

REMEMBER YESHUA THE SON OF DAVID: A CRUCIAL REMINDER FOR THE LAUSANNE CONSULTATION ON JEWISH EVANGELISM

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When he told the woman at the well, “We worship what we know for salvation is from the Jews,”¹ Yeshua was including himself in the “we” that is the Jewish people. The woman had no difficulty herself identifying him as such, saying, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a Samaritan woman, since Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.” Although neither Yeshua nor the woman were confused about the matter, a survey of history demonstrates that Yeshua’s Jewishness is not so apparent to others.

Examine the church’s artistic and literary legacy and you will discover its amnesia concerning the Jewishness of Yeshua. The church embraces a generic Christ, the cosmic Savior, the Man for Others, the Metaphysical Hero, or even a chameleon Redeemer who blends in perfectly wherever he is placed. In its paintings, icons, weavings, drawings, and sculptures the church in every culture makes Jesus over in its own image. Thus we

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture is from the Revised Standard Version Bible translation. Liberties have been taken to substitute “Yeshua” for “Jesus” and “Messiah” for “Christ.”

will find the Gentile Christ with the aquiline nose, the rugged white Anglo Saxon Marlboro Man Christ, the black Christ, the Asian Christ, the Indian Christ, Swinburne's conquering pale Galilean, varieties of Latin American folk Christs, and countless other variations on the theme. Somehow the church forgot to remember what was so obvious to the Samaritan woman: Jesus was, is, and evermore will be a Jew. This is crucial, because the Christ of faith and the Christ of history only intersect in the very specific one who became incarnate in the womb of the Virgin Mary. Our faith in the Messiah is groundless when we lose contact with this flesh and blood specificity.

Bernard Dupuy named this sickness and its remedy in 1974:

We have to get back to the One who became incarnate as a Jew among the Jews; to the One for whom being a Jew was not some kind of throw-away garment but his very being. . . . It was in becoming incarnate in the Jewish people that Jesus offered himself as savior to the entire human race. We can acknowledge Jesus only as he appeared to us: as *this* particular Jew, *this* just and suffering servant; it is *thus* that he reveals himself in order to reign over the world.²

Still, none of the historic creeds and confessions of the church make any reference to Yeshua's Jewishness: not one. The Man from Galilee has become the Son of Man Without a Country. This being the case, we in the Messianic Jewish Congregational or Jewish Missions Movements (hereafter Congregational/Missions Movements) will be tempted to congratulate ourselves on our emphasis of this fact so widely neglected by the church. However, to do so would be premature. Like the church, we too have proven ourselves blind and mute concerning something closely related to Yeshua's Jewish

² Dupuy, Bernard. "What Meaning Has the Fact that Jesus was Jewish for the Christian?" in Kung, Hans and Walter Kasper, eds., *Christians and Jews*. Concilium: Religion in the Seventies, Volume 98. New York: Seabury, 1974: 74.

identity, something equally foundational to the faith we profess. We are often blind and mute concerning his role and status as the Son of David.

DAVID'S GREATER SON

Craig Blaising reminds us that “the incarnation is not just the union of God and humanity; it is the incarnation of the Son of God in the house of David as the Son of covenant promise. From a human standpoint, Jesus is not just a man, or generic man; he is that man--that descendant of David.”³ The Christ of faith, the Messiah of the Bible, is more than just a Jew, and even more than God incarnate as a Jew. He is the union of deity and humanity in the Son of David.

Blaising emphasizes how the Apostle Paul twice names the Davidic Sonship of Yeshua as central to the gospel he preached:

However, in Scripture, not only the Jewishness of Jesus, but also his Davidic lineage are central features of the Gospel. For example, Paul, in Romans 1, summarizes the gospel in this way:

The gospel of God which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord.

This is the gospel that he says in Romans 1:16 is to the Jew first and also to the Greek. In 2 Timothy 2:8, he writes, “Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel.”⁴

³ Blaising, Craig A. 2001. "The Future of Israel as a Theological Question." (*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 44, no. 3: 435-450), 445.

⁴ Blaising, *loc cit*

Many in the Congregational/Missions Movements will protest, “Or course Yeshua is the Son of David! He could not be the Messiah if he were not the Son of David! We always teach this!” But is that all? Is his being the Son of David simply a matter of lineage, a bit of genetic evidence that he comes from the right family? No. “Son of David” is Yeshua’s *office*. It names his role as the anointed King, that descendant of David destined to rule forever, that unique one chosen by the Father to shepherd Israel and the nations to their predestined consummations.

Imprinted by classical Dispensationalism, some will hold that Yeshua’s office as the Son of David will only be actualized in a future millennial reign when the Messiah rules from Jerusalem. Yet there are many, including Progressive Dispensationalists, who will argue instead that Scripture portrays Yeshua as the presently reigning Son of David.⁵

Yeshua Is The Reigning Son Of David Now⁶

In his Day of Pentecost sermon, Peter refers to “this Yeshua (whom) God raised up . . . exalted at the right hand of God, . . . (who) having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, . . . has poured out this which you see and hear.”⁷ This is enthronement language. Peter further argues from Psalm 16 that David himself predicted

⁵ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. is one of those scholars who hold that Yeshua’s reign is “already” even if there are aspects of that reign which are “not yet.” “There is a ‘now-already’ aspect of the kingdom’s appearance, as well as a ‘not yet’ future part of that same kingdom. . . . Thus, while the King is not yet visible in his kingdom, the kingdom nevertheless has begun and is effectively and powerfully operating through Christ’s disciples and his church.” Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Recovering the Unity of the Bible: One Continuous Story, Plan, and Purpose* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 137. See also Darrell L. Bock, “The Reign of the Lord Jesus,” in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, ed. Craig Blaising and Darrell L. Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 38.

