

God's way to unity in the Body of Christ

There is apparently no doubt that the topic of **unity among His followers** is *extremely important* to Jesus. We see this first and foremost in *His last prayers before His death*, when He said: ***“My prayer is (...) for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one – I in them and you in me – so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”*** (John 17:20-23 NIV, also in the following)

When *we as the church* rightly set out to come together with brothers and sisters of other denominations to worship, serve and glorify God together, *one thing* is usually *left out*, what, however, is perhaps *the most important key to true unity in the Body of Messiah*: Our *common, humble returning to **our true, original and likewise future identity***!

It is about *all of us becoming aware anew of our vital connection and belonging to the group* from which the church historically *first broke away*; thus creating the first “church schism”, which *to this day* has not yet been overcome in necessary *profound repentance and return*.

It was **the detachment from the “olive tree” Israel**.

As early as the Council of Nicea in the 4th century, attempts were made to *eradicate* the original profound connection between *the church of Jesus and Israel*, for example by introducing own feast days in place of the God-given, biblical times of celebration and resting (cf. Lev. 23). Emperor Constantine, for example, wrote about the shift of “Easter” to the Sunday after Passover:

“it appeared an unworthy thing that in the celebration of this most holy feast we should follow the practice of the Jews (...) Let us then have nothing in common with the detestable Jewish crowd”

(From the letter of Emperor Constantine, quoted in [Eusebius, Vita Const., Lib. III, Ch.18](#))

In all of this, starting with the exclusion of Jewish-Christian bishops from the Council and then the later, even worse atrocities committed by the Church against the Jews, we have for centuries struck at our own roots, despised them, detached ourselves from them and to this day have not turned back from many of them.

This, however, was (and is) a **deep sin before God!**

A separation from something that *should belong together* before Him and ultimately *will forever!*

We are living in a **time of restoration**, about which Jesus said: **“Elijah does come, and he will restore all things.”** (Mt 17:11 ESV) And likewise Peter preached about **“Jesus, (as the One) whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago.”** (Acts 3:20f. ESV)

And this *return of Jesus*, Who, as the Messiah of Israel, will fulfill all that the prophets have always promised about Him (in which Israel and Jerusalem, the “capital city of the great King”, are *absolutely central!*) is really drawing ever closer.

God has *allowed* many things to happen for a long time, but this patience is coming to an end. We can also see this in the warning words of Paul, who writes explicitly to the Church of Rome:

“do not consider yourself to be superior to those other (Jewish) branches. If you do, consider this: you do not support the root, but the root supports you. (...) you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but tremble. For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either. Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off.” (Rom 11:18-22)

So we are now called upon to *no longer* silently ignore this separation from our root, as many others do, and continuing indifferently in the same spirit; but to rather *seek and walk* a path of cooperation in God-worked, humble, repentant love: *In our hearts, which we hold out to Him and allow Him to shape*, but also *in a very practical way*; above all with our Messianic Jewish brothers and sisters.

But still also in a longing to see **all Israel** saved.

(Cf. Rom 10:1 KJV: “**Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.**”;

Rom 11:24-26: “**if you (...) contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree! (...) and in this way all Israel will be saved. As it is written: ‘The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob.’**”)

Let us therefore reflect on this *ourselves*:

What is *unity* actually *about*? ... Is it not

the restoration of the original, God-ordained plan?

This *plan*, however, did not begin with *us*, not even with *Jesus' first coming*. Through Him, we only share in the New Covenant, which was made “**with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah**”. (Jer 31, 31 KJV)

We have become “**fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise**” that were **lastingly** given to **Israel**.

(Eph 3:6 ESV) As “*branches that were grafted in against nature*” (cf. Rom 11:24), we have received a **share** in Israel's calling to be a “**holy nation**” and to serve God “**as a kingdom of priests**”.

(Ex 19:6; cf. 1 Peter 2:9) We still have **never replaced** Israel, as the Church has long taught *in a proud, sinful, unbiblical manner* and in some cases still does so today!

At the end of this age, *a time of distress, but also of great grace and salvation* is promised for Israel.

(Cf. Dan 12:1 KJV: “**And at that time (...) there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.**”;

Isa 45,17: “**But Israel will be saved by the Lord with an everlasting salvation; you will never be put to shame or disgraced, to ages everlasting.**”; Isa 60:21: “**Then all your people will be righteous and they will possess the land for ever.**”;

Isa 2,3f.: “**For out of Zion shall go forth the law (...) He shall judge (...) and shall decide disputes for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares...**”; Zech 12-14 ESV; ...)

It is extremely important that we *recognize* God's order and plan and do not seek *unity in the body of the coming "King of Israel"* (cf. Jn 1:49; Mt 27:11) on a basis where we completely exclude, disregard and ignore Israel.

Instead, it becomes increasingly essential that we seek this *all-important* alignment with *God's Kingdom purposes for this earth*, which will increasingly involve *Israel and Jerusalem* again.

The enemy knows this, too, and will therefore unite all nations against Israel in the coming *years or decades* at the latest.

(Cf. Zech 12; 14; Joel 4:1-3; Mic 4:11-12)

- Because *this people and this city* are **inextricably linked** to *God's plan of salvation to bring His kingdom to this earth*, which also means *the end of Satan's reign*.

The following prayer is synonymous with "*Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven!*" when it says:

"For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, for Jerusalem's sake I will not remain quiet, till her vindication shines out like the dawn (...) and all kings your glory; (...) You who call on the Lord, give yourselves no rest, and give him no rest till he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth." (Isa 62:1-7)

God says about the Temple Mount located there:

"Son of man, this is the place of my throne and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the people of Israel forever." (Eze 43:7 ESV)

And the wonderful truth is that if we *all* truly *recognize and celebrate in humility* that we are **part** of the **"olive tree of Israel"**, we, as *believers of all denominations*, will therein find our place; as well as an *identity* that far surpasses that of *being a "Pentecostal", "Evangelical", "Catholic", etc.*

There will come a time when we will move from the "church age" into a "kingdom age"; and in the run-up to it every church system will be shaken to the core and everything purely man-made in it will fall; countless believers will emerge from religious structures and join the movement that follows *the Messiah of Israel alone*.

He says: ***"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me (...) and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this (Jewish) sheepfold. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd."*** (John 10:14-16)

God's one people of Jews and Gentiles will soon be united through and in our King Yeshua, who will return to Jerusalem and establish His throne there!

May we *be with Him* and agree when He speaks:

"Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion, for behold, I come and I will dwell in your midst, declares the Lord. And many nations shall join themselves to the Lord in that day, and shall be my people. And I will dwell in your midst, and you shall know that the Lord of hosts has sent me to you.

And the Lord will inherit Judah as his portion in the holy land, and will again choose Jerusalem."

Be silent, all flesh, before the Lord, for he has roused himself from his holy dwelling." (Zech 2:10-13 ESV; cf. Isa 62:11f.)

In addition to such wonderful promises, where *both Jews and Christians appear*, the Bible gives further **prophetic announcements** of a **temporary separation**, but also an **end-time reunion** of **God's entire people**:

The early division of the people of Israel into a **southern kingdom** ("**Judah**") and a **northern kingdom** ("**Israel**") (cf. 1 Kings 12:16; 2 Chr 10:16) was only a foreshadowing of the later, much greater division between **the Jews** and the **believers from the nations**.

Unlike *the Jews*, who returned from the Babylonian captivity (cf. the books of Ezra & Nehemiah) and retained their identity to this day, *the majority of God's people, the 10 tribes of the northern kingdom, never returned from the Assyrian captivity, but merged completely with the other peoples of the earth, so that their identity was virtually completely lost over the centuries.*

God announced back then that He “***will put an end to the kingdom of Israel. (...) for I will no longer show love to Israel, that I should at all forgive them. Yet I will show love to Judah; and I will save them (...) for you*** (the ten tribes of the northern kingdom “House of Israel”) ***are not my people, and I am not your God.***” (Hos 1:4-9)

But already in the very next verse, in anticipation of the end, it says: “**Yet the Israelites will be like the sand on the seashore, which cannot be measured or counted. In the place where it was said to them, “You are not my people”, they will be called “children of the living God”.**

The people of Judah and the people of Israel will come together; they will appoint one leader and will come up out of the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel.” (Hos 1,10f.)

Interestingly, both Paul and Peter interpret this promise about the northern tribes of Israel, however, for the entire church from the nations. (Cf. Rom 9:25f.; 1 Peter 2:10)

Thus we see that there is a **deep connection** between the two!

In still another prophecy, *right in the context of the end-time gathering of God’s people in the Promised Land, restoration and revival of the “dead bones” of Israel*, it goes on to say:

“The word of the Lord came to me:

‘Son of man, take a stick of wood and write on it,

“Belonging to Judah and the Israelites associated with him.”

Then take another stick of wood, and write on it,

“Belonging to Joseph (that is, to Ephraim) and all the Israelites associated with him.”

Join them together into one stick so that they will become one in your hand.” (Ezek 37, 15-17)

This is an *end-time prophecy*.

But who is meant by *Judah* or *Joseph/Ephraim* in this present day and age?

- **Judah** clearly reflects the Jews: the former southern kingdom, consisting of the tribes of Judah, Benjamin and part of Levi, who returned from Babylon in the 6th century BC (cf. Ezr 1:5; Neh 11:4) and have remained as an ethnic group to this day.

- **Joseph** and his son **Ephraim** were in turn the leading tribes of the northern kingdom of Israel, which consisted of the 10 remaining tribes, which altogether merged with the other nations. Yet, there are clear indications of what makes up their identity until today:

Joseph literally means “*The Lord adds*” - and to this day there is *one group* that God has added to his people: Namely, us Christians.

Joseph’s sons *Ephraim* and *Manasseh* were furthermore later even “adopted” by Jacob (Israel) when he said to Joseph:

“Now then, your two sons born to you in Egypt before I came to you here will be reckoned as mine; Ephraim and Manasseh will be mine, just as (his natural sons) Reuben and Simeon are mine.”
(Gen 48:5)

In the same way, we *Christians* have supernaturally attained “sonship”, count just as much before God as His “**firstborn son**” (Ex 4:22), *the physical Israel*, and equally belong to His people.

But what defines **Ephraim’s ultimate identity, still relevant today**, more than anything else is what Jacob prophesies about him at the end of his life, when he blesses him in front of his older brother and says: **“his offspring shall become a multitude of nations”** (Gen 48:19 ESV), literally **“the fullness of the (Gentile) nations”** (Hebrew: “Melo HaGoim”)

This expression only occurs *once more* in the Bible, when Paul says in relation to the Jews and the believers from the nations:

“a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And in this way all Israel will be saved”.
(Rom 11:25f. ESV)

All this allows us to recognize quite clearly who is ultimately meant by *Joseph* and *Ephraim* at this present time: namely “the added ones”, the “fullness of the Gentile nations”, who attain God’s salvation before - *at the end of days* - the eyes of the Jews (at least of a remnant of them) will finally be opened collectively.

In parallel also Ezekiel's prophecy continues:

“This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am going to take the stick of Joseph – which is in Ephraim’s hand – and of the Israelite tribes associated with him, and join it to Judah’s stick. I will make them into a single stick of wood, and they will become one in my hand. (...)

I will take the Israelites out of the nations where they have gone. I will gather them from all around and bring them back into their own land. I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel. There will be one king over all of them and they will never again be two nations or be divided into two kingdoms (...) and they will all have one shepherd.

They will follow my laws and be careful to keep my decrees.

They will live in the land I gave to my servant Jacob, the land where your ancestors lived. They and their children and their children’s children will live there for ever, and David my servant will be their prince for ever.

I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant. I will establish them and increase their numbers, and I will put my sanctuary among them for ever. My dwelling-place will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people.

Then the nations will know that I the Lord make Israel holy, when my sanctuary is among them for ever.” (Ezek 37, 19-28)

Jesus Himself uses precisely this terminology in the parable of Him as Shepherd, Who must also bring the “other sheep” (from the Gentiles) and ultimately make His **two flocks** into **one**. (Cf. again John 10:16: “...and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.”)

By this, He is effectively saying: “I am this shepherd announced in Ezekiel's prophecy, Who will gather His people at the end of time, purify them and make them one.”

...When He will come and - especially from Jerusalem (cf. Isa 2; 60; 62;...) - reign with His saints for a thousand years on this earth. (Cf. Rev 20)

And then on into all eternity in the new creation, when the “New Jerusalem” will descend from heaven. (Cf. Rev 21)

This reunification of God's people described in Ezekiel also becomes clear in other New Testament passages, for example when the Jew Jochanan (John) writes:

“that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one.” (John 11:51f.)

The expression “the scattered children of God” refers far beyond the Jews to all ***“the twelve tribes scattered among the nations”*** (James 1:1), which also James consciously and explicitly addresses here in his letter. Which in other places - as already mentioned - are equated with all true children of God worldwide, that means ***“the fullness of the Gentile nations”***, who have come to sonship through the rebirth in the Messiah and thus share in the people, citizenship, inheritance and promises of Israel. (Cf. Eph 3:6; 2:19)

How ingenious is our God, Who is ***“declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose’*** (Is 46:10), when He describes to us already here, in the prophetic action and promise of Ezekiel, through the language of an Old Testament prophet, what will happen to His overall people two and a half thousand years later!

How amazing, how biblical history already foreshadows the future: By God's people splitting at the time of Solomon, the largest part of them (the 10 tribes of the northern kingdom) separating from the Jews, soon after merging completely with the nations, but being promised by the prophets for the end of time that their descendants would one day be more numerous than the sand on the seashore (cf. Hos 2:1) and they would ultimately be reunited with the Jews under one king. (Cf. John 10:16; Ezek 37:22)

And it concerns us all! We are part of it, but we must no longer ignore the fact that we are merely *part of it, grafted in*; that God's people and His plan of salvation will not ultimately be fulfilled without ***the Jews being saved on the one hand and us from the nations returning to our true identity on the other***, allowing Jesus to gather us and make us into one flock which He will eventually gather to Himself in the Holy Land.

Whereby both ***the Jewish people*** and ***the land of Israel*** are our concern, if we really take *God's heart* and *His declared will* seriously. Therefore, may *not only the enemy* know how central the fate of *the land and people of Israel* are for the coming of the Kingdom of God, but *also we* as the body of this King, Who will *only* come again when ***the Jewish people in Jerusalem*** will welcome Him there, to whom He said:

“I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.”” (Luke 13:35)

How central it is therefore that we agree with God - *in our hearts, in our intercession, but also through our concrete actions*; allowing ourselves to be carried along in His prepared works, which ultimately work towards a great goal: The ***“unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God”***. (Eph 4:13)

But who is this Jesus Who is coming again?

“Who is this coming from Edom, from Bozrah, with his garments stained crimson” and judging the nations? (Isa 63:1; Rev 19:15)

“Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.” (Ps 24:8)

He is ***“the King of Israel”*** (John 1:49), who will *return, take up residence* in His chosen city and *reign* (for 1000 years here, and thereafter forever *in the New Jerusalem*).

(Cf. Ps 132:13f.: ***“For the Lord has chosen Zion, he has desired it for his dwelling, saying, ‘This is my resting-place for ever and ever; here I will sit enthroned, for I have desired it.’”***;

Ps 2:6: ***“I have installed my king on Zion, my holy mountain.”***;

Eze 43:6f: ***“I heard someone speaking to me from inside the temple. He said: ‘Son of man, this (the Temple Mount in Jerusalem) is the place of my throne and the place for the soles of my feet. This is where I will live among the Israelites for ever.***

The people of Israel will never again defile my holy name”;

Zech 14, 8f.: ***“On that day living water will flow out from Jerusalem (...) The Lord will be king over the whole earth.***

On that day there will be one Lord, and his name the only name.”;

Ezek 37:28; Isa 2:2ff; Isa 60f; Isa 62:1-7; Joel 4:20f; Zech 8:22f;...)

Let us recognize and understand in the Spirit: We are part of God's people, "**children of Abraham**" (Gal 3:7), we are **one with Israel!** May we draw *the right conclusions* from this; turn back to God's view, plan, orders and even times, *even if certainly* in the freedom of the New Covenant;

in loving devotion to one another in the body, but also to our "spiritual fathers" (cf. Mal 3:23f.), the Jewish people; in the *God-worked love of Paul*, who testifies:

"I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race, the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption to sonship; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of the Messiah, who is God over all, for ever praised! Amen." (Rom 9:2-5)

Let it become our heartfelt prayer for *the brothers of Jesus according to the flesh* that God may make "**his light shine**" in their hearts to give them "**the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ**", Yeshua the Messiah. (2 Cor 4:6)

He still wants to do *great things* for His people when He promises: ***"I will restore the fortunes of Judah and the fortunes of Israel, and rebuild them as they were at first. I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me, and I will forgive all the guilt of their sin and rebellion against me.***

And this city (Jerusalem) shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and a glory before all the nations of the earth who shall (...) fear and tremble because of all the good and all the prosperity I provide for it. (...)

Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: 'The Lord is our righteousness.'" (Jer 33:7-16 ESV)

The return of Jesus is imminent and we are facing a huge transition process from the present *church age* to the *age of the Messianic Kingdom*, where the church - *in the present form, detached from Israel* - will not continue to exist.

Where God will gather His true children into one, glorify them and give them dominion over this earth together with Jesus.

(Cf. Rev 20:6; Dan 7:27: ***“Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven will be handed over to the holy people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.”***)

Let us therefore seek *His face*, become still before Him, wait on Him; learn His ways and the obedience that is only possible when we die to our self-centeredness and carnal life. Let us *circle around Him* all the more and *get to know Him*. Grasp *His holy character*, but also *His mighty, marvelous plan* out of His Word and His Spirit, so that it becomes more and more part of our deepest identity. Yeshua is worth it! *He Himself* and the *salvation purposes of our heavenly Father* are beyond anything we can imagine!

“When the oppressor is no more, and destruction has ceased, and he who tramples underfoot has vanished from the land, then a throne will be established in steadfast love, and on it will sit in faithfulness in the tent of David one who judges and seeks justice and is swift to do righteousness.” (Isa 16:4f. ESV)

“At that time Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the Lord, and all nations shall gather to it, to the presence of the Lord in Jerusalem, and they shall no more stubbornly follow their own evil heart. In those days the house of Judah shall join the house of Israel, and together they shall come from the land of the north to the land that I gave your fathers for a heritage.” (Jer 3:17f. ESV)

“Jerusalem—built as a city (...) to which the tribes go up (...) There thrones for judgment were set, the thrones of the house of David. Pray (or ask for/about) for the peace of Jerusalem! (...) For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your good.” (Ps 122, 3-9 ESV)