, God is bringing together the faithful remnant of Israel and the faithful Gentile nations under the eschatological promise of God's future kingdom ushered in through Christ.[518]

Upon this foundation, consideration may also be given to James's usage of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18 during the debate over the question of Gentile adherence to the Mosaic law, specifically the questions over observance of the laws surrounding circumcision. James stipulates that God was "taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name" (Acts 15:14)."[519] To make his position clear, James utilizes Amos 9:11–12 and the reference to the restoration of national Israel as well as the Gentile nations.[520] His assertions can be read and interpreted as both affirming the validity of God's covenant with Israel and the inclusion of the Gentiles into the kingdom, the latter of which is not an "abrogation or obsolescence of God's covenant with the Jewish people."[521]

Vlach argues that the usage of Amos 9 in Acts 15 is not evidence of James declaring "that the salvation of Gentiles fulfills the Amos 9 prophecy,"[522] but rather signals back towards what had been prophesied about the Gentiles one day being saved without becoming Jews.[523] The heart of the debate in Acts 15 is soteriological in nature but also highly eschatological, as the contextual evidence of the passage points to the inclusion of the Gentiles in the messianic plan in

[518] William S. Campbell, "'A Remnant of Them Will Be Saved' (Rom 9:27): Understanding Paul's Conception of the Faithfulness of God to Israel," *Journal of the Jesus Movement in Its Jewish Setting* 2 (2015): 79–101.

[519] Van Gemeren, *Interpreting the Prophetic Word*, 84.

[520] Ibid.

[521] Soulen, "Post-Supersessionism," 350.

[522] Vlach, *Has the Church*, 100.

[523] Ibid.

terms of what is defined as "a case of initial fulfillment of Amos 9."[524] The issue of concern is not only over the salvation of the Gentiles, which Amos predicted, but also that which is indicated in Acts 1:6 about "the future restoration of the Davidic kingdom to Israel which is still to come."[525]

Amos 9:11–15 points to this future day when God will raise up the fallen booth of David, a moment which was inaugurated by the coming of Christ and will culminate in his second coming. It is a promise of a future in which both Jew and Gentile will form part of God's kingdom, all the while Israel retains its chosen status as Yahweh's people. The church is the current expression of this kingdom, being formed by Jews, as well as Gentiles of many nations, yet awaiting that final day when the faithful remnant of Israel will be restored to their divinely ordained place and purpose. Amos 9:11–15 points forward to that glorious day when Jesus will sit forever enthroned on the throne of David, fulfilling God's covenantal promises for all eternity. The prophetic message of Amos is one for both Jew and Gentile alike, yet it is one that ultimately points to the Messiah, the one in whom God's promises are fulfilled.

[524] Vlach, *Has the Church*, 100.

[525] Ibid.

CHAPTER FOUR: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE SUPERSESSIONIST AND POST-SUPERSESSIONIST CONSTRUCTS

Having conducted the textual, contextual, and theological analysis of both Amos 9:11–12 and Acts 15:16–18 as individual pericopes, as well as James's appropriation of the prophetic text, it is now necessary to examine the hermeneutic frameworks of supersessionism and post-supersessionism, as well as what each perspective implies for the relationship between the nation of Israel and the church in this age. These points will be examined and argued in terms of (1) an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the hermeneutic parameters of supersessionism and post-supersessionism as applied to the Amos 9:11–12 reference in Acts 15:16–18, and (2) an examination of the implications of supersessionism and post-supersessionism for the nation of Israel and the church.

James brings into his discourse a fundamental OT premise in stating that God was "taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name" (Acts 15:14)."[526] Read from a post-supersessionist perspective, this both affirms the validity of God's covenant with Israel and the inclusion of the Gentiles into the kingdom, without abrogating his "covenant with the Jewish people."[527] James's inclusion of Amos 9 in Acts 15 is not a declaration "that the salvation of Gentiles fulfills the Amos 9 prophecy"[528] but rather brings to the forefront the prophetic promise that the Gentiles would one day be saved without becoming Jews.[529] The supersessionist understands this passage to say that James interpreted the unfolding events of his day as a

[526] See Gen 10; 12:1–3; Isa 19:16–25; 42:6; Zech 14:16.

[527] Soulen, "Post-Supersessionism," 350.

[528] Vlach, *Has the Church*, 100.

[529] See Hos 2:23.

nonliteral and *complete* fulfillment of the Amos 9 prophecy.[530] Yet, the premise of a nonliteral and complete fulfillment of Amos 9 in Acts 15 is rejected, proposing rather that James signals an "initial application/fulfillment of the Amos 9:11–15 prophecy" as applied to the Gentiles without disregarding the faithfulness of God to completely fulfill his promises made to Israel. The contextual evidence of the passage points to the inclusion of the Gentiles in the messianic plan in these terms of "initial fulfillment."[531] The issue of concern is not only over the salvation of the Gentiles, which Amos foretold but also that which is indicated in Acts 1:6 about "the future restoration of the Davidic kingdom to Israel which is still to come."[532] Amos 9:11–15 points to this future day when God will raise David's fallen booth, inaugurated by Christ's first coming and culminating in his second coming. It is a promise of a future kingdom consisting of both Jews and Gentiles. The church is the current expression of this kingdom, being formed by Jews and Gentiles of many nations. Yet it is an expression that awaits that day when the faithful remnant of Israel will be restored to their divinely ordained place and purpose, as foretold in Amos 9:11–15.

The Strengths and Weaknesses of the Supersessionist Hermeneutic

The overriding biblical–theological difference between supersessionism and post-supersessionism centers on interpretive conclusions surrounding the role and function of Israel and the church. As such, it is essential to consider that the analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of each system should be built upon the differences in their hermeneutic frameworks. From the supersessionist perspective, this is an interpretive process built upon a

[530] Kim Riddlebarger, *A Case for Amillennialism: Understanding the End Times* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003), 39.

[531] Vlach, *Has the Church*, 100.

[532] Ibid.

"hermeneutic of allegorization" in that "*Israel* is made to mean the *church*."[533] The weaknesses of this supersessionist hermeneutic of allegorization are directly related to (1) a specific view of the interpretive priority of the NT over the OT,[534] (2) a belief in nonliteral fulfillments of OT texts regarding Israel,[535] and (3) a typological view of Israel, identifying the nation as a type of the NT church.[536] The interpretive conclusions built upon this supersessionist hermeneutic are not compatible however, with what would have been the perspective of first-century Jewish Christians such as Paul and James.

Beginning with the hermeneutic perspective that the NT has interpretive priority over the OT, the supersessionist argues that the interpreter must utilize the NT to understand OT texts, thus viewing the NT as an interpretation of the OT. The weakness of the supersessionist view of the superiority of the NT over the OT lies in the fact that it is an exaggerated application of *sensus plenior*. Taken to its extreme, *sensus plenior* opens the door to allegorizing or spiritualizing the text, which is, in essence, what the supersessionist view of NT superiority requires. This is problematic given that it allows the interpreter to determine meaning beyond what was originally intended. The supersessionist hermeneutic prioritizes this deeper spiritual meaning, which is allowed to replace the original meaning. By comparison, the post-supersessionist hermeneutic requires that the original meaning not be replaced or reinterpreted, allowing rather only for meaning to be inferred in addition to the original. Given that the supersessionist hermeneutic is built upon a strict application of *sensus plenior*, the interpreter can extract meaning from the text other than what was originally intended. If, as the supersessionist

[533] Enns, *Moody Handbook*, 545.

[534] See Ladd, "Historic Premillennialism," 20.

[535] See Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 713.

[536] Waltke, *Kingdom Promises as Spiritual*, 282.

argues, the NT writers changed or expanded the original meaning of OT texts, then the door is open to spiritualizing any OT message in terms that do not respect the original context and meaning. As applied to the question of Israel and the church, this means that the original blessings of God to Israel may now be interpreted in spiritual terms, ultimately being spiritually fulfilled in the church. This is the perspective of Ladd, who explains, "it is quite possible that the prophecies addressed originally to literal Israel describing physical blessings have their fulfillment exclusively in the spiritual blessings enjoyed by the church."[537] This exaggeration of *sensus plenior* stands in complete opposition to that of *sensus literalis,* which upholds the priority of the meaning of the text defined by historical and grammatical considerations. As has been previously demonstrated, to understand the Bible within the construct of *sensus literalis* is to recognize that God says exactly what he wants to say, and for this, he uses literal language. This is determined to be the interpretive path that guards against the modification of the meaning of OT texts that goes beyond the historical–grammatical–literary limits of the original context.

Having considered the supersessionist view of the NT's superiority over that of the OT, it is also important to consider the second interpretive weakness of the supersessionist construct, which is the belief in nonliteral fulfillments of OT texts regarding Israel. This second aspect of the supersessionist framework is closely related to the previous treatment of NT superiority, which is an interpretive by-product of this premise. The ability to argue in favor of nonliteral fulfillments of OT texts regarding Israel is determined possible only within the exaggerated application of *sensus plenior*. The problem with this, however, lies in the fact that there are so many OT passages that point to the future restoration for ethnic Israel (Amos 9:11–15; Zech 13:8–9; 14:16; Joel 3:17–18). Whereas there are debates over the historical timeline that anchors

[537] George E. Ladd, "Revelation 20 and the Millennium," *RevExp* 57 (1960): 167.

the events of the OT, it is generally accepted that approximately 1700 years transpired between the time of Abraham to that of Jesus Christ. God had been progressively developing his redemptive plan and promises in and through the nation of Israel generation after generation. For 1700 years, the promises of God had been part of the national mindset and identity of the Hebrews. They expected an actual, historical, tangible future as God's chosen nation. It is not only untenable but illogical to think that with the dawning of the NT era, Jewish Christ followers, such as Paul and James, would have set aside these expectations, replacing them with the anticipation of spiritual nonliteral fulfillments of God's promises. James's understanding of Amos 9:11–15, for example, would have logically been built upon a literal reading and meaning of the salvation oracle pointing toward a future and literal restoration of Israel. His perspective would have been built upon not only the prophetic message of Amos but the entire prophetic corpus.[538] Thus, the supersessionist argument in favor of nonliteral fulfillment of God's promises to Israel is entirely incompatible with the overwhelming evidence of the OT, which singularly predicts a future literal restoration of Israel.

One additional interpretive factor warrants mention: the identification and interpretation of types as related to the role and function of Israel and the church. The continuity of Scripture can be, at least in part, identified through its corresponding elements or types. The idea of persons or things in the OT pointing towards or foreshadowing something or someone in the NT is a common yet highly debated area of biblical studies. Whereas the analysis of all the differing perspectives on typology lies outside the scope of this investigation, it is important to recognize that supersessionists typically identify a typological relationship between Israel and the church in

[538] Although many examples exist of OT prophecies that point to the direct, literal, and future restoration of Israel, the following passages are offered: Lev 26:40–45; Num 23:9; Isa 11:1–12:6: Jer 30:10–11; 33:25–26; 46:27–28; Ezek 36:21–22; 7:11–28; Hos 3:4–5; Zech 14:16; Joel 3:17–18.

that they see Israel as a type "that finds its completion and fulfillment in the alleged superior antitype—the church."[539] This is but one additional argument offered by supersessionists for disregarding the continuing eschatological role of Israel, as the church is viewed as fulfilling all the biblical expectations originally applicable to Israel.

However, a superficial survey of the NT provides evidence to refute the perspective that God's promises to Israel signal a typological fulfillment in the church. Passages such as Matthew 10:28, Acts 1:6, and Romans 9 and 11 remove any textual footing upon which to build the supersessionist typological hermeneutic. These passages address matters related to the eschatological future restoration of Israel, passages which would be out of place if the supersessionist view of the church as an anti-type to Israel is accurate. Paul's perspective, for example, on Israel's future salvation in Romans 11:26–27 both refutes the idea of the church fulfilling the role and function of Israel as well as any argument that the nation was but a foreshadowing of the NT church. As such, the supersessionist typological perspective of Israel and the church is refuted as lacking a sufficient foundation.

The NT asserts that God's redemptive plan has a place for both Jews and Gentiles, both Israel and the nations. It is a plan presented in terms of the salvation of Gentiles preceding that of Israel. This Gentile salvation, however, should not be interpreted to mean that they are part of some new construct or "new and true Israel," nor should it be interpreted to mean that the restoration of Israel has been fulfilled in the present age prior to the second coming of Christ. As such, God's salvific work among the Gentiles is occurring as part of his initial and progressive fulfillment, directing time and history towards the future restoration of Israel (see Rom 11:25–27). Upon the foundation of this critical analysis of the supersessionist hermeneutic, having

[539] Vlach, *Has the Church*, 105.

defined its weaknesses in terms of (1) interpretive priority of the NT over the OT, (2) nonliteral fulfillments of OT texts regarding Israel, and (3) a typological view of Israel, progression will be made toward the analysis of this very hermeneutic as applied to James's inclusion of Amos 9:11–12 in the Jerusalem Council discourse of Acts 15.

Interpreting Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18 through a Supersessionist Lens

The supersessionist places interpretive priority upon the NT over that of the OT, a central aspect of their perspective on the matter of the continuity and/or discontinuity between the OT and NT. This perspective requires the interpreter to prioritize the meaning and message of the NT when examining OT prophetic and eschatological passages.[540] The import of this premise is that it allows the interpreter to assert that NT writers could have occasionally changed or reinterpreted the original meaning of OT passages. Of concern for the current investigation is the application of this hermeneutic to passages such as Amos 9:11–12, which reference the restoration of Israel. Recalling at this point the supersessionist perspective of Hoekema is helpful given his interpretation of the Amos 9:11–12 reference in Acts 15:16–18 to mean that the OT oracle is "being fulfilled right now, as Gentiles are being gathered into the community of God's people."[541] To Hoekema, this was a clear example of a figurative, nonliteral interpretation of an OT passage dealing with the restoration of Israel.

If this interpretation is correct it must stand up to critical analysis. As such, beginning with the supersessionist premise of NT priority, is the OT description of Israel redefined or reimagined in the NT to mean only the church? If it is, there must also be evidence to support the concept that OT covenantal promises of blessing no longer apply to Israel, being bestowed rather

[540] See LaRondelle, *Israel of God*, 3.

[541] Vlach, *Has the Church*, 84–85.

upon the church. The only path towards this type of conclusion is one that rejects the tenets of *sensus literalis* and the interpretive foundation of a historical–grammatical hermeneutic. Hoekema agreed with the premise that "the Old Testament must be interpreted in light of the New Testament" but at the same time asserted that "a totally and exclusively literal interpretation of Old Testament prophecy is not justified."[542] This presents an unreconcilable difference with the construct of *sensus literalis*, which recognizes that God says exactly what he wants to say through literal language. Referring anew to Martínez, *sensus literalis* provides for the interpretation of the text "in accordance with the semantic and grammatical rules common to the exegesis of any literary text, within the framework of the situation of the author and the readers of his time."[543] Thus, to interpret that the NT redefines or reimagines Israel as the church, requires that OT prophecies be read through an allegorical lens, placing the church at the center of both the OT and NT texts instead of national Israel. Vlach signals Ken Riddlebarger's understanding of this premise to mean that "eschatological themes are reinterpreted in the New Testament."[544] It is only within a framework such as this, which allows for this type of reinterpretation or modification of meaning, that God's promises to Israel can morph from literal to allegorical in nature. As such, on the grounds of its incompatibility with a historical–grammatical hermeneutic, the supersessionist application of a figurative, nonliteral interpretation of OT passages that deal with the restoration of Israel is deemed untenable at best.

Further, the NT itself does not support the supersessionist premise of NT priority which allows for the redefinition and reinterpretation of covenantal promises made to Israel.

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[542] Vlach, *Has the Church*, 81.

[543] Martínez, *Hermenéutica Bíblica*, 121.

[544] Vlach, *Has the Church*, 80.

Specifically, the Evangelists do not demonstrate the employment of a consistent allegorical interpretation of the OT text. Consider, for example, Matthew, who affirmed that Jesus would fulfill every jot and tittle of the Torah until it was fully accomplished (Matt 5:18), and he understood that Jesus brought forward a literal fulfillment of the messianic prophecies (see Isa 53). Also, Luke asserted that the prophetic promise of Isaiah 61 was literally fulfilled in the person of Jesus. As Vlach stipulates, the OT covenantal promises "are not transcended or fulfilled in some nonliteral ways" in light of "greater NT realities."[545] Thus, in contrast to the supersessionist employment of allegorical interpretation, the NT proffers a more literal and plain-sense interpretation of these OT prophetic promises. It would be illogical to assume that the Evangelists applied a literal–historical–grammatical hermeneutic to some but not all passages. There is consistency in their interpretive methods; as such, the same literal and plain-sense interpretation applies to those OT passages dealing with Israel's future restoration. This is but an additional piece of evidence that demonstrates the weakness of the supersessionist interpretive framework.

