

However, the issue which divided the Jerusalem church at the time of the Council of Acts 15 was evidently not whether Gentiles could join the messianically renewed Israel, but whether they could do so without becoming Jews. Few of the prophecies of the Gentiles coming to worship in the eschatological Temple could have been used to decide that issue. To understand how Amos 9.11–12 could be so used we must turn to the second remaining issue of interpretation, which concerns the phrase: πάντα τὰ ἔθνη ἐφ’ οὓς ἐπικέκληται τὸ ὄνομά μου ἐπ’ αὐτούς (“all the nations over whom my name has been invoked”). Discussion of the quotation in Acts 15.16–18 has rarely appreciated the significance of this phrase.

The expression ἐφ’ οὓς ἐπικέκληται τὸ ὄνομά μου ἐπ’ αὐτούς is a literal rendering of the Hebrew idiom אֲשֶׁר-נִקְרָא שְׁמִי עֲלֵיהֶם (Amos 9.12). In its relatively frequent use in the OT the idiom expresses ownership, and is used especially of YHWH’s ownership of the ark, the Temple, the city of Jerusalem, and the people of Israel. Israel is the people “over whom the name of YHWH has been invoked” (Deut. 28.10; 2 Chron. 7.14; Jer. 14.9; Dan. 9.19; cf. Isa. 43.7), whereas the Gentiles are “those over whom your name has not been invoked” (Isa. 63.19).³⁹ As an expression of God’s election of Israel as his own people, the phrase is equivalent to the covenant term סְגֻלָּה which denotes Israel as God’s “special possession” (Exod. 19.5; Deut. 7.6; 14.2; 26.18; Ps. 135.4; Mal. 3.17). In post-biblical Jewish literature it seems to have become more common than the latter as an expression of Israel’s covenant status (Sir. 36.17; 2 Macc. 8.15; Bar. 2.15; PsSol 9.9; LAB 28.4; 49.7; 4 Ezra 4.15; 10.22; cf. 2 Bar. 21.21).⁴⁰ Its use in Amos 9.12 with reference to “all the nations” is very striking, even in the MT, where its original meaning no doubt referred to the

to become proselytes. But it is not at all clear that the evidence he examines really supports this conclusion.

³⁹ In all these texts the LXX renders the Hebrew idiom literally, as in Amos 9.12.

⁴⁰ In view of the connection with the eschatological Temple in the interpretation of Amos 9.11–12 in Acts 15.16–18, it is remarkable how often reference to Israel as the people “over whom the name of YHWH has been invoked” is connected explicitly (2 Chron. 7.14; Isa. 63.19 [cf. 18]; Dan 9.19 [cf. 17]; Sir. 36.17 [cf. 18–19]; 4 Ezra 10.22) or implicitly (Jer. 14.9) with the Temple.

subjection of Israel's neighbors to Davidic rule. Even the MT could easily have been understood by a Jewish Christian as predicting the extension of Israel's covenant status and privileges to the Gentile nations. The LXX merely makes this implication clearer.

The significance of Amos 9.12, especially in the LXX, is very close to Zech. 2.11 (Heb. 2.15): "Many nations shall join themselves [LXX: καταφεύξονται, "flee for refuge"] to YHWH on that day, and shall be my [LXX: his] people." But whereas this verse might more readily be understood to mean that the Gentiles will join the people of God as proselytes, Amos 9.12 says that the nations *qua* Gentile nations belong to YHWH. It is not implied that they become Jews, but that precisely as "all the nations" they are included in the covenant relationship. It is doubtful whether any other OT text could have been used to make this point so clearly. By not paying sufficient attention to these words of the text, commentators have consistently missed the very precise relevance of Amos 9.12 to the debate at the Council of Jerusalem.⁴¹

The decisiveness of Amos 9.12 for the issue under discussion in Acts 15 may have been even greater if the OT expression ἐπικαλεῖται τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου ἐπὶ τινὰ was already in use with reference to Christian baptism. In Jas. 2.7, the rich oppressors of Christians are said to "blaspheme the excellent name that was invoked over you" (τὸ καλὸν ὄνομα τὸ ἐπικληθὲν ἐφ' ὑμᾶς). Apart from Acts 15.17, this is the only occurrence of the expression in the NT. Since the letter of James is probably addressed to Jewish Christians (1.1), it is unlikely that the expression here is derived from Amos 9.12, and there is no other OT occurrence of the expression that is likely to be a specific source. Rather, this is an instance of the application of OT terminology for Israel as God's covenant people to the Christian community as the renewed Israel of the messianic era (cf. 1.1). Most likely the invoking of the name over Christians was understood as a reference to baptism in the name of Jesus, as it

⁴¹ Cf., e.g., Lüdemann, *Early Christianity*, p. 168: "[The quotation] does not wholly fit the context of the question whether Gentile Christians are to observe the law of Moses."