

JEWISH EVANGELISM ON THE EVE OF THE THIRD MILLENNIUM

LAUSANNE CONSULTATION ON JEWISH EVANGELISM (LCJE)

New York, August 12-17 1999

Introduction

The sixth international conference of the Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism (LCJE) met August 12-17. 130 participants from 16 countries convened in New York. The LCJE is a network of organizations and individuals who seek to facilitate and strengthen the gospel proclamation to Jewish people throughout the world. The representatives serve as a catalyst to increase cooperative ventures and to coordinate efforts between mission agencies, Messianic congregations, denominations and theological institutions.

Recent Developments within the Last Decades of this Millennium

In the last 30 years there has been a significant increase in the number of Jewish people believing in Yeshua haMashiach (Jesus the Messiah) throughout the world, as well as an increasing number of Messianic congregations. The modern movement of Jewish believers in Yeshua cannot be ignored; it has come to stay and will not go away.

In the former Soviet Union we see a steady increase in numbers of maturing disciples eager and enthusiastic to share their faith. As demographics shift, many are moving to other parts of the world, becoming a strong testimony for the gospel.

In Germany a number of our brothers and sisters in the Lord are reaching out in love to Jewish people. We are thankful to God for Messianic congregations and house groups that are springing up there.

In Israel concern for ministry to the Messianic youth is increasing as Messianic Jews consider the importance of the next generation of Israeli believers. Efforts at reconciliation between Israeli and Palestinian believers stand as a testimony to the power of the gospel, giving us glimpses of the peace that only Yeshua can bring.

Secular media is proving to be an effective tool in reaching people with the good news of Yeshua. In addition the Internet has provided open access for Jewish people to explore the claims of Yeshua as well as countless opportunities for believers to share the gospel through chat rooms and web sites.

We rejoice in the reports of all these developments!

Jewish Identity

As we enter a new millennium we recognize that Jewish people express their identity in many ways and are affected by social, political and religious changes in the wider society. We also recognize that Jewish identity and therefore Jewish survival is once again being challenged.

Those of us who are Jewish share in the challenges confronting our people and stand

with them in the need to strengthen and preserve our God-given identity. We also recognize that our faith in Yeshua is seen by many as a threat to Jewish identity and survival. Yet we believe that the core of Jewish identity is tied to a purpose and a divine calling that is fulfilled only in Yeshua—to be reconciled to God and to be a light to the nations for his glory. We therefore reject the commonly held view that Jews who believe in Jesus are no longer Jewish.

Those of us who are Gentiles affirm that Jews who believe in Yeshua do not forfeit their Jewish identity; indeed, our own identity as Christians is also found in Yeshua the Jewish Messiah. Through him our identity is linked to the destiny of the people Israel. We do not wish to see our brothers and sisters lose their Jewish identity. We are enriched and encouraged by their distinct identity within the body of the Messiah.

As Jews and Gentiles united by faith in Yeshua, we recognize the right of Jewish believers in Yeshua to maintain a recognizable Jewish identity and to communicate faith in the Messiah to Jews and Gentiles alike.

To the Church at Large

We are deeply grieved that, in recent decades, some churches and denominations have stated that Jewish people do not need to hear the gospel. At the same time we are encouraged that the witness of faithful Gentile believers in Yeshua has helped many Jewish people come to faith.

We rejoice in the renewed emphasis some churches and denominations have placed on Jewish evangelism and we urge all churches to recognize their responsibility to witness to Jewish people. We call on churches to respect and affirm the Jewish identity of Messianic believers, whether they worship in traditional churches or Messianic congregations.

In light of recent heinous crimes—such as a man shooting Jewish children in a day school for the purpose of publicizing and promoting violence against the Jews—we implore you to stand with us against anti-Semitism of any kind wherever it is found.

The Millennium Ahead

Without Yeshua haMashiach there would be no millennium to mark. The millennium not only refers back to his birth, but also points to the future—the same Yeshua who proclaimed himself the Messiah of Israel also promised to return. He was, is and will be the only way of salvation for Jews and Gentiles. He is the Lord; the future is his. Therefore we who have found reconciliation with God through Yeshua carry into the next millennium the privilege and obligation to proclaim his reconciling power to others.

Our Hope

As the world prepares to celebrate the year 2000, our hope is that individuals, churches, congregations, denominations and theological institutions will commit themselves to the task of evangelism as we:

- tell Jews as well as Gentiles of the reconciling power found only in the Lord Yeshua

- take advantage of the window of witnessing opportunity as ideologies and trends that failed to keep their promises leave people hungry for truth and open to Yeshua
- devote resources to bringing the gospel to Jewish people in underevangelized areas of the world
- pray fervently for the salvation of Jewish people, for the peace of Jerusalem and for the peoples of the Middle East
- joyfully anticipate and work towards the day when all Israel will be saved
- eagerly await the return of our Messiah.