What the NT does set forward, however, and very specifically in Acts 15:16–18, is evidence of an initial/partial fulfillment of OT promises to Israel. James points to the prophetic promise of a restored Davidic line in the messianic age (Amos 9:11–12) being initially fulfilled through the inclusion of the Gentiles into the church. Yet, as has been argued, this initial fulfillment does not equate with complete fulfillment, nor does it abrogate any OT promise made to Israel. Just as God has progressively revealed himself through the historical record of the biblical text, he is bringing about progressive fulfillment of promises such as those made in

[545] Vlach, *Has the Church*, 107.

Amos 9:11–12. The fullness of these promises will be realized in terms of God's eschatological future timeline and the restoration that he has promised to bring to Israel.

So, what does the supersessionist reading of Acts 15:16–18 set forth? How is the interpreter to read James's discourse in light of perspectives such as that of Edmund Clowney who argues that "the greatest promises of the Old Testament are fulfilled in the church"?[546] Is Steve Motyer correct in stipulating that … "[Paul] consistently applies to the church – that is, the mixed Jewish and Gentile congregations to whom he writes – the great covenant ideas and terms which had previously belonged to Israel"?[547] Would Amos's audience, as well as James's, have understood the salvation oracle of Amos 9:11–12 to be applicable to the nation of Israel or to the NT entity of the church? Recalling to mind, for example, the context of the Amos 9:11 citation in 4*QFlorilegium* (4Q174 1:12), which points back to the promises of God to David in 2 Samuel 7:11–14, the OT perspective of these prophetic passages was steeped in and intimately linked to God's promises to the nation of Israel. Goran Eidevall amplifies this by indicating that the perspective of, for example, the Qumran exegetes on the prophecies in Amos that are "eschatological and/or obscure in character" are most assuredly aligned with "their own experiences and expectations."[548] Their understanding of these texts was directly related to their immediate context and relationship with the nation of Israel. As such, it is not only reasonable but logical to conclude that those hearing these texts for the first time would have understood God's message to signal a future and literal fulfillment for the nation of Israel.

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[546] Edmund P. Clowney, "The Final Temple," in *Prophecy in the Making: Messages Prepared for Jerusalem Conference on Biblical Prophecy*, ed., Carl F. H. Henry and W. A. Criswell (Carol Stream: Creation House, 1971), 84.

[547] Steven Motyer, "Israel (nation)," *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 585–86.

[548] Göran Eidevall, "Ancient and Modern Interpretations of the Book of Amos," in *Amos: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 28.

The surety of God's faithfulness to his word is in jeopardy if, as the supersessionist argues, the NT writers somehow modified the meaning of God's OT promises. Reading Amos 9:11–12 in harmony with other prophetic promises such as those found in Jeremiah 31–33 as well as Ezekiel 36–48, underscore the surety and fidelity with which God entered into covenant relationship with Israel, promising blessings that are still to come in the NT age. Either God is faithful to keep his word (not man's interpretation of that word), or he is not. The determination of how God fulfills his promises cannot be open to human modification if, in fact, God says exactly what he means to say. Does it not seem more reasonable to assume that if God had intended to communicate that the NT entity of the church was to replace Israel, receiving the OT covenantal promises of blessing, he would have simply stated it as such? Thus, the supersessionist hermeneutic framework and its resulting theological conclusions are deemed untenable and unsustainable in light of the historical–grammatical method, as well as the premise of *sensus literalis*, and as such is an inappropriate perspective from within which to appropriately interpret James's inclusion of the Amos 9:11–12 oracle within the Jerusalem Council discourse of Acts 15.

The Strengths and Weaknesses of the Post-Supersessionist Hermeneutic

Moving now from the supersessionist to post-supersessionist hermeneutic, it is important to recognize that within this latter construct, the priority of the NT is also recognized, yet not in terms of NT modification of OT revelation. Contrary to the supersessionist interpretation, the post-supersessionist argues that the overwhelming evidence of Scripture points to God's faithfulness to Israel and his unyielding willingness to remain steadfast to the Jewish people (see Rom 11:1–2a). This premise is built upon the OT affirmation and prophetic perspective of, for example, Jeremiah (see Jer 33:25–26), which demonstrates the covenantal foundation of God's

relationship with Israel and his promise of future restoration. In addition, it is critical to recall the unconditional nature of God's covenantal promises to Abraham and David.[549] What God promised in terms of blessings for the descendants of Jacob was not dependent upon any condition of faithfulness or obedience. As such, the post-supersessionist reading of the NT, which will be illustrated through its application to Acts 15:16–18, leads to the affirmation that God's blessings are available literally to both Jew and Gentile alike; the application to one does not require the negation of the other. As compared to the weaknesses of this supersessionist hermeneutic of allegorization, the post-supersessionist framework maintains (1) a proper view of the interpretive priority of the NT over the OT, (2) a belief in literal fulfillments of OT texts regarding Israel, and (3) the application of the historical–grammatical interpretive methodology. These premises provide a foundation upon which to affirm that God's covenant relationship with the Jewish people is both present and future, as Israel has a distinctive place and function in God's progressive redemptive plan. In addition, the post-supersessionist understands that there is a continuing distinction between Jew and Gentile in the church today defined in terms of the particular Jewish and Gentile expression of their covenant relationship with God. The interpretive conclusions built upon this post-supersessionist hermeneutic are, in fact, compatible with what would have been the perspective of first-century Jewish Christians such as Paul and James.

Considering the first element of NT superiority, whereas post-supersessionists recognize that in the NT, God has provided the fullness of his progressive revelation, this does not mean, as the supersessionist argues, that the NT writers somehow reinterpreted the meaning set forth in the OT. Saucy speaks to this point, explaining: “The fulfilled reality of the coming of Christ

[549] Keith H. Essex, “The Abrahamic Covenant,” *MSJ* 10 (1999): 192–93.

transcended many elements contained in the old Mosaic covenant, but this cannot be said of the promises of the new covenant and other eschatological realities."[550] As such, in accordance with the tenets of the historical–grammatical hermeneutic, OT texts should be examined first and foremost in light of their immediate historical–grammatical contexts. This is the only interpretive framework within which the universal message and meaning of the OT may be conserved, avoiding future modifications of the meaning of the text. As such, it is this interpretive methodology that upholds the premise of synchronous reading and interpretation, guarding against any asynchronous tendencies. As this applies specifically to the topic of the relationship between Israel and the church, the NT builds out from and upon the foundation of the OT without reinterpreting any of God's promises. In the simplest of terms, this leads to the interpretive conclusion that God's promises made to Israel should be understood as currently in effect with present and future implications for the nation of Israel.

The second aspect of the post-supersessionist hermeneutic, which is recognized for its strengths over and above that of the supersessionist perspective, is related to the issue of God's fulfillment of his OT promises. The supersessionist views God's work in the NT as evidence of nonliteral spiritual fulfillment of his promises once made to Israel being ultimately realized in the church. The post-supersessionist, however, understands God to be bringing about an initial, albeit partial, yet literal fulfillment; viewing his OT promises as being initially and partially fulfilled through his inclusion of the Gentiles into his kingdom, a work which will find its conclusion in the final literal fulfillment in Israel. This is a premise that comes to directly impact the interpretation of Acts 15:16–18, which, viewed from within the post-supersessionist framework, recognizes that God has brought about an initial level of fulfillment of the Amos 9 oracle in the

[550] Saucy, *Case*, 30.

church, but there is a future, literal and complete fulfillment to be realized within the eschatological plans of God for Israel.

Prior to analyzing the post-supersessionist hermeneutic as applied to Acts 15:16–18, the sufficiency of the historical–grammatical methodology is recognized for its ability to identify and analyze the truths of the text. In contrast to the supersessionist employment of typological interpretation, the post-supersessionist relies on the adequacy of the historical–grammatical methodology, even when examining biblical types. For example, by employing a historical–grammatical hermeneutic to passages such as Hosea 11:1 it is not only possible but plausible to identify those NT counter elements, such as in this case, that which is found in Matthew 2:15 ("out of Egypt I called my *son*"). Post-supersessionists, whereas recognizing the relationship between Israel and the church, do not proffer a type / anti-type relationship between the two entities.

One additional hermeneutic factor to consider before examining the post-supersessionist reading of Acts 15:16–18 is the delineation of the terms "Israel" and the "church." Beginning with the use of Israel, applying the hermeneutic foundations of lexical and syntactical word study, the term was never used in an allegorical sense but rather always pointed to the physical posterity of Jacob.[551] Yet, what was Israel understood to mean by the NT writers? Did they understand Israel to be a reference to a political entity, an ethnic people, or a geographic location? Analysis of the NT indicates that the term "Israel" is used seventy-three times and always in reference to the ethnic Jewish people which traces its origin back to the days of Abraham (Gen 12:2; 17:6; 18:18).[552] As such, following the principles of *sensus literalis*, all

[551] "יִשְׂרָאֵל *(yiś·rā·ʾēl),* another name for Jacob, son of Abraham (Gen 32:29; 35:10), a people pertaining to Israel." Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages: Hebrew*.

[552] Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages: Greek*.

references to Israel in the NT were understood in terms of the Jewish people, not the political entity nor the land of Palestine.

Moving forward to the concept of the church, which was born from the events described in the book of Acts, there is a distinction to be made between Israel and the Gentiles (Acts 3:12; 4:8, 10; 5:21, 31, 35; 21:28). "The Septuagint used the Greek term meaning "church" or "assembly" (*ἐκκλησία, ekklēsia*) to translate the Hebrew term "assembly" (קָהָל, *qahal*)."[553] As such, the Greek term *assembly* "likely expressed the early church's conviction that it was the fulfillment and culmination of the Old Testament people of God."[554] Given the cultural and historical context of the first century, the early church was deeply related to Judaism yet quickly began to develop its unique identity.[555] Joshua Greever asserts that "the early church understood itself to be the eschatological community, the recipient of God's end-of-time saving promises," which were grounded in the OT prophetic assurance of God's Spirit being poured out in the "last days"[556] (see Joel 2:28). The events of Acts 2 which recorded this very outpouring during Pentecost were understood as the literal fulfillment of this promise of God's Spirit dwelling among his people. It was interpreted to mean that God's promises had begun to be fulfilled.[557]

In drawing a clear line of distinction between the supersessionist and post-supersessionist perspectives, the premise that Israel is now defined in terms of the "*ekklēsia*" is a difficult exegetical position to defend. To begin with, no passage directly and explicitly states that the

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[553] Joshua M. Greever, "Church," *LBD*.

[554] Hans Conzelmann, *An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament,* trans. John Bowden (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 254–55.

[555] Greever, "Church," *LBD*.

[556] Ibid.

[557] Ibid.

church is the "true Israel." At best, it can only be inferred from passages such as Galatians 6:16, Romans 9:6, 1 Peter 2:9–10, and Ephesians 2:11–22 that the church is the fulfillment of the "true Israel" but even with these inferences, there is no exegetical foundation upon which to argue that the text indicates that Israel has been replaced by the church in God's redemptive plan (see Rom 9–11). Having examined these key terms, as well as the strengths of the post-supersessionist hermeneutic, progress can now be made towards the examination of James's use of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18 through a post-supersessionist lens.

Interpreting Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18 through a Post-Supersessionist Lens

To this point, the central question of concern has been in determining what supersessionism offers concerning the interpretation of James's use of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18, placing special attention on matters of NT priority and the debate over literal and non-literal fulfillments of OT passages. Upon the foundation of NT priority over that of the OT, supersessionists defend the concept of non-literal fulfillments of OT prophetic passages,[558] a perspective which greatly impacts the interpretive conclusions to be made concerning James's speech and use of the Amos 9 salvation oracle. Post-supersessionism, however, stands in stark contrast, affirming and defending literal albeit partial fulfillment of OT prophetic passages such as the Amos 9 oracle.

By means of contrast, it is important to recall that according to the supersessionist interpretation, the inclusion of Amos 9:11–12 in the Jerusalem Council discourse is evidence of a non-literal fulfillment signaled by the salvation of the Gentiles.[559] The Gentile salvation and

[558] Hoekema, "Amillennialism," 172.

[559] O. Palmer Robertson, "Hermeneutics of Continuity," in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship between the Old and New Testaments: Essays in Honor of S. Lewis Johnson Jr*., ed. Johnson S. Lewis and John S. Feinberg (Westchester: Crossway, 2010), 107.

inclusion in the first-century church is thus to be understood as a complete fulfillment of the Amos 9 oracle in a non-literal fashion.[560] This aligns with the Reformed or Covenant Theology assertion that the Davidic kingdom has come to be fully realized and restored in the church, casting aside any concern for a future eschatological redemption and restoration of the nation of Israel. This is a view that varies from the dispensationalist perspective, which envisions a future restoration of the Davidic Kingdom following the salvation of the Gentiles. Yet for the post-supersessionist aligned with the premise of progressive dispensationalism, the Jerusalem Council discourse requires a completely different reading. Considering the post-supersessionist view on NT literal fulfillment of OT prophetic passages, James presents what can only be understood as a literal but partial and progressive fulfillment of the Amos 9 salvation oracle, which incorporates the current salvation of the Gentiles. The full and literal fulfillment of the Amos 9 prophecy is then to be understood in terms of the current inclusion/grafting of the Gentiles and the future eschatological restoration of the Jewish remnant.

Given that this is an interpretive debate, how can a conclusion be drawn about the validity of one perspective over the other? On the foundation of the previously articulated exegesis of these passages, the premise of non-literal fulfillments of OT prophetic passages finds no foundation in Acts 15. This factor, in harmony with the previously articulated perspective, that the inclusion of the Gentiles into God's redemptive plan does not require the negation nor obsolescence of the nation of Israel will be offered to demonstrate the strength of the post-supersessionist reading of Acts 15 as compared to that of the supersessionist interpretation.

Critical to the defense of the post-supersessionist reading of Acts 15 is the recognition of what James both does and does not articulate in his discourse and use of the Amos 9 salvation

[560] Robertson, “Hermeneutics of Continuity,”107.

oracle. James never asserts that the current salvation of the Gentiles was a fulfillment of Amos 9:11–12. Rather he indicates that it was in line with the OT prophetic message concerning the future salvation of the Gentiles, something that was to occur without the requirement of circumcision or adherence to the Mosaic Law.[561] "He states that what is taking place in his day "agree(s)" with what the OT prophets had predicted about the Gentiles (Acts 15:15)."[562] God's plan for the salvation of mankind finds continuity between the OT and NT, pointing clearly to the fact that salvation is and forever has been by grace and not works. The Mosaic law allowed the nation of Israel a path toward communion with Yahweh, but it was never to be their path toward salvation. Abraham himself was justified, given his faith in the promises of God prior to any act of circumcision, and as such, stands as an example for all people, both Jew and Gentile, who have experienced salvation and been grafted into the kingdom of God by faith and faith alone. Marshall speaks to this, asserting that "God is making a people out of the nations, and nothing in the text suggests that they are to become Jews in order to become God's people."[563] As such, James's discourse aligns with the OT prophetic perspective that "Gentiles would someday be saved without becoming Jews and keeping the Mosaic law."[564]

The post-supersessionist argues that when James asserts that "with this the words of the prophets agree" (see Acts 15:14), he is signaling that the current salvation of the Gentiles is in partial yet literal fulfillment of the Amos 9 oracle.[565] Yet the question remains as to the matter of

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[561] Homer Heater Jr., "Evidence from Joel and Amos," in *A Case for Premillennialism: A New Consensus*, ed. Donald K. Campbell and Jeffrey L. Townsend (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), 156.

[562] Vlach, *Has the Church*, 99.

[563] I. Howard Marshall, *Acts*, *TNTC* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 253.

[564] Vlach, *Has the Church*, 99.

[565] Saucy, *Case*, 78–80.

Israel. If James was, in fact, pointing to this partial–literal fulfillment, what can be concluded about the restoration of the Davidic line? Is James also indicating a partial-literal fulfillment of the prophetic promises made to Israel? Applying the principles of the historical–grammatical method, it is clear that James was not indicating anything beyond a potential initial fulfillment of Amos 9 in Acts 15. Looking to Blaising and Bock, "we cannot pit Old Testament revelation against New Testament revelation in such a way that the original author's meaning is totally redefined."[566] The Jerusalem Council focused on the question of the salvation and inclusion of the Gentiles and whether they were obligated to fulfill the requirements of the law. Neither the present nor future eschatological redemption and restoration of Israel was the factor that precipitated the need for the Jerusalem Council, nor was it the focus of James's discourse. This does not mean that James's speech was completely unrelated to the theme of Israel's restoration, but it was not the main topic of concern. The main issue was the inclusion of the Gentiles in the messianic plan. As such, the supersessionist perspective of Acts 15 and its insistence on recognizing a non-literal fulfillment of the Amos 9 prophecy is determined to force a level of interpretation that goes beyond the principles of the historical–grammatical method. As Vlach asserts, "this is important because supersessionists want us to believe the OT expectation for Israel has been altered and reinterpreted with the events of Acts 15," but this is a level of interpretation that draws conclusions beyond that which the text allows.[567] Respecting the principles of the historical–grammatical method, the more sound conclusion is that James inclusion of the Amos 9 salvation oracle is an indication that the once prophesied salvation of the

[566] Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, "Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church: Assessment and Dialogue," in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, ed. Darrell L. Bock, Walter C. Kaiser Jr., and Craig A. Blaising (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 391.