⁶ Since this paper is addressed to professionals in the world of Jewish evangelism, I will be restricting my focus to the Son of David’s office with respect to the Jewish people. This is not to deny his significance for the nations, as is attested in Is 11:10; Am 9:12 (cf. Ac 15:15-21), Mi 5:2-3. For an exposition of the interfacing of God’s mission for the Messianic Jewish world and the church, see my *Christians and Jews Together* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2009), available from MJTI.com

⁷ Ac 5:32-33

“that his descendant would be raised up from the dead incorruptible, and *in this way*, He would be seated upon His throne.”⁸ Furthermore, in the same context, Peter references Psalm 110 speaking of David’s Son at God’s right hand. He argues that this was fulfilled through Yeshua’s resurrection, something that in apostolic preaching always connotes his ascension and session as well.⁹ Peter drives his point home forcefully: “Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ (that is, anointed King Messiah) this Yeshua whom you crucified.”¹⁰ Later, in his address to the Sanhedrin, he clearly alludes to Yeshua’s current kingly office when he says, “God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.”¹¹ If Peter had wanted to communicate that Yeshua’s reign as the Son of David lies dormant until some far off millennium, he certainly did a poor job making his point!¹²

Paul also homes in on Yeshua’s Son of David identity when preaching in Antioch of Pisidia. He connects the raising up spoken of in 2 Samuel 7:12, Psalm 16, and Isaiah

⁸ Ac 2:30-31, in Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1993), 177.

⁹ Blaising and Bock, *loc cit*

¹⁰ Ac 5:36

¹¹ Ac 5:31

¹² This is not to deny that Peter points to a later, culminating phase of Yeshua’s kingly work, a time of consummation yet to come (Ac 3:19-21). The kingly work of Yeshua the Son of David is both/and, both now in the form of a foretaste, and later, in times of consummating fulfillment. This may be compared to the New Covenant, which Jeremiah reminds us is made with the House of Israel and the House of Judah, and of which the Newer Testament reminds us the church has been made partaker. The New Covenant is truly in effect now, but certainly not in its fullness. For example, it points toward a day when “they shall no longer say, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me from the least of them to the greatest” (Je 31:34). We are not there yet, but we are on the way: already and not yet. Perhaps the most famous spokesperson for this “already/not yet” perspective is George Eldon Ladd. The best way to more fully explore his treatment of the matter is through reading George Eldon Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974).

55:3, all Davidic Covenantal texts, with Yeshua's resurrection. For Paul, "the raising up of Jesus son of David from the dead, his title *Son of God*, His enthronement at the right hand of God, and His activity of blessing Jews and all other people who bless Him, who trust in Him, are all aspects of the Davidic promise. The New Testament repeatedly proclaims these as *presently* fulfilled."¹³

Even the term "Son of God" relates to Yeshua's identity as King Messiah, Son of David. David McCleod shows how Paul uses the term "Son of God" in Romans 1:3-4 in two distinct ways, in reference to his divine, eternal, essential Sonship in verse three, and of his messianic Sonship in verse four. "Verse 4 must be read in light of Nathan's promise to David that God would adopt David's son as His own. David's son would become God's Son (Ps. 2:7. 12; Acts 2:36; 4:26-28; 5:31; 10:42; 13:33). . . . In verse 4 it (the term 'Son') is used of his office. . . . At his resurrection, then, Jesus, the Son of David was 'appointed' or 'installed' or 'enthroned' as God's [Messianic reigning Davidic] Son."¹⁴

There Is No Excuse For Not Serving The Son of David Now

Those who remain unconvinced, who insist that Yeshua is not yet exercising his Davidic kingly role, cannot justify a passive wait and see attitude concerning how to respond to his allegedly currently dormant office. This is because scripture never

¹³ Blaising and Bock, 177-8, emphasis added.

¹⁴ David J. McCleod, "Eternal Son, Davidic Son, Messianic Son: An Exposition of Romans 1:1-7" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 162 (January-March 2005:76-94), 86-88. To better understand the enthronement imagery used of Jesus the Son of David in the Acts and the Epistles, see McCleod's discussion of *horisthentos huiou theou*, commonly translated "declared the Son of God" (Ro 1:4) where he convincingly demonstrates that the verb *horidzo* more properly means "to appoint," "constitute" or "install," which is its meaning in all other New Testament uses (Lu 22:2; Ac 2:23; 10:42; 11:29; 17:26; He 4:7). "At his resurrection Jesus is 'not just declared to be the Son of God: He was actually instituted the Son of God' in this messianic and Davidic sense" (McCleod, *Eternal Son*, 88).

announces future events as mere information, or to simply satisfy curiosity. Instead, future events are prophetically revealed to spur God's people to present action.

