

Yeshua for Israel

The fifth international conference of the Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism (LCJE) met June 18_23, 1995. It was the first global conference on Jewish evangelism to be held in Jerusalem. 160 participants from six continents gathered under the banner, Yeshua (Jesus) for Israel.

Significant Developments

We rejoice and give thanks to God that the Gospel of Jesus is being heard and received by Jewish people throughout the world:

We see the Spirit of God at work in a new generation of Israelis as well as Russian and Ethiopian immigrants, and we are impressed with the colorful expressions of their faith in Jesus through music, dance and graphic arts. We also note their commitment to theological education and evangelism.

We rejoice in the tremendous movement of Jewish believers in Jesus, particularly in the former Soviet Union as well as South Africa.

The newest LCJE chapter is in Japan, and we are blessed by our Asian brothers and sisters who not only express deep love for Jesus the Messiah but also their heartfelt desire to see Jewish people find salvation through him.

We recognize the opposition and difficulties inherent in Jewish evangelism, yet as we see the Spirit of God opening Jewish hearts to the Messiah, our joy will not be overshadowed. We commit ourselves to work together to communicate the Gospel.

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From its inception, the Gospel proclamation was Jewish in essence, content and context; thus we affirm that belief in Jesus as Messiah is in keeping with faith in the God of Israel. Jesus' Jewish disciples were the first to proclaim to their own people that he is indeed the Messiah, and that there is salvation in no other name (Acts 4:12).

Jesus was named Yeshua because he was to "save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). It is therefore profoundly tragic that of all names, his has been misused to perpetrate atrocities which Jewish people have suffered throughout the centuries, even up to our own time. We therefore call upon all who identify themselves and their faith with the name of Jesus to honor the meaning of his name. To do so requires both compassion for the Jewish people and the courage to meet them with the message of salvation in Jesus in a way that affirms their Jewish identity.

The Challenge of Reconciliation

We note that the religious relativism of contemporary culture is not only erosive and intolerant of any claim to truth, but is also self-destructive. We recognize our responsibility to uphold biblical faith as ambassadors of reconciliation on behalf of Almighty God; it is our burden and our joy to proclaim his great love and offer of reconciliation through Jesus to all people. The pluralistic climate in Jewish

communities around the world begs to be met with this ministry: "We implore you on the Messiah's behalf - be reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:20).

While religious relativism is to be expected in today's secular society, it is both distressing and shameful to find it within churches. Any church or denomination that presumes to say that the Jewish people (or any other people) can be reconciled to God outside of Jesus, does not honor Jesus. They also perpetrate a form of discrimination, no matter how unintentionally. We therefore call all Christians to recognize the legitimacy and the urgency of sharing the Good News of Jesus, the Jewish Messiah with those people from whom and for whom he first came. We urge any Christian who has been persuaded that Jewish evangelism is disrespectful or unloving to consider the need to base love and respect upon New Testament mandates rather than to measure love according to the spirit of this age.

We also note the skepticism of many churches towards Jewish believers in Jesus who maintain their Jewish identity. The first century Apostolic Council in Jerusalem recognized the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing Gentiles into the community of God's people, and decreed that these new Christians need not become Jews (Acts 15). In like manner, we call upon the churches of this century to recognize the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing Jews into the body of Christ. We urge all Christians to welcome Jewish believers in Jesus into the Body of Christ with glad hearts, whether they choose to worship in traditional churches or Messianic congregations.

The Ministry of Reconciliation

In 1995 Israel will begin celebrating the third millennial anniversary of the city of David. We are reminded that Jerusalem is a symbol of peace and reconciliation. It was here that God chose to reconcile the world to himself in Jesus the Messiah. The heart of evangelism is reconciliation with God and therefore evangelism ought to beget reconciliation between peoples. We rejoice and give thanks for the testimonies of Arab Palestinian Christians and we are blessed to know of ministries of reconciliation between Jewish and Arab believers in Jesus. We join our hearts in prayer for reconciliation in the current context of the Middle East as well as between Jewish and Gentile believers throughout the Diaspora.

The Hope of Jerusalem

In Jerusalem, the capital of the Jewish people, we stand in awe, for it is here that biblical history and biblical hope meet. The prophets spoke of the Word of the Lord going out from Jerusalem, and it is from here that Jesus told his disciples to begin their Gospel mission. We rejoice to see the Jewish people return to Zion, and the Land of Israel. We also rejoice even more that many are turning to Jesus, the Messiah. The Scriptures speak of the day when God will make a new Jerusalem, a city for the redeemed of Israel and of the nations. As we reach out to the people of Israel - in the Land and throughout the world - with the Gospel of Jesus, we pray for the peace of Jerusalem.