[567] Vlach, *Has the Church*, 100.

Gentiles was beginning to be fulfilled (initial fulfillment), but there was still to come a future restoration of the Davidic kingdom (Acts 1:6). To draw from the perspective of Homer Heater:

> …the citation is merely to show that the tenor of Old Testament Scripture supports the idea of Gentiles coming to God without losing their identity. James was not ignoring the future restoration of Israel and equating the 'hut of David' with the church; he merely said that one element of what will happen in the future was happening in this day.[568]

The concept of an initial fulfillment of Amos 9 is one to which previous attention has been provided, yet it is important to recall that "initial fulfillment is not exhausted fulfillment."[569] Thus the future restoration of the Davidic kingdom is to be realized by God in the future, a principle which aligns with what Paul asserts in Romans 11:25–27 where he indicates that there will be a period of time in which God would bring salvation to the Gentiles followed by the redemption and restoration of Israel. God's redemptive plan is then understood as developing along two paths, different in every way, except that they both are moving history towards a final fulfillment of the promise of salvation for a remnant of ethnic Israelites as well as a remnant from among the Gentiles (Hos 1:10; Rom 9:25–26). During the current age, God is at work bringing salvation to the Gentiles, a work to be followed by the salvation of Israel, resulting in the final form and function of the kingdom of God.

Amos along with other Minor Prophets such as Micah and Zephaniah, spoke directly to the role and function of the remnant. Within the context of Amos, the concept of the remnant is highlighted through the term שְׁאֵרִית which is used to reference: (1) the remnant of the Philistines (Amos 1:8), (2) Israel as "the remnant of Joseph" (Amos 5:15), and (3) the remnant of Edom (Amos 9:12).[570] Amos is quite graphic in his description of the element of divine judgment that

[568] Heater, "Evidence," 156–57.

[569] Bock, "Evidence from Acts," 197.

[570] Lo, "Remnant Motif," 131.

is to be the precursor to the resulting formation of the remnant. As related to Israel, the prophet clearly articulated that the people of God will not "escape the Day of Yahweh," describing their situation in terms of a man attempting to flee a lion only to be met by a bear or going into a house, leaning against a wall, and thusly being bit by a snake (Amos 5:19). "The inescapability of judgment is once again pinpointed by the fact that 'those who escape the initial onslaught will be hunted down one by one' (Amos 9:1-4)."[571] Amos describes a situation that indicates that "only a remnant of Israel will remain but not Israel as a remnant."[572] A first and superficial glance at what Amos stipulates might lead to the conclusion that there is no hope for any in Israel to survive, yet the prophet indicates that while all will experience the divine judgment of God, this is not an indication of the abolition of a people. Amos subtly and poetically illustrates through his metaphorical image of a sieve (Amos 9:8b–10), that the nation will experience judgment, all the while "limiting and accentuating the idea of the total destruction of those who paid no heed."[573] Through this literary device, the prophet addresses "the dilemma between total destruction and the survival of the remnant."[574]

Yet what does this survival look like? Amos provides a prophetic response to this very question in Amos 9:11–15 in which he brings forth the theme of the restoration of the Davidic kingdom, asserting that, "On that day Yahweh will raise up", repair, and rebuild the booth of David (Amos 9:11).[575] It is a declaration of the future hope of the remnant in its redeemed and

[571] L. V. Meyer, "Remnant," ABD 1:669.

[572] Gerhard Franz Hasel, *The Remnant: The History and Theology of the Remnant Idea from Genesis to Isaiah* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1972), 189.

[573] Nogalski, *Literary Precursors*, 103–04.

[574] Lo, "Remnant Motif," 137.

[575] Hasel, *The Remnant*, 210.

restored state, enjoying "the restoration of the Davidic kingdom" (Amos 9:11), as well as "peace and security" (Amos 9:15). Amos also speaks to something beyond the particular future context of Israel but also signals that in their restoration they will "possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by my name" (Amos 9:12). The history of the OT outlines the difficulties that existed from the time of Jacob and Esau (Israel and Edom), situating them as enemies from the days of old. Yet in the future, God promises a renewed and restored state not only for his people but also for Edom and the other nations whom he will graft into the line of those who will experience his spiritual blessings.[576] It is a description of redemption, renewal, and restoration, a time of peace and prosperity (Amos 9:15; Mic 5:3–4; Zeph 3:13). Again, employing the use of metaphoric language, Amos declares that the Lord will plant the people of Israel anew in the Promised Land, an image of firmness and security, as no one will ever again, "pluck them up" (Amos 9:15).[577]

Paul echoes this OT description of renewal and restoration (see Rom 9:22–29). From the post-supersessionist vantage point, Paul stipulates that despite Israel's sinful rejection of God, which merited their destruction, God graciously preserved his remnant. As such, God will protect and maintain a remnant of his people despite those who have rejected him. Paul's descriptive form points to the importance of God's desire to rescue from not only Israel but also from amongst the Gentiles as well. Paul highlights that the natural descendants of Abraham, who form part of the remnant, as well as those believers who have been grafted into the kingdom.[578]

[576] Lo, "Remnant Motif," 141.

[577] Ibid., 142.

[578] Donaldson, "Supersessionism," 27.

As such, Paul indicates that God has chosen a remnant by grace from among the Israelites but also the Gentiles as well. It is here where the meaning of *fullness* comes to have a significant bearing on this overall discussion of the remnant, the *fullness* of Israel as indicated in Romans 11:12 and the "*fullness* of the Gentiles" in Romans 11:25. Concerning the nation of Israel, the fullness of the Jewish people (v. 12) points squarely to the remnant of ethnic Israel who has both recognized and received Jesus Christ as Messiah and Lord. According to Paul, there is a remnant of God's people chosen by grace. This remnant represents a minority of Jews who have believed in God and have accepted his favor and grace through Jesus Christ.[579] A future hope is then offered in that, through faith in the Messiah, Jews and Gentiles alike can form part of God's kingdom. Those grafted into the remnant become heirs to all God has promised to his chosen nation. Through the post-supersessionist lens, Romans 9 thus provides evidence of the security of the future of Israel, while Romans 11 confirms the eventual restoration of the remnant. Jew and Gentile will be saved as all believers have been saved; that is, they will be saved by grace through faith (Eph 2:8–10).

According to the post-supersessionist reading of these texts, Paul's references and commentary point back to the very foundation of the nation of Israel and her descendants. These descendants, called by God as his own, despite their transgression against him, were to remain in his employment as a sign and instrument of salvation to the Gentiles. The providential God of both the OT and NT allowed Israel to experience a partial and temporary hardening of their heart, and in doing so, God allowed them to be used to bring salvation to the Gentiles. It is this very process that led to the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15. James signals this by recognizing how God has "intervened to choose a people for his name from the Gentiles" and then emphasizes

[579] Bruce A. Ware, "The New Covenant and the People(s) of God," in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, ed. Darrell L. Bock, Walter C. Kaiser Jr., and Craig A. Blaising (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 93.

how this very intervention agrees with the words of the prophets. It is according to God's predetermined order for redemptive history that “after this,” he “will return and rebuild David’s fallen tent” (Acts 15:14–16), a prophetic promise related to the future restoration of Israel. James highlights a specific order to God's unfolding progressive development, manifested in a clear, initial, and literal fulfillment of the salvation oracle of Amos 9.

As such, the supersessionist perspective on the priority of the NT and the resulting belief in the non-literal fulfillment of OT prophecies is an untenable hermeneutic perspective compared to the post-supersessionist methodology. Whereas the supersessionist construct requires the interpreter to draw conclusions that go beyond the historical and grammatical contexts of both the OT and NT passages, the post-supersessionist reading and interpretation respect the original meaning and authorial intent of both. Further, it is the latter of the two interpretations that provides a solid canonical framework within which to uphold the premise of the unity and diversity of Scripture.

Implications of Supersessionism and Post-Supersessionism for Israel and the Church

Considering the exegetical analysis previously presented and the strengths and weaknesses of the supersessionist and post-supersessionist hermeneutics, a question emerges concerning the implications of these interpretive conclusions for the nation of Israel and the church. What implications do these distinct perspectives have on our view of Israel and the church and the way in which we see certain historical events in which Israel as a nation has played a role?

The modern interpreter should take into sincere consideration the filter through which he reads Scripture and determine his understanding of God's continual faithfulness to uphold his commitment to ethnic Israel through his covenantal love for his chosen nation even now in the

church age. Examining the events of world history, it is reasonable to question how the history of Israel might have developed differently if humanity had adhered to the idea of the Jewish people continually occupying the place of importance as God's chosen people. Some argue that the supersessionist perspective stands in the background as a contributing factor in leading up to the Holocaust and other historical abuses of the nation of Israel, as well as current anti-Semitic sentiments. Whereas it is somewhat untenable to argue that supersessionism played a direct and explicit role in these events, it is reasonable to assert that the collective and cumulative effect of generational negativity towards the Jewish people, being one of the unfortunate and perhaps unintended results of this interpretive perspective, was a contributing factor. The direct and explicit factors that led to these events are matters rooted in the sinful minds and hearts of those acting against God's chosen nation.[580]

Speaking more specifically to this collective and cumulative effect of generational negativity, Soulen looks back to the way that the early church developed a "canonical narrative" perspective in which "God's efforts as 'consummator' and 'redeemer' were viewed against the "failure of Adam and Eve to obey and sustain a relationship with God."[581] This failure led to God's redemptive plan which culminated in "a loving relationship with his erring children."[582] What is interesting though is that the Christian perspective on this unfolding redemptive story signaled that "the Old Testament dispensation has redemptive power solely by virtue of its

[580] "Throughout the history of the Christian church, the question of Israel's place within God's redemptive purposes has been of special importance. In modern history, with the emergence of dispensationalism as a popular eschatological viewpoint and the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, the theological question of God's intention for Israel has become even more pressing. After the Holocaust, the Nazi attempt to exterminate the Jews throughout Europe during World War II, the issue of the relation between the church and Israel has also been affected anew by the sad reality of anti- Semitism, which some allege belongs to any Christian theology that insists upon one way of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, whether for Jews or Gentiles." Venema, "The Church and Israel."

[581] Soulen, *God of Israel*, 27.

[582] Ibid.

reference to the future coming of Christ. Circumcision, promises, law, temple, Israel's history . . . all point in various ways toward Christ and the church."[583] As John E. Phelan points out though, "the implications of this were devastating for the Jewish people."[584] Soulen expounds on this point explaining the developing perspective of, "theological indifference for Christians not only within the sphere of the church but within human history as well."[585] So negative was the impact of this perspective that the Jewish people were "deemed to be under a divine curse, doomed to wander the earth, frail and miserable" and as Augustine declared, they "were to be kept in misery."[586]

The examination of Israel's history and the impact of the supersessionist perspective on its identity and function in world history is an important and valuable area of study. Yet the primary question of interest in this investigation is not centered on the historical consequences of this negative relegation of the Jewish people, but rather on the implications for the nation of Israel and the church today. Clearly the discussion of Israel's role and position in the world in relation to the church continues to be an important one. How is the church to view and ultimately interact with the nation of Israel today? What, if any, is the church's responsibility to Israel? What is the appropriate view of Israel to be taught from our pulpits and classrooms? Current

[583] Soulen, *God of Israel*, 27.

[584] John E. Phelan, "The Cruelty of Supersessionism: The Case of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Christian Theology Without Supersessionism? Challenges and Possibilities," *Religions* 13 (2022): 59.

[585] Soulen, *God of Israel*, 20.

[586] Phelan, "Cruelty of Supersessionism," 59.

world events have brought this topic to the forefront of debate, running the gamut of platforms from seminaries to local churches.[587]

The following chapter will provide an examination of the correlation between the textual analysis of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18 and post-supersessionism, in terms of soteriology, ecclesiology, missiology, and eschatology. It is critically important to articulate that from this point forward, analysis will be conducted upon the premise of the appropriateness of the post-supersessionist hermeneutic as it recognizes and affirms the continuity of the OT and NT, being grounded in the historical–grammatical method, and respecting the premise of *sensus literalis*. From the period of the OT forward, God has maintained a faithful remnant through whom He has continually demonstrated the outworking of his covenantal love for all humanity. Israel has always played a specific role in God's redemptive plan, even when they "stumbled." It was God's determined purpose to use the nation of Israel as both a sign and an instrument of his kingdom. Whether through times of faithfulness or disobedience, it was God's pleasure to use his nation, both sovereignly and providentially, in bringing to fruition his redemptive plan. Is there a distinction between God's relationship with Israel and the church? That is a point to which Scripture answers in the affirmative. However, this distinction cannot be defined in terms of God's sacrificial offer of salvation that has been extended to all humanity. The distinction seems to lie more in the expression of the Jewish relationship to God and that of the church's relationship, as well as the chronological and eschatological order of the history of salvation as determined by the Lord. Israel has always been separated by God for his purposes, and there is still a role for the nation in this age. The hope of future restoration for Israel is not built upon the

[587] When this investigation began, no active conflict existed between Israel and Hamas. However, as of the date of publication, the Israel-Hamas war that began on October 7, 2023, when Hamas launched an unprecedented attack on Israel from the Gaza Strip is still underway.

character of the Jewish people but rather on the immutable character of God. Whether read from the supersessionist or post-supersessionist lens, God's steadfast faithfulness to his own character is reflected in the absolute certainty of the fulfillment of his promises. Rather than *supersedence*, Scripture points to *precedence*, the precedence of the unconditional nature of God's promises made to Abraham and David. It is to these very promises that the remnant of Israel rests, trusting in the future redemption and restoration of the Davidic kingdom. God's work among the Gentiles is current and sure, just as his work among the Jews is future and complete. Within the economy of God, there is not only room for both Jew and Gentile, but there is a function and purpose for each.

There is no indication, neither in the OT nor the NT, that God's acceptance and inclusion of one people would come at the cost of another. God's promises and prophetic assurances remain intact and current despite the sins and failures of all humanity. Whereas supersessionism and its relationship to replacement theology proffer the rejection of Israel as permanent and unchanging, post-supersessionism and its historical-grammatical hermeneutic affirms and defends that it is not God's judgment upon Israel which is permanent but rather his calling of this people unto himself.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF A POST-SUPERSESSIONIST HERMENEUTIC APPLIED TO AMOS 9:11–12 IN ACTS 15:16–18

Building upon the interpretive and exegetical conclusions presented thus far, attention will now be placed on examining the implications of a post-supersessionist reading of the Amos 9:11–12 reference in the Acts 15:16–18 portion of the Jerusalem Council discourse, specifically as it relates to matters of soteriology, ecclesiology, missiology, and eschatology. As such, building upon the premise of the former chapter, that is, the superiority of a post-supersessionist interpretation of the text, it will be demonstrated how this hermeneutic methodology impacts the specific areas of soteriology, ecclesiology, missiology, and eschatology. From this point forward, the focus will shift from signaling strengths and weaknesses between the two hermeneutic frameworks to delineating a theological system built upon the post-supersessionist reading of the text.

The supersessionist premise that God's covenant relationship with Israel has been abrogated requires, in general, a reading of the NT, which draws conclusions beyond the immediate historical–grammatical meaning of the text. As has been demonstrated, no textual evidence purports Gentiles' adoption of Jewish identity, nor is there evidence to support the idea of "attempts to 'gentilize' the church (e.g., Romans 11 and 14–15)."[588] "To 'gentilize' or to 'Judaize' Christian communities would be to undermine the proclamation of God's invasive power, a power that transcends all normal expectations of social cohesion."[589] Whereas it is not beyond reason to recognize that the NT transmits an "anti-Jewish polemic" it should not be concluded that "this polemic is supersessionist."[590] Although there is a negative sentiment in

[588] Longenecker, "On Israel's God," 39.

[589] Ibid.

[590] Ibid.

terms of Israel's failures before God, "these do not necessarily go hand in hand with a claim to replace Israel or even a desire to do so."[591] Paul himself, a Jewish Christ follower, "imagined ethnic Israel, whether hardened or enlivened, to play the role of God's specially chosen instrument in the course of salvation history."[592] It is upon the foundation of this covenantal relationship between God and Israel that the NT affirms that the very "hardened part of ethnic Israel will be transformed into Christocentric faith in the eschatology activity of God."[593]

Jason F. Moraf stipulates that the traditional reading of Luke and the role of the book of Acts in "supersessionist interpretation and theology"[594] has led to an interpretive "ambivalence toward Jews and Judaism."[595] Yet from the perspective of historical–grammatical interpretation, this position has been proven difficult to defend given that Luke emphasizes "Israel's scriptural history, values Torah, and highlights the Jewish origins of the Jesus movement."[596] Whereas reading Luke–Acts from the supersessionist perspective is common, the scriptural perspective, both of the OT and NT, affirms God's continual commitment to Israel. Thus, as Moraf explains, a "non-supersessionist reading of Luke-Acts must demonstrate Luke's commitment to the Jewish people, first and foremost, their identity, their covenant relationship with God, and expectations for their salvation."[597] Towards this goal, the following analysis will provide a post-

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[591] Thomas Breidenthal, "Neighbor-Christology: Reconstructing Christianity before Supersessionism," CC 49 (1999): 328.