We can see that this is so from examining 2 Peter 3:9-14, which calls us to wholehearted retooling of our lives in view of that cataclysmic end awaiting the present cosmic order.

The Lord is not slow about his promise as some count slowness, but is forbearing toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up. Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of persons ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be kindled and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire! But according to his promise we wait for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, since you wait for these, be zealous to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace.

Peter is calling for attentive waiting and vigorous activism geared to hasten the coming day of God. This call to zealous action is the antithesis of passivity. And if the coming end of the cosmos calls for attentiveness and activity in the now, how much more should we be attentively awaiting and hastening the coming of the Son of David who will rule and reign from Jerusalem? By what stretch of the imagination could any suppose the approaching footsteps of Messiah warrant nothing beyond passive agreement? On the contrary, the approach of the Son of David calls for alertness and action of the highest sort. Clearly we have work to do. But what kind of work might that be?

FOUR STEPS TOWARD RIGHTLY HONORING THE SON OF DAVID NOW

To understand and undertake that work we must take at least four giant steps, difficult and demanding. But such is often the case when one obeys God as we are all called to do. Perhaps what makes them hardest is that they involve repudiating and correcting past neglect. Nothing is more irksome than being forced to acknowledge fault. Yet, if we in the Congregational/Missions Movements are to spark and experience renewal, this is where we must begin.

Restore the Son of David to His Context

We must restore Yeshua to his proper context as the Son of David. At least since the Day of Pentecost, Jesus the risen and enthroned Son of David has been advancing an agenda for Israel that must become the context for our labors as well. This context, this agenda, is nicely summarized for us by Ezekiel, who names seven aspects of God's, and thus Messiah's end-time agenda for the Jewish people, that people to whom we are called.¹⁵ This agenda can be best grasped through viewing the illustration on the following page, which properly highlights Yeshua's centrality.¹⁶

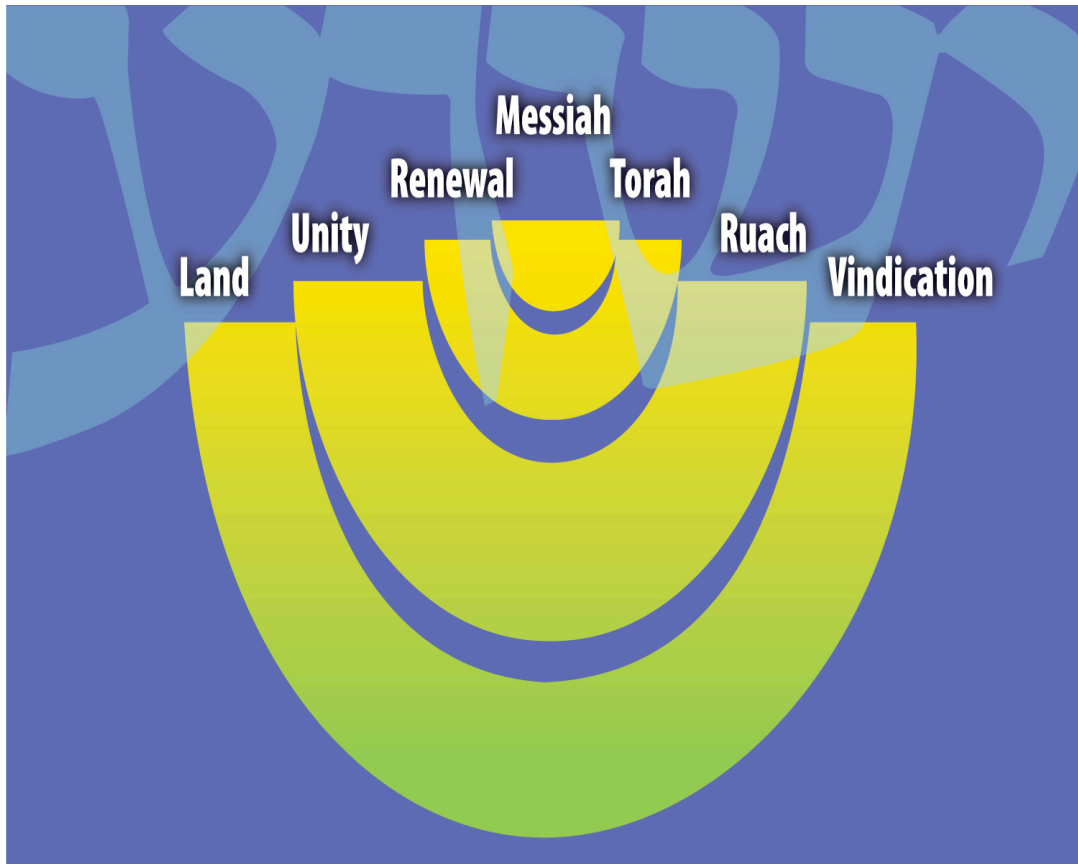
Ezekiel reminds us that through the risen Messiah:

1. God will regather the Jewish people to the land he gave us forever.
2. God will unify us as a people.
3. God will bring the Jewish people to repentance-renewal.
4. God will gather us in allegiance to the Messiah.

¹⁵ This might be called "The Ezekiel Agenda," and I have called it, "The New Messianic Jewish Agenda." However, it could just as easily be called the Son of David's Agenda.

