

THE POSSIBLE INFLUENCE OF LXX EXODUS 20:11 ON ACTS 14:15

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A number of recent commentators have noted that in Acts 14:15, Luke does not mention Jesus as the content of the gospel, but instead mentions God the Creator as that content.¹ Some interpreters, such as E. Haenchen, have also observed that Acts 14:15b contains a quotation from LXX Exod 20:11.² However, no one, so far as I can tell, has investigated the theological affinity between the two verses. To do so is the purpose of this brief study.

In short, my suggestion is that Acts 14:15 quotes LXX 20:11 as a validation of the Gentile mission. This mission as a fulfillment of the divine plan is, of course, a major theme of Luke Acts (cf. e.g., Acts 13:44-52 and 28:28).

Exod 20:11, like Acts 14, refers to God as the Creator of the world. In fact, it contains the only reference to an act of God within the context of the Decalogue. As such, it could have been considered an ideal text for first-century Gentile Christians to use in demonstrating that the Creator God included all humanity when he gave the Torah to Moses on Mt. Sinai. Although God first revealed himself to the Jews, He did so with an understanding that ultimately the entire human race would obey the Torah. Both Rev 7:4-9 and Rom 9-11 appear to convey expectation.

Acts 14:15b is almost a verbatim quotation of the corresponding line in LXX Exod 20:11. The only difference is that *hos* in Acts

¹For example, F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 275-278; F. J. Foakes Jackson and Kirsopp Lake, eds., *The Beginnings of Christianity: The Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 4, *English Translation and Commentary*, by F. J. Foakes Jackson and Kirsopp Lake (London: Macmillan, 1933), 165-166; E. Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971), 431; W. Neil, *Acts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 164-165.

²Haenchen, 428; cf. Bruce, 276.

replaces *kurios* in Exodus. This change could result from the grammatical syntax and/or from the writing style of the author. The author has "God" in the main clause as the antecedent and therefore the subordinate clause reads better with the relative pronoun.

There is a similar passage in LXX Ps 145:6, but there the verb is an aorist active participle, whereas the verb in both LXX Exod 20:11 and Acts 14:15 is an aorist active indicative. Thus on purely literary grounds, the quotation in Acts 14:15 appears more closely related to the Decalogue passage than to LXX Ps 145:6.

Acts 14:15b tends to support M. Dibelius' contention that the speeches in Acts are for the reader rather than for the participants in the story.³ They do not, for example, contain a quotation formula by the speaker (cf. Acts 2:16 and 23:5b). The use of Exod 20:11 in Acts 14:15 would have had the intent of conveying to the reader the immutable plan of God. Specifically, by quoting the Decalogue, the text in Acts 14 associates the giving of the Torah with the mission to the Gentiles. The intent of the author might well have been to convey to the reader the concept that the same God who gave Moses the Ten Commandments and established a covenant with Israel had now established, through the Gentile mission, a new people of God, the Church, as part of the divine plan (see 15:7-11 and 15:13-21). Indeed, Luke-Acts concludes with God's calling a new people from among the Gentiles because the Jews had rejected the Christian gospel (28:26-29; cf. 14:19).

Acts 14:15b is an integral part of the agenda of Acts 13-15, the narrative of the first missionary journey and of its acceptance by the Jerusalem Church. These chapters indicate that the first missionary journey of Paul was ordained by God, and that the results of the mission—the persecution from the Jews (e.g., 13:32-41, 46, 50; 14:1, 19; cf. 14:22) and the positive reception by the Gentiles (13:46-47; 14:8-18, 21-28; 15:7-11, 13-21; cf. 14:21 and 15:3)—also were ordained by God. Thus, the quotation from LXX Exod 20:11 tells the reader that the Creator God, who gave the Torah at Mt. Sinai and chose a select people to Himself, now has chosen a new people, the Christians, from among the Gentiles (cf. 28:26-29).

³M. Dibelius, *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles*, ed. H. Greeven (London: SCM, 1956), 4-11; see also, Bruce, 276-277 and 332-342; B. Gärtner, "Paulus und Barnabas in Lystra: Zu Apg 14, 8-15" *Svensk exegetisk årsbok* 27 (1962): 83-88; see also, J. T. Sanders, *The Jews in Luke-Acts* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 54-56.