[592] Longenecker, "On Israel's God," 39.

[593] Ibid.

[594] Jason F. Moraf, "Children of the Prophets and the Covenant: A Post-Supersessionist Reading of Luke-Acts," *Religions* 14 (2023): 1.

[595] Ibid.

[596] Ibid.

[597] Moraf, "Children of the Prophets," 1.

supersessionist treatment of the soteriological, ecclesiological, missiological, and eschatological conclusions that can be drawn from Acts 15:16–18, conclusions built upon Luke's narration of God's covenantal faithfulness to Israel and progressive salvation of the Gentiles. Whereas a wide array of perspectives on post-supersessionism exists, the following is offered as an interpretive plumbline for this analysis, providing structure and focus to the forthcoming treatment of each theological area. As such, in agreement with the general tenets of post-supersessionism, questions related to soteriology, ecclesiology, missiology, and eschatology will be analyzed assuming that:

1. God's covenant relationship with the Jewish people is present and future.
2. Israel has a distinctive place and function in God's progressive redemptive plan.
3. There is a continuing distinction between Jew and Gentile in the church today.
4. This distinction is defined in terms of the particular Jewish and Gentile expression of their covenant relationship with God.[598]

The Jerusalem Council discourse addressed the question of "the integration of Gentile Christians into what had been a primarily Jewish body of believers."[599] Whereas the issues leading up to and surrounding the Council were many, historical–grammatical analysis provides not only a description of the contextual situation but points to fundamental theological principles essential to the church of the first, as well as the twenty-first century. Thus, the remainder of this chapter will examine the theological implications of a post-supersessionist reading of the Amos

[598] Donald Rudolph and J. Willitts, eds., *Introduction to Messianic Judaism: Its Ecclesial Context and Foundations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 317.

[599] Michael Mahan, "A Narrative Analysis of the Jerusalem Council Discourses: Table Fellowship and the Implicit Theology of Salvation," *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership* 5 (2013): 1.

9:11–12 reference in Acts 15:16–18 in terms of soteriology, ecclesiology, missiology, and eschatology.

The Soteriological Implications of a Post-Supersessionist Reading of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18

The first area of theological concern to be examined is that of the soteriological implications of a post-supersessionist reading of James's discourse during the Jerusalem Council. This interpretive reading of the text requires that Acts 15 be analyzed in terms of not only the book of Acts but also the Lukan corpus of Luke–Acts. In doing so, the interpreter is privy to Luke's narrative framed within a distinctly Jewish perspective. This is, by all accounts, an interesting point of view, given that Luke was writing from and to a Gentile context. Luke clearly emphasizes God's faithfulness to his chosen people, highlighted in his emphasis on critical themes such as "God, Torah, temple, and the people of Israel."[600] It is a perspective that recognizes the alignment of Lukan and Pauline perspectives concerning both the Jewish and Gentile place and function in "the universal, multi-ethnic community of Christ-followers," being "distinct yet covenantally related socio-religious entities."[601] It is helpful at this juncture to recall the perspective of Campbell that "the church and Israel [are] related but separate entities which should not be dissolved or merged in such a way that the sub-group identity of the one is lost or unrecognized."[602] When viewed from the Pauline Jewish lens, the church then was to be understood in terms of theological unity yet social distinction.[603] This is a premise which is firmly rooted in Paul's teaching that:

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[600] Moraf, "Children of the Prophets," 3.

[601] See Korner, "Post-Supersessionism," 2.

[602] William S. Campbell, *Paul and the Creation of Christian Identity* (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 99.

[603] Campbell, *Paul*, 99.

> … no one can be justified before God by doing what the Law commands, for no one can do everything which the Law demands … forgiveness is now only obtained through the death of Christ on the cross, not through the OT cultus. Thus, those who seek to be justified by doing the works of law end up cursed; the only way to receive the Spirit is not by obeying the Law but by faith in Jesus.[604]

Critically important to this juncture of the investigation is the specific Pauline perspective on the law and justification as related to the first-century Jewish perspective and subsequent hermeneutics. In reviewing, for example, Paul's letter to the Romans, he offered a concentrated emphasis on the law and the "works of the law." The phrase "works of law" (*erga nomou*) is used eight times by Paul (Rom 2:15; 3:20; 3:27; 3:28; Gal 2:16; 3:2; 3:5; 3:10), referring to "deeds prescribed by the Mosaic Law."[605] Hawthorne, Martin and Reid present a centralized perspective of his use of this phrase stating that "He (*Paul*) affirms that no one can be justified by "works of the law" (Gal 2:16; Rom 3:20, 28), that the Spirit was not received by "works of the law" but by responding to the Gospel in faith (Gal 3:2, 5) and that those who are characterized by "works of the law" are cursed (Gal 3:10)."[606] They conclude that Paul's employment of the phrase "works of law" referred to "doing what the Law commanded."[607]

When Paul used *erga nomou*, he was not just referring to nomistic practices "but to merit-amassing observance of the Law as well."[608] The Jewish expectation of law observance was, therefore, not a path to justification but rather a response to a God who required obedience on the part of his people. Based on these assertions, it becomes clear that the NT demonstrates that the

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[604] Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid, eds., *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 975.

[605] R. David Rightmire, "Works of the Law," EDBT, 835.

[606] Hawthorne, Martin, and Reid, *Dictionary of Paul*, 975.

[607] Ibid.

[608] Rightmire, "Works of the Law," EDBT, 835.

Jewish tradition of adhering to the law, albeit important to the covenantal relationship between God and nation, would be insufficient to open the door to personal salvation. From a canonical perspective, the NT called for a personal covenantal relationship beyond the communal alliance that had marked the national and religious identity of the Jewish people. The impact of this principle lies in the importance of understanding God's call to salvation extended to both Jews and Gentiles. This call to a relational covenant with God was fulfilled in its totality through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. No action on the part of Jew or Gentile could bring to fruition this relationship. The emphasis of the NT writers on the OT indicated their understanding that the covenantal promises of the past laid the groundwork for what Jesus Christ would complete in the New Covenant.

Mattison stipulates that the key issues surrounding Paul's perspective on justification revolve around his views "of the law and the meaning of the controversy in which Paul was engaged" … Paul strongly argued that we are "justified by faith in Christ (or "the faith of Christ") and not by doing the works of the law" (Gal 2:16b).[609] Scripture set forth that man was condemned by the law, yet Paul understood that justification before God was possible without completing the requirements of the law. Stephen Westerholm carries this thought even further, stating that Paul articulated a construct in which "the only viable path to righteousness, for Jew and Gentile alike, was by faith in Christ."[610] Paul asserted that "Christ took the place once occupied by the law."[611] The ultimate question then is to examine what this meant to the one hearing this new, tradition–breaking teaching for the first time. The NT writers offered a

[609] Mark M. Mattison, "A Summary of the New Perspective on Paul," *The Paul Page*, 16 October 2009, https://www.logos.com/grow/a-summary-of-the-new-perspective-on-paul/.

[610] Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The "Lutheran" Paul and His Critics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 408.

[611] Ibid.

worldview and existence in which the problem of the OT law had been solved, a perspective that finds firm footing in the discourse of Acts 15 and its employment of the Amos 9 oracle.

There has been great debate in recent years over Paul's beliefs concerning the law. Longenecker stipulates that there have been two main lines of thinking surrounding Paul and the law. First is the traditional view: "Paul imagined that human sinfulness has rendered the law ineffective since the law is incapable of overturning the condition of human sinfulness."[612] This traditional view has led to a religious perspective grounded upon legalistic footings: "Good works and bad works are added up, and the verdict of salvation or damnation is pronounced justly on the basis of whether the final total is a positive or a negative number."[613] In contrast to this view is the new perspective on Paul (NPP) in which "most forms of Judaism in Paul's day are not worthy of the attribute legalistic."[614] Instead, most Jews, including Paul, would have recognized God's election of his people and, in turn, strived to obey the law out of a reaction to God's act of grace towards his covenant people.

The OT perspective of the law can only be fully understood in terms of the context of the history of the nation of Israel. Whereas the law appears to be a rigorous set of rules and guidelines, it was a gift from God to guide Israel in how they were to live in communion with their Creator and their community. In the NT, however, the law refers theologically to the entire OT religious system (1 Cor 9:20). Paul's reference to the law would have been a topic of much concern and interest to his contemporaries as they would have been familiar with its implications and most likely overwhelmed by any teaching that offered an alternative route to its fulfillment.

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[612] Bruce W. Longenecker and Todd D. Still, *Thinking through Paul: A Survey of His Life, Letters, and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 326.

[613] Ibid.

[614] Ibid.

That, however, is the message that Paul offered as an ambassador for Christ, clearly demonstrating that what man could never fully satisfy through attempted obedience to the law had been forever fulfilled through Christ, once and for all defining the covenantal relationship between Creator and creation, providing mankind with a means to salvation and a justified right standing before God.

This NPP, perhaps now not so new, marked a turning point in the world of Pauline scholarship, evidenced by E. P. Sanders's volume, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*.[615] The NPP was more a loose movement consisting of many persons and perspectives than that of a single–purpose entity. N.T. Wright explains that the success of Sanders's work centered on five factors: (1) its emergence following much protest over the negative image of Judaism within Christian scholarship; (2) the clarity he brought to the idea of the Jewish Paul; (3) its reception among Reformed theologians; (4) the elevation of a previously unnoticed area of exegetical scholarship; and (5) the time and place in which the work emerged.[616]

Sanders opened the door into a new era of Pauline studies and accomplished several things: (1) he studied methodologies for comparing related but different religions; (2) he destroyed the standard view of Rabbinic Judaism; (3) provided a treatment of Palestinian Judaism; (4) purported a particular Pauline profile; and (5) compared Paul and Palestinian Judaism.[617]

If the above list represents what Sanders set out to do, then it is important to examine what qualified him as successful in his endeavor. This question points to his assertion that first-

[615] Ed Parish (E. P.) Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1977).

[616] Nicholas Thomas (N. T.) Wright, *Paul and His Recent Interpreters: Some Contemporary Debates* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2015), 65–67.

[617] Wright, *Paul*, 70.

century Jews "were not early forerunners of medieval Catholics, or indeed Pelagians."[618] Sanders argued this based on his understanding of the covenantal relationship between God and Israel and the subsequent covenantal reading of first-century Judaism. Central to this reading was the question of law-keeping towards the goal of maintaining, not obtaining, the covenantal relationship. Paul's understanding of present and future justification was intimately related to this eschatological perspective. Paul's theology of justification illustrated that he, as well as the Jewish community, believed in a final judgment according to works upon which the Messiah had already passed judgment. Sanders's opponents, many of whom were Reformed theologians, found grounds for debate on the premise that he was attempting to align a Pauline depiction of Christianity with that of Judaism. However, in essence, the construct presented by Sanders was in line with the standard Reformed view of the law.

Building upon his premise of *covenantal nomism,* Sanders made it clear that Paul did not initially have a problem with the law. Paul had been a faithful Jew who lived according to covenantal expectations. So, the question emerges then as to what the problem with the law was and how Paul determined that one existed. Sanders argues that there was not, in fact, a problem, but instead that Paul discovered salvation in Christ, not in Judaism. Paul's gospel focused on the work of salvation in Jesus Christ and how man could participate in that dynamic.[619] The means of that participation was faith, the believer's conscious awareness, and belief in Jesus Christ.

James Dunn later developed a post-Sanders position through a detailed exegesis of key Pauline texts, which resulted in (1) his acceptance of much of Sanders's perspective on Judaism yet assertion that some areas had been misinterpreted; (2) his treatment of Paul's comments on

[618] Wright, *Paul*, 71.

[619] Sanders, *Paul*, 552.

the law; and (3) his debate with Richard Hays over the phrase *pistis Christou*.[620] Although Dunn interpreted *pistis Christou* as "faith in Jesus Christ" and Hays understood it to mean "the faithfulness of Jesus Christ," they found agreement in Paul's teaching on justification and the idea of participation in Christ.

In the early 1990s, the NPP began receiving both scholarly and popular attention, much of it critical, such as that offered by D. A. Carson and his students, Simon Gathercole, Andrew Das, Seyoon Kim, and Martin Hengel. At the heart of their objections were two main concerns: first-century Judaism and the letters of Paul, each with its subset of issues.[621] Against the critics, Wright brought forward the question of covenantal nomism or his preferred term of covenantal narrative. Wright stipulated that there is a need to flesh out what is meant by the narrative of the covenant to properly treat issues such as grace and works, those being areas of consternation for NPP opponents. Of course, these are not new areas of question and debate, yet there is still a great deal of difficulty in finding common ground for understanding the relationship between God's grace and human behavior. Yet, with all the questions related to the Jewish context and the first-century world, what shines through is the overriding concern over justification by grace through faith.

Westerholm, in opposition to the NPP,[622] asserted that the issue of concern surrounding the Lutheran Paul stemmed from two vastly different sides of a single question: justification by faith leading to a sinner's approval by grace or the idea that Gentile inclusion in the people of God is by faith alone. However, there is nothing in the NPP that attempts to demonstrate that the

[620] James Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

[621] Wright, *Paul*, 108.

[622] Westerholm, *Perspectives*.

Pauline gospel argues in favor of the imposition of Jewish practices onto Gentiles. As Wright indicates, it was in response to this very issue that Paul articulated the doctrine of "justification by faith apart from works of the law," thus leading to the perspective "that the Pauline language of 'justification' relates directly to the question of the inclusion of gentiles without circumcision."[623] This specific point is set centerstage in the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 and James's creative employment of the Amos 9 salvation oracle.

As such, how does James's incorporation of the Amos 9 oracle affirm and support the idea that the OT problem of the law had been solved? How does this specific prophecy align with James's assertions? James's reference in v. 16 directly signals the restoration of the Jewish people. This was a work that Jesus had ushered in as he began to gather a believing remnant from Israel, starting with his disciples and extending beyond towards the fulfillment of his promise to rebuild and restore the house of David. James then states in v. 17 that the purpose of this rebuilt and restored house was to make a way for all mankind to be called out by the Lord. The inclusion of the Amos 9:11–12 oracle demonstrates that God had promised to come and rebuild the ruins of his people and then use those very same people as an instrument in extending salvation to all mankind, both Jew and Gentile, circumcised and uncircumcised. God had simply but profoundly begun his work of calling a people unto himself from all nations through salvation by grace.

Thus, the doctrine of salvation emerges as the first and most critical theological matter surrounding Acts 15.[624] J. Julius Scott affirms this, intimating that the contextual scenario surrounding the Jerusalem Council ultimately led the apostles to wrestle with "the nature of the

[623] Wright, *Paul*, 117.

[624] Veselin Kesich, "The Apostolic Council at Jerusalem," *SVTQ* 6 (1962): 112.

new faith" and determining "the basis upon which salvation was imparted."[625] Timothy Wiarda develops this perspective even further, affirming that "the narrative forcefully highlights a theological message, that God's purpose for the Gentiles is salvation without circumcision."[626] As will be examined, there are other theological issues of concern within the apostolic decree, but arguably, the doctrine of salvation stands centerstage in the interpretive conclusions surrounding the discourse.

Thus, what was James saying about the path to salvation for the Jews and the Gentiles? It is important to recall that most of Jesus's recorded ministry occurred within Jewish territory, although he ministered in great measure among the Gentiles (i.e., he healed a Gadarene demoniac and a Samaritan leper, he rewarded a Canaanite woman's faith and healed her daughter, in addition to healing the servant of a Roman centurion). These events would have most likely been received with great skepticism, if not outright rejection, by most Torah–abiding Jews. The socio-cultural construct of the time dictated strict separation between the Jews and the Gentiles. This reality was rooted in a long history of the Jewish pursuit of superiority. Yet Jesus's teachings called for a revolutionary removal of racial and ethnic division, as he came to call men from among all peoples to be a part of his kingdom.

The Messiah, while ministering to all peoples, faithfully demonstrated his deep connection and commitment to the Jewish people, a key element in understanding his mission, which Paul expressed in terms of being sent "to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom 2:10). Jesus's focus on the Jewish people was evident, as he directed his disciples to "not go to the Gentiles...but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt 10:6). The time for

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[625] J. Julius Scott, "The Church's Progress to the Council of Jerusalem According to the Book of Acts," *BBR* 7 (1997): 205–24.

