

Paul hoped that the sinner's removal from the assembly would result in future salvation, *hina to pneuma sōthē en tē hēmera tou Kurioi* (ἵνα τὸ πνεῦμα σωθῆ ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ κυρίου), "so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Yeshua." With the contrast between flesh and spirit in v. 5, are two different modes of being in view, one being the sinful nature, and the other being a person committed to a Holy Spirit transformed life? Or, is the contrast between flesh and spirit in v. 5 one of where sin enacts its consequences on a physical body that has engaged in wanton pleasures, yet a salvation of the core inner person can be enacted at a future point?

Furthermore, how are readers to approach "on the day of the Lord Yeshua"? It is to be taken as a future time in history (3:15), or could this be a place where "the day of the Lord Yeshua" would be a moment in the present when the sexually immoral sinner comes to his senses, repents of sins, and is reconciled with God *in spite of the physical toll sin has taken*? The reason we should favor "the day of the Lord Yeshua" here in v. 5 relating to a moment in the present—the salvation of Yeshua finally being enacted after a season of gross sin—is how salvation is here reflected in dualistic terms. The complete salvation, that is to be enacted in the eschaton, is one of redemption of the whole human being of both material and immaterial components (1 Thessalonians 5:23), with the final condemnation of sinners also depicted as a sentencing of a person of both material and immaterial components (Matthew 10:28). In v. 5, only the saving of the spirit of the sinner is in view, which should lead us to conclude that "on the day of the Lord Yeshua" is the time Paul anticipates when the sexually immoral will have a dynamic encounter with Him.

6 Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? 7 Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Messiah our Passover also has been sacrificed. 8 Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

5:6 Paul is pretty mortified as to what many of the Corinthians have let go on within their assembly: "Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough?" (NIV). The symbolism that Paul evokes in vs. 6-8 is taken from Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread, with a prohibition on leaven or yeast (Heb. *chameitz*, חָמֵץ; Grk. *zumē*, ζύμη) present during the Passover season (Exodus 12:8-20; 13:3-7; Deuteronomy 16:3). Given Paul's exclaim, "Your glorying is not good" (KJV) or "Your pride in yourselves is lamentably out of place" (Phillips New Testament), one can be reminded of Zephaniah 1:12: "It will come about at that time that I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and I will punish the men who are stagnant in spirit, who say in their hearts, 'The LORD will not do good or evil!'"

In the Apostolic Scriptures, the presence of leaven often represents sin or some form of ungodliness (Matthew 16:6; Mark 8:15; Luke 12:1; Galatians 5:9). Fee makes the interesting observation, "Although the OT does not expressly so specify, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, as well as being a religious celebration, was probably a health provision. Because of the

fermentation process, which week after week increased the dangers of infection, the Israelites were commanded once a year to purge their homes of all leaven.”²⁹ The thrust of v. 6 is obvious enough, in how the leaven or yeast of sin, no matter how seemingly small, if not removed and cleansed will enact a serious problem on the Corinthian Believers.

More generally for vs. 6-8 is how the Apostle Paul does appropriate the themes of Passover (*Pesach*, פֶּסַח) and the Festival of Unleavened Bread (*Chag HaMatzah*, חַג הַמַּצֹּת). How have commentators approached this? They certainly have had to recognize how the theological and spiritual message, of Passover and the Exodus, is an important part of the largely non-Jewish Corinthians’ Biblical heritage. Sampley describes, “Paul’s rich Jewish heritage has obviously become his readers’ tradition too, because he does not have to explain his Passover reference. He associates casting this man out of the church with the Jewish practice of cleansing the house of yeast at Passover, rejects their boasting (5:6), and urges them to realize that they are like fresh, unleavened Passover dough.”³⁰ Craig S. Keener also states, “The Corinthians’ familiarity with Passover (5:7) and other festivals (16:8) was probably not unusual for early Christians (e.g., Acts 20:6, 16), and is certainly not surprising for a church birthed from a synagogue (Acts 18:4-8).”³¹

What cannot go overlooked, given the statements of 3:16-17 preceding, is how Believers corporately composing the Temple is comparable to the Tanach record of the Temple being cleansed in order for Ancient Israel to observe the Passover. Ciampa and Rosner properly direct,

“[I]n the Old Testament, there is an observable link between cleansing or restoring the temple and celebrating the Passover. Following the ‘removal of all defilement from the sanctuary’ (2 Chr. 29:5), in order to ‘reestablish the service in the temple of the LORD’ (2 Chr. 29:35), King Hezekiah in 2 Chronicles 30 calls upon the people to celebrate the Passover. Similarly, King Josiah, after removing the articles of idolatry from the temple and restoring the sacred ark to its rightful place, ordered the Israelites to celebrate the Passover and observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread (2 Chr. 35:1-19; 2 Kgs. 23:1-23). Ezra followed the same pattern; Ezra 6 records first the completion and dedication of the temple (6:13-18) and then a joyous Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread (6:19-22). It is intriguing that, even in the Gospels (Matt. 21:12-13; Mark 11:15-18; Luke 19:45-47; John 2:13-22), as in 1 Corinthians 5, cleansing the temple and celebrating the Passover are connected.”³²

5:7 One can actually detect a note of positivity in Paul’s view of his Corinthian audience, as he states, “Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed” (RSV). A version like the CJB employs some Hebraic terminology, having, “Get rid of the old *hametz*, so that you can be a new batch of dough, because in reality you are unleavened. For our *Pesach* lamb, the Messiah, has been sacrificed.”

²⁹ Fee, 216.

³⁰ Sampley, in *NIB*, 10:848.

³¹ Keener, 51.

³² Ciampa and Rosner, 212.

Paul actually considers the Corinthians, in spite of the presence of someone who has committed incest and their flippancy about it (vs. 1-2), to be unleavened or free from sin, the Weymouth New Testament having, “for in fact you *are* free from corruption.” It is widely recognized by interpreters how the sacrifice of Yeshua of Nazareth, for the sins of humanity, is tied to the Passover sacrifice (Exodus 12:21; Deuteronomy 16:2, 6; John 1:29; Hebrews 10:10) and the Exodus, depicting how Believers must be taken from a condition of being in slavery to sin, to a new life of forgiveness and freedom in Him.³³

It is hardly surprising that a figure like Stern, in his *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, actually has much to summarize on Yeshua being sacrificed as the Passover lamb:

“...In the New Testament Yeshua the Messiah is portrayed frequently both as a lamb and as a sacrifice. At Yn. 1:29, 36 he is called ‘the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.’ At Ac 8:32, Luke quotes Isaiah 53:7-8, which speaks of the Messiah as a slaughtered lamb, and explicitly connects it with Yeshua. And the book of Revelation is full of passages about the Lamb that was slaughtered (Rv 5:6-13; 6:1, 16; 7:9-17; 12:11; 13:8, 11; 14:1-10; 15:3; 17:14; 19:7-9; 21:14, 22-23; 22:1-3). Messianic Jews [Hebrews] 9:1-10:20 says that Yeshua’s death effectively replaces the sacrifices for sin. (Romans 3:25 implicitly connects Yeshua’s sacrificial death with a different Jewish holiday, *Yom-Kippur*; for there he is called the ‘*kapparah*,’ the covering, or atonement, ‘for sin.’). And this is not inconsistent with his also being the Passover lamb; in fact, he gives new meaning to all the Jewish holidays.)

“But here Yeshua’s death is understood as that of the Passover lamb, as at Yn 19:33, 36: ‘But when they got to Yeshua and saw that he was already dead, they didn’t break his legs.... For these things happened in order to fulfill this passage of the *Tanakh*: ‘Not one bone of his will be broken’ [Exodus 12:46, which refers to the Passover lamb].’ Likewise, at the Last Supper, which is generally understood to have been a Passover meal, Yeshua referred to the broken *matzah* as his body and the wine as his shed blood which establishes the New Covenant (11:23-26; Mt. 26:26-29). And 1 Ke 1:19 should be considered an allusion to Yeshua as the Passover lamb, because it speaks of ‘the costly bloody sacrificial death of the Messiah, as of a lamb without defect or spot’; whereas the Passover lamb too was to be ‘without blemish’ (Exodus 12:5).

“On the night of the Exodus from Egypt, at the original Passover, each family sacrificed and ate a lamb, after smearing its blood on the doorposts of the house, so that the angel of death would ‘pass over’ that house and not kill that family’s firstborn son when he killed the firstborn sons of the families of Egypt (Exodus 11:4-7; 12:3-13, 21-23, 29-30). Thus, the most straightforward significance of the Messiah’s being our Passover lamb is that because of his death, the angel of death will pass over us at the final judgment and instead we will have everlasting life. ‘For God so loved the world that he gave his uniquely-born Son, so that everyone trusting in him may have eternal life instead of being utterly destroyed’ (Yn 3:16). The Greek of our passage does not have in it the word for ‘lamb’ but says, literally, ‘For the Messiah, our *Pesach*, has been sacrificed.’ This echoes Exodus 12:11 (‘It is *Adonai’s Pesach*’) and 12:21 (‘...and kill the *Pesach*’), where the absence of the word ‘lamb’ from the Hebrew calls attention to the total identification between the Passover event and the Passover lamb—neither exists

³³ Bruce, pp 56-57; Morris, 87.

without the other. Likewise, there is no escape from the utter destruction of eternal death at the Last Judgment apart from trust in the Messiah, who is our Passover.

“At the original Passover, an annual feast was prescribed in which each family would slaughter and eat a lamb as a remembrance of the Exodus (Exodus 12:3-14, 21-28). In Yeshua’s time the central event of Passover was the slaughter of the lamb for each household in the Temple court; and when Sha’ul wrote, this was still the custom. At a modern Ashkenazic *Seder* there is no Passover lamb, because the rabbis decreed that if the lamb could not be slaughtered at the Temple (impossible after its destruction in 70 C.E.), lamb should not be eaten during Passover at all. Instead, a lamb shankbone is placed on the ‘*Seder* plate,’ along with the other ceremonial items needed for the meal, as a reminder that these sacrifices did once take place. (Sephardic Jews, however, do eat lamb at Passover.) Today, when a Messianic Jew observes *Pesach*, his identification of Yeshua the Messiah with the Passover lamb gives him a rich treasure of new significance to add to the traditional layers of meaning for this festival.”³⁴

5:8 One of the most significant verses, for today’s Messianic movement, is undeniably 1 Corinthians 5:8. This verse is frequently quoted around the season of Passover, not just to get Messianic people interested once again in commemorating the festival of freedom, but also for Messianic congregations to promote their *seder* to the wider Jewish and Christian communities. 1 Corinthians 5:8 makes the bold proclamation, “Let us, therefore, celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (RSV). The CJB offers the understandable paraphrase, “So let us celebrate the *Seder* not with leftover *hametz*, the *hametz* of wickedness and evil, but with the *matzah* of purity and truth.”

The key verb of interest is *heortazō* (ἑορτάζω), which *LS* has defined with, “to keep festival or holiday,”³⁵ followed by *BDAG* with, “celebrate **a festival**, of the Passover...as a figure of the Christian life.”³⁶ When many of today’s Messianic Believers see 1 Corinthians 5:8, they read it as a clear admonition from the Apostle Paul that the Corinthians were to keep the Passover, and that the festival of Passover is an important observance to be kept by all Believers today, remembering both the Exodus and the sacrifice of Israel’s Messiah. Not all interpreters are agreed, though, that 1 Corinthians 5:8 is an actual reference to the Corinthians for them to be observing the Passover.

Frequently, it is concluded that Paul’s statement is rather indicative of the Passover and Unleavened Bread used as an illustration of the Corinthians’ behavior.³⁷ Norman Hillyer concludes, “The Christian life is likened to a constant *festival*; so believers must continuously keep ‘leaven’ out of their lives and fellowship.”³⁸ Barton similarly states, “The Corinthians are to see themselves in the light of the Passover, itself the biblical paradigm of *true* freedom (5:6-

³⁴ Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, pp 448-449.

³⁵ *LS*, 277.

³⁶ *BDAG*, 355.

³⁷ Cf. Prior, pp 78-79 who takes it a step farther, using the term “Easter,” although he means the resurrection.

³⁸ Hillyer, in *NBCR*, 1058.

8).³⁹ While no reader of 1 Corinthians 5:8 can honestly disagree with, in the words of Ciampa and Rosner, how “the reference seems...to be to holy living and moral purity in general,”⁴⁰ would there not be something lost if the reference to Passover is entirely metaphorical? An entirely metaphorical view is precisely what is in statements of David E. Garland:

“The present tense ἐορτάζωμεν (*heortazōmen*) may be added to the evidence from the context that Paul is not thinking in terms of the celebration of a Passover rite but metaphorically in terms of a continual celebration.”⁴¹

Perhaps reflective of the metaphorical approach of Passover representing a quality of Believers’ life in the Messiah, the Montgomery New Testament actually does have, “So let us keep the unending feast, not with any old leaven, neither with leaven of malice and vice, but with unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”

Throughout much Christian history, 1 Corinthians 5:8 has also been taken as a reference to the rite of communion being the new “Christian Passover.” The *Book of Common Prayer*, employed in the Anglican tradition, actually does include 1 Corinthians 5:8 in its liturgy for the eucharist: “[Alleluia.] Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us; *Therefore let us keep the feast.* [Alleluia].”⁴²

There are some examiners, such as Bruce, who feel it appropriate to deduce that “Paul may well have written this around the time of Passover and the festival of unleavened bread.”⁴³ The Kingdom New Testament seemingly reflects this in its rendering: “Cleanse out the old yeast, so that you can be a new lump, the yeast-free lump that you really are. It’s Passover-time, you see, and the Passover lamb—the Messiah, I mean—has already been sacrificed!” Garland protests, “Paul does not use the metaphor because it was Passover season, nor does its use imply that the church celebrated the Jewish rite of Passover.”⁴⁴

While a Corinthian commemoration, of the Passover in the Diaspora, would have been different than a Passover commemorated at the Temple in Jerusalem—as it would have lacked the element of the Passover lamb—the common Passover elements of unleavened bread (*matzah*, מַצֵּה) and bitter herbs, and a recitation of the plagues and the Exodus, could be performed. **Yeshua the Messiah and remembering His work would substitute for a lamb.** In various ways, the kind of Passover meal the Corinthians could have held, would not have been too dissimilar from how the Ashkenazic Jewish tradition today does not consume lamb at Passover.

Even with today’s Messianic readers concluding that Paul indeed admonished the Corinthians to keep the Passover—something seemingly afforded to him if his letter was written around Passover time—the message of Passover does not at all end with the week spent reflecting on the *seder*. The Passover is to be a way of life that is indeed manifested in the ongoing, daily conduct of the redeemed in Israel’s Messiah. So, as important as vs. 6-8 might be for contemporary Messianic people, as Jewish and non-Jewish Believers are

³⁹ Barton, in *ECB*, 1325.

⁴⁰ Ciampa and Rosner, 215.

⁴¹ Garland, 180.

⁴² *The Book of Common Prayer* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 337.

⁴³ Bruce, 57; also Prior, 76.

⁴⁴ Garland, 180 fn#42.

encouraged to participate in remembering the Passover, **we need not forget the wider context of Paul's words in association with the Corinthian sexual immorality.** Hays indicates, after all, "the Passover imagery...points to the necessity of community discipline and purity."⁴⁵

There is a tragedy when celebrating the Passover becomes something entirely metaphorical and figurative from v. 8, as far too many sincere Christian people have been robbed from the deep richness of the *seder* and the themes of the Exodus tangibly impacting them. Equally so, if all Messianics do is observe the Passover as a matter of routine, and we fail to incorporate its theme of freedom from bondage into our lives, its significance is equally lost.⁴⁶

9 I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; 10 I *did* not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world. 11 But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one.

5:9 The statement Paul makes in 1 Corinthians 5:9 is important not only for its contents, but for what it communicates regarding previous correspondence to his audience: "I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people" (NKJV). Various versions have taken this a step further, by having "earlier letter" (CJB, The Message, Common English Bible) or "previous letter" (Phillips New Testament). The text that we canonically call 1 Corinthians is not the first letter that Paul wrote to the Corinthians. Various theories do abound as to where this previous letter, perhaps to be labeled as **Corinthians A**, might be. Some think that it is no longer extant, while others have proposed that this letter, or parts of it, was redacted into what we canonically call 2 Corinthians.

The biggest issue, to be sure, is that whatever was in Paul's previous letter to the Corinthians had either been misinterpreted, purposefully misinterpreted, or just widely disregarded. As made clear in this letter that he is writing, Paul was mortified about the tolerance of incest (vs. 1-2), and as will be seen further on, various Corinthians soliciting prostitution (6:9-20). Paul's insistence that the Corinthians not associate with the immoral, whether they be sexually immoral or otherwise, is observably rooted within assertions made in Psalm 1:1-2:

"How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night."

5:10 The ironic twist of Paul's admonition, for the Corinthians not to associate with the sexually immoral, is that he mainly does not have people of the world at large in mind. He observes, "not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers,

⁴⁵ Hays, 86.

⁴⁶ For a further study, consult the *Messianic Spring Holiday Helper* by Messianic Apologetics.

or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world” (ESV). Paul does want the Believers, even with restrictions imposed such as those of the Apostolic decree (Acts 15:19-21, 29), to be a witness for Israel’s Messiah in the pagan world around them. Being cut off from the main spheres of social and religious influence in paganism, did not mean a total abandonment of people who need to hear the good news or gospel message.

5:11 The people who Paul is actually concerned about, which only intensifies the problems that have erupted in Corinth, are labeled as *adelphos onomazomenos* (ἀδελφὸς ὀνομαζόμενος), taken by the 2011 NIV to be “anyone who claims to be a brother or sister.” There are a whole list of sinful activities listed by Paul, which were either being tolerated by various Corinthians, or which had the potential to manifest themselves if the current influences were not halted. As he fully states,

“But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother or sister who is sexually immoral or greedy, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or robber. Do not even eat with such a one” (NRSV).

Here, social meals among Believers with proper conduct, and so-called Believers with improper conduct, are prohibited. But how far did this exclusion go? Was it a total exclusion? Was it an exclusion from social gatherings and fellowship meal gatherings among the Believers, associated with worship? Surely some kind of, albeit limited involvement, of these sinners in the worship gatherings would have been allowed, given the tenor of 14:24-25⁴⁷ and how the gift of prophecy was to often convict people of their sin, turning them to repentance. Thiselton draws the conclusion,

“Paul calls for *discrimination* about boundary markers, corporate identity, and the recognition of the Christian community as a corporate witness to overt beliefs, values, and lifestyles. *The addresses are to use their sense about how this works out* so that no one is confused and so that a man such as the immoral offender is well aware of where he stands in relation to the community.”⁴⁸

As Psalm 101:7 says, “He who practices deceit shall not dwell within my house; he who speaks falsehood shall not maintain his position before me.” Implementing this imperative, however, does involve details only known by specific people, who can discern a situation “on the ground.” While various sinners among the Corinthians were to be socially spurned and left alone, that some of them would attend worship times—hopefully with the intention of them rectifying their behavior—is reasonable to deduce. Yet, some would be entirely barred from the assembly (vs. 12-13).

⁴⁷ “But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an ungifted man enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all; the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so he will fall on his face and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you” (14:24-25).

⁴⁸ Thiselton, 409.

12 For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the [assembly]? 13 But those who are outside, God judges. REMOVE THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES [Deuteronomy 17:7; 19:19; 22:21, 24; 24:7].

5:12 Paul directs the Corinthians, “After all, it is none of my business to judge outsiders. God will judge them. But should you not judge the members of your own fellowship?” (Good News Bible). Far from the Corinthians thinking that they are superior to the world around them, they instead have a responsibility to monitor the behavior of their community of Messiah followers, with various procedures even specified by the Lord Himself (i.e., Matthew 18:15-18).

5:13 While affirming how the world at large is to be left in the hands of God, the Apostle Paul specifies ex-communication from the assembly for the sinners caught in sexual immorality: “God judges those outside. ‘Purge the evil person from among you’” (ESV). V. 13 quotes or references a selection of Torah passages:

“The hand of the witnesses shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. So you shall purge the evil from your midst” (Deuteronomy 17:7).

“[T]hen you shall do to him just as he had intended to do to his brother. Thus you shall purge the evil from among you” (Deuteronomy 19:19).

“[T]hen they shall bring out the girl to the doorway of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her to death because she has committed an act of folly in Israel by playing the harlot in her father's house; thus you shall purge the evil from among you...[T]hen you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city and you shall stone them to death; the girl, because she did not cry out in the city, and the man, because he has violated his neighbor's wife. Thus you shall purge the evil from among you” (Deuteronomy 22:21, 24).

“If a man is caught kidnapping any of his countrymen of the sons of Israel, and he deals with him violently or sells him, then that thief shall die; so you shall purge the evil from among you” (Deuteronomy 24:7).

A failure to remove sin from the assembly could very well result in a communal loss of blessing (cf. Joshua 7:5, 25). Without removing the sexually immoral from the assembly at Corinth, what would happen to the presence of God, or the quality of the presence of God, which was supposed to be active among the Believers? In the view of Hays, “Paul seems to have translated and transferred the basic disciplinary norms of Israel’s covenant community over onto the church at Corinth...Paul in effect addresses the Gentile Corinthians *as* Israel. God’s word to Israel has become God’s word directly to them.”⁴⁹ This is hardly surprising, given non-Jewish Believers’ status as fellow members of the Commonwealth of Israel (Ephesians 2:11-13) or the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16) along with Jewish Believers.

⁴⁹ Hays, 88; also Sampley, in *NIB*, 10:848.

Also to be recognized, is how a theologian like Witherington, who holds to a widely negative view of God's Torah for the post-resurrection era—considering it to have been abolished—still has to recognize, in view of the Tanach or Old Testament quotations in v. 13, “This suggests not only that Paul believed that some of the holiness code still applied to Christians, but also that there must have been a large enough number of Jewish Christians in Corinth who would take Paul's side in this matter to interpret his ruling if there was any doubt about its implications.”⁵⁰

The application or relevance of Torah instructions for the Corinthian Believers, struggling with sexual immorality in their midst, would not be difficult for past generations of various Protestant Christians, who would, albeit incorrectly, hold to the so-called “moral law” as being relevant instruction. The Torah's sexual code would classify as a part of such “moral law.” What can be challenging, for Biblical ethics, is evaluating the status of capital punishment in the post-resurrection era. There is no denying the fact that the Torah prescribed execution for sinners committing various prohibited sexual acts; the Apostle Paul, in appealing to Torah passages, instead prescribed ex-communication or banishment from the congregation. **Why is there a difference?**

Some have thought that Paul had no choice but to prescribe ex-communication for sexual immorality, because all Jewish executions had to have been approved by the Roman authorities—leaving ex-communication or banishment as the only viable punishment at the Believers' disposal. Keener is reflective of this view:

“Rome reserved capital punishment for its own agents, but Jewish courts could practice excommunication for any crime for which the biblical sentence was death....Paul, like his Jewish contemporaries, applied this punishment to banishment by an earthly court, leaving severer judgment, if necessary, to God.”⁵¹

There would be various Messianic teachers who would concur with this conclusion.

Others, however, such as this writer, would conclude that the reason capital punishment was not prescribed, is because there has been a decisive shift in the post-resurrection era away from capital punishment, due to the sacrifice of Yeshua. Colossians 2:14 specifically does communicate, “having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross,” which is rightfully taken as Yeshua being executed and having absorbed the capital penalties of the Torah in His sacrifice. *The code of conduct in God's Torah was not nailed to the cross, but its capital penalties were.* Perhaps with capital punishment for murderers being reserved for infrequent executions (Genesis 9:6), a figure like Paul would have definitely viewed capital punishment for sexual offenses to have been for the pre-resurrection era. Sins such as sexual immorality are still severely serious, but Yeshua the Messiah died so that such a sinner would not have to be executed himself, and could instead be turned over “for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Yeshua” (v. 5).

⁵⁰ Witherington, 156.

⁵¹ Keener, 51.