

A Comparison of Romans 15:12 with Isaiah 11:10

Hebrew Text / Translation (Isa. 11:10)	LXX Text / Translation (Isa. 11:10)	Greek Text/Translation (Rom. 15:12)
<p style="text-align: center;">וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא שָׂרֵשׁ יְשִׁי אֲשֶׁר עֹמֵד לְגַם עַמִּים אֵלָיו גּוֹיִם יִדְרָשׁוּ וְהָיְתָה מְנוַחָתוֹ כְּבוֹד:</p>	<p>Καὶ ἔσται ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ ἡ ῥίζα τοῦ Ἰεσσαὶ καὶ ὁ ἀνιστάμενος ἄρχειν ἐθνῶν, ἐπ’ αὐτῷ ἔθνη ἔλπιουσιν, καὶ ἔσται ἡ ἀνάπαυσις αὐτοῦ τιμῆ.</p>	<p>καὶ πάλιν Ἡσαΐας λέγει, Ἔσται ἡ ῥίζα τοῦ Ἰεσσαὶ καὶ ὁ ἀνιστάμενος ἄρχειν ἐθνῶν, ἐπ’ αὐτῷ ἔθνη ἔλπιουσιν.</p>
<p>NASB. Then in that day The nations will resort to the root of Jesse, Who will stand as a signal for the peoples; And His resting place will be glorious.</p>	<p>Moises Silva.¹ And there shall be on that day the root of Iessai, even the one who stands up to rule the nations; nations shall hope in him, and his rest shall be honor.</p>	<p>NASB. Again Isaiah says, “There shall come the root of Jesse, And He who arises to rule over the Gentiles, In Him shall the Gentiles hope.”</p>
<p>JTB.² And there will come about in that day a root of Jesse who will stand as a signal for peoples. For him nations will seek; and will be his resting place glorious.</p>	<p>JTB. And there will be in that day the root of Jesse, even the one arising to rule nations; in him nations will hope; and will be the resting place of Him (one of) honor.³</p>	<p>JTB. And again Isaiah says, “There will be the root of Jesse, even the one arising to rule nations; in him nations will hope.”⁴</p>

1. Moises Silva’s translation: <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/nets/edition/33-esaias-nets.pdf> (p. 834)

2. JTB. Literal translation of the author, James T. Bartsch in all three columns. My translations seek to preserve, as much as possible, the word order of the original text, whether Hebrew or Greek. The purpose is so that one can more accurately assess the provenance of Paul’s quotation in Rom. 15:12. By way of comparison, the NASB translation of Isaiah 11:10, though plausible, hardly follows the Hebrew word order.

3. The Septuagint (LXX) translation of Isaiah 11:10. Several points are in order:

(1) The Hebrew text has no article in front of “root.” The LXX adds the article (“**the** root”).

(2) The Hebrew (Masoretic Text – MT) uses two distinct words – “peoples” (*amim*, 5971) and “nations” (*goyim*, 1471). The LXX translates both with only one word, “nations” (*ethnos*, 1484).

(3) The LXX somewhat loosely translates the MT (“who will stand as a signal for peoples”) as “even the one arising to rule nations”. The Heb. *nes* (5251) means a signal pole, standard, or banner. So “signal” signifies a leader whom the nations will one day seek out and around whom they will rally. It means that a root of Jesse (Jesus) will one day serve as a rallying point for the Gentile peoples of the earth. The LXX translates the Heb. *nes* as *archein* (757), literally, “to be first”, by extension “to rule over”. That is possible, but a bit of a stretch, in my opinion. As previously stated, the LXX fails to translate accurately, in this clause, the Heb. word “peoples” (*amim*, 5971), replacing it instead with the Greek translation of the Hebrew word “nations” (*goyim*, 1471) (Grk. “nations” (*ethnawn*, 1484), translated as “Gentiles”).

(4) The LXX translates the MT “For him nations will seek” (JTB translation) as “in him nations shall hope” (JTB). The Heb. “seek” (*darash*, 1875) occurs in the book of Isaiah 13 times. In 9 of those 13 it is translated “seek” in the NASB. The Greek equivalent of seek is *dzeteo* (2212). Instead of using seek (*dzeteo*), the LXX uses hope (*elpidzo*, 1679), significantly different.

(5) The LXX translates “and will be his resting place glorious” (JTB) as “and will be the resting place of him one of honor” (JTB). Glory and honor are certainly close. The word translated “glorious” in Isa. 11:10 is *kabod* (3519). The NASB translates *kabod* as “glory” 147 times, as “honor” only 33 times. So “glory” clearly is the preferred translation. The most common word for “glory” in Greek is *doxa* (1391). The Greek word for “honor” is *time* (5092). Yet the LXX translators here translated *kabod* as *time* instead of *doxa*. Let the reader understand: My purpose here in this note is not to criticize the LXX translation, but to show how differently the LXX translation could have turned out had the translators attempted to be more literal.

4. Two observations are in order:

(1) Paul leaves out certain phrases because they do not fit his primary argument. First, he omits, “In that day.” Second, he omits the last clause, “And his resting place shall be one of honor.” There is nothing amiss here. Isaiah 11:9-10 clearly speaks of Christ’s Millennial reign on earth, when “the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (Isa. 11:9). It is “in that day” that the earth’s nations (Gentiles, if you will) will intentionally seek out Jesus, “root of Jesse,” and He will be a rallying point for them when He is seated on His glorious throne (Isa. 11:10). But that eschatological day was not Paul’s primary point, though it was present. His primary point was that, through the servanthood of Jesus, the Jewish Messiah, the Gentiles would also have the opportunity to glorify God for His mercy toward them, even though they were not among the chosen Jewish people.

(2) It becomes readily apparent that Paul is quoting the LXX text, not translating the Hebrew text. This can be supported on two counts. (a) First, if one eliminates the phrases that Paul omitted, he follows the LXX word order almost word for word, and does not follow the Hebrew word order. (b) Second, he consistently uses LXX vocabulary, not vocabulary derived from a careful translation of the Hebrew text.

i For example, Paul includes the article “**the** root of Jesse”, found in the LXX, but not in the MT.

ii Paul twice refers to “nations”, following the LXX, when the MT specifies “peoples” once and “nations” once.

iii Paul follows verbatim the LXX, not the MT, in using the phrase “even the one arising to rule nations”. The MT speaks of (a root of Jesse) “who will stand as a signal for peoples.” The differences between the LXX (and Paul) on the one hand, and the MT on the other, are profound, though not irreconcilable.

iv Paul follows the LXX in stating that “in him nations will hope” instead of the MT, “For him nations will seek”.

Though there are some “King James only” advocates who deny that the New Testament writers quoted from the LXX, clearly here (Romans 15:12) is an instance in which Paul did so.