[626] Timothy Wiarda, "The Jerusalem Council and the Theological Task," JETS 46 (2003): 245.

reaching the Jewish people was short, and as such the need was urgent. The opportunity to reach the Gentiles was to be much longer, given that their time of judgment would come later.

The Jerusalem Council represented the greatest crisis of the church to that time because the disciples had to work out the universal application of the glory of God within the cultural paradigms that existed in Judaism. This issue had to be resolved before they could advance in fulfilling the task of the Great Commission. However, first, the church leadership was faced with deciding if it was necessary for the new Gentile believers to not only adhere to the requirements of the law but also take on all the Jewish cultural customs in order to be accepted into the universal family of God. Paul had already demonstrated, though, that the Gospel meant that salvation was by faith, apart from the law. Yet, the practical implications of this new theological premise had led to debate and outright disagreement. Many Jews viewed adherence to the law as indisputable.[627] Pointedly, the tradition of circumcision was at the heart of this conflict as it had been a practice of utmost importance for generations.[628] The Jews believed that "unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1). Yet not only Paul but James as well brought a new perspective to this issue, asserting that the Jews were not to "make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God" (Acts 15:19). From this point forward, salvation was not to be determined by traditional or cultural norms, but rather faith in Christ alone. James's declaration represented a change in the doctrinal and missional perspective of the Jewish leadership, as from this point forward, it was to be accepted that the Spirit of Christ had been given not only for the Jewish people but for all humanity.

[627] *Mishnah*, Tractate Aboth 3.2–3.

[628] *Jubilees* 15.33–34.

The standard perspective of most Jewish believers that the Gentiles had to become Jewish to be true believers (Acts 15:1) was refuted through James's employment of the Amos 9 salvation oracle. Just as context is essential to interpreting the theological meaning of Acts 15, so too is it important that the context of Amos 9 be recalled. In the concluding chapter of the book of Amos, God reminds his people that his redemptive work extended far beyond the ethnic boundaries of Israel. He brought to memory his salvific and redemptive work among his chosen nation, as well as the Philistines and Arameans (Amos 9:7). However, given Israel's rejection of their God, he indicates that for a time, they would be left to their own devices, a period in which his judgment would be upon his people (Amos 9:8–10). Yet this period would not be without purpose, as he would also be at work filtering out those who were to be a part of his remnant (Amos 9:9). Only upon the conclusion of this period would God rebuild the Davidic line and renew and restore the blessings promised to his people (Amos 9:11–12).

Examining anew the differences between the MT and LXX translations of Amos 9:11–12 brings clarity not only to God's plan for his chosen nation but all peoples. The differences brought to the LXX translation allow for a more comprehensive reading and application of the text, thus indicating the inclusion of all peoples in God's redemptive plan. Consider the differences in the translation of Amos 9:11–12 and then compare them to James's employment of the text:

MT (Amos 9:11–12):

On that day, I will raise up the fallen Tabernacle of David, and I will close up their breaches, and I will raise up its ruins, and build it up as in the days of yore.	יאבַיּוֹם הַהוּא אָקִים אֶת־סֻכַּת דָּוִיד הַנֹּפֶלֶת וְגָדַרְתִּי אֶת־פִּרְצֵיהֶן וַהֲרִסֹתָיו אָקִים וּבְנִיתִיהָ כִּימֵי עוֹלָם׃
In order that **they inherit the remnant of Edom and all the nations because My**	יבלְמַעַן יִירְשׁוּ אֶת־שְׁאֵרִית אֱדוֹם וְכָל־הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר־נִקְרָא שְׁמִי עֲלֵיהֶם נְאֻם־יְהוָה עֹשֶׂה זֹּאת׃[629]

[629] Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages: Hebrew*.

Name is called upon them, says the Lord
Who does this.

LXX (Amos 9:11–12):

11 On that day I will raise up the tent of David that has fallen, and I will rebuild its things that have fallen, and I will raise up its things that have been destroyed, and I will rebuild it just as the days of the age,	11 ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ ἀναστήσω τὴν σκηνὴν Δαυὶδ τὴν πεπτωκυῖαν καὶ ἀνοικοδομήσω τὰ πεπτωκότα αὐτῆς καὶ τὰ κατεσκαμμένα αὐτῆς ἀναστήσω καὶ ἀνοικοδομήσω αὐτὴν καθὼς αἱ ἡμέραι τοῦ αἰῶνος,
12 **so that the remnant of the people, and all the nations upon whom my name was invoked upon them, will search for me**," says the Lord who is making these things.	12 ὅπως ἐκζητήσωσιν οἱ κατάλοιποι τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, ἐφ᾽ οὓς ἐπικέκληται τὸ ὄνομά μου ἐπ᾽ αὐτούς, λέγει Κύριος ὁ Θεὸς ὁ ποιῶν πάντα ταῦτα.[630]

Acts 15:16–18:

16 After these things I will return, and I will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen, and I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it,	16 Μετὰ ταῦτα ἀναστρέψω καὶ ἀνοικοδομήσω τὴν σκηνὴν Δαυὶδ τὴν πεπτωκυῖαν καὶ τὰ κατεσκαμμένα αὐτῆς ἀνοικοδομήσω καὶ ἀνορθώσω αὐτήν,
17 **so that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord**, **and all the Gentiles who are called by My name,"**	17 ὅπως ἂν ἐκζητήσωσιν οἱ κατάλοιποι τῶν ἀνθρώπων τὸν κύριον, καὶ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη ἐφ᾽ οὓς ἐπικέκληται τὸ ὄνομά μου ἐπ᾽ αὐτούς, λέγει κύριος ποιῶν ταῦτα
18 says the Lord, who makes these things known from long ago.	18 γνωστὰ ἀπ᾽ αἰῶνος.[631]

Whereas the differences in the LXX are identifiable,[632] James seems to be employing them to undergird and even bolster that which is articulated in the MT. James's incorporation of Amos 9:11–12 draws attention to the fact that God's redemptive plan contemplated the inclusion of the Gentiles, a plan that did not set forth any special caveat requiring Gentile conversion to

[630] Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages: Greek*.

[631] Ibid.

[632] The inclusion of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18 indicates James's reliance on, yet not strict adherence to, the Greek version of the text. Note that he adds "after these things," a phrase not incorporated in the MT or the LXX.

Judaism. As such, James asserted that Gentiles would be saved as Gentiles, this being God's redemptive plan in the past, present, and future.

James's inclusion of Amos 9:11–12 indicates that there is a time of renewed blessing to come. What James and his contemporaries were experiencing was but an initial and partial, yet literal fulfillment of what Amos foretold. In the future eschatological kingdom, both Jews and Gentiles will be included through salvation by grace. Nothing in the Amos 9 oracle nor James's discourse indicates that the path toward salvation depended upon embracing Jewish law or traditions. Salvation had always been a work utterly dependent upon God's grace extended towards humanity. Thus, in harmony with the NT doctrine of salvation, both Jews and Gentiles alike were to enjoy salvation because of the grace of God alone. Pointedly, there is no evidence in the text to support the idea that the Gentiles had to be circumcised and, by extension, become Jews to experience salvation. Salvation was not then, nor is it today, to be defined in terms of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. God's gift of salvation was and forever has been extended to all humanity, independent of questions of tradition or even faithfulness to him.

The historical, grammatical, and literary evidence demonstrates God's plan for salvation, which was and continues to be his taking for himself a people from among the nations, including uncircumcised Gentiles. God's action was and is wholly independent of law, indicating a particular theology of salvation: salvation by grace alone. As such, James's discourse, read from and interpreted through the post-supersessionist lens, clearly emphasizes the doctrine of salvation by grace alone for Jews and Gentiles alike. This interpretive perspective, wholly dependent upon a synchronistic reading and interpretation of the text, aligns with that of the interpretive framework of Jewish Christ followers such as Paul and James. Against the supersessionist interpretation, there is no indication that God's calling of a people unto himself was to be an

either–or scenario. Rather, the history of salvation was an unfolding of God's universal and collective plan, resulting in the restoration and redemption of remnant of man.

The Ecclesiological Implications of a Post-Supersessionist Reading of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18

Closely related to and naturally extending out from the foundation of the theological implications of the Acts 15 discourse upon the doctrine of salvation is its implications within the context of ecclesiology. As has been previously explained, supersessionism has had a long-lasting and damaging impact on church history. "Elements of Replacement Theology can be traced as far back as Marcion (A.D. 160), who carried on a theological crusade to purge the church of what he perceived to be dangerous Jewish errors and influences."[633] This negative view of the Jewish people grew over time, being reflected in the writings of other early church fathers such as Irenaeus, who stated, "the Jews have rejected the Son of God and cast Him out of the vineyard when they slew Him. Therefore, God has justly rejected them and has given to the Gentiles outside the vineyard the fruits of its cultivation."[634] So deep-rooted was this anti-Semitism that by the seventh century, "Jewish people who came to faith in the Messiah were required to denounce their Jewish ancestry and heritage before they could be baptized."[635] It is difficult to understand how the church, which began within a predominantly Jewish context, had devolved to this point.[636] "The Messiah was Jewish; the writers of the Bible were Jewish; the apostles were Jewish; the earliest Christians were Jewish; the first congregation was Jewish

[633] Gary Hedrick, "Replacement Theology: Its Origins, Teachings and Errors," *CJF Ministries* (2012): para. 9.

[634] Roberts Alexander et al., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to ad 325* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 1:493.

[635] Hedrick, "Replacement Theology," para. 10.

[636] See John Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1996), 399–444.

(located in Jerusalem); and the first missionaries were Jewish!"[637] Even from this singular historical consideration, it is difficult to uphold the supersessionist perspective. Yet, the history of the church has been plagued by this problematic view that the Jews have no place within Christianity "since they are an irredeemable people."[638] Yet over the past few decades, this once unquestionable and universally accepted perspective has become a matter of much debate, with open arguments in favor of a multi-ethnic expression of the church, consisting of peoples from all nations (*ethnos*), including the Jews.[639]

The concept and origin of the church are critical aspects of the interpretive debate between supersessionists and post-supersessionists. To this point, emphasis has been placed on defining the distinction between supersessionism and post-supersessionism in terms of the church's replacement of Israel. It should be considered, however, that some supersessionists argue that the church has always existed, traceable back to the period of the OT. Wayne Grudem purports this perspective, stipulating that the church consists of believers from both the OT and NT.[640] It is an argument built upon a specific interpretation found in the LXX in which *ekklesia* (assembly) is used to translate *qahal* (assembly, convocation, congregation).[641] The belief is that given the apparent interchangeable relationship between these terms, it is reasonable to assume that the church has existed in some form from the time of the OT to this day. The question that

[637] Hedrick, "Replacement Theology," para. 10.

[638] Longenecker, "On Israel's God," 39.

[639] Ibid.

[640] Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 853.

[641] Francis Brown, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Charles Augustus Briggs, *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977), 874.

must be addressed centers on determining the validity of this interpretive conclusion proffered by some supersessionists.

The NT term *ekklesia* was frequently used to describe general gatherings or assemblies of persons, a usage not unlike that employed by Luke in passages such as Acts 19:32, 39, and 41. However, only three examples of the term being used to describe religious gatherings exist.[642] The OT term *qahal*, by comparison, communicated the idea of a "summons to an assembly and the act of assembling."[643] There seems to be at least a superficial difference between the two terms, as *qahal* refers to an assembly, whereas *ekklesia* refers to those assembled.

The LXX uses *ekklesia* 77 times to translate *qahal*, yet there is no evidence that the meaning of the individual terms was seen as transferable to the other. Rather, Vlach explains that "in the attempt to show continuity between the church and Israel, some supersessionists claim that *qahal* was a technical term for Israel as the people of God in the OT" and, as such, provides an OT background concept of the NT *ekklesia*.[644] From this interpretive perspective, the supersessionist stipulates that "the apostles viewed the church as the new Israel and the continuation of OT Israel."[645] Yet, the semantic analysis of these terms does not support such a premise. The close study of the NT employment of *ekklesia* demonstrates that in 109 of the 114 occasions in which *ekklesia* is utilized, it does so in terms of the church.[646] Not only is it of note the way the term is used but also its distribution, with 112 of the 114 references placed after the Gospel accounts, with 23 usages explicitly found in the book of Acts and the remainder found in

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[642] L. Coenen, "*ἐκκλησία*," *NIDNTT* 1:291–2.

[643] Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages: Hebrew*.

[644] Vlach, *Has the Church*, 207–9.

[645] Ibid., 208.

[646] Robert L. Saucy, *The Church in God's Program* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), 16.

the Pauline Epistles and Revelation. This distribution leads to the conclusion that the very concept of the church is more indicative of the period of NT history recorded following the Gospels. This is an interpretive conclusion further bolstered by the book of Acts and its (1) emphasis upon the Holy Spirit's place and function on the day of Pentecost, marking the very birth of the church, in addition to (2) its description of both the universal body as well as local congregations of believers in the Epistles. The NT writer's perspective of the *ekklesia* clearly centered on this new post–Pentecost entity. Pentecost inaugurated a "qualitatively new era" of the Spirit's reach and intensity, distinguishing the OT from the NT.[647] As such, the argument of some supersessionists, which purports that the church can trace its roots back to the OT based on a perceived parallel between *ekklesia* and *qahal*, finds no definitive semantic foundation.

With the supersessionist premise of the superiority of the church over Israel further discredited, given these and other previously articulated issues, what is the appropriate perspective of the nature and origin of the church? What can be understood of Paul and James's perspectives expressed in terms of their participation in the Jerusalem Council debate? How did they see the church given the question of Gentile inclusion? The answer lies in the very construction of the question. If the point of conflict centered on inclusion and the manner of that inclusion, then logically, the idea of one people group replacing the other was not part of the equation. It is important, then, to examine the events surrounding the Jerusalem Council from both sides of the circumcision debate. For the Jewish believer who insisted upon Gentile circumcision as the path towards inclusion in the kingdom of God, it is reasonable to assume that they did so based on a belief that the law applied to all peoples. Yet for those who disregarded such a requirement, such as that demonstrated by Paul, Luke, and James in the analysis of the

[647] Michael Horton, *Rediscovering the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 149–50.

previous discussion on soteriology, there existed the possibility to consider that not all cultural rules and cultic practices applied equally to all people. Some, such as David Hesselgrave and Edward Rommen, view this latter perspective as evidence of contextualized decision-making within the early church. In other words, the Jerusalem Council was necessary to "make a decision with respect to Gentile converts and Hebrew culture."[648] The Council focused on matters of Gentile conversion, with the primary and driving question having been determined to be soteriological. However, does James offer a contextualized approach to this matter of debate? His response was arguably not contextually but scripturally driven, evidenced by the manner in which he built upon the Amos 9 oracle, which was steeped in a historical–grammatical interpretation of the OT text, representative of the Jewish hermeneutic of the first century. That is not to say, however, that Judaic cultural concerns were disregarded in the Acts 15 decree, a factor which is encapsulated in the treatment of the four prohibitions that follow his employment of Amos 9:11–12.

The apostolic decree emphasizes God's desire for "unity and diversity in his kingdom," considering how the apostles "addressed the question of whether Gentiles have to become Jews, or take on Jewish life, in order to be part of the people of God."[649] The resulting decree of the Jerusalem Council declared that Gentile believers were not obligated to fulfill the requirements of the law to be accepted into the kingdom of God. However, there were a few stipulations for their inclusion that affected not soteriology but ecclesiology. The four requirements mentioned in Acts 15:20 "demonstrate that Gentile believers," and naturally Jewish believers as well, "were

[648] Charles Kraft, *Christianity in Culture: A Study in Dynamic Biblical Theologizing in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1979), 340–41.

[649] David Rudolph, "One New Man, Hebrew Roots, Replacement Theology," *The Kings Collective*, 2021, https://collective.tku.edu/one-new-man-hebrew-roots-replacement-theology/.

expected to keep universal Torah ethics (e.g., 1 Cor 5–10)."[650] However, the question emerges of the importance and relevance of these requirements as they relate to the structure and function of the early church.

James not only dealt with Gentile inclusion into the church but also described what was to be considered appropriate behavior for "the new Christian gentiles in order to accommodate Jewish notions of purity."[651] James's discourse describes the "minimal purity requirements"[652] for those Gentiles who were "seeking association with the Jewish community."[653] It was this grouping of prohibitions which were of import given that although Gentile believers were not to be bound to fulfilling the law, "the Jewish (OT) Scriptures still have authority," and ultimately, "the decision that is made concerning Gentiles in Acts 15 is based finally on those Scriptures (15:21)."[654] This is relevant not only because of the immediate question of Gentile inclusion but also because it is yet another piece of evidence that undergirds the premise that the NT writers placed priority and authority on the OT Scriptures. Within the apostolic decree, there is recognition of both the prophetic corpus and the Mosaic law.

At the point in time when the Jerusalem Council occurred, there was a socio-cultural undercurrent that stood in the background of every interaction between the Jews and the Gentiles. So difficult were these inter-ethnic relations that the Jewish people viewed Gentile participation in the faith as challenging and troublesome. The Pharisees believed, at least in part,

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[650] Bockmuehl, "Noachide Commandments," 167–71.

