



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

BIBLE CONFIDENCE SERIES

Why Does James Quote Amos?

The Fallen Tent of David, Acts 15, and God's Welcome to the Nations

The short answer

James quotes Amos 9 because the salvation of Gentiles through Jesus was not a surprise or a change in God's character. Amos had promised that God would restore David's fallen house and bring people from the nations under His name. At the Jerusalem Council, James explains that Gentile believers are received by God's grace without first becoming Jewish.

"After these things I will return. I will again build the tabernacle of David, which has fallen."

Acts 15:16 WEB; compare Amos 9:11–12

Simple · Clear · Scripture-grounded



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PART ONE • BEGINNER GUIDE

One Old Testament promise helps settle a New Testament dispute

This Companion was not written to replace your Bible. It was written to help you fall in love with it. Every page is intended to send you back into God's Word with greater confidence, deeper understanding, and a clearer picture of Jesus Christ.

Foundational truth

The Bible tells one God-directed story. Amos spoke truly to Israel in his own day, and Acts shows how that earlier promise reaches forward through Jesus to the gathering of people from the nations.

What you will learn

01

What Amos promised

See why a book filled with warnings ends with hope for David's fallen house, Israel, and the nations.

02

What happened in Acts 15

Understand why Jewish believers debated circumcision and how Peter, Paul, Barnabas, and James responded.

03

Why James chose Amos

Trace how Jesus, the Son of David, brings God's promised restoration and welcomes Gentile believers by grace.

Recommended preparation

For more background, read the four introductory guides in the How the New Testament Uses the Old Testament series.



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BEGIN WITH AMOS

Amos announces judgment—and then closes with hope

Amos ministered to the northern kingdom of Israel during a time of prosperity, injustice, and spiritual unfaithfulness. People continued religious activity while mistreating the vulnerable and ignoring God's commands (Amos 2:6–8; 5:21–24).

The book's message is serious

God warns that covenant rebellion will bring judgment. Amos sees Israel shaken among the nations, yet God also promises that He will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob (Amos 9:8–10). Judgment is real, but it is not the last word.

The surprising final movement

Amos 9:11–15 turns from ruin to restoration. God will raise David's fallen shelter, repair its breaches, restore His people, and bring lasting fruitfulness and security.

Read before continuing

Open your Bible and read Amos 9:8–15. Mark every sentence in which God says, "I will." Then read Acts 15:1–21 and identify the question the church is trying to answer.

Beginner memory anchor

Amos ends with hope: the God who judges sin also keeps His promises and restores by His own power.



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THE FALLEN TENT OF DAVID

A broken royal house will be raised again

David was Israel's king, and God promised that David's royal family and kingdom would endure (2 Samuel 7:12–16). After David and Solomon, the kingdom divided. Both kingdoms eventually fell, and David's line of kings appeared weak—like a shelter that had collapsed.

Why call it a tent or shelter?

Amos uses the picture of David's fallen booth or shelter rather than a magnificent palace. The image emphasizes ruin and weakness. Restoration will not come because the dynasty can repair itself; God says that He will raise and rebuild it (Amos 9:11).

01

David received a promise

God promised to establish the throne of David's offspring (2 Samuel 7:12–16).

02

The royal house appeared to fall

Sin, division, defeat, and exile made the promise look impossible.

03

God promised to restore it

Amos looked beyond judgment to God's faithful rebuilding work.

04

Jesus is David's promised Son

Jesus rose from the dead and was exalted as Lord and King (Matthew 1:1; Luke 1:32–33; Acts 2:29–36).

Jesus connection

Jesus' resurrection and exaltation are the decisive turning point in the raising of David's fallen house. The promised King is alive and reigning, and through Him God gathers a redeemed people under His rule.



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THE NATIONS IN AMOS

God's restoration reaches farther than Israel alone

Amos's closing promise looks beyond Israel alone. God's restored kingdom will reach people from the nations who are called by His name (Amos 9:11–12).

This was always part of the larger story

- God promised that all families of the earth would be blessed through Abraham (Genesis 12:1–3).
- Israel was called to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exodus 19:5–6).
- Isaiah said the Lord's Servant would be a light to the nations (Isaiah 49:6).
- Jesus commanded His disciples to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18–20).

Do not miss Amos's original hope

Amos is speaking about restoration after Israel's judgment. James does not erase Israel from the promise. He shows that restoration through David's King also welcomes people from the nations under God's name.

A simple storyline

Promise to Abraham → covenant people Israel → promise to David → judgment and exile → promised restoration → Jesus the Messiah → good news to Jews and Gentiles → final kingdom.

Why this matters

Gentile inclusion is not a backup plan. It belongs within God's long-promised purpose to bless the nations through Israel's Messiah.



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NOW READ ACTS

Gentiles are believing in Jesus—but must they become Jewish?

In Acts, God gives the Holy Spirit to Gentiles such as Cornelius, and many Gentiles believe through Paul and Barnabas (Acts 10:34–48; 11:15–18; 14:27).

The dispute

Some believers from Judea teach that Gentile converts must be circumcised according to the custom of Moses in order to be saved. Paul and Barnabas strongly disagree, and church leaders gather in Jerusalem to consider the question (Acts 15:1–6).