¹⁶ This illustration courtesy of Molly Hurley, of Teknigrammaton Graphics, <http://www.teknigram.com/>

5. God will cause the Jewish people to live in covenant faithfulness to the statutes and ordinances God given to our ancestors.
6. God will cause us to communally experience the fullness of the Divine Presence.
7. By doing these things, God will vindicate his name in the sight of the nations.



As we restore Yeshua to his context as the Son of David, we will begin to notice how the Newer Testament underscores Yeshua's activity in fulfilling this agenda. One example is found in Peter's statement on the Day of Pentecost that it was the risen Son of David who had sent forth the Spirit and his manifestations "which you see and hear."¹⁷ This sending of the Spirit applies to at least the third and sixth items mentioned

¹⁷ Ac 2:32

by Ezekiel: bringing the Jewish people to repentance-renewal and causing us to communally experience the fullness of the Divine Presence. Peter's statement later, that God exalted Yeshua at his right to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins, when read against the context of Ezekiel 37, also relates to the repentance-renewal of Israel. And certainly, Peter's call to Israel to "repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for establishing all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old"¹⁸ is pointing toward the outcomes prophesied in Ezekiel 36 and 37, sketched lightly for us in the seven steps of the New Messianic Jewish Agenda.¹⁹

Devote Resources Toward Moving His Agenda Forward

We in the Congregational/Missions Movements must devote our resources of time, influence, and action to see that each item on this agenda is constantly moving forward.

Both the Jewish Missions Movement and the Messianic Jewish Congregational Movement should be "waiting for and hastening" Jewish return to the Land, Jewish unity, Jewish repentance renewal, Jews coming to Yeshua faith, Jews returning to covenant faithfulness, Jews experiencing the fullness of the Divine Presence in a communal context, and should be at the forefront of the vindication of God's Name through accomplishing these things. Indeed, I am convinced that our passivity about any or all of

¹⁸ Ac 3:19-21

¹⁹ Elsewhere I suggest the New Messianic Jewish Agenda and its context in Ezekiel may tentatively be regarded as a sketch of what Paul refers to as "the fullness of Israel." See Stuart Dauermann, *Jews and Christians Together* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers), 2009.

these items besmirches the name of the one we claim to serve. It is only as these agenda items go forward that God's name is vindicated. One reason the record of the Congregational/Missions Movements has been spotty in these area is adherence to a nexus of theological and ecclesial paradigms at variance with the agenda itself. The next section of this paper outlines some of these paradigms.

Reframe Thinking and Action About Jewish Covenantal Identity

In our thinking, feeling, and doing we must restore the Jewish people to their identity as a people called by God to glorify him in the context of communal Torah living.

Many in the Congregational/Missions Movements have forgotten and therefore neglect the covenantal identity and responsibilities of the Jewish people. This is due to prior, and to some degree, subconscious ecclesial alliances, financial entanglements, and theological commitments. (What Jewish mission would risk alienating its support base by preaching that Jews who believe in Jesus should obey Torah? What Jewish mission agency is not committed to a theology that declares such Torah obedience to be no longer mandated, with a mailing list sharing the same commitments?) Although we have distanced ourselves from supersessionist theologies, the Congregational/Missions Movements are each, in varying degrees and different places, steeped in what I term "cryptosupersessionsm."

Cryptosupersessionism

Cryptosupersessionism exists wherever there is an unconscious and entrenched cluster of presuppositions assuming the expiration or setting aside of identity markers that formerly applied to the Jewish people, effectively nullifying Israel's covenantal uniqueness in whole or in part. Cryptosupersessionism is the more powerful because it is unconscious. In our ranks it is often those who speak loudest about the Jewish people and their chosenness who embrace cryptosupersessionist theological commitments vitiating Jewishness of its substance.

An Example: Some Implications of the Law of Christ Doctrine

Consider the teaching, widely represented in our circles, that with the coming of Messiah/the New Covenant, the Law of Moses is categorically rendered inoperative, and that the only Law that applies to Jewish Yeshua-believers is the Law of Christ.²⁰ Since the church too is subject only to the Law of Christ, is it not clear that this teaching postulates the expiration of a major identity marker that formerly differentiated the Jewish people? Some protest that Jewish covenantal uniqueness is preserved through the Abrahamic Covenant, but it is highly questionable that Jewish covenantal identity can be

²⁰ Confidence and consensus is waning concerning the commonly held assumption that the Law of Christ is to be defined as the commandments promulgated by Yeshua and the Apostles. Todd A. Wilson comments, "While the phrase [the Law of Christ] has traditionally been harmonized with Paul's negative portrayal of the law by treating the phrase either as a circumlocution for Christian living or as a reference to some other "law," a growing number of interpreters want to treat the "law of Christ" as a reference to the *law of Moses*." Wilson also surveys the widening group of exegetical opinion viewing Paul's "law of faith" and the "law of the Spirit of life" as referring likewise to the Law of Moses. See Todd A. Wilson. "The Law of Christ and the Law of Moses Reflections on a Recent Trend in Interpretation." *Current Issues in Biblical Research*. (London, Thousand Oaks CA and New Delhi: SAGE Publications. Volume 5.1:125-144. Found on line at <http://cbi.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/5/1/123> (Accessed September 23, 2007).

successfully transmitted intergenerationally on such a basis, even if supported by a variety of seasonal celebrations.