[651] Mark D. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul's Letters* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1996), 192.

[652] Ibid., 193.

[653] Ibid.

[654] Glenny, *Septuagint*, 22.

that the complicated relationship between the two groups could be addressed in terms of table fellowship, establishing, and maintaining "fellowship purity" for both Jew and Gentile alike. It was a point upon which attention could be placed and thus offer the Gentiles a path toward their classification as "righteous" in terms of the Jewish perspective.[655]

The place and function of the Gentiles in relation to the Jewish people was not an exclusive NT theme, as their incorporation was "part of the fulfillment of the prophecies in the Scriptures about the restoration of Israel."[656] Mark Nanos argues that the Jerusalem Council decree provides insight into the development of *halakha* for the Gentiles, that being something of a middle ground between the Mosaic and Noahide laws, which had been the guiding principles for those sojourners or strangers among Israel (*gerim*[657]) during the OT period. Nanos explains that the laws applied to the *gerim* included cultic and ethical matters for Gentiles living in Israel, whereas the Noahide laws were more general, ethical laws for Gentiles outside of Israel. Nanos' interpretation of the apostolic decree provides a necessary middle-of-the-road perspective on the law for the Gentiles, emphasizing both faith and ethics.

In addition, it is valuable to recall the previously examined perspectives on interpreting the four prohibitions, particularly the view that they were related to Leviticus 17-18. It was these specific commandments (idolatry in Lev 17:1–9; blood in Lev 17:10–12; "strangled" in Lev 17:13–16; and sexual immorality in Lev 18:1–23)[658] that were applicable to both Jews and

[655] Nanos, *Mystery of Romans*, 193.

[656] Ibid.

[657] *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[658] William A. Strange, *The Problem of the Text of Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 97.

Gentiles living in Israel.[659] The meaning that emerges then, from within the post-supersessionist framework concerning James's discourse, is that the Jews and the Gentiles, who previously lived separately given their distinction as "holy" and "unholy," were now in a position in which they could live in communion with one another given the work of Christ in bringing holiness to all who believe upon him.[660]

This very question of communion between these two groups that were to be melded into one cohesive body emerges as an important theological theme. That is, the communion of the church, formed by those people that God was calling unto himself from all the nations, "those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles" (Acts 15:20). From the days of Moses forward, Gentiles had lived among the people of Israel, and there were laws which were applicable to each that allowed for the peaceful and reasonable coexistence of these groups. These non–Jews referred to initially as *ger* or *gerim* (plural) ("strangers, sojourners"),[661] had joined in the Exodus caravan from Egypt, subsequently being allowed "to enter and live in the land of Israel together with the twelve tribes" ultimately being viewed as "members of the larger Israelite community" yet distinct from "Israel according to the flesh."[662] These Gentiles were "afforded certain privileges in Israelite society that suggest acceptance and (in some cases) equality (Num 9:14)."[663] This takes on specific significance considering that they lived "more or

[659] Haenchen, *Acts of the Apostles*, 469.

[660] Karin Hedner Zetterholm, "Jewishly-Behaving Gentiles and the Emergence of a Jewish Rabbinic Identity," *JSQ* 25 (2018): 321.

[661] גֵּר, *ger*; Exod 12:48; Lev 19:33; Num 9:14; 15:14; Deut 10:18; 24:17; 27:19; Jer 7:6; Mal 3:5. Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages: Greek.*

[662] Robert Jones, "Outsider, Israelites and the," *LBD*.

[663] Ibid.

less permanently among the Israelites" without becoming one of them.[664] It is this very group to whom the matter of debate centers in Acts 15. The inclusion of the Gentiles (*ethnos*) meant that the once prophesied people-groups "out of the nations" who have come to join Israel and live "in the midst of" the Jews, now both form part of one entity, that being the church. Yet here again, there is no indication that one group is taking the place of the other, nor that one must assume the cultural and/or religious identity of the other to obtain this inclusion. Christ and his provision of salvation by grace alone paved the path to inclusion.

The prohibitions that James articulated then are understood to point to aspects of the law that needed to be recognized for the good of the communion of the body. Whereas, as it has previously been examined, other interpretive perspectives of the prohibitions look to matters of ethical principles of rabbinic literature concerning idolatry and immorality, as well as themes related to activity in pagan temples; it is this view that finds foundation in Leviticus 17–18 that is arguably the most appropriate. This is an assertion built upon the premise that it is this view that textually follows James's employment of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18.

Additionally, it is important to maintain a level of eschatological awareness while analyzing these verses, given their relationship and proximity to decisions related to the eschatological ingathering of the Gentiles. The prophets had predicted this ingathering of peoples, and James and his contemporaries were living out God's initial stages of fulfillment. God had explicitly declared his expectations of purity and holiness from his people from the time of Sinai. Israel and the nations had failed miserably to meet those expectations. Yet now, in the formation of God's kingdom under the New Covenant, analyzed from the post-supersessionist perspective, all believers were to live in purity and holiness, not as the fulfillment of any law, but

[664] Rolf Rendtorff, "The *Gēr* in the Priestly Laws of the Pentateuch," in *Ethnicity and the Bible,* ed. Mark G. Brett (Boston: Brill, 2002), 85.

rather as part of the spiritual growth and formation anticipated for all believers. The church was to be the construct within which all peoples, Jew and Gentile alike, could live in harmony and communion, consciously and intentionally dedicating themselves to that which was right and good before the Lord.

This scenario of harmony and communion was the expression of unity that was first alluded to at the beginning of the treatment of these matters related to ecclesiology. It is also aligned with the description of the NT church as outlined in Acts 2:42–44. This unity of the church was to be founded upon the common bond and foundation of Christ himself, to whom all believers were to worship in purity and live in holiness. The element of diversity that was also alluded to was to be built upon the unique ethno-sociocultural expressions of worship within the church. As has been determined, Gentiles were to be saved as Gentiles; there was no expectation of a homogeneous expression of identity within the body. Both Jews and Gentiles, unique in their cultural and ethnic identity, were to find bonds of communion centered on the One who had called them to purity and holiness. Unity in foundation, form, and function, yet diversity in its multi-ethnic expression. As such, and in agreement with Joel Willits, "a post-supersessionist framework is necessary if we are to recapture and sustain the "truth of the Gospel" and affirm the premise of "a multi-cultural *ekklesia*."[665] It is only from within the framework of a "circumcised/uncircumcised *ekklesia*" that the church will fulfill its role as "a universal ecclesiology that celebrates diversity, fights cultural hegemony, and supports diverse ethnic expressions of faith in Jesus, whether they be Jewish or Gentile." [666]

[665] Willitts, "Re-Newed Perspective," 379.

[666] Ibid.

The Missiological Implications of a Post-Supersessionist Reading of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18

The evidence presented thus far affirms and bolsters the supremacy of the post-supersessionist hermeneutic compared to that of supersessionism's non-literal, allegorical structure. As has been demonstrated, reading and interpreting the biblical text through the post-supersessionist lens both respects and is aligned with the fundamental aspects of the historical–grammatical hermeneutic, which has been demonstrated as the interpretive method most closely aligned with that of the NT writers. Through this lens, matters of soteriology and ecclesiology have been examined, being theological constructs present in the apostolic decree of Acts 15. Yet, as stipulated from the onset of this chapter, additional theological areas must be examined, including missiology and eschatology. Building upon the theological conclusions related to soteriology and ecclesiology, attention will turn to that of missiology, which naturally flows from the study of these areas.

James's employment of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18 carries with it critical missiological implications related to how Amos's prophecy signals that Gentiles have always been a part of God's redemptive plan. To examine this more closely, it is important to consider once again the construction of the text and the variances that exist between the MT and LXX, this time placing attention on the use of "the remnant of Edom" in the MT, which is changed to "the remnant of men" in the LXX, as well as the MT and LXX use of "all the nations" as compared to James's employment of "all the Gentiles":

MT (Amos 9:11–12):

On that day, I will raise up the fallen Tabernacle of David, and I will close up their breaches, and I will raise up its ruins, and build it up as in the days of yore.	יא בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא אָקִים אֶת־סֻכַּת דָּוִיד הַנֹּפֶלֶת וְגָדַרְתִּי אֶת־פִּרְצֵיהֶן וַהֲרִסֹתָיו אָקִים וּבְנִיתִיהָ כִּימֵי עוֹלָם׃

In order that they inherit **the remnant of Edom** and **all the nations** because My Name is called upon them, says the Lord Who does this.	יבלְמַעַן יִירְשׁוּ אֶת־שְׁאֵרִית **אֱדוֹם** וְכָל־הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר־נִקְרָא שְׁמִי עֲלֵיהֶם נְאֻם־יְהוָה עֹשֶׂה זֹּאת׃[667]

LXX (Amos 9:11–12):

11 On that day I will raise up the tent of David that has fallen, and I will rebuild its things that have fallen, and I will raise up its things that have been destroyed, and I will rebuild it just as the days of the age, 12 so that **the remnant of the people**, and **all the nations** upon whom my name was invoked upon them, will search for me," says the Lord who is making these things.	11 ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ ἀναστήσω τὴν σκηνὴν Δαυὶδ τὴν πεπτωκυῖαν καὶ ἀνοικοδομήσω τὰ πεπτωκότα αὐτῆς καὶ τὰ κατεσκαμμένα αὐτῆς ἀναστήσω καὶ ἀνοικοδομήσω αὐτὴν καθὼς αἱ ἡμέραι τοῦ αἰῶνος, 12 ὅπως ἐκζητήσωσιν οἱ κατάλοιποι τῶν **ἀνθρώπων** καὶ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, ἐφ᾽ οὓς ἐπικέκληται τὸ ὄνομά μου ἐπ᾽ αὐτούς, λέγει Κύριος ὁ Θεὸς ὁ ποιῶν πάντα ταῦτα.[668]

Acts 15:16–18:

16 After these things I will return, and I will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen, and I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it, 17 so that the **rest of mankind** may seek the Lord, **and all the Gentiles** who are called by My name," 18 says the Lord, who makes these things known from long ago.	16 Μετὰ ταῦτα ἀναστρέψω καὶ ἀνοικοδομήσω τὴν σκηνὴν Δαυὶδ τὴν πεπτωκυῖαν καὶ τὰ κατεσκαμμένα αὐτῆς ἀνοικοδομήσω καὶ ἀνορθώσω αὐτήν, 17 ὅπως ἂν ἐκζητήσωσιν οἱ κατάλοιποι τῶν **ἀνθρώπων** τὸν κύριον, καὶ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη ἐφ᾽ οὓς ἐπικέκληται τὸ ὄνομά μου ἐπ᾽ αὐτούς, λέγει κύριος ποιῶν ταῦτα 18 γνωστὰ ἀπ᾽ αἰῶνος.[669]

In the LXX, "Edom" (אֱדוֹם) is translated as "people" or "humanity" (*ανθρωπων*), with Edom understood to be representative of "mankind" or "all humanity" which naturally includes the Gentiles.[670] There is a parallel that can be drawn from one translation to another in that "the remnant of men/mankind" aligns with "all the Gentiles/nations." It is a translation and

[667] Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages: Hebrew*.

[668] Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages: Greek.*

[669] Ibid.

[670] Stuart, "Hosea–Jonah," 398.

interpretation that corresponds perfectly with the overall redemptive plan of God of bringing renewal and restoration to all people through the Davidic line.

This restoration of the nations, which Amos foretold, is what James and his contemporaries were experiencing as God was bringing forward the initial, literal, yet partial fulfillment of his prophetic promise. All those who called upon the name of the Lord would be saved and subsequently belong to him. As has been demonstrated, James's use of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18 affirms that not only the Jews but the Gentiles, as well, belonged to the Lord as he was actively incorporating them into his kingdom with no expectation of fulfilling the law. Upon this foundation, the impact of the apostolic decree on the mission of the early NT church must be considered. More specifically, if James was asserting that Gentiles were to be incorporated into the kingdom of God as Gentiles, respecting the cultural identity of both Jew and Gentile, then what impact was this to have on the work of the early church in carrying the Gospel to the uttermost parts of the world?

The Gospel changes every aspect of a believer's life, including his culture and cultural awareness. The perspective of David K. Strong clarifies this reality as he stipulates that conversion is a process of fundamental change related to one's faith, only to be later followed by matters of culture. He stipulates that there is a very real possibility that the new believer's culture may change, but he "affirms that the first order of the day is the convert's allegiance."[671] Yet James's decree established a framework within which the church was to function as a multi-ethnic environment. If the Gentiles were to be saved as Gentiles, then the precedent was established that the loss of sociocultural or ethnic identity was not a requirement for inclusion

[671] David K. Strong, "The Jerusalem Council: Some Implications for Contextualization—Acts 15:1–35," in *Mission in Acts: Ancient Narratives in Contemporary Context*, ed. Robert L. Gallagher and Paul Hertig (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2004), 203.

and acceptance into the kingdom of God. David G. Peterson describes this by stating, "the Jerusalem Council makes the gospel of salvation by faith alone the key to defining the true nature of this church, which involves Jewish and Gentile believers together."[672] This multi-ethnic expression was one that the early missionaries seemed to understand without much difficulty, especially the Apostle Paul. In Paul's letters to the early churches there is a clear emphasis placed on the universality of the apostolic mission (Eph 3:1–13; Col 1:6, 23), a reality that was grounded in the events of the book of Acts and its description of the progress of the apostolic mission moving out from Israel to the nations (Acts 10:1—11:18). In addition, Paul's letters highlight the way Israel's blessings were being shared with the Gentiles (see Eph 2:11–22; 3:5–6). Yet at the same time, "in Acts, the apostles and the prophets—including Paul—are consistently connected with the original apostolic community at Jerusalem and portrayed as distinctly Israelite figures, even as they take part in the gentile mission (Acts 8:14; 11:1, 27; 12:25—13:1; 15:2, 4, 27, 32; 21:10, 17–26)."[673] Thus, one of the first missiological lessons to be drawn from the Jerusalem Decree is that the kingdom of God, from the time of the OT forward, was intended to be an entity consisting of peoples from all nations. Within this multi-ethnic entity, there was to be respect for the ethnic and socio-cultural identity of its members.

Beyond carrying the Gospel to the nations, an interesting question emerges concerning Israel. What was their role to be in the apostolic mission? Or were they to be the target of this mission? What was to happen with the mission they were charged with in the OT? Paul again provides valuable insight concerning these matters. For example, in Galatians 2:7-9, he signals that there were ongoing, simultaneous missions focused on both the circumcised and the

[672] Peterson, *Acts of the Apostles*, 443.

[673] Lionel J. Windsor, "Israel and the Apostolic Mission: A Post-Supersessionist Reading of Ephesians and Colossians," *Religions* 14 (2023): 4.

uncircumcised (Jew and Gentile). Further, it becomes abundantly clear the burden that Paul had for the Jewish people in coming to know Christ as he expressed in 1 Corinthians 9:20 and his efforts to become "like a Jew, to win the Jews." Although it was clear that the church was to go about the work of reaching all peoples, both Jew and Gentile, the question remains concerning the charge of God to Israel to be a light to the nations in the OT (Isa 49:6). If, as the supersessionist argues, the church has replaced Israel, does this mean that this charge now applies to the church? Or, if, as the post-supersessionist argues, there is a continuing distinction between Jew and Gentile in the church today, does Israel still have some role to play in carrying out their mission?

Addressing this aspect of the missiological implications of Acts 15:16–18 requires analysis of questions, which ultimately will be addressed in the final chapter in which conclusions will be offered concerning the importance of a post-supersessionist hermeneutic for correctly understanding James's inclusion of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18. However, it is important at this juncture to define what is meant by Israel's OT mission or charge to be a *light to the nations*. Was this mission evangelistic, as would be the NT contemporary perspective, or was God's charge to Israel indicative of something more comprehensive? The very foundation of this question opens the door to much discussion as there is not a clear consensus over the definition of "mission" in the OT compared to that of the NT. For example, Kevin Paul Oberlin stipulates that "although there is some indication that Israel had a ministry to the nations in the Old Testament, one should not automatically assume continuity with New Testament missions."[674] The reason for the ambiguity of this matter again lies in the meaning of "mission."

[674] Oberlin, "Ministry of Israel," 2–3.

If “mission” is defined only in terms of evangelism and discipleship as realized by the church today, then it would be hard to defend that this same construct is to be found in the OT. However, if “mission” is defined in terms of a particular role and call of God upon a person or an entity, then there is a concept of “mission” to be found in both the OT and NT, which provides additional evidence for the continuity between the two. As such, building upon the basic tenets of post-supersessionism, outlined at the beginning of this chapter, and this latter definition of mission, Israel still has a role to play in God’s ongoing redemptive plan.

