

they think James is talking about when he quotes Amos. How do Gentile Christians fulfill the prophecy of Amos? When I ask this question to Gentile Christians, I usually get a blank stare. This was the Scripture that gave the Apostles an understanding about where the Gentiles fit into God's plan, yet most Gentile Christians admit that they don't have a clue what it means.

Amos wrote some very short prophecies against some of the pagan nations that surrounded Israel and Judah, but the bulk of God's message through Amos is against "the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt" (3:1), i.e., the house of Israel and the house of Judah. Amos speaks more against the house of Israel than he does against Judah. This can be seen by all the references to Samaria (the capital of the northern kingdom) and Beth-el (the place where Jeroboam set up one of the golden calves).

In virtually every chapter about the house of Israel, Amos prophesies the coming captivity of the house of Israel (3:14f; 4:2; 5:5; 6:7; 7:17; 8:2; 9:4). Near the end of his book, Amos writes this:

"Behold, the eyes of the Lord God are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth; saving that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith Yahweh. For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth" (Amos 9:8f).

It is right after this that Amos prophesies the restoration of "the tabernacle of David that is fallen down," an event which the Apostles linked to the Gentiles coming to faith in Israel's Messiah. It should be obvious that "the tabernacle [*sukkah*] of David" does not refer to a literal *sukkah*. A *sukkah* is a temporary booth covered with leafy branches, a shelter used to celebrate *Sukkot*, the Feast of Tabernacles. The Feast of Tabernacles prophetically speaks of the Messianic Kingdom (Zech. 14). Therefore the "*sukkah* of David" refers to a place of spiritual rest and shelter into which the Gentiles (including those who are descendants of the house of Israel) can enter and join the Messianic Jews as we all await the return of King

Messiah. The *Sukkah* of David was standing when David ruled over all¹ twelve tribes, and Israel was one united kingdom with one king. The *Sukkah* of David fell when the kingdom was divided into two separate houses after the death of Solomon. The *Sukkah* of David was to be restored when all twelve tribes were once again united as one kingdom with one king. The Apostles understood that this was beginning to take place as a result of the Gentiles coming into the Messianic Jewish Community. David Stern's *Jewish New Testament Commentary* supports this view of the Apostles' understanding of Amos. Stern writes: The complete fulfillment of Amos's prophecy will take place when the undivided realm of King David's time is restored. Meanwhile, this is a beginning.⁶

It is unclear how much the Apostles understood about exactly how and when all the details would come to pass ("It is not for you to know the times or the seasons..," Acts 1:7), but it is very clear that they understood that the restoration of David's united monarchy would somehow be fulfilled by the Gentiles coming into the Messianic Community. James did not specifically mention the two houses by name when he quoted the prophecy of Amos, but he did not need to. He and all the other Apostles knew the Scriptures well enough to know that Amos wrote primarily about the ten northern tribes. And the Apostles all knew, as Orthodox Jews today know, that part of the Messiah's mission would include the regathering of the descendants of the ten lost tribes. The very last question the Apostles asked their Messiah before He left this earth was a question about this part of His job as the Messiah: "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6).

Notice, they did not ask, "Lord, wilt thou at this time drive out the Romans and restore the tribal territory of Judah to the Jews?" Their expectations *included* the house of Judah, but their expectations were not *limited* to the Jews. They were looking for a re-united kingdom that included all the tribes of Israel. Their expectations were based on the writings of the Prophets, writings with which they were very familiar. If our vision and expectations are likewise based on the writings of the Prophets,

then we too will have a vision that includes all twelve tribes of Israel - and even more, for the writing on Ezekiel's two sticks also included the words "and companions." These "companions" of Judah and Ephraim are those Gentiles who do not have any physical Israelite ancestry. They too are full-fledged Israelites. Their status as Israelites is by adoption, which does not make them a whit inferior to blood-line physical descendants. Their identity as Israelites carries with it all the privileges, blessings, and duties that belong to every Israelite.

WHERE SHOULD OUR EMPHASIS BE?

Having laid the groundwork by showing the Scriptural foundation of the Two-House teaching, let us now turn to our original question. Where should our emphasis be when presenting this teaching? What aspect is really important, and what is the best way to communicate that aspect?

I believe the answer to that question depends on the spiritual maturity, spiritual receptivity, and Biblical literacy of the people to whom we are speaking. Are we speaking to Jews or to non-Jews? To Messianic Jews or to Orthodox Jews or to Conservative, Reform, or secular Jews? To Gentile Christians or to non-Christians?

Some people need to first hear the basics of repentance, faith, baptism, etc. before we try to present an in-depth teaching about the Two Houses. We first need to get people into God's House, the Body of Messiah, and then get them into the Scriptures. There are some basics of discipleship that need to be incorporated into a disciple's life, and these basics are far more important than having a clear understanding of Two-House teaching. Once a disciple has gotten grounded in the basics of disciple-ship and once he is stable in his walk, then the vision of the Two Houses can be presented.

So how should the Two-House teaching be presented to various groups, and what should be emphasized? First let's look at ways that the teaching might be presented to Jews, and discuss the possible effects it might have on Jewish people.