When challenged on this by a Jewish missionary who insisted the Abrahamic covenant provided a sufficient foundation for such intergenerational transmission, I reminded him that he had just bragged to me about his son having participated in a Bar Mitzvah ceremony. I pointed out that this observance does not come out of the Abrahamic covenant but out the fabric of Jewish Torah living. His own actions demonstrated how he needed more to sustain his son's Jewishness than reminders about the Abrahamic covenant. Inevitably, jettisoning the Law of Moses and substituting the "the Law of Christ" means reducing Jewishness to genetics and nostalgia, while assimilating Jews into a code of conduct and way of life indistinguishable from Gentile Christians—the same Law, the Law of Christ.

We in the Messianic Movement have declared seriously defective One Law Movements which postulate that both Jewish and Gentiles must keep the Law of Moses. However, whenever and wherever the Jewish Missions community insists that Jews and Gentiles are only responsible to adhere to "the Law of Christ," this too is a One Law Movement, and equally defective.

Commenting on One Law Movements in a paper for the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations, Russ Resnik and Dan Juster write:

Paradoxically, One Law people undermine their own vision for "One People," by basing unity on a common response to Torah. In other words, they hope to achieve unity by producing unified Torah-based behavior among all believers. Scripture, however, portrays our unity as accomplished in Messiah himself.

The letter to the Ephesians, which includes some of the strongest statements of unity within the Body of believers, never posits the idea of

One Law. Instead, it calls us to maintain “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,” for “there is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (4:4-6).

The beauty of this God-given unity is that it honors and preserves biblical distinctions between diverse groups, particularly Jews and Gentiles.²¹

Their critique applies equally to the One Law Movement via the alleged One Law of Christ binding on Jew and Gentile as widely assumed in the Jewish Missions Movement. The unity into which Messiah brings us is a differentiated unity, wherein Jews and Gentiles remain essentially different, distinct but not separate, and reconciled to one another despite their continuing distinctions. This is the marvelous reconciling unity that Messiah effects: not uniformity, lopping off distinctives, not some sort of enforced conformity, nor some utopian unanimity where all agree on every jot and tittle. In fact, the unity in Messiah of which Paul speaks is only represented where and when Messianic Jews live differently, in the context of Jewish covenantal life, and yet in unity with their Gentile brothers and sisters, who accept them in their differentness and who recognize that while such a lifestyle is not their own covenantal calling, they ought always to refrain from disparaging Jewish covenantal distinctives, or casting aspersions on those who adhere to them. Unfortunately, such affirmation of Jewish observance by Jewish Yeshua-

²¹ Daniel Juster and Russ Resnik, “One Law Movements: A Challenge to the Messianic Jewish Community,” p. 8, found on line March 15, 2010, at <http://umjc.net/home-mainmenu-1/faqs-mainmenu-58/14-umjc-faq/24-is-the-torah-only-for-jews>

Mark Kinzer is helpful here as well in his analysis of Markus Barth’s treatment of the one new man of Ephesians 2:15 (Markus Barth, *Ephesians 1–3* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974). Barth defends his translation as reading “one new man consisting of two.” See Mark S. Kinzer, *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism : Redefining Christian Engagement With the Jewish People* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2005) 167-171.

believers is often lacking in Jewish mission and even Messianic congregational circles. Instead, negativity about Torah-based Jewish covenantal distinctives is the more frequently encountered norm. This should not be!

This position consigns Jews to assimilation and, within two or three generations at most, communal extinction in almost every case. Although we all know exceptions, these are exceptions. The rule is assimilation and communal disintegration.²² If we accept that Jewish Yeshua believers are subject to no religious law other than the same Law of Christ to which the average white-bread Gentile in Tulsa subscribes, then we are fitting Jewish community and continuity into a plain pine box. It is time to say *Kaddish*.²³

The fourth point of the New Messianic Jewish Agenda is based on Ezekiel 37:24: "My servant David shall be king over them; and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall follow my ordinances and be careful to observe my statutes." Contrary to those who postulate a polarization between allegiance to Messiah on one hand and Jewish Torah obedience on the other, this passage, and others like it, presents the two as coordinate.²⁴ Here again, the case for cryptosupersessionism is shown to be unfounded.

²² In a 1989 study, DellaPergola and Schmelz determined that absent conversion, no grandchildren of intermarriages continue to identify as Jews. Since intermarriage is so prevalent in our circles, when one factors in a disparagement of Jewish Law-keeping, we must be honest and admit that we are greasing the skids toward assimilation and Jewish communal disintegration. Any other assessment seems dishonest and self-serving. See DellaPergola, S. and Schmelz, U.O. (1989). "Demographic Transformations of American Jewry: Marriage and Mixed Marriage in the 1980s". *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, Vol. 5. pp. 169-200.

²³ For a convincing argument for the necessity of Torah adherence for Jewish communal continuity, see Elliott Abrams, *Faith or Fear: How Jews Can Survive in a Christian America* (New York: The Free Press, 1997).

²⁴ Ezekiel points out that it is both the work of the Spirit (36:27) and the work of the Messiah (37:24b) to bring Israel back to obedience to the *chukkim* and *mishpatim* (statutes and ordinances) that God gave to our ancestors—the nuts and bolts of Torah living (see also Moses' verdict on the matter in Dt 30:6).

This will be hard to sell to many in the Congregational/Missions Movements. However, one can grasp the urgency of the matter by surveying the perspective of the Bible on Jewish sin and Jewish repentance, a matter surprisingly out of focus in our circles.

Jewish Sin and The Shape of Jewish Repentance

One would think that religious professionals who work among the Jewish people, would have a clear idea of what it is that Jews must repent of, and what shape their repentance must take. Yet, as I travel and ask members of the Congregational/Missions Movements what it is for which Jews need to repent, and what shape that repentance must take, I have been met with blank stares, and never with a uniform response. Behind those stares are people realizing that that they had never really thought about the questions, perhaps because it seemed so obvious. Sooner or later one will hear this answer: “Jewish people need to repent for their sins.” But how do we know what those sins are for which Jews should repent? Are they just run of the mill standards of human decency that Jews, like others, stumble over from time to time, or, if you will, constantly?

Jewish Sin – Transgression of the Law

Kendall Soulen helps to clarify the question for us, pointing us toward the answer, when he says, “Human sin is never merely the sin of the creature against the Creator-

I find it remarkable that Dispensationalists in the Congregational/Missions Movements, who pride themselves on adhering to the “plain meaning” of Scripture texts, shy away from seeing the plain meaning and implications texts like these. I regard this inability as being due to preunderstandings and presuppositions imbedded in their theological grids. On the role of preunderstandings and presuppositions in shaping theological positions and conditioning openness or resistance to change see Darrell Bock’s discussion in Blaising and Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism*, 58-62.

Consummator. Human sin is also always the sin of Jew and Gentile, of Israel and the nations.”²⁵ And in Romans 2:12 Paul indicates his agreement with this principle: “All who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law.”

Who then is it that has sinned under the law? There can be only one answer to this question: the Jewish people. We Jews are a people born into a covenantal identity and responsibility to obey God’s law. And the measure of our sin is our disobedience to Torah’s demands.²⁶ And since that is true, repentance requires that we reverse our pattern of neglect. If the measure of Jewish sin is disobedience to Torah, then Jewish repentance requires a return Torah living. While it is true that, due to prior theological and ecclesial commitments I would guess, no Jewish Mission agency has ever come close to affirming this, it is nonetheless true: the measure of Jewish sin and of Jewish repentance at least

²⁵ R. Kendall Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996) 153.

²⁶ Classical Dispensationalists and many others will protest that the Law of Moses/Torah is now inoperative. When I questioned Arnold Fruchtenbaum, the best known and most capable Hebrew Christian proponent of this view, concerning when that suspension of the Law of Moses took effect, he said, “When Jesus died.” However, this cannot be. Paul wrote his letter to the Romans some twenty to twenty-five years after the crucifixion, yet he argues there that the Law of Moses is the measuring stick of Jewish obedience to God. Later in his life, he acknowledges his fault when he insulted the High Priest Annas during his trial before the Sanhedrin, appealing to a relatively minor Torah text in Ex 22:28, saying, “I did not know, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, ‘You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people’” (Ac 23:5). Additionally, Paul takes pains to demonstrate his conformity to Torah when he visits with James, in which context his joining in a Temple ritual is expressly interpreted as his demonstration that he walked obediently (lived halachically) and kept Torah (see Ac 21:15-26, especially verse 24). In Ga 5:3, written approximately sixteen years after the crucifixion, Paul says every man who receives circumcision is required to keep the whole law. While time and space do not permit more elegant arguments than these, we should note in conclusion that it is impossible to reconcile the doctrine of the Law/Torah’s cessation with the practice of first century Yeshua believers, and against the full orb of apostolic teaching. As Richard Bauckham states, “As far as we can tell, the vast majority of Jewish Christians in the New Testament period continued to observe the whole law, taking for granted that they were still obligated to do so.” (Richard Bauckham, *James*, London: Routledge, 199), 147.

includes conformity to Torah or the lack thereof. An honest assessment of Scripture calls for nothing less, as well as something more, for there is one more crucial aspect to Jewish sin and Jewish repentance.

Jewish Sin - Rejection of God's Messengers

This second measurement of Jewish sin and Jewish repentance is rejection of God's messengers. In both testaments, these two measuring rods, Torah disobedience, and rejection of God's messengers are found together. One passage especially graphic in its force is found in the Book of Nehemiah, written in the mid-5th century BCE. Chapters eight through ten deal with covenant renewal on the part of returning exiles, and chapter nine records a national historical retrospective and confession of sin. In reviewing the experience of the Israelites under Joshua, we read in verse 26, "Nevertheless they were disobedient and rebelled against thee and cast thy law behind their back and killed thy prophets, who had warned them in order to turn them back to thee, and they committed great blasphemies." Notice that their disobedience is described as casting God's law behind their backs, not wanting to hear it, to deal with it, to obey it. Notice as well how this is yoked to how they "killed the prophets, who had warned them in order to turn them back to thee." Here we have a description of Jewish sin (casting God's law behind our backs) and its linkage to killing the prophets/rejecting God's messenger who admonished us to return to God.

But what shape would that repentance take? Nehemiah sheds light on this question and its answer: "And thou didst warn them in order to turn them back to thy law. Yet they acted presumptuously and did not obey thy commandments, but sinned

against thy ordinances, by the observance of which a man shall live, and turned a stubborn shoulder and stiffened their neck and would not obey.”²⁷ Here he explains what he meant in verse 26 when he spoke of turning back to God: the shape of Jewish turning back to God (repentance) is a return to Torah, to his commandments and ordinances, by which a person who does them shall live.²⁸ Here then we have the answers to our questions: Jewish sin is disobedience to Torah and rejection of his messengers, and Jewish repentance is acceptance of his messengers and a return to Torah living.

Some are sure to object that this is Old Testament revelation, no longer applicable after the coming of Christ. To those who say such, and there are many I would guess, one of the best refutations is to be found in the Book of Acts, chapter seven where we read of Stephen, the Hellenistic Jew and first martyr among the Jerusalem-based Yeshua believers. Here we see how he naturally portrays Jewish sin as a rejection of God’s messengers, the prophets, and disobedience to Torah:

Stiffnecked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You continually oppose the Ruach HaKodesh! You do the same things your fathers did! Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who told in advance about the coming of the Tzaddik, and now you have become his betrayers and murderers! - you! - who receive the Torah as having been delivered by angels - but do not keep it!²⁹

Notice carefully the two aspects of Jewish sin highlighted here: persecuting God’s messengers, culminating in the betrayal and murder of the Messiah, and failing to

²⁷ Ne 9:29

²⁸ For a good understanding from a respected evangelical voice for law keeping as a way of life, as Jews know it to be, rather than as a way of death, as Christians are apt to see it, see Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., “Leviticus 18:5 and Paul : Do This and You Shall Live (Eternally?),” *JETS* 14, no. 1 (Winter 1971):19-28.

²⁹ Ac 7:51-53 (CJB)

keep Torah. These are directly parallel to the criteria outlined by Nehemiah, a pattern that occurs repeatedly in Scripture.³⁰

Reframe Outreach/Evangelism as Recruitment to the New Messianic Jewish Agenda

I am convinced that we must come to see outreach as recruiting Jewish people to the New Messianic Jewish Agenda. Messianic Jewish outreach, and the outreach proper to the Jewish missions movement is not simply a matter of saving deracinated souls, of converting people who just happen to be Jewish. No: it requires reconnecting with what it means that the person we are speaking to is a member of a covenant people, as discussed above, and therefore requires that we call Jewish people back to their identity, calling, and destiny through enlisting them in the service of the Son of David and his agenda.

It will do not good to protest that most Jews are secular. If what I am saying about Scripture is so, then part of our mission to Jews is to call them out of their secularity, back to Torah living, that way of life which the God of our ancestors gave us as the means of communally honoring Him, and indeed, that way of life to which we are covenantally obligated.³¹

In the late 1980's I heard a missionary to the Jews speaking at a meeting where he said "It is not our responsibility to look after Jewish continuity: God will take care of Jewish continuity. Our job is just to preach the gospel." Perhaps some reading this find

³⁰ For other texts referring to the killing of the prophets/rejection of God's messengers, see 1 Ki18:4,13; 19:10; 2 Ch 24:20,21; 36:16; Je 26:20-23; Mt 21:21-43 (= Mk 12:1-12; Lk 20:9-19; Mt 23:33-46); Mt 23:34-39 (= Lk13:31-35). For other texts referring to casting God's law behind our backs, see, for example, 1 Ki 14:9, where the comparison is to casting God behind our backs, an even stronger metaphor for disobedience, and Ps 50:17, and texts too numerous to mention about disobedience to God's laws.

³¹ In addition to the passages in Ex 19:8; 24:3, 7; Dt 5L27-28 which record and commend our ancestors agreeing to obey God's commandments, see Dt 29:10-15 which all commentators agree indicates that this covenantal obligation included all future generations of Israel.

his position sensible, but I view such a position as actually a pious-sounding bundle of falsehood.

This is why I spoke up at this meeting, where I was a guest, and corrected this gentleman by referring him to what I term the Mordecai Mandate, derived from Mordecai's counsel to Esther.³² In the fourth chapter of the book, Mordecai is certain that God will preserve the Jews. He tells Esther, "if you keep silence at such a time as this, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another quarter." The reason he is confident of this is because of God's faithfulness to his covenant. But he also warns her, "If you keep silence at such a time as this . . . you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Failure to embrace her responsibilities and to do what she could, would have disastrous effects for her time and context. The same will be true for us. We too are culpable to do what we can, despite God's sovereign will, for if we do not act, then the consequences for our own context will be grave, and we, in part, responsible. The lesson here is that we are all responsible personally and institutionally to do all we can to preserve the Jewish community and its cohesion.

We disobey God and violate our covenantal obligations when we neglect our covenant responsibility for other Jews. This is why I state the Mordecai Mandate in these terms: Even though God is at work in history toward this end, we remain responsible to do all that we can to preserve Jewish community continuity. Failure to do so will bring harm to the Jewish people in our own time and context, for which are culpable before

³² Es 4:14

God. Therefore, any approach to outreach among Jews that disrupts or destroys Jewish communal cohesion is wrong.

The Mordecai Mandate is doubly our responsibility because of our claimed allegiance to the Son of David. We cannot rightly claim that allegiance without forwarding his agenda, which we see sketched for us in the New Messianic Jewish Agenda outlined by Ezekiel. And we sin against these priorities and against the Son of David whenever we treat any of these agenda items with indifference. What do I mean?

We who claim Yeshua the Son of David as both Lord and Messiah should be recruiting all Israel to the regathering of the seed of Jacob to the Land (aliyah), Jewish unity, repentance-renewal, allegiance to the Messiah the Son of David, Torah-based covenant faithfulness, the communal experience of the Divine Presence, and the vindication of God's name through the accomplishing of these things.

What we need is a gospel of continuity and consummation for the Jewish People. Here is a good approximation of it:

- The Messiah has come and He is coming again. His name is Yeshua, and he is the best possible news for the Jewish people
- Through Yeshua the Son of David, the God of Israel, who has been with the Jewish people in all their afflictions, has come to rescue us again in greater manner and greater measure than ever before, as the prophets said He would (including talk of the atonement, the resurrection of Yeshua and its connection to the resurrection of the dead, of Israel as a nation (Ezekiel 37), of the Gentile world from the grave of idolatry, and Israel's full restoration as in the New Messianic Jewish Agenda)
- In him, all of God's promises to the Jewish people are being fulfilled
- Come join with us, to serve the God of Israel by advancing his agenda for His people in the context of Torah obedience and allegiance to Yeshua, the Son of David

Outreach means more than simply saving Jewish souls. It means bringing Jews back into conformity with God's will for us as part of that covenant people who will someday all honor the Son of David and benefit from the consummation of his agenda. It means aligning Jews with God's future for our people.

This message compares more favorably with the message of Yeshua and the Apostles than the message we are used to proclaiming. N.T. Wright comments:

The worry about the afterlife, and the precise qualifications for it, which have so characterized Western Christianity, especially (it seems) since the Black Death, and which have shaped and formed Western readings of the New Testament, do not loom large in the literature of Paul's contemporaries.

The tide which was carrying all Israel along in the times of Jesus and Paul was the tide of hope that Israel's God would act once more and this time do it properly, that the promises made to Abraham and his family would at last come true, that the visions of the prophets who foretold a coming restoration would find their ultimate fulfillment.

What we in the Western world have come to see as the 'individual' hope, and indeed the individual life of faith, piety or virtue, found their place within that.³³

It is not difficult to verify the truth of what Wright says here if one but notes the comment the two disciples made to Yeshua on the Road to Emmaus, "But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel,"³⁴ and the question the disciples asked Yeshua some time later after he had been speaking to them for forty days concerning the Kingdom of God, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"³⁵ In both cases, we can see the

³³ N. T. Wright, *Justification: God's Plan & Paul's Vision*. (Downer's Grove: IVP Academic, 2009), 56-57.

³⁴ Lk 24:21

³⁵ Ac 1:6

issue of which Wright speaks was indeed uppermost in the minds of these first century Jews.

Yeshua's retort to the apostles was no rebuff for their concept of the Kingdom. He did not correct them as to *whether* this was going to happen but only as to their preoccupation about *when*: "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority."³⁶

Someone has defined efficiency as doing things right, and effectiveness as doing right things. If we neglect the message and context of Yeshua as the Son of David, being content with more familiar approaches, aren't we consigning ourselves to simply becoming, at best, more efficient rather than more effective? Optimally, we should be doing right things in the right way. But can we do the right things without pursuing the Son of David's agenda, and recruiting others to do so? I don't think so.

Evangelism is not about taking scalps: it is about making disciples. And in our context, this means making Jewish disciples of the Son of David, pursuing his agenda until he comes.

I, Yeshua, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the Messianic communities. I am the Root and Offspring of David, the bright Morning

³⁶ Ac 1:7. John R. W. Stott, chief theologian of the Lausanne Movement, speaking from his supersessionist presuppositions comments on Ac 1:6, "The mistake they made was to misunderstand both the nature of the kingdom and the relation between the kingdom and the Spirit. Their question must have filled Jesus with dismay. Were they still so lacking in perception? As Calvin commented, "There are as many errors in this question as words." John R. W. Stott. *The Message of Acts: The Spirit, the Church, and the World Bible Speaks Today* (Downer's Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 41. However, I agree with Darrell Bock's rejoinder to Stott, "There is no indication in Jesus' reply . . . that anything they asked was wrong except that they are excessively concerned about when this would take place." (Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 62. See also Hillaire Le Cornu and Joseph Shulam, *A Commentary on the Jewish Roots of Acts* (Jerusalem: Academon, 2003) 15.

Star. The Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come!' Let anyone who hears say, 'Come!' And let anyone who is thirsty come - let anyone who wishes, take the water of life free of charge." . . . The one who is testifying to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon!" Amen! Come, Lord Yeshua!³⁷

The Son of David comes. Amen! Come Lord Yeshua! *Baruch haba baShem Adonai!*

Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord!

³⁷ Re 22:16-16, 20. CJB.