God called the nation of Israel to be not only his treasured possession but also his mediator, representative, and kingdom of priests before the nations (Exo 19:5–6). That is to say that Israel had a role to play in God’s redemptive plan, through which he would call all men and all nations unto himself. It was this that defined Israel’s mission to the world. It has previously been established that God has allowed a partial hardening of Israel’s heart, a time during which God has not completely abandoned his people but rather is allowing them to be used in bringing salvation to the Gentiles. Thus, Israel still has a role to play in God’s unfolding redemptive plan. It is not, perhaps, intentional, and visible, as is that of the church, but it is no less important than God’s charge to each believer to make disciples.

Thus, in bringing this discussion to a close concerning the missiological implications of James’s use of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18, the post-supersessionist hermeneutic provides clear evidence that although Israel failed to carry out its mission during the period of the OT, it has not lost its role and function in God’s redemptive plan. Further, there is no adequate foundation upon which to argue that this OT charge, once given to Israel, has somehow been transferred to the church. Adhering once again to the principles of the historical–grammatical hermeneutic, God’s charge to Israel still stands, and in the current unfolding of his redemptive

plan, he is bringing about the progressive fulfillment of that plan. Further, as related to the church, much in the same way as Paul indicated in Galatians 2, the church has a continual, simultaneous mission towards which we are to be working in taking the Gospel to all the nations, including Israel.

The Eschatological Implications of a Post-Supersessionist Reading of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18

There is one additional theological area to examine towards the goal of delineating the implications of a post-supersessionist reading of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18: the area of eschatology. The post-supersessionist hermeneutic applied to the eschatological promise of Amos 9:11–12, which points to a future point in time in which the "tent of David" will be reconstructed, also indicates that there is a future hope for the Gentiles. The OT declaration of Amos 9:11–12 contributes to both the theological unity and diversity of the prophetic corpus concerning the nations, which the NT echoes and affirms through James's reference to *all of mankind* (Acts 15:16–18). What Amos prophetically declared, James theologically affirmed concerning those nations who had once stood against God yet would experience His future blessings. The OT makes clear that these nations, as well as the nation of Israel, were to play an essential role in the plan of God. Yet it is here where tension emerges concerning the inclusion of the Gentiles into God's redemptive plan in relation to God's commitments to the faithful remnant of Israel. The canonical evidence, however, makes clear that the renewal of the covenant and the restoration of "David's fallen tent" would give dawn to the messianic era in which both Israel and the nations would experience his eternal blessings.

Recalling the exegetical analysis of the Amos 9:11–12 portion of the final salvation oracle of the book of Amos is now required. Properly reading these verses requires that they be examined as part of a larger literary unit (vv. 11–15) in which vv. 11–12 center on "the nations,"

whereas vv. 13–15 center on God's future restoration of Israel in the Promised Land. The prophet's mention of the *fallen tabernacle*, or the *booth of David*, is of utmost importance to the question of not only Israel's future restoration but the Gentile inclusion into the kingdom of God.

God made clear his promise to raise up "the fallen booth of David" in Amos 9:11, a promise which indicated that at some future point in time, God would bring restoration to the Davidic line originally prophesied in 2 Samuel 7. During this process of restoration, God's name would be known among the nations, echoing the unconditional promise of God to Abraham in Genesis 12:2–3. Amos 9:11–15 presents a promise of salvation, which was to proceed a time of judgment upon the nation. There is progression indicated in this future work, beginning with the restoration of the Davidic line, followed by God's work among the Gentiles, culminating in the full regathering and restoration of Israel in the Promised Land. It is a process that was set into motion because of Jesus's resurrection and ascension (see Acts 2:28–36; 13:22–32). James's employment of the Amos 9 oracle indicates his awareness of the fact that he and his contemporaries were experiencing the initial albeit partial fulfillment of this OT promise, as they were witnessing the initial stages of the Gentile inclusion into the kingdom of God.

The interpretation of Amos 9:11–15, as well as the relationship that exists between vv. 11–12 and vv. 13–15 will ultimately be driven by the interpreter's eschatological perspective. A treatment of the differing eschatological perspectives was provided in an earlier section, and as such, attention here will be placed on that of the progressive dispensationalist and their hermeneutic framework in which the NT writers are viewed as interpreting the original OT promises to find "their spiritual fulfillment in the church and their more literal fulfillment in Israel's future."[675] As was previously asserted, this is a perspective that views God's promise of

[675] Porter, *Future Restoration*, 26.

land being literally fulfilled for ethnic Israel in the future. Also, as has been established, the progressive dispensationalist / post-supersessionist reading of Acts 15 demonstrates that there is a place for both Israel and the church while maintaining that "God will keep his promises to national Israel."[676] This is a premise built upon the covenant promises of Jeremiah 31:33, which were made with "the house of Israel," through which God reaffirmed "his unconditional promise to the nation of Israel."[677]

This is a perspective that aligns with that of Paul expressed in Romans 11:1, where he affirmed that God had not rejected his people. In Paul's mind, Gentile believers in no way superseded or usurped the place and role of Israel. Paul clearly understood that a future salvation and restoration was awaiting the Jewish nation (Rom 11:26–27), yet at the same time, he understood that God's blessing of grace was to be extended to the Gentiles as well. This extension of grace was and is best understood in terms of inclusion, not "nullification or supersession," because what God promised to Israel could never be revoked (Rom 11:29).[678] If the Jewish nation has no future in God's plan, as the supersessionists claim, then what is the future "fullness" of Israel that Paul mentions in Romans 11:12? And when will the nation experience "life from the dead" and be accepted by God (v. 15)? The most reasonable response is found within the Pauline understanding of a future renewal and restoration of Israel.

Drawing from the conclusions of the previous chapter, it is important to recall that Paul emphasized that God has chosen a remnant by grace from among the Israelites and the Gentiles. It is here where the idea of the *fullness* of Israel, as indicated in Romans 11:12, and the "*fullness*

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[676] Porter, *Future Restoration*, 26.

[677] Ibid.

[678] Ibid., 27.

of the Gentiles" in Romans 11:25 is of importance. For Israel, the fullness of the Jewish people (v. 12) signals the remnant of ethnic Israel who will turn to the Messiah. It is this certain future hope founded upon faith in the Messiah that will provide Jews and Gentiles alike entrance into God's kingdom.

The appropriation of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18 while highlighting God's return and rebuilding of the house of David through Christ's resurrection, also points to the universal reach of the gospel in that it both provides a solution for the remnant of Israel and a place for Gentile inclusion in his redemptive plan. As such, James's incorporation of Amos 9:11–12 refers both to the restoration of national Israel and God's inclusion of the Gentiles into his kingdom.

The post-supersessionist perspective of the future of Israel is most closely aligned with the tenets of Scripture identifiable through the employment of a historical–grammatical hermeneutic, and as such, aligns with the teaching of progressive dispensationalism. This eschatological perspective recognizes that there "is a distinction between Israel and the church, and a future salvation and restoration of the nation Israel in a future earthly kingdom under Jesus the Messiah as the basis of a worldwide kingdom that brings blessings to all nations."[679] As has been stated and repeatedly defended, the post-supersessionist "does not think that God's covenant with the Jewish people has been made obsolete or that the church has replaced Israel as God's people."[680] Progressive dispensationalists, manifesting a post-supersessionist perspective, adhere to the idea that "the people of Israel are a specific people who received specific national promises" … "God keeps his promises to those whom the promises were made."[681] Further, it is

[679] Vlach, *Dispensationalism,* 93.

[680] Tucker, *Reading 1 Corinthians,* 7.

[681] Vlach, *Dispensationalism,* 37.

important to underscore the progressive dispensationalist belief that "Israel and the church are distinct; thus, the church cannot be identified as the new and/or true Israel."[682]

Ultimately, Israel has been separated by God to be employed within his plan and redemptive purposes both in the present church age as well as the eschatological future. Central to this overall theological treatment is the matter of God's salvation offered to humanity compared to his promises to Israel. As Vlach succinctly states, "there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile … however, salvific unity between Jews and Gentiles does not erase ethnic or functional distinctions between the two groups."[683] Thus, upon the premise of the employment of the historical–grammatical hermeneutic aligned with that of the post-supersessionist framework, James's employment of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18 underscores the validity of God's covenant relationship with the Jewish people both now and in the future, recognizing the unique role and function, as well as identity, of both Israel and the church in God's redemptive plan.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, key biblical texts important to the exegetical analysis of Acts 15:16–18 have been examined from within the post-supersessionist framework towards the goal of delineating fundamental aspects of a theological system that agrees with the first-century Jewish Pauline hermeneutic, in addition to that of the historical–grammatical methodology and progressive dispensationalism. This was a process that was built upon the interpretive and exegetical conclusions presented throughout this investigation, examining the implications of a post-supersessionist reading of a specific text, that being the Amos 9:11–12 reference in Acts 15:16–18, as related to matters of soteriology, ecclesiology, missiology, and eschatology.

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[682] Vlach, *Dispensationalism*, 41.

[683] Ibid., 44.

What has been demonstrated is that the post-supersessionist reading of the text that assumes (1) God's present and future covenant relationship with the Jewish people, (2) his distinctive place and function for Israel within his progressive redemptive plan, and (3) the continued distinction between Jew and Gentile in the church today defined in terms of the particular Jewish and Gentile expression of their covenant relationship with God, signals and affirms God's covenantal faithfulness to Israel and progressive salvation of the Gentiles. As the Jerusalem Council discourse addressed the question of the integration of Gentile Christians into a highly Jewish context, it was demonstrated that the post-supersessionist analysis of this particular passage and its creative employment of the Amos 9 salvation oracle appropriately and accurately describes the identity and relationship of the church and Israel in this age, both resolving the exilic state of God's people and the place of the Gentiles in his plan. James's scriptural response to the debate surrounding Gentile inclusion into the church, read from the first-century Jewish Pauline perspective, which the post-supersessionist framework most closely aligns with, provides a clear theological system for defining matters of soteriology, ecclesiology, missiology, and eschatology. In addition, as James's response brought closure to the Council's debate, it also clarified the identity and mission of the NT community. James's declaration affirmed God's commitment to ethnic Israel while also defining the identity and mission of the church, which was to be inclusive of all peoples. As was premised from the outset of this investigation, the interpretation of James's appropriation of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18 is most properly understood only when and if examined from within the framework of the Jewish mindset and perspective employed by James, as well as a close examination of the variations found between the LXX and MT. The historical–grammatical analysis that has been set forth provides not only a description of the contextual situation of both the Jerusalem Council and the

Amos 9 salvation oracle, but also provides a cohesive biblical–theological system of soteriology, ecclesiology, missiology, and eschatology.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS

The focus of this research has been the examination of the implications of a post-supersessionist hermeneutic applied to James's use of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18. As a result of the exegetical and theological analysis conducted, it was demonstrated that when read and interpreted from a post-supersessionist perspective, James's creative employment of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18 provides a frame of reference for describing the identity and relationship of the church and Israel in this age which resolves the interpretive conflicts surrounding the exilic state of God's people and the place of the Gentiles in his redemptive plan. In addition, James's employment of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18 provides canonical evidence that undergirds the fundamental tenets of post-supersessionism that God's covenant relationship with the Jewish people is both present and future, affirming Israel's continual and distinctive place and function in God's progressive redemptive plan.

The premise of this investigation was built upon the idea that if it could be argued that James discourse was built upon a perspective which proffered inclusion of both Jew and Gentile into the Christian community, then given its importance in the course of early church history, it could stand as a type of test case for then affirming the tenets of post-supersessionism and by extension shape the way in which we interpret the NT use of the OT. The question that provided direction to this investigation centered on demonstrating that the post-supersessionist framework, as compared to that of the supersessionist, provides the interpreter a construct within which to read and interpret the text in a way that is compatible with what would have been the NT Jewish mindset. Whereas it is recognized that there is no consensus on how to define this Jewish perspective, the overwhelming biblical evidence supports the premise that James would have viewed and interpreted the events of his day in terms of the historical and religious perspective of

the Jewish people, who from the time of Abraham, had maintained the belief that the God of Israel who had provided for his nation in the past, would continue to do so in the future. James's perspective would have been built upon the collective consciousness and identity of the Jewish people who clung to the unconditional OT promises of God for a future restoration of his people. The prophetic corpus pointed the Jewish people to a sure and future hope, a fact which Amos prophesied (Amos 9) and James brought to memory (Acts 15). To argue, then, that James would have viewed the Gentiles as the new recipients of God's OT promises to Israel, that is, the premise of supersessionism, is not only illogical but incongruous with the OT canon. An asynchronous reading of the text is the only path towards this preponderance of James's reinterpretation or expansion of the Amos 9 salvation oracle to mean that the Gentiles now occupied the place once promised to the nation of Israel.

Several exegetical factors were central to the development of this research: (1) the nature of James's use of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18; (2) the contextual background of both the prophetic oracle and the Jerusalem Council; (3) the Jewish interpretation of Amos 9:11–12; and (4) the LXX, MT, and Qumran citations of both passages. The analysis of these factors culminated in the textual and theological analysis of James's use of Amos 9:11–12 viewed from within both the supersessionist and post-supersessionist constructs. The analysis of this text from within both of these hermeneutic frameworks demonstrated the strength of the post-supersessionist methodology as compared to the supersessionist hermeneutic of allegorization, in terms of the post-supersessionist adherence to (1) a proper view of the interpretive priority of the NT over the OT, (2) a belief in literal fulfillments of OT texts regarding Israel, and (3) the application of the historical–grammatical interpretive methodology, all of which are deemed compatible with that of the Jewish interpretation employed by James. Thus, upon the interpretive

conclusions that emerge from this framework, there is a foundation upon which to affirm that God's covenant relationship with the Jewish people is both present and future, as Israel has a distinctive place and function in God's progressive redemptive plan.

Interpretive Conclusions Related to the Post-Supersessionist Hermeneutic Applied to James's Use of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18

The Jerusalem Council and the resulting apostolic decree of Acts 15 registers one of the most critical moments in the life and development of the NT church. The underlying question which led to the need for a centralized discussion and debate among the Jewish–Christ following leadership, centered on the path to Gentile inclusion into the church. More specifically, how were the Gentiles to be incorporated into an organism that was fundamentally Jewish in nature? Given the centrality of the Jewish culture and tradition to that of the first-century church, it seemed only natural that those who desired to become part of this new entity and movement would have to adhere to the religious culture and customs of the Jews. Or was that a correct assumption to be made?

In providing an answer upon which the church could move forward, James offered a scriptural response, citing the OT salvation oracle of Amos 9:11–12. However, as has been examined, James did not employ a direct quote of the Amos 9:11–12 oracle but rather adapted its structure so that, in agreement with that set forth by the OT prophets, the covenantal promises of renewal for the remnant of Israel were respected while also recognizing God's plan for the Gentiles to participate in those covenantal blessings. It was a response that affirmed God's commitment to ethnic Israel while also defining the identity and mission of the church. This is an interpretation that aligns with what would have been the Jewish anticipation of a future restoration of the nation, as well as what is deemed as the historical–grammatical hermeneutic employed by James and his astute use of the Amos 9 salvation oracle.

The textual references to the Gentiles as God's "people" (*λαόν*) (Acts 15:14) who are "called by God's name" (Acts 15:17) are contextually and conceptually connected with the eschatological promise of Amos 9:11–12 which points to a future reconstruction of the "tent of David" as well as a future hope for the nations (or Gentiles). Amos's prophetic promises, which are theologically aligned with the prophetic corpus concerning both Israel and the nations, are echoed in James's reference to mankind (*anthropoi*). Amos prophetically declared, and James theologically affirmed that Edom, the symbol of all those who had stood against God, would, along with Israel, experience his future blessings as part of his eschatological plan.

However, here, the hermeneutic frameworks of supersessionism and post-supersessionism lead to differing conclusions. For the supersessionist, who generally views scripture through an allegorical lens, there is no point of debate to consider when it comes to the inclusion of the Gentiles into God's redemptive plan or God's OT commitments to Israel because all those questions now center on the church, which has ultimately assumed the role and function of Israel in the NT. Yet, for the post-supersessionist, there are matters of great relevance that must be dealt with in terms of the place and function of Israel and the church.

The post-supersessionist hermeneutic and its natural alignment with progressive dispensationalism recognizes a unified and universally extended view of salvation. Progressive dispensationalism which upholds the distinction between Israel and the church, also provides a definition of the place and function of the church, which is, in this age, partially enjoying the blessings promised to Israel. This is a premise built upon the distinction between the current partial fulfillment and that of complete and literal fulfillment of God's prophetic promises in the future. It is also a premise that aligns with the NT employment of OT promises in signaling the future literal fulfillment of God's promises in terms of, for example, Israel's indisputable and

irrevocable return to the Promised Land. Additionally, it is a premise that upholds the literal interpretation of OT promises to Israel, a key point of debate between supersessionists and post-supersessionists.

