

## 1 Corinthians 12:1-6

### “Confessing ‘Yeshua is Lord’”

“Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware. You know that when you were pagans, *you were* led astray to the mute idols, however you were led. Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, ‘Yeshua is accursed’; and no one can say, ‘Yeshua is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit. Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons.”

A theme which dominates 1 Corinthians chs. 12-14 is the proper employment of the gifts of the Spirit,<sup>146</sup> and Paul issuing various corrections, clarifications, but also rebukes to his audience: “Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed” (1 Corinthians 12:1, TNIV). The exact label is *tōn pneumatikōn* (τῶν πνευματικῶν), “spiritual things” (YLT), which does not always have to be representative of spiritual gifts (cf. 2:13; 9:11), but can be employed a bit broader in terms of “spiritual matters” (LITV). The tenor of what Paul communicates, addressing various spiritual gifts and various roles within the Body of Messiah, strongly supports that he is responding to previous written correspondence, or an oral report, issued to him by the Corinthians.

That there has been some confusion, misunderstanding, and division between various Corinthians or Corinthian factions, over the spiritual gifts, is easily deduced—something which later on becomes quite clear in the discussion over tongues (1 Corinthians ch. 14). The Apostle Paul makes the effort to direct how all Believers are part of the same Body of Messiah—and hence all—regardless of what spiritual gift or gifts they have been granted, are interconnected with one another. Believers are to use their gifts as a means of mutual blessing, guided by the imperative of love (1 Corinthians ch. 13). People claiming themselves to be more spiritual than others, or having reached some peak of spirituality, was causing problems. Soards directs,

“Among the Corinthians the flamboyant gifts are more cherished and more highly esteemed. Remarkably, some people in Corinth seem to have become so elevated in their spirituality that they had no use for, and even expressed disdain for, the all-too-human Jesus who suffered the disgrace of dying on the cross.”<sup>147</sup>

Fee, who is widely identified as being Pentecostal and charismatic, asks, “Had their emphasis on spirituality, manifested by tongues, become an end in itself, so that they were focusing more on these things than on God himself?”<sup>148</sup> While there are legitimate spiritual gifts witnessed in Paul’s discussion with the Corinthians, whether or not such gifts are edifying of other Believers, and are tempered by a demeanor of love and edification for one another—should serve as an important test as to whether or not such “spiritual things” originate from the true Holy Spirit, or some other place.

Paul makes a very interesting statement regarding the disposition of his audience, which is majority non-Jewish. He speaks to their previous, pre-Messiah condition, remarking, “You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led” (1 Corinthians 12:2, NKJV). Unlike Ephesians 2:11, which identifies the non-Jewish Believers as “the Gentiles in the flesh” or “the nations in the flesh” (YLT), *ta ethnē en sarki* (τὰ ἔθνη ἐν σαρκί), speaking of physical descent—1 Corinthians 12:2 does claim *hoti hote ethnē ēte* (ὅτι ὅτε ἔθνη ἦτε), directing most versions to necessarily render it as “You know that when you were heathen”

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<sup>146</sup> This entry has been adapted from the author’s commentary *1 Corinthians for the Practical Messianic*.

<sup>147</sup> Soards, 252.

<sup>148</sup> Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 583.

(RSV) or “You know that when you were pagans” (ESV), speaking of a spiritual condition. Garland indicates, “The noun ἔθνη (*ethnē*) is the Jewish term for Gentiles (the assumption is that Jews are *the* nation; the rest are simply the nations), and in the context of idols, the translation ‘pagans’ is apropos.”<sup>149</sup> Hays actually draws the conclusion that with the non-Jewish Corinthians, no longer to be regarded as pagans—and he invokes the English “Gentiles”—they are to be regarded as grafted-in to the community and heritage of Israel:

“When he indicates that the Corinthian believers are no longer Gentiles, Paul is unmistakably suggesting that they have turned away from idols to serve the living God of Israel (cf. 1 Thess. 1:9) and thereby become grafted into Israel (cf. Rom. 11:17-24). That is why he can speak of Israel in the wilderness as ‘our fathers’ (1 Cor. 10:1): He includes the Corinthian Gentiles among those who can rightly claim ancestry from the Israel of the Old Testament stories...[H]is offhand turn of phrase reveals much about his ecclesiology and his understanding of the place of his converts in relation to the people of Israel.”<sup>150</sup>

There is an unquestionable spiritual heritage in the Tanach or Old Testament that the Corinthians who have expressed faith in Israel’s Messiah, must consider: “You know how, in the days when you were still pagan, you were swept off to those dumb heathen gods, however you happened to be led” (1 Corinthians 12:2, NEB). That idols were considered to be dumb or mute, is rooted within the record of Israel’s Scriptures (1 Kings 18:26-29; Habakkuk 2:19-18; Psalm 115:4-8; cf. Acts 17:29). Paul has prefaced his words to the Corinthians about a proper handling of the spiritual gifts, by reminding them of where they came from, and in essence asking them if they have truly improved from the quality of pagan spirituality they once embraced. In the estimation of Sampley, “Paul’s ‘back-to-basics’ move discloses his abiding conviction that the Corinthians’ behavior shows them to be babies in the faith (cf. 3:1-2), a note to which he will explicitly return in 14:20.”<sup>151</sup>

The Apostle Paul affirms something very important to the Corinthians, as they will have to evaluate and consider the quality of their spirituality: “Therefore, I want to make it clear to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says, ‘Yeshua is cursed!’ and no one can say, ‘Yeshua is Lord,’ except by the *Ruach HaKodesh*” (1 Corinthians 12:3, CJB/CJSB). If a man or woman speaks via the distinct influence of the Holy Spirit, then with it will come a clear declaration of Yeshua as Lord. Soards indicates, “According to Paul genuine enthusiasm affirms the lordship of Jesus, whereas the practice of ecstasy generates behavior contrary or hostile to the affirmation of Jesus’ lordship.”<sup>152</sup> Contrary to this, exclaiming *Anathema Iēsous* (Ἀνάθεμα Ἰησοῦς) or “Yeshua is accursed” or “Curse Jesus!” (Goodspeed New Testament), is decisively not an action of the Holy Spirit. Paul’s remarks in 1 Corinthians 12:3 are properly concluded to be a form of shock language. Blomberg remarks that perhaps some of the Corinthians had even cursed Yeshua the Messiah, formally, before receiving Him into their lives:

“Some of them had doubtless spoken seemingly inspired utterances during various Greco-Roman rituals (v. 2). But in those settings, participants who had heard of Christ’s claims might well have cursed him, so Paul notes that no one can sincerely declare Jesus to be *anathema* who is a true believer (v. 3).”<sup>153</sup>

The term *anathema* (ἀνάθεμα) notably possesses a Tanach background via the term *cherem* (כֶּרֶם), which can mean either “devoted thing” or “devotion, ban” (BDB).<sup>154</sup> BDAG details

<sup>149</sup> Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 564.

<sup>150</sup> Hays, 209.

<sup>151</sup> Sampley, in *NIB*, 10:941.

<sup>152</sup> Soards, 254.

<sup>153</sup> Blomberg, 243.

<sup>154</sup> BDB, 356.

## The Nature of Yeshua in the Pauline Epistles and Hebrews

*anathema* as “that which has been cursed, *cursed*, *accursed*...LXX as a rule=אָנָתְמָה: what is ‘devoted to the divinity’ can be either consecrated or accursed. The mng. of the word in the other NT passages moves definitely in the direction of the latter.”<sup>155</sup> Presumably, none of the Corinthians subsequent to making a declaration in favor of Yeshua as Messiah, had declared Him to be anathema or accursed. But, how many were acting in a manner which was more consistent with an environment of dishonor to the Messiah, than honor? Hays makes the critical observations,

“Paul is simply using this dramatic fiction of cursing Jesus to emphasize that those who are inspired by the Holy Spirit will speak and act in ways that glorify the lordship of Jesus. This provides him with a fundamental criterion that allows him to critique the behavior of those at Corinth who are in effect denying the lordship of Jesus even while engaging in inspired spiritual speech—even though the actual critique is deferred until chapter 14.”<sup>156</sup>

Surely also to be considered is what the positive declaration *Kurios Iêsous* (Κύριος Ἰησοῦς) or “Yeshua is Lord” would mean to the Corinthians. For certain, Yeshua being declared as *Kurios* would mean that other lords, be they the gods and goddesses of the Greco-Roman pantheon, or a political leader such as Caesar, were not “Lord.” Via its Septuagint connection rendering the Divine Name YHWH/YHVH (יהוה), an affirmation of Yeshua as Lord would require people to recognize the Messiah as being Divine, and not some supernatural but ultimately created being (cf. John 20:28; Acts 2:21; Romans 10:9, 13; Philippians 2:11). Fee astutely explains,

“The use of ‘Lord’ in such a context meant absolute allegiance to Jesus as one’s deity and set believers apart from both Jews, for whom such a confession was blasphemy, and pagans, especially those in the cults, whose deities were called ‘lords.’ Thus this became the earliest Christian confession, tied in particular to Jesus’ having been raised from the dead and therefore having become the exalted One.”<sup>157</sup>

That there is going to be some diversity in the spiritual gifts, that are granted to Believers, is something which is notably rooted within the diversity of the very God that the redeemed serve: “Now there are various kinds of gifts, but the same Ruach. There are various kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are various kinds of working, but the same God who works all things in all people” (1 Corinthians 12:4-6, TLV). If there is some diversity within the God that the Corinthians serve—with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit all working together—then surely there can be some degree of unity and cohesion among the human beings made in the image of this God, and who claim to emulate this God. Fee states how “the unity of God does not imply uniformity in gifts; rather, the one and the same God is responsible for the variety itself.”<sup>158</sup> This God actively runs an ordered universe. Those who emulate this God should likewise be able to facilitate some kind of edifying spiritual environment for those who need His love and salvation.

It cannot be overlooked that within 1 Corinthians 12:4-6, there are references to the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:4), the Lord Yeshua (1 Corinthians 12:5), and God the Father (1 Corinthians 12:6). Some look for a formula of Father, Son, and Spirit for a revelation of a tri-unity in the Godhead—but 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 can be taken as sure Biblical evidence that such a formula is not necessary in order for the Father, Son, and Spirit to be detected. Stern is right to point out in his *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, “The word ‘Trinity’ is never used in the New Testament, but the elements which led theologians to develop such a concept are seen in

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<sup>155</sup> BDAG, 63.

<sup>156</sup> Hays, 209.

<sup>157</sup> Fee, *1 Corinthians*, pp 581-582.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 586.

passages like this one, where **Spirit, Lord,** and **God** refer respectively to the Holy Spirit, Yeshua the Messiah, and the Father.<sup>159</sup>

## 1 Corinthians 15:15-28

### “that God may be all in all”

“Moreover we are even found *to be* false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Messiah, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Messiah has been raised; and if Messiah has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Messiah have perished. If we have hoped in Messiah in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied. But now Messiah has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man *came* death, by a man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Messiah all will be made alive. But each in his own order: Messiah the first fruits, after that those who are Messiah's at His coming, then *comes* the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death. For HE HAS PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET [Psalm 8:6]. But when He says, ‘All things are put in subjection,’ it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him. When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all.”

To the Apostle Paul, Yeshua the Messiah's resurrection from the dead, is essential to the good news or gospel (Romans 1:3-4; 4:25; 6:4-5; 8:34; 10:9).<sup>160</sup> He bluntly tells the Corinthians, “But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Messiah has been raised” (1 Corinthians 15:13), or “If there's no resurrection, there's no living Christ” (The Message). Given the gravity of Yeshua's resurrection in not just conquering death, but inaugurating the future age to come breaking into the present—without such a resurrection, Paul has to say, “if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation is without foundation, and so is your faith” (1 Corinthians 15:14, HCSB). Rhetorically, Paul goes even further, by announcing to the Corinthians, “And we apostles would all be lying about God—for we have said that God raised Christ from the grave. But that can't be true if there is no resurrection of the dead” (1 Corinthians 15:15, NLT). If there is no resurrection of the dead, Yeshua was not raised, and Paul and the Apostles are all guilty of bearing false witness (Exodus 20:16; Deuteronomy 5:20; cf. Mark 10:19; Matthew 19:18; Luke 18:20). In the view of Proverbs 19:5, “A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who tells lies will not escape.”

Prior explains how significant the resurrection of Yeshua is to those who believe in Him:

“[I]f he did nothing of the sort, if Jesus was another guru-figure and in fact an imposter, it is nothing short of blasphemy to link the name of God almighty with such a person. The only convincing reason for linking God to the person and work of Jesus is the fact of his resurrection. Only God has power over death: if Jesus rose from the dead, God raised him.”<sup>161</sup>

If the Corinthians deny the future resurrection of the dead, then there was no resurrection of Yeshua from the dead: “For if the dead are not raised, not even Messiah has been raised” (1 Corinthians 15:16). If Yeshua the Messiah was not raised from the dead, then this necessarily begs the question about the Corinthians' current spiritual state, as Paul tells them, “And if Christ be not raised, your faith *is* vain; ye are yet in your sins” (1 Corinthians 15:17, KJV). If

<sup>159</sup> Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, 476.

<sup>160</sup> This entry has been adapted from the author's commentary *1 Corinthians for the Practical Messianic*.

<sup>161</sup> Prior, 264.