01

Peter remembers what God did

God gave Gentiles the Spirit and cleansed their hearts by faith (Acts 15:7–10).

02

Grace is the ground of salvation

Jews and Gentiles are saved through the grace of Jesus (Acts 15:11).

03

Paul and Barnabas report God's work

They describe God's signs and wonders among the Gentiles (Acts 15:12).

04

James turns to Scripture

James says the prophets agree and quotes Amos 9 (Acts 15:13–18).

The real question

Must Gentiles become Jewish and keep the Mosaic Law in order to be saved? The council answers no: salvation is through the grace of Jesus.



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WHY JAMES CHOSE AMOS

The experience of the church agrees with God's written Word

James does not treat the Gentile conversions as self-validating. He compares what Peter, Paul, and Barnabas report with Scripture. Then he says, "This agrees with the words of the prophets," and quotes Amos (Acts 15:15 WEB).

Amos supplies the biblical shape

01

David's fallen house is restored

Jesus, David's Son, has died, risen, and been exalted (Acts 2:29–36).

02

People from the nations seek the Lord

Gentiles are turning to God without first becoming Jewish.

03

They are called by God's name

Their belonging comes from God's grace, not human achievement.

04

God's plan is not newly invented

God's saving purpose was known "from eternity" (Acts 15:18 WEB).

James's conclusion

Do not require circumcision and conversion to Judaism as conditions of Gentile salvation (Acts 15:19).

Beginner answer

Restoring David's house and welcoming the nations belong together. Jesus is the promised King, and Gentiles are received through faith in Him.



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HOLD BOTH PASSAGES TOGETHER

Amos's promise fits what God is doing in Acts

James does not pull an isolated sentence from Amos. He recognizes the same God, the same Davidic promise, and the same outward-reaching restoration now becoming visible through Jesus.

QUESTION	AMOS 9	ACTS 15
Setting	Hope after judgment	A dispute about Gentile believers
David's house	Its fallen shelter will be rebuilt	Jesus, David's Son, is reigning
The nations	People called by God's name are included	Gentiles are turning to God
God's action	God repairs, raises, and restores	God visits the nations to take a people
Main result	Restoration reaches beyond Israel	Gentiles need not become Jews to be saved

A careful summary

Amos promised that after judgment God would raise David's fallen house and extend His name among the nations. In Acts 15, James sees the risen Jesus—the Son of David—and the faith of Gentiles as evidence that this promised restoration is underway. Therefore, Gentiles do not need to become Jewish in order to be saved.

Important guardrail

This passage does not teach that Gentile believers replace Israel or become superior to Jewish people. It teaches grace, God's covenant faithfulness, and the inclusion of the nations through Israel's Messiah (compare Romans 11:17–24).



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THE COUNCIL'S DECISION

Grace welcomes—and grace forms a holy people

James recommends that the church not make it difficult for Gentiles who are turning to God. He then asks them to abstain from practices connected with idolatry, sexual immorality, strangled animals, and blood (Acts 15:19–20, 28–29).

What the decision does not mean

- These instructions are not a second path of salvation by works.
- They do not make Gentiles Jewish before God can receive them.
- They do not teach that holiness is optional because salvation is by grace.

What the decision protects

The instructions were pastorally wise. They called new believers to leave idolatry and sexual sin behind, and they removed practices that would seriously hinder fellowship with Jewish believers. In a church learning to live as one family, James protected both holiness and shared life together (Acts 15:19–21, 28–29).

Why mention Moses in verse 21?

Jewish communities heard Moses read in synagogues throughout the cities. Gentile believers therefore lived near people whose consciences and daily lives had been shaped by the Law. The council's guidance helped believers from very different backgrounds worship and share fellowship without making law-keeping the basis of salvation.

Grace and obedience in the right order

We are not saved by becoming culturally acceptable or by keeping enough rules. We are saved by Jesus' grace. That same grace teaches us to turn from sin and live as God's people (Ephesians 2:8–10; Titus 2:11–14).

Memory anchor

Gentiles are welcomed by grace, not by becoming Jewish; together, Jewish and Gentile believers belong to Jesus, David's promised King.



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PART TWO · DIGGING DEEPER

Why does Acts sound different from Amos?

Readers often notice that Acts 15:17 speaks of “the rest of mankind” seeking the Lord, while many English translations of Amos 9:12 speak of Israel possessing “the remnant of Edom.” This is a real wording difference, not something to hide.

Two ancient textual forms

Most English Old Testaments translate the traditional Hebrew text of Amos. James’s wording in Acts closely reflects the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament, commonly called the Septuagint. The Greek wording speaks of the remainder of humanity seeking the Lord, including Gentiles called by His name.

Do the readings teach opposite messages?

No. In the Hebrew form, restored Davidic rule extends over Edom and nations called by God’s name. In the Greek form quoted in Acts, people from the nations seek the Lord and bear His name. Both place the nations within the result of God’s restoration of David’s house.

Be accurate and humble

The Hebrew and Greek forms involve technical textual questions beyond a beginner guide. Acts gives Christians an inspired interpretation of Amos for the Jerusalem Council: Gentile inclusion agrees with the prophets and belongs to God’s known plan.

Study habit

When a New Testament quotation does not match your English Old Testament word for word, check the footnotes and several translations. The difference may reflect the ancient Greek Old Testament, a different textual form, or the writer’s purposeful summary.



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PART TWO · EARLY INTERMEDIATE

How much of Amos 9 is fulfilled in Acts 15?

James clearly applies Amos 9:11–12 to the restoration centered in Jesus and the inclusion of Gentiles. Christians agree on that immediate point. They differ on how the rest of Amos 9:11–15 relates to the church, Israel, the present age, and Christ's future kingdom.

Truths the passage makes clear

- Jesus is the promised Son of David whose kingdom will not end (Luke 1:32–33).
- God is gathering people from the nations under His name (Acts 15:14–18).
- Gentile believers are saved by grace without becoming Jewish first (Acts 15:10–11, 19).
- God remains faithful to His promises and does not authorize Gentile pride (Romans 11:17–29).
- Amos's fruitfulness and lasting security point beyond the council toward the complete restoration God will bring in the new creation (Amos 9:13–15; Revelation 21:1–5).

Questions Christians answer differently

Some understand Acts 15 as the beginning or present realization of Amos's restoration, with a future completion still ahead for Israel and the world. Others see the restored Davidic kingdom already established in Christ and expanding through the multiethnic church, while still awaiting final new-creation fullness. These views overlap in affirming Christ's reign and Gentile inclusion but organize Israel and future fulfillment differently.

A safe conclusion

Do not make agreement on every end-times detail a requirement for receiving the central teaching of Acts 15. James's immediate conclusion is plain: God welcomes Gentiles through Jesus by grace.



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PART TWO · BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

The promise to David serves the blessing promised to Abraham

God promised to bless all families through Abraham (Genesis 12:1–3) and an enduring royal house to David (2 Samuel 7:12–16). Those purposes meet in Jesus, Abraham’s offspring and David’s Son (Matthew 1:1; Galatians 3:16).

01

The King comes through Israel

Jesus is not detached from Israel’s story. He is Israel’s Messiah and David’s promised heir.

02

The blessing reaches the nations

Through Jesus, forgiveness and the Holy Spirit are proclaimed to all peoples (Luke 24:46–49; Acts 2:38–39).

03

One new humanity is formed

Christ reconciles Jewish and Gentile believers to God and to one another without pretending their histories never existed (Ephesians 2:11–22).

04

The kingdom will be complete

The story moves toward people from every tribe, language, people, and nation worshipping the Lamb (Revelation 5:9–10).

What this reveals—and produces

God keeps promises, judges sin, restores what human failure has broken, and welcomes people through Jesus. His grace should produce humility, gratitude, holiness, and confidence that the gospel is good news for every nation.



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PRACTICE PAGE

Trace Amos and Acts for yourself

Amos 9:8–15

What judgment appears before the promise? _____

What does God promise to rebuild? _____

Who beyond Israel appears in the promise? _____

Acts 15:1–21

What question caused the council? _____

What evidence does Peter give? _____

Why does James quote Amos? _____

What does the council refuse to require? _____

My conclusion

In one sentence, explain how Amos 9 supports James's decision: _____

One possible faithful summary

Amos promised that God would restore David's fallen house and bring people from the nations under His name; James sees this promise taking shape through Jesus and concludes that Gentiles are welcomed by grace without first becoming Jewish.

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THE MOST IMPORTANT PLACE TO BEGIN

Would you like to begin with Jesus?

The Bible's message is good news. God created us to know Him, but every one of us has sinned and fallen short of His glory (Romans 3:23). Sin separates us from God, and we cannot repair that relationship through good works, religion, heritage, or effort.

God did for us what we could not do for ourselves. Jesus Christ, the Son of God and promised Son of David, lived without sin, died for our sins, and rose from the dead. Through Him, God offers forgiveness, reconciliation, and eternal life as a gift of grace (Romans 5:6–8; 6:23; 1 Corinthians 15:3–4; Ephesians 2:8–9).

How do we respond?

01

Turn toward God

Repentance means turning from sin and self-rule toward God. It is not becoming perfect before you come to Him (Acts 3:19).

02

Believe in Jesus

Trust that Jesus is Lord and that His death and resurrection are sufficient to save you (John 3:16; Romans 10:9–10).

03

Call on Him

Speak to God honestly. Confess your need, place your trust in Jesus, and ask Him to forgive you and lead your life. “Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Romans 10:13 WEB).

A prayer can express your faith

Jesus, I know that I have sinned and cannot save myself. I believe You died for my sins and rose again. I turn to You, ask for Your forgiveness, and trust You as my Savior and Lord. Help me follow You and grow in Your Word. Amen.

A prayer is not a magic formula—the words themselves do not save us. Jesus saves everyone who truly comes to Him in faith. If you have trusted Christ, begin reading His Word, tell another faithful Christian, connect with a Bible-believing local church, and learn about baptism and discipleship (Matthew 28:18–20; Acts 2:38–42).