Thus, a post-supersessionist hermeneutic and its alignment with the progressive dispensationalist theological parameters, applied to Acts 15:16–18 identifies and defends both Israel and the church's place in God's redemptive plan. James's discourse in the apostolic decree should be interpreted as recognizing the new Christian faith's Jewish foundation while embracing the new entity's multi-ethnic facet. For the Jewish Christ-follower, circumcision was a reminder of both their national and religious identity, yet for the Gentile Christian who had no foundation of a covenantal relationship with God, it was a practice that held no religious significance. It was James's response to this conflict, which not only addressed the matter of circumcision but demonstrated the level of continuity/discontinuity between Judaism and the church. These interpretive conclusions align with a balanced *sensus literalis* and *sensus plenior* reading of the text. That is, these are interpretive conclusions that are constructed upon both the meaning of the text defined by historical and grammatical considerations while also considering and preserving both the OT and NT contexts without forcing the interpreter to employ a spiritualized hermeneutic dependent on typology. It is this interpretive reading of James's use of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18, understood in terms of contemporary post-supersessionism / progressive dispensationalism, which allows the interpreter to identify and describe the identity and relationship of the church and Israel in this age in a way that is compatible with that of the first-century Jewish Christ followers.

Based on these conclusions, it becomes clear that the events described in Acts 15, as well as James's discourse and employment of the Amos 9 salvation oracle, were important to the

church's initial stages of development but are also of immense value to God's plan for unity and diversity within his kingdom today. The NT clearly articulates that God's gift of salvation is extended to all peoples, both Jew and Gentile alike. All have sinned (Rom 3:23), and all owe a debt that cannot be paid (Rom 6:23). Yet Jesus, the only name under heaven given to humankind by which he can be saved (Acts 4:12), came to extend salvation to all who believe upon him. The NT describes a path to salvation paved only by the blood of Christ. There is no act of faith or good work, no cultic rite or tradition (i.e., circumcision) that can place man within God's saving grace. As has been demonstrated, these fundamental theological truths ultimately impact our understanding of the NT church and its mission.

The results of this research consistently point to God's faithfulness to a remnant through whom he has demonstrated the outworking of his covenantal love, with Israel always playing a role in this redemptive plan, as well as the Gentiles. Yet there is a distinction in the roles that each has played, just as there is a distinction in God's relationship with each. However, there is no distinction to be made in God's sacrificial offer of salvation. Examining this matter both canonically and from within the construct of biblical theology demonstrates that God's redemptive work has revolved around his chosen nation. In the OT, God called Israel out to be a light to the nations, a role they failed to fully realize. Yet here, it is critical to recall that God's promises of blessing to Israel were not dependent upon their faithfulness to this task. Thus, the argument of the supersessionist that given Israel's failure, God has transferred both their role and future reception of blessing to the church finds no foundation. The identification of a substitutionary role of the church in place of Israel forces the canon to say something that was never intended. The identity, form, function, and position of Israel and the church should not be

viewed in either–or terms but rather in terms of both having a place and function in a multiethnic-sociocultural diverse kingdom.

Research Implications

The investigation into James's use of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18 within a post-supersessionist hermeneutic framework reveals profound implications for understanding the relationship between Israel and the church in God's redemptive plan. This perspective challenges traditional supersessionist interpretations that view the church as replacing Israel in God's covenantal promises. Instead, it argues that James's citation of Amos serves to affirm both continuity and distinction between Israel and the Gentiles within the church.

From a post-supersessionist viewpoint, James adapts the Amos passage to show that God's covenant with Israel remains valid and future-oriented, contrary to supersessionist claims of Israel's permanent rejection. This approach reconciles the inclusion of Gentiles into God's people without negating Israel's distinct identity and role in God's plan. It aligns with the first-century Jewish mindset, emphasizing the ongoing relevance of God's promises to Israel alongside the church's expansion to include Gentiles.

The exegetical factors critical to this analysis include James's method of employing Amos 9:11–12, the historical and prophetic context of both passages, and the textual variants across different ancient manuscripts. These factors underscore James's intent to uphold the integrity of God's promises to Israel while extending salvation to the Gentiles. The post-supersessionist approach contrasts sharply with supersessionist allegorical interpretations, asserting a literal fulfillment of God's promises to Israel in the future. The Jerusalem Council's decision in Acts 15 reflects this tension, where James's use of Amos signals a pivotal moment in early Christianity's theological development. His decision not to impose Jewish customs like

circumcision on Gentile believers reflects a nuanced understanding of the church's identity as inclusive yet rooted in Jewish heritage.

Hermeneutically, the post-supersessionist method emphasizes the historical-grammatical approach to interpret Scripture faithfully. It seeks to uncover the author's original intent and context, thereby avoiding arbitrary spiritualization or allegorization common in supersessionist readings. This methodological rigor ensures that the text's meaning is derived from its historical and linguistic context, preserving its integrity and relevance for contemporary theological discourse.

Building upon the interpretive and exegetical conclusions drawn from Acts 15:16–18 and Amos 9:11–12, a post-supersessionist reading profoundly impacts theological domains such as soteriology, ecclesiology, missiology, and eschatology. This perspective asserts continuity in God's covenantal relationship with Israel while emphasizing the universal accessibility of salvation through faith in Christ, irrespective of ethnic distinctions. Soteriologically, it aligns with Pauline theology by emphasizing justification through faith alone. Ecclesiologically, a post-supersessionist perspective maintains a distinction between Jews and Gentiles within the church while affirming their covenantal unity with God. Missiologically, it is a framework that emphasizes the church's mission to all nations based on God's inclusive salvation plan revealed in Amos 9. Eschatologically, a post-supersessionist interpretation anticipates the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel and the Gentiles in the eschaton. The Acts 15 decision, influenced by Amos 9, points toward a future where God's redemptive work brings unity and reconciliation among all peoples, highlighting Israel's restoration as integral to God's eschatological purposes.

Practical Ecclesiological Conclusions Related to the Post-Supersessionist Interpretation of the Jerusalem Council Discourse

Although both Israel and the church have a place and function in God's multiethnic-sociocultural diverse kingdom, the staunch supersessionist may still be unconvinced of the superiority of the post-supersessionist hermeneutic over that of supersessionism. Given the possibility of such a dissenting opinion, there is yet another factor which should be considered concerning the role of Israel and the church following the Jerusalem Council discourse.

If, as the supersessionist argues, the church has replaced Israel in its role and function, and, if as they argue, James was not considering the inclusion of the Gentiles into the Jewish-Christian construct of the church, what is to be surmised about the manner in which James concludes his discourse? It is to Acts 15:19–21 which attention now turns for a moment, those verses which emphasize the four specific prohibitions which James offered as relevant to the Gentile inclusion into the church. It is recognized that while the verses in which the prohibitions are listed fall outside of the text which has been directly under investigation, they form part of the larger rhetorical section and should be examined in relation to one another.

These four prohibitions, present a structure within which both Jew and Gentile alike were to enjoy the blessing of table fellowship, a reality which had previously been unknown between the two socio-ethnic groups. Having wholly disregarded the topic of circumcision, James sets forth four specific prohibitions which in fact have nothing to do with inclusion into the kingdom but rather focus on the new socio-ethnic dynamic which was to develop if the church was to grow. As such, the four prohibitions are not to be interpreted as requirements for salvation, nor are they requirements for being recognized within the newly established Judeo-Christian organism.

The Gentile believers were not being called upon to uphold the law of Moses but rather simply abstain from idolatrous practices which would both affect their communion with God as well as their communion within the kingdom. As has been established in addressing the NPP, there exists a very real possibility that Paul and potentially other Torah abiding Jewish Christ followers adhered to the law, not for purposes of salvation but rather for the purpose of maintaining their communion with God. Both these Torah-abiding Jewish Christ followers, as well as the newly incorporated Gentile believers were encouraged to abstain from realizing sacrifices involving the use of and consumption of blood and blood byproducts, as well as participate in illicit sexual relations, all of which were activities common to the idolatrous temple practices of the day. These were activities which led to the contamination of both people and land (Lev 18:24–25) and as such, no faithful Jew could entertain the possibility of sharing a table with someone contaminated through these acts. James's prohibitions provided a context of liberation in which true Christian communion could occur in terms of table fellowship. If these factors were respected by both Jews and Gentiles, then it would be possible for them to enjoy the fullness of communion within God's multiethnic-sociocultural diverse kingdom.

What bearing then do these factors have on the supersessionist perspective of the church replacing or superseding Israel's role and function? If consideration can be given to the fact that James was placing before the burgeoning church an ethical system in which both Jews and Gentiles alike could come together in the bonds of Christian fellowship, how, when, and where does the idea of supersessionism come into play? It is quite illogical to think that James would have set forth these specific prohibitions if his perspective of the church were not inclusive of both peoples occupying a place and function within God's kingdom. Is this not in fact what Jesus did as he dined with sinners, and specifically Gentile sinners? Did Jesus not provide an example

of what the Christian community was to look like as believers from all backgrounds could come together "around the table"? Is this not a description of incorporation or bringing together rather than replacing or superseding? God had promised from the times of the OT that he had a special place and purpose for Israel. Within that plan there was also a place and purpose for the Gentiles. Now in the church age, there was to be a place and purpose for both, each fulfilling its specific role within God's kingdom, all the while enjoying the bonds of Christian fellowship and communion.

Hermeneutic Conclusions Related to the Post-Supersessionist Methodology

In addition to the theological and practical conclusions offered thus far, the post-supersessionist reading of the biblical text, illustrated through the analysis of the Jerusalem Council discourse, provides a clear interpretive construct within which to analyze Scripture in accordance with the principles of the historical–grammatical method. That a single passage has one single meaning has been a long-established principle of biblical interpretation. The challenge, however, is in determining for certain that singular meaning. The post-supersessionist hermeneutic, aligned with the principles of the historical–grammatical method, have been demonstrated as an interpretively faithful construct for determining the practical and theological meaning of a passage.

The goal of interpretation cannot be the discovery of some never–before–seen or never–intended aspect of revelation. Rather, the task of the interpreter is to identify the intended meaning of the text. This process of identification requires the analysis of questions centered on matters of both content and context. As it relates to context the interpreter must examine the historical, cultural, and literary contexts of the passage under consideration, as well as matters related to the contemporary Christian community and the individual interpreter's

presuppositions. Without mutually emphasizing both the biblical and contemporary cultural contexts the interpreter will ultimately fall short in faithfully applying the Bible's message.

In examining biblical text, it should be remembered that the goal of the interpretive process is to simply understand the meaning of the author's words expressed in the text. This is a process which requires the interpretation of the words used in the text according to generally accepted grammatical principles. This search for the common sense meaning of the words used in a passage represents one of the most critical aspects of the exegetical process. It is here where the interpreter is obligated to analyze the biblical text according to the historical–grammatical method. This process requires the interpreter to examine the normal meaning of the language being employed while also examining rules of grammar and the historical context of the passage.

A most basic premise in this exegetical process is the fact that words do not have meaning in and of themselves but rather find meaning within a particular context or in relationship to surrounding words. By examining the grammatical relationships, as well as the historical and literary contexts of the passage, the interpreter can with greater accuracy determine the literal meaning of the text. The post-supersessionist hermeneutic framework obligates the interpreter to consider the type of literature used, the context, the historical background, as well as the grammar employed in a passage, in order to clearly identify the single literary meaning of the text, and thus avoid the pitfall of spiritualizing or allegorizing its meaning.

As the biblical authors wrote in cooperation with the Spirit of God, they arranged their words in such a way as to convey a particular meaning that would have been clear to the audience receiving the message. By examining the words used within a particular literary, grammatical, and historical context then the contemporary interpreter can also come to understand what the author's intended message was at the time it was written.

The post-supersessionist hermeneutic, as well as the historical–grammatical method, places the interpreter in a situation in which he can faithfully identify and subsequently respect the author's originally intended meaning. This is a critically important interpretive premise, if in fact the interpreter's goal is to accurately interpret the meaning of a passage. Throughout this investigation, the post-supersessionist hermeneutic has been referred to as both a perspective as well as a framework. Both concepts provide the interpreter with a set of guiding but limiting principles within which to examine the text. In adhering to the principles of the post-supersessionist framework, the interpreter guards against embarking upon the erroneous path of manipulating the text to communicate something it was never intended to say. Thus, the interpreter avoids resting upon his own understanding and response to a passage. If the meaning of a passage is determined by the interpreter, then there will never be a definite single meaning to be identified. Additionally, if the interpretation of a passage is open to spiritualization or allegorization, as is the perspective of supersessionism, then the meaning of any given passage in essence becomes arbitrary. While it is true that every reader will have a different response to the application of the meaning of the text, there can be but one meaning, that which was ordained by God and penned by his chosen authors.

The meaning of the text is that which God has chosen to reveal about himself through his human writers, each of whom used words, ideas, concepts, and figures of speech that would have been easily understood by their audiences. The task of the contemporary interpreter cannot include the imposition of modern ideas, words, concepts or even understanding of the text. Rather his task is to investigate the author's world and words in order to understand what it would have been like to hear them firsthand, and as such understand the intended message. Therefore, by adhering to the post-supersessionist perspective and hermeneutic framework,

examining the historical and grammatical context of a passage, the interpreter will with more ease and accuracy, extract the meaning of the text as it was originally intended by the author.

Final Conclusions

Much emphasis has been placed on the textual evidence that supports the post-supersessionist perspective. However, there are also theological implications related to the very person of God that arguably merit consideration. Specifically, questions centering on God's immutability. If, as the supersessionist argues, God's promises to Israel are no longer applicable to the nation, then something in God's economy has changed. Could it be argued that these promises were somehow conditional in nature? Or, if the textual evidence indicates that they were unconditional, that is they were not dependent upon Israel's obedience or faithfulness, then the question emerges as to if there was a change in God's redemptive plan. The very construction of this question presents a dangerous theological premise because it puts in doubt one of the fundamental attributes of God … his immutability. If God says exactly what he intends to say as *sensus literalis* proffers and there is agreement upon God's unchanging nature, then it is untenable to argue that what God promised in the OT somehow is no longer applicable. Given that there is no textual evidence to indicate that God has revoked his promises to Israel, then the supersessionist hermeneutic opens the door to debating one of the fundamental attributes of God, and by extension many other aspects of systematic theology. If God's promises to Israel have somehow changed, thus too his word has changed, and the believer is left with an uncertain foundation upon which to build his faith. It is thus concluded, that the supersessionist hermeneutic jeopardizes the surety of God's Word, and as such, is determined to be an unsustainable framework and perspective.

Based on the tenets of the historical–grammatical hermeneutic, aligned with a balanced view of the NT's superiority limited by the principles of *sensus literalis* and *sensus plenior*, the synchronous reading and interpretation of the text realized from within the post-supersessionist framework places the contemporary exegete on a plane of interpretive compatibility with that of the first-century Jewish Christ-followers. Reliance upon this hermeneutic perspective and methodology as applied to James's use of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18 results in a frame of reference for describing the identity and relationship of the church and Israel in this age, which resolves the interpretive conflicts surrounding the exilic state of God's people and the place of the Gentiles in his redemptive plan. The application of this methodology to James's employment of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18 provides evidence that undergirds the fundamental tenets of post-supersessionism, affirming God's covenant relationship with the Jewish people as both present and future, affirming Israel's continual and distinctive place and function in God's progressive redemptive plan. It is ultimately concluded that the post-supersessionist framework provides the contemporary interpreter a construct within which to read and interpret the text in a way that is compatible with that of the NT Jewish Christ followers. James's use of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18 not only undergirds the premise of post-supersessionism but provides sufficient evidence to refute supersessionism based on its incompatibility with the historical–grammatical method, as well as first-century Jewish hermeneutics.

God's determined plan and purpose to use the nation of Israel as both a sign and an instrument of his kingdom shines through the pages of both the OT and NT. It is the very essence of God's sovereign and providential word which is at stake in the supersessionism / post-supersessionism debate. The chronological and eschatological order of the history of salvation as determined by the Lord is not open to reinterpretation or expansion as the supersessionist

framework purports. The hope of future restoration for Israel is built upon the immutable character of God and his faithfulness to his own character which is reflected in the absolute certainty of the fulfillment of his promises. Scripture does not set forth a foundation of *supersedence* but rather *precedence*, the precedence of the unconditional nature of God's promises made to his beloved nation Israel, as well as the nations of the world. The post-supersessionist reading of Scripture provides no evidence to support the premise that God's acceptance and inclusion of one people would come at the cost of another. To the contrary, post-supersessionism and its adherence to a historical–grammatical hermeneutic affirms and defends that it is God's calling of a people unto himself which is permanent and sure, not his judgment upon Israel.

The question of Israel's role and position in relation to the church has historically been explained in terms of the exertion of a substitutionary role of the church in place of Israel. Yet, this is a perspective built upon a reading of the text which forces the canon to say something that was not originally intended. God's OT promises made to Israel, initially and partially fulfilled through the inclusion of the Gentiles into the kingdom, will one day, in God's eschatological timeline, be fully and literally fulfilled just as Amos prophesied (Amos 9) and James affirmed (Acts 15).

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