

## Report from the 3<sup>rd</sup> AustralAsian LCJE Conference 7-10 August 2012



It is eighteen months since we met last, and as we gathered from different parts of the region at the beautiful Collaroy Conference Centre in Collaroy Beach, Sydney, there was excited anticipation of what God would have for us in the next few days of fellowship, listening to good teaching, sharing, praying and just having good fun. There were plenty of joyful and delighted hugs all around, and animated chats in catching up with what had transpired since we had last met. The weather

was sunny and the surrounding ocean views from our rooms, the dining room and verandah were breath-taking!

**THE FIRST SESSION IN THE EVENING** started with the traditional greetings (by video) from LCJE's newly elected International Coordinator, Jim Melnick, and from Tuvya Zaretsky (by letter) the LCJE President. This connected us into the wider circle of the LCJE community.

This was followed by a Report from the Field by Ps. Kon (Kostya) Michailidis ("Yeshua Tsidkenu" a Russian Jewish Messianic Congregation in Sydney).

The first talk of the conference was titled "**Healthy Relationships: Characteristics and Warnings**" and was given by **Natasha Michailidis**. We were encouraged and warned through Biblical examples and life experiences to have right attitudes towards other ministries and our brothers and sisters; to rejoice in success of others; and to be wary of jealousy of each other. The talk concluded with the scripture: *1Cor3:7-8 "...neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labour."* (NIV)

Each morning was started by prayer at 7.30 before breakfast and was very well attended in spite of some bleary eyes. **David Brickner**, Executive Director of JFJ San Francisco USA, took the first devotional session each morning with a Bible Study. He chose three psalms that were Messianic and were written by King David. The first one was **Psalm 22** which is pertinent for anyone who at some stage had difficulties in their life. The psalm prophetically expresses the sufferings of the Messiah, but King David also expresses his own suffering. He writes of his own experience of a faith in a God who is, or seems to be, far off - the faith that sustains us in the midst of doubt.

The second morning David spoke on **Psalm 16** in which King David recognizes that he has no earthly security but that God alone is his inheritance. This psalm is considered to be a resurrection psalm,

bringing hope where none is present - as the Holy One conquering death. David Brickner also shared about the history of his own wonderful inheritance of five generations of Messianic Jews.

The third morning David spoke on **Psalm 2** and reminded us that these psalms are in the context of what can be applied to Yeshua's teaching in Luke 24:44b when He said "... that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." The book of Acts and other NT writings understand these psalms as Messianic and support the understanding that Psalm 22 speaks of crucifixion of the Messiah, Psalm 16 is considered to be a resurrection psalm and Psalm 2 as the ultimate glorious enthronement of the King Messiah.

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The **FIRST FULL DAY** offered a rich fare of short talks, Reports from the Fields by Paul Cohen (Ariel Ministries), Martin Weatherston (CMJ), Matthew Peet (HebeHop), Muchan update video by Lawrence Hirsch (Chief Executive Celebrate Messiah), Deane Woods (Friends of Israel) and testimonies by Joan Kirsten and June Volk. There was also a Practitioners Forum where a panel answered questions on: "What's working and what's not working?"

The morning's presentation was by **Dr. Ashley Crane** on "**Ezekiel: Dry Bones and Rattling**" It was a thought provoking and appropriate to its title - a "rattling" presentation, a different take on what most of the audience would have heard. Ashley's main claim was that Ezekiel's original organization of the text was different to the Masoretic text that we have. Ashley's thesis is that: in Ezekiel's original flow of text, the dry bones represented real resurrection of Israel's real dead after a real battle with Gog from Magog. Ashley proposed that the chapter order originally would have been Ezekiel 36:1-23, 38, 39 followed by the dry bones epic of Chapter 37 and that the examination of modern Israeli history reflects that order.

In the evening **Shelly Volk** presented a paper titled "**Re-gathering our People**". In it he read many scriptures about the Lord bringing Jewish people back to their land and that Israel would be a nation that will be a blessing for all the nations. This is a repeated pattern woven through the whole of the Bible and an answer to Replacement theology. Shelly challenged us not to be content in our comfort zones, going from one Shabbat to another with our man-made programmes but to hear what the Spirit is saying to us.

The **SECOND DAY** followed a similar format. There were reports from the fields: by Scott Brown (Celebrate Messiah NZ), Lawrence Hirsch (Chief Executive Celebrate Messiah), Mark Landrum (Jews for Jesus), Des Rubie (Jews for Jesus NZ) and Rita Ivenskis (Celebrate Messiah- Dom Mesi'i).

A book report by Ashley Crane and Paul Cohen acquainted us with current trends. We also heard two



moving testimonies: one by Rowan Marcus and the other by Jeff Cook.

There were 4 major presentations: 1) **Lawrence Hirsch** presented a timely paper on the topic of “**Anti-Israelism in the Church and its Effects on Jewish Evangelism**” He showed a video in which an attempt was made to raise up a groundswell of anti-Israel sentiment in the world today in one-eyed support for the plight of the Palestinian people. He expanded how this same vehement anti-Israel propaganda is flooding into the church today.

The paper briefly covered main points of the conference that was held at the Bethlehem Bible College called “Christ at the Checkpoint” and explained the theological underpinnings of Christian Anti-Israelism.

2) **Rob Smith** presented a paper “**A Study in Romans 11**”. Rob’s thesis was that the fulfillment of the land promise given to Abraham will be realized at the time of new earth and New Jerusalem, and he rejects any notion of bounded territorial fulfillment, but believes that the promise is on a greater plane than that.

He used chapter 4 as a springboard to discuss the key word “promise”- the nature of that promise, the identity of the heirs of the promise, and the means by which the promise is to be received. He cited the text in Eph 2:15 of the barrier between Jew and Gentile being abolished, creating a new man, and also the text in Gal 3:27-29 “there is neither Jew nor Greek”

Rom 4:11-12, 17 speaks of Abraham being the father of many nations- those who walk in faith - both circumcised and uncircumcised. This reality of international family, says Rob, gives an expanded understanding of the land promise. This inheritance is big - embracing the whole world.

3) **Bob Mendelsohn** spoke on “**Lessons from the Book of Jonah**” and drew some interesting conclusions from it. He reminded us of what an unlikely candidate Jonah was to be included in the Bible because of his disobedience, rebellion, selfishness and only doing God’s will under great duress.

Bob proposed an interesting parallel to this story by linking it to the account in Matthew where Y’shua ordained Peter to preach the gospel, using his formal name Shimon Bar Yonah, son of Jonah.

Bob said that whether Jonah was Peter’s father’s name or not, Jonah’s ministry was certainly given to him. Peter was sent to preach to his “Nineveh” - a group of Gentiles. Acts 9 ends with Joppa, the very city from which Jonah did NOT go to Nineveh. From there Peter, Jonah’s greater ‘son’, now goes to his Nineveh in the form of the Roman Cornelius, and the beginnings of the group “Gentiles for Jesus” was born.

4) **E.M.** from Celebrate Messiah spoke on “**Money and Ministry: Is there enough for us all?**”

On the **THIRD DAY** which was the last day of the Conference, three more talks were squeezed in besides David Brickner’s teaching on Psalm 2:

1) **Lawrence Hirsch** spoke on “**Handling Jewish Objections**” and raised several important observations. Jewish culture has an inbuilt defence mechanism against the gospel. Jewishness is defined in a negative way - “Being Jewish is not believing in Jesus.” His advice was that we need to preach/teach the Gospel through a Jewish frame of reference. We need to teach the unknown or rejected through that which is

known and accepted. In answering Jewish objections we need to move people from what they know and accept to what is unknown and rejected.

2) **Scott Brown** talked about “**Jewish Evangelism in the New Age: Perspectives and Response.**”

He listed the basic tenets of the New Age movement as:

- 1) God is an impersonal force.
- 2) The force is in everything, therefore there is no cessation.
- 3) You can become a god.
- 4) Knowledge is freedom.

He also explained how God’s unique relationship with the Jewish people seems to have planted in the Jewish soul a passion for things spiritual. But when this passion is misdirected - a “zeal for God, but not according to knowledge” (Romans 10:2) - Jewish people are especially vulnerable to the old lies of the New Age. Scott encouraged us to kindly ignore apparent confidence (1 Corinthians 1:18-21). Despite their glowing reports of spiritual transformation and inner peace, the truth remains that their spirit yearns for the Life that only Y’shua can provide.

The final talk was by **Bob Mendelsohn** entitled “**When Dreams go thud: Handling failure in Ministry.**” This talk was a follow up on “If I had a dream” given by Bob at the last LCJE Conference. He said that dreams don’t just happen; they take work to accomplish. He talked about handling disappointment and rejection. He concluded by asking the question: Dare we still dream? His answer was “yes”. We are to dream and to work even with the sound of our own thuds. Even with our own personal failures and disappointments, and even the rejection of others who don’t get it.

As all the faces in the photo show, we had a rich time together. We were reminded at times that we are not an organization, but a network. At times we disagree with each other theologically, but we all agree that God is moving among His chosen people at this end of the world, and we are glad to be a part of it all - together. A special thanks to Bob Mendelsohn for organizing it so brilliantly and to David Brickner and his sister Martha for making the big trip down under.



