

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

one God created us?" If we are all children of the same Father, then we are certainly to be united as His people. This is why immersion or baptism is highlighted in Ephesians 4:5, because water immersion is a practice that unites all Believers, and knows no gender barriers (Galatians 3:27). Wood remarks, "Baptism is one because it makes one. It provides the evidence that all Christians, without discrimination as to color, race, sex, age, or class, share the grace of Christ."<sup>74</sup> Water immersion was something that Jews of all classes performed when going to the Temple, and it was something required of all proselytes male and female. For Believers in Yeshua, it is a unifying element that while marking them as holy, does not mark any one Believer as better than another. The act of immersion allows them to identify, in some small way, with the death, burial, and resurrection of the Messiah (Romans 6:3-4).

### Ephesians 5:18-20

#### "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs"

**"And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah to God, even the Father."**

Dunnam describes<sup>75</sup> how the *ekklēsia* is "an embassy of God's kingdom set right down in the center of whatever evil orders may be struggling for dominance."<sup>76</sup> Such a representation of God's Kingdom must be a haven of His proper and good character, just as Paul says, "So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (Ephesians 5:17).

A specific example of how not to be foolish, but instead demonstrate God's wisdom, is detailed by Paul: "do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18, RSV). This is probably an allusion to Proverbs 23:31-32, "Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly; at the last it bites like a serpent and stings like a viper." Paul is very specific in Ephesians 5:18 in telling his audience to not be intoxicated with wine. This is not a prohibition against drinking alcohol, but is rather a prohibition against drunkenness, a trait of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:13). This is similar to the requirement of overseers not being drunkards (1 Timothy 3:3, 8; Titus 1:6). The Apostle Peter commended his audience in how the pagans "are surprised that you do not run with *them* into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign *you*" (1 Peter 4:4).

While some from various traditions will take Ephesians 5:18 as a support for a total prohibition of drinking alcoholic beverages, the very mention of wine (Grk. *oinos*, οἶνος) indicates how common it was consumed in Mediterranean culture. Certainly while there were wines that were stronger in their alcoholic content than others, the question of whether an alcoholic wine was even consumed is really only asked by American Bible teachers. The United States has an alcohol culture of extremes where people either drink to excess, or fully abstain. The question is not asked by European Bible teachers for whom drinking alcohol in moderation is a part of daily living.<sup>77</sup> The kind of drunk activity that Paul would absolutely be speaking against is that epitomized by the worship of the Greek god Dionysius (Roman Bacchus). The celebration of Dionysia "was often accompanied by drunken excesses, sexual license, and the tearing to pieces of a human or animal victim, symbolizing the god, and the burying of the

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<sup>74</sup> Wood, in *EXP*, 11:56.

<sup>75</sup> This entry has been adapted from the author's commentary *Ephesians for the Practical Messianic*.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 221.

<sup>77</sup> If necessary, consult the FAQ, "Alcohol."

flesh" (IDB).<sup>78</sup> Antiochus Epiphanes forced the Jews under his rule to observe Dionysia (2 Maccabees 6:7).

We do need to be careful how far we press the point of the Believers in Asia Minor being warned about celebrations such as Dionysia. O'Brien indicates, "Although such cults were widespread, there is nothing to suggest that they had a continuing influence in the churches of Asia Minor."<sup>79</sup> Yet, drunkenness to an extreme would often lead to wild and lewd sexual orgies in the ancient Mediterranean world, regardless of if a specific deity were in view. This stands in contrast to a glass of wine with dinner, a beer after a hard day of work, or even a nightcap of whiskey. In the Tanach, we see drunkenness associated with the corruption of the Temple priesthood:

"And these also reel with wine and stagger from strong drink: The priest and the prophet reel with strong drink, they are confused by wine, they stagger from strong drink; they reel while having visions, they totter *when rendering judgment*" (Isaiah 28:7).

The drinking of alcohol can create a state of joyfulness, as attested by various ancient sources (Philo *On Drunkenness* 146-148). Yet Paul says that instead of being drunk with wine, Believers are to "be filled with the Spirit"—a clear requirement if they are to be truly filled up to the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:19). Lincoln validly attests, "Drunkenness leads to disorderly and dissolute behavior, but being filled with the Spirit produces very different results—praise, thanksgiving, and, when the participle of  $\nu$  21 [*hupotassomenoi*, ὑποτασσόμενοι] is also included, mutual submission."<sup>80</sup> At *Shavuot*/Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the Believers present and great joy erupted, people looking on mocked them and said, "They are full of sweet wine" (Acts 2:13). The Apostle Peter had to step in and immediately clarify, "For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is *only* the third hour of the day; but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel" (Acts 2:15-16), explaining how Joel foretold a time when all would receive the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28-32), something to be no doubt accompanied by joy.

Some today in the charismatic movement claim that they can get "drunk with the Holy Spirit," but this is not something that is present in the mind of the Apostle Paul. For his ancient audience, he is contrasting being drunk with wine *which leads to gross sexual sins*, versus being filled with the Holy Spirit. Those who get drunk are often trying to search for the joy, one which the Holy Spirit provides without the need for alcoholic inducement.

Paul gives some specific examples of what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit, that are exactly the opposite of any kind of sexual orgy as would be practiced by the Greeks or Romans. Those filled with the Spirit are to find themselves, "speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah to God, even the Father" (Ephesians 5:20). This is paralleled by Colossians 3:16-17:

"Let the word of Messiah richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Yeshua, giving thanks through Him to God the Father."

Being filled with the Holy Spirit causes one "in everything [to] give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Messiah Yeshua" (1 Thessalonians 5:18). The First Century Messianic assembly

<sup>78</sup> N. Turner, "Dionysia," in George Buttrick, ed. et. al., *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 4 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 1:844.

<sup>79</sup> O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 389; cf. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 343.

<sup>80</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 345.

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would have modeled its worship style from the Tanach Scriptures, various Jewish liturgies from the Synagogue, and would have had its own songs and hymns exalting Yeshua (such as the *Carmen Christi* of Philippians 2:6-10). Spontaneous songs were also a part of some of the early congregations (1 Corinthians 14:15). The comparison and contrast between drunkenness leading to lewd sexual practices, and being filled with the Holy Spirit leading to some kind of worship or thanks issued to God, could not be clearer. In whatever we do today, let it be for God's glory and not for self-pleasuring.

### Ephesians 5:21-23

#### "Messiah as the Source"

*"Be submissive to one another in the fear of Messiah. Wives to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the man is the source of the woman, as Messiah also is the source of the assembly, being Himself the Savior of the body" (PME).*

The instruction regarding husbands and wives in Ephesians 5:21-33, has been one of the most fiercely debated passages in theological examination over the past several decades.<sup>81</sup> Debates have arisen not only as it involves the First Century Mediterranean context of what is communicated, but contemporary application regarding marriage and issues involving women in ministry. Huge divides are present regarding not just approaches to the statements which appear, but also the definition of specific terms.

The general statement made in Ephesians 5:21 affects how readers interpret the verses that follow, all the way to Ephesians 6:9. Paul asserts, "Submit to one another in fear of the Messiah" (CJB/CJSB). The principle which guides the whole discussion which follows, is **mutual submission** of individual Believers to one another, *Hypotassomenoi allēlois* (ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις). The service that is required of individual Believers to one another has been modeled by Messiah Yeshua in Philippians 2:3-8, as the Master emptied Himself of His exalted glory in Heaven, entering into our world, being born as a mortal to atone for fallen humanity.

Mutual submission of Believers to one another is to be natural evidence of the Holy Spirit enacting a change in peoples' lives. The verb *hypotassō* (ὑποτάσσω), employed in Ephesians 5:21, "has a wide range of meaning centered on the idea of enforced or voluntary subjection," as the middle voice participle *hypotassomenoi* would relate "'to subject oneself,' 'to be subservient,' 'to submit voluntarily'" (TDNT).<sup>82</sup> Mutual submission is supported by previous admonitions seen in the letter:

"[W]ith all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love...Therefore, laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE of you WITH HIS NEIGHBOR [Zechariah 8:16], for we are members of one another...Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Messiah also has forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:2, 25, 32).

What is specifically in view in Ephesians 5:21-6:9 is not the religious leadership within a congregation, but rather how family groupings were to be organized. Paul's theme of mutual submission would not have been entirely foreign to the Jewish community of the First Century, as submission to one another is seen in the DSS:

"Thus shall each Israelite know his proper standing in the *Yahad* of God, an eternal society. None shall be demoted from his appointed place, none promoted beyond his foreordained rank. So shall all together comprise a *Yahad* whose essence is truth, genuine humility, love of

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<sup>82</sup> G. Delling, "hypotássō," in TDNT, 1159.