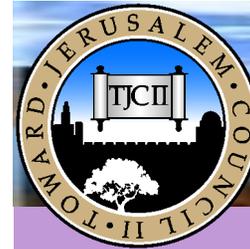


Toward Jerusalem Council II

A Cry to the Church



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A Vision of Unity between Jews and Gentiles in the Body of Messiah

Introduction

Toward Jerusalem Council II (TJCII) is first of all a vision. It is a vision of grace extended to the Church of this generation. It is a vision for the healing of the oldest wound in the Church. It is the vision for the unity of Jew and Gentile in the one body of Jesus (Yeshua), the Messiah of Israel for which He prayed (John 17:18-23). The original body of Messiah was Jewish. As Jewish believers took the message of reconciliation to God through Jesus to the Gentile world, it was necessary to understand how God intended the Gentiles to be absorbed into the body of Jewish believers. The first Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) achieved unity between Jew and Gentile, while honoring the specific roles each group brought to the fulfillment of Scriptural promise. From being totally Jewish, the body of Messiah became, in effect, totally Gentile in the sense that by the 4th century Jewish believers were no longer allowed by the Gentile hierarchy to live in the body of Messiah as Jews. They were required to abandon their Jewish identity and all Jewish practice. On this point the Church and Synagogue were in agreement: one could not be Jewish and believe in Jesus.

But God has spoken! He has resurrect-

ed the Messianic Jewish Community of the first century, regardless of the false perception of either Church or Synagogue. A Jewish expression of faith in Yeshua has reappeared, to the body of Messiah, and it is here to stay! The mystery of the Gospel has been restored to us (Ephesians 3:1-7). Once again there is a Jewish partner within the body of believers, with whom the Gentiles can talk, pray, and listen to the Lord. There is a Jewish partner in Messiah who brings to the body the wisdom of her Jewish roots. The reconciliation of these partners in the body of Messiah will bring new life, and will sanctify the Name of God.

Leadership of TJCII

The main leadership of TJCII began with equal number Messianic Jewish and Gentile Christian leaders. Messianic Jewish leaders from Israel and the USA and Gentile Christian leaders from the USA and Europe. Beginning in 1997, TJCII has held gatherings in several countries. One of these gatherings was a Prayer Conference in September 2006 in Jerusalem. Approximately 200 Messianic Jewish and Gentile Christian leaders from 36 different countries attended this conference. (See, "A Cry to the Church Worldwide" inside.)

TJCII-North America exists to promote the vision of Toward Jerusalem Council II (TJCII) in North America.

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The Vision of TJCII:

- **Uniting Jews and Gentiles for the Return of Yeshua:** John 17
- **Working toward the Second Jerusalem Council:** Acts 15
- **Encouraging Unity That Leads to Restoration:** Romans 11
- **Preparing for the Way for Yeshua's Return:** Zechariah 8

Development of Vision

The grace of the TJCI initiative was extended to the Church more than a decade ago through the Messianic community. It was supported first by Evangelical Christians. However, its development has made clear how essential it is that there is participation by the ancient churches of East and West. The teaching that the Church replaced God's Covenant nation began here (Supersessionism or Replacement Theology). Edicts that resulted in the disappearance of the Jewish segment of the body of Messiah and the persecution of the Jewish people in the name of Jesus began (but did not end) here. The schism between Jewish and Gentile believers was the original split in the body of Messiah and became the root for all further divisions in the Church throughout the centuries. For this reason the Christian recognition of the Jewish expression of the body of Messiah will release a major impulse for the restoration of unity among all the Christian bodies that have become divided through the ages.

Since TJCI began, Pope John Paul II took some remarkable initiatives in regard to a Catholic expression of sorrow for the sins of Catholics against the Jewish people through the ages. The Jewish people, who have a sharp awareness of who oppressed them through the centuries, immediately recognized the importance of the papal actions and statements. When the Pope visited Yad Vashem and prayed at the Western Wall in Jerusalem in

March 2000, the Jews knew that something historic was happening. It is appropriate that the historic churches of the East and West should take the first steps in repentance, healing and reconciliation. In September 2006, Archbishop Rowan Williams of the Anglican Church and Chief Rabbi Shlomo Amar and Chief Rabbi Yonah Metzger of Israel signed an historic joint declaration establishing a framework for dialogue between them. This declaration strengthens the links between the Anglican Church and Israel and honors the covenant made by God with Abraham.

Who are the Messianic Jews?

The Messianic Jewish Community comprises Jews who have come to faith in Jesus (Yeshua) as Messiah of Israel, Son of God and Savior of the world and they hold this faith specifically as Jews and refuse assimilation into "Gentile" Christianity. That is to say, Messianic Jews challenge the accepted Christian and Jewish view that when Jews come to faith in Jesus, they cease to be Jews and become Christians instead. Messianic Jews are the "elder brother" in the body. The first believers expressed their faith as Jews; a faith in Yeshua that did not deny or compromise their calling as God's Covenant people.

The Messianic Jewish Community seeks to promote a faith in Yeshua as Messiah of Israel, expressed in Jewish terms, with worship and community life shaped by Jewish Scriptures, and often reflected in the meaningful Jewish

Tradition of holding worship services on the Sabbath, given to the Jewish people in perpetuity. The Biblical Feasts, given to the Jewish people hold rich lessons for all believers. The life and teachings of Yeshua take on a deeper meaning when understood in their Jewish context. Messianic Jews see the New Testament (Brit Hadasha) as the fulfillment of the Old Testament (Tanakh). The entire body of Messiah is blessed through this wisdom. The rise of the Messianic community demonstrates the Inviolable nature of the eternal covenant between God and Israel. The establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 is further affirmation of that covenant, and was foretold by the prophets (Ezekiel 36 and 37). Messianic Jews emphasize the prophetic link between the return of the people to the land, the gift of the Spirit, and their return to God in re-birth and spiritual transformation. Thus the land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem are as Significant for Messianic Jews, as they are for the Jewish people as a whole.

Messianic Jews Today

The impetus for an international Messianic Community came almost entirely from the USA where there are more Messianic congregations and resources are greater. But the centrality of Israel and Jerusalem in Jewish faith confers a unique importance on the Messianic Community in Israel, where it was initially called "Messianic Movement." For Messianic Jews, Jerusalem is the focal point of their eschatological hope and of their vision for the restoration of both Israel and the Church.

Messianic congregations (Kehilot) in Israel have more than tripled in number since the influx of immigrants from the former Soviet Union during the 1990s and now numbers more than 100 congregations. The Messianic Community, like the traditional community, is remarkably diverse, reflecting the different countries of origin and different language groups: Hebrew, English, Russian, and Ethiopian. There are more than 250 Messianic congregations in the USA. The majority are associated with either the International Alliance of Messianic Congregations and Synagogues (IAMCS), formed in 1948 and the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations (UMJC), founded in 1979. The fastest growth of the Messianic Community is in former countries of the Soviet Union: Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus. In Europe, the Messianic Community has been established in England, France, Belgium and the Netherlands, though its numbers are not large. Recently, there is also significant growth of new Messianic Communities in Latin America, Brazil, Argentina and Mexico.

A Cry to the Church Worldwide

"A Cry to the Church," states: *"We are a gathering of followers of Jesus. We come from many nations, from many Church traditions and from the Messianic Jewish Community, both in Israel and in the Diaspora. We met in Jerusalem from September 12-14, 2006 under the auspices of the Toward Jerusalem Council II Initiative (TJCI) and the Olive Tree Fellowship of Jerusalem.*