

## 1 Corinthians 1:1-9

### “Opening Greetings”

“Paul, called as an apostle of Yeshua the Messiah by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, to the [assembly] of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Messiah Yeshua, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, their *Lord* and ours: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Yeshua the Messiah. I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you in Messiah Yeshua, that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge, even as the testimony concerning Messiah was confirmed in you, so that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, who will also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah. God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Yeshua the Messiah our Lord.”

Paul’s first extant correspondence to the Corinthians is witