



# TWELVE THESES OF FAITH ON ISRAEL

## Twelve theses on Israel

### An introduction

There are twelve tribes of Israel. Twelve apostles were sent into the world to proclaim the coming kingdom. The faith of the church is confessed in the twelve articles of the Apostolic Creed. It is still one of the fundamental creeds for millions of Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant Christians worldwide. Five hundred years ago, Martin Luther was privileged to rediscover the gospel of free grace. On October 31st, 1517, he nailed his 95 theses on the door of the city Church of Wittenberg, launching the reformation of the Catholic Church.

We are privileged to live in a time, in which we see how the people of Israel is restored into the land of the promise. That makes us grateful. But it also causes a feeling of urgency. God's plan of salvation for His creation has entered a new, decisive stage. How do we relate to it? And how do we relate to Israel? How does the Church relate to Israel?

We give thanks for the good we have received in the tradition of the Church. But we also have to recognize that the Church has hardly had any vision for Israel or the Jewish people, even has spoken with contempt of the Jews and of Israel. This fills us with shame.

Many, therefore, feel the need and the urgency to speak more broadly about God's salvation plan with His creation from within the Scriptures. A small group of people from different denominations and backgrounds, working within the framework of Christians for Israel, has come to-

gether to deeply think it over. In a sense, they did not represent anybody. It was their desire, however, to speak as members of the Body of Christ, in connection with the Church worldwide and through the ages.

This has resulted in twelve theses on the place of Israel in God's salvation plan, in which God's election of Israel to bless the nations is expounded. In this booklet, you will first find the twelve theses, followed by a further elaboration, and finally, as the third part, an explanation (clarification) with Biblical references.

These theses do not replace any creed whatsoever, but are meant as an impulse to think further about the essential Biblical message concerning Israel and the kingdom.

In this spirit, Christians for Israel now offers these articles to churches and Christians worldwide, in prayer and humility.



## WHAT WE BELIEVE WITH REGARD TO ISRAEL TWELVE THESES

1. We believe that Israel was created and chosen by God to bless the nations.
2. We believe that the Church and the nations should bless Israel.
3. We believe that the Church has not replaced Israel. By faith in Jesus Christ we also have become 'children of Abraham', the father of all who believe.
4. We believe that all the Covenants since Abraham have been made with Israel.
5. We believe that the Lord will be faithful to all the Covenants He made with Israel, as well as to all the promises He gave to the Church.
6. We believe that there is the mystery of the hardening in part of Israel for our sake, but that there is also the blindness of the Church for Israel, and a veil over the nations with regard to Israel.
7. We believe that the Church should repent for all deeds of anti-Semitism committed in her name, and should show her true repentance in acts of love and solidarity with Israel and the Jewish people.
8. We believe that the restoration of the Jewish people to the Promised Land of Israel is the beginning of ultimate redemption. We believe that the nations carry a responsibility to help the Jews return.
9. We believe that the City of Jerusalem is the place where the Lord again will make His Holy Name dwell.
10. We believe that one day, Messiah will come to establish His worldwide Kingdom, Then the bodily resurrection of the righteous dead will take place and they will reign with Christ in His Kingdom on earth. We therefore pray for the peace of Jerusalem.
11. We believe that the Son of man will sit in judgment over the nations when the Kingdom comes and will ask them how they have treated Israel and the Jewish people.
12. We believe that ultimately and finally the renewal of all things will take place. Creation will be delivered from its bondage to decay and be brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. And God will be all and in all.

## ELABORATION OF THE XII THESES

1. As members of the body of Jesus Christ we believe and confess that God has chosen Abraham, Isaac and Jacob because He wanted to bless all the nations of the world in and through them. In this way salvation has come through Israel to us.
2. It is our calling to bless Israel, for we owe our salvation to the Firstborn Son of this nation. Through Jesus the Jew we, as believers from the nations, are included with Israel to be 'children of Abraham', the father of all who believe.
3. It is our strong conviction that the Church has not replaced or superseded Israel in God's economy. The presupposition that the promises that were given to Israel now have been transferred to the Church is a terrible aberration and a sin before God. We believe that Christ Jesus is the seed of Abraham so that the promised blessing for the nations has come through Him, and Abraham has become the father of all those who believe. As the body of Christ we celebrate the mystery of salvation through the crucified and risen Lord.
4. We believe that the covenants made with the patriarchs remain valid for Israel. These covenants include the land, the nation, the blessing and the Davidic kingship, as well as the covenants regarding the priesthood of Levi, the city of Jerusalem and the covenant of peace. We believe that the New Covenant, too, was made with the House of Israel and the House of Judah, and that the Church has been engrafted into this covenant through faith in Jesus Christ. Of this new Covenant the signs are the broken body and spilt blood of our Lord. We believe and confess that Jesus will come as the Messiah of Israel to turn away godlessness from Jacob and to redeem the guilt of the nations. With great anticipation we expect His Coming in Glory and the bodily resurrection of the righteous dead. Maranatha!
5. We confess that the LORD is faithful to all of His Covenants with Israel. God did not reject His people, nor did He temporarily put them aside. Israel remains to be the axis in God's plans of salvation for the world. Not all of the promises have yet been fulfilled in Christ, but He is the sure guarantee for their future and final fulfilment.
6. With the Apostle Paul we acknowledge that a 'hardening in part' and temporarily has come upon Israel. This will only be the case 'until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in' and one day all Israel shall be saved. With great anticipation and fervent prayers we are expecting that glorious future for the people of God.
7. By understanding what has happened during centuries gone by, we as a part of the corporate body of the Church, will always be aware of our collective guilt, which will always lead to an attitude of repentance and humility instead of pride towards the Jewish people. This will lead to and show itself in bringing forth fruits worthy of repentance: acts of love and solidarity with the Jewish people and with Israel. We therefore will actively go against all kinds of anti-Jewish and anti-Semitic attitudes, religious and non-religious, both within and without Christianity.
8. We behold and believe that the return of the Jewish people to the Promised Land of Israel, and the establishment of the State of Israel is a sign of God's faithfulness to the everlasting promises and Covenants that He made with Israel and the Jewish people. Together with Israel, we will thank, worship and praise the LORD for the beginning of redemption and the fulfilment of Biblical prophecies leading to the ultimate redemption.
9. In eager expectation we are looking forward to the moment that Jerusalem will be the praise in all the earth. Then the nations will go up to the mountain of the LORD, for Torah will go out from Zion, the Word of the LORD from Jerusalem. Finally, peace and righteousness will cover the earth, and the nations shall train for war no more (Isaiah 2:2-4).
10. We pray for the Peace of Jerusalem and are longing for the great day of the Coming of the Prince of Peace to Jerusalem, when He will be sitting on the throne of His father David in Jerusalem and rule over the house of Jacob, being the twelve tribes of Israel, and of His Kingdom there will be no end. We fervently wait for the day that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, of which Jesus and the Apostles together with all the prophets of Israel have been speaking throughout the ages. Messiah will come and rule from sea to sea, from shore to shore – as far as nations will exist on the face of the earth. 'He will be our Peace' (Micah 5:1-4). Then the veil will be taken away from the eyes and the ears and the hearts of Israel, as well as the veil that has covered the face of the nations.

11. We understand and believe that before the ultimate Kingdom of Peace and Righteousness is established, there will be a Day of Judgment upon the nations. The main question that the nations will have to answer is the question asked by Jesus: 'What did you do to the least of these brothers of Mine?' (cf. Matthew 25:40) His calling for solidarity with the poor and suppressed of this world regards in the first place our attitude towards Israel and the Jewish people. The divine commandment given to us by mouth of Isaiah is: 'Comfort ye, Comfort ye My people', says your God.'
12. We finally believe and confess that the LORD Himself will be the guarantee of the renewal of all things, of the (re)new(ed) heavens and of the (re) new(ed) earth. Then the heavenly Jerusalem will come down to earth and the nations will walk by its light and the Glory of God will be its light and the Lamb will be its lamp. And the tree of life will be the source of healing for the nations. On that day God will be all and in all. Hallelujah!

## CLARIFICATION OF THE XII THESES

This statement is a cry of the heart on behalf of all who have discovered that the people and the nation of Israel hold a fundamental and decisive position in God's plan of salvation with this world. We have attempted not to put something forward that could be considered as being totally new and original, rather just a statement in plain and common language that will lead us all back to our biblical roots. Sadly, when it becomes apparent that the followers of Jesus have cut their biblical roots, there is no hope for divine blessing. The statement is not one of pride, rather one of humility: a cry of the heart. For it is both good and very necessary that the members of the ekklesia, the body of Christ consisting for the greater part of an overwhelming majority of believers coming from the nations, know what their position in God's plan is, Romans 11:17 ff.

1. Israel has been created (compare Isaiah 43:1: Genesis 15:4 and 17:19) by God for the glorification of His Name. For that purpose God elected Abraham and his descendants to become the instrument in His hands to bless and redeem the world, not in the sense of a numerus clausus (a restricted number) but as a synecdoche (a part representing the whole). It was not God's intention to be selective in His choice, but He chose this way to carry out His universal plans and purposes (Genesis 12:3 ff). Everything in salvation history revolves around the election of Israel, but ultimately it is about the realization of God's plans concerning the Universe and His Creation.

By the term 'Israel' in the Twelve Theses, we refer to both the people and nation of Israel, consisting of the twelve tribes of Israel coming from the twelve sons of Jacob. The term 'Jewish People' has the same meaning. The term 'Israel' can also be used

as the name for the land of Israel that God promised to Abraham. We can even use it as referring to the State of Israel that was established in 1948. We are convinced that the promises about the land of Israel that God gave to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their descendants are still valid today (Genesis 13:15; 15:18, Psalm 105:7-11 etc.). The land of Israel is the Promised Land, the land that God promised to give to them. One cannot make a breach between the promises given to Israel in the Bible and the establishment of the modern State of Israel. On the other hand, the establishment of the State of Israel is not yet the ultimate fulfilment of the promises given to Israel in the Bible. That ultimate fulfilment will only come when the Kingdom of God on earth has been realized by the coming of the Messiah of Israel. However, we may say that the establishment of the State of Israel is a part of the ultimate redemption of Israel and a moment in the fulfilment of the promises that God gave to Abraham.

2. The Church and the nations bless Israel by recognizing God's Covenants with Israel, by recognizing that Israel was entrusted with the very words of God (Romans 3:2) and by affirming the bond between the people and the land. The Church, moreover, will continue to stress that Jesus was, is and will remain a Jew, and that salvation comes from the Jews (John 4:22). From the foregoing follows, that the Church and the nations will stand in solidarity with Israel and will seek Israel's prosperity (Psalm 122: 9).
3. We initially considered writing that 'replacement theology' is a heresy. However, we realized that this aberration has never been adopted by an authori-

tative Church Council. It would nevertheless be very appropriate for the churches to strongly speak out against this misunderstanding, this misconception and fallacy in all its variations, because replacement theology is proclaimed openly more and more, or cloaked in theological terms such as 'expansion theology' or 'fulfillment theology'. A typical characteristic of such false concepts is the idea that the role of the people of Israel, the nation of Israel and the land of Israel are redundant, replaced or superseded.

Believers from the nations can fully participate in God's plan of salvation. Thanks to the blood of Jesus the dividing wall has been broken down (Ephesians 2:13 ff). Everyone who has been baptized in Christ Jesus is covered with Christ. Galatians 3:26-29: "So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (compare also Galatians 3:7 and Romans 4:11). But men will still be men and women still will be women, albeit in a deep spiritual unity within the church of Christ. Whereas Jews will be Jews and Gentiles will be Gentiles, in the church this is in a deep spiritual unity by faith in Christ.

4. The respective covenants are elaborated on in different theses. Here, an exposition of the New Covenant, that has also been made first and foremost with Israel, seems fit. Yeshua came as Messiah in the first place as the One Who would redeem the sins of His people, the people of Israel. And one day that will happen, openly and publically, when the whole house of Israel will enter into their own New Covenant (Romans 11:25-27; Jeremiah 31:31-34, Isaiah 53, Zechariah 12:10-14, etc.). But the redemption and removal of the sins immediately has a worldwide perspective, including and regarding all of the nations, John 1:29: "The next day [John] saw Jesus coming to him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" After His coming in humility to take away the sins of the world and being met with rejection, one day He will come in Glory to gather all nations before Him (Matthew 25:31-33, Isaiah 2:2-4, Isaiah 63:1-6; Revelation 19:11 ff.). Anyone who does not add to the words of the prophecy, or takes away from the

words of the prophecy will shout, together with the Apostle John: Come, Lord Jesus! (Revelation 22:18-20)

5. In various translations it is written as a caption above chapter 11 of the Epistle to the Romans: 'National Israel is temporarily set aside but not cast away permanently'. Captions – of course – do not appear in the original Greek text of the New Testament, as they are added later by the editor. In reality, the text says the opposite! Romans 11:1: "I ask then: Did God reject His people? By no means!" And at the end of his impressive dealing with the mystery Paul succinctly exclaims: "For God's gifts and His calling are irrevocable."

Often people in the churches give the impression that all the promises made to Israel have been fulfilled in Christ, referring to Paul: "For all the promises of God in him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us" (2 Corinthians 1:20, NKJV). What Paul means, however, is that the Lord Jesus is the guarantee that we can trust the promises of God.

In Romans 15:8-11, Paul quite vividly expresses this point, in order that the nations shall also worship and praise the God of Israel: 'Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy, as it is written: "For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, And sing to Your name." And again he says: "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people!" And again: "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!"' (NKJV).

6. The understanding of this matter is no less than the understanding of a mystery (Greek: *mustèrion*), that the Apostle reveals to the members of the church in Rome, in order that they may not become conceited and come to wrong opinions and conclusions by their own reasoning – words that we, living in the 21st century, should fully take to heart! When Jesus was rejected as the promised Messiah, the message of salvation came to the Gentiles, to the nations. It was the Apostle's desire to provoke his fellow Israelites to jealousy by this 'success' of his mission. In other words, Paul wanted to engage all Israel in this mission to the Gentiles (cf. Romans 10:2 and 19 with Romans 11:11). While Christians

sometimes have understood it as their calling to provoke to jealousy all those of Israel who have not yet received the revelation about Jesus (Romans 11:11), what has the Church over the centuries ever done to provoke Israel to jealousy in showing unconditional love? With few exceptions by individual Christians, Christianity at large did hardly anything, but added to their affliction.

7. There is a difference of opinion among Christians and churches about the question whether we should confess guilt for what was done to the Jewish people over the centuries. In our culture we tend to think almost exclusively from an individual perspective: I am responsible for what I did, or do with regard to the Jewish people. I am not responsible for what someone else did in the past or does now. But the Bible teaches us to think collectively (Psalm 106:6; Nehemiah 1:5-11; Daniel 9:5-11). Of course, not everybody was involved in the atrocities that were committed to the Jewish people throughout history and especially in the concentration camps. However, true repentance identifies with the sins of one's people, even of one's forefathers and even of Christianity at large over the centuries. God sees us not just as individuals but also as a group with a corporate identity. There is no reason whatsoever for pride in the notion that I personally, or my family, or my church or denomination was not involved in anti-Jewish theology or actions. Paul tells us: "Do not be arrogant, but tremble" (Romans 11:20). And verse 18 says: "Consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you!" True repentance will not just show itself by solemn declarations at special occasions. True repentance will show itself in producing fruits worthy of repentance in acts of love and solidarity with the Jewish people and with Israel.
8. After the establishment of the State of Israel, the Chief Rabbinate added a prayer for the State to the liturgy of the Shabbat morning service. In carefully formulated words, the Eternal One is given thanks for Medinat Yisrael (the State of Israel) as the 'beginning of the blossoming of our redemption'. Some parts of Orthodox Jewry have their reservations, though. Some are convinced that the nation of Israel can only live in peace in the land of Israel, in the Promised Land, if and when the promised Messiah has come. Admittedly, the present State of Israel is a secular state that is not perfect, where mistakes are made and will be made, against the expressed will of the Eternal One. Therefore, it is not our duty as Christians and churches to always endorse and applaud without criticism the policies of the Israeli government. Despite this, on the basis of God's promises, we as Christians and churches should back, and will unequivocally back the right of the State of Israel to exist, and therefore reject all kinds of vicious boycott actions and attempts of the enemies of Israel to get rid of this Jewish State in the Middle East. Israel is and must be a safe haven for the so often persecuted and dispersed Jewish people, God's people. For many of the Jewish people, the existence of Israel and living in the Promised Land is an expression of their Jewish identity.
9. The aforementioned hope is based upon the words of the prophet Isaiah 2:2-4 and Micah 4:1-4. It is expressed magnificently in the statue made by Evgeney Vuchetiv that has been given its proper place in the garden close to the United Nations building in New York. Without a shadow of doubt this can be an inspiration for those in the United Nations who are trying to come to the proper decisions with regard to world peace. But unfortunately, there is no mentioning that such will only be the case if and when Torah shall go forth from Jerusalem!
10. In Acts 3:17-21, the Apostle Peter says: "Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. But this is how God fulfilled what He had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer. Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that He may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you – even Jesus. Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as He promised long ago through His holy prophets." Repent and turn to God in order that the times of refreshing will come! All prophets have spoken about the renewal of all things. First the restoration of the fallen tent of David (Amos 9:11) will take place and then the restoration of the nations, when the veil over their eyes will be lifted and the confusion will end. Finally the Kingdom of Peace and Righteousness will come. God will reign through His Messiah. And the nations will praise this King coming from the line of King David. Psalm 72 speaks about it in beautiful terms, ending (verses 17-19): "May His Name endure forever; may it continue as long as the sun. Then all nations will be

blessed through Him, and they will call Him blessed. Praise be to the Lord God, the God of Israel, who alone does marvelous deeds. Praise be to His glorious Name forever; may the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and Amen.”

The veil of Israel shall be taken away (2 Corinthians 3:12-16) as well as the veil that covers the nations (Isaiah 25:7). Ultimately Messiah will swallow up death itself forever (Isaiah 25:8).

11. Unfortunately, many Christians seek to prove themselves right in criticizing Israel. But we will stress the point that it is not Israel in the first place that caused the suffering of Palestinians that happened after the establishment of the State of Israel. It cannot be denied that, above all, they have become victims because of the failing policies of their own leaders. Even our Arab brothers and sisters in Christ suffer because of the Palestinian leadership. Respectfully, we will ask the Israeli's to pay attention to injustices that sometimes happen, without lecturing them from an attitude of superiority and pride. In many cases, they do listen respectfully, because we come as friends. However, our main task is to carry out the Biblical remit: “comfort, comfort ye My people...”, to encourage them, to love them and to stand with them. Most are totally convinced that the whole world hates them. We will tell them that we will stand at their side over and against those who hate Israel and the Jewish people.

12. When Messiah will eventually have destroyed all the enemies and the final enemy, death, has been defeated, Jesus will surrender the Kingdom to God the Father, and the Universe will enter into its final phase of everlasting glory. 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 says: “Then the end will come, when He hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For He “has put everything under His feet.” Now when it says that “everything” has been put under Him, it is clear that this does not include God Himself, who put everything under Christ. When He has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to Him who put everything under Him, so that God may be all in all.” In the prophetic and eschatological perspective it is not always clear to define which prophecy refers to which stage of the unfolding Kingdom. The prophets sometimes mix the beautiful elements without sharply defining which elements belongs where. But the Kingdom of God will be realized when Satan and the powers of darkness will be bound, but death is still a reality (Isaiah 65:20, Revelation 20:1-6). Finally, there will be the realized Kingdom of God, that will glow with everlasting life and in which death shall be no more (Revelation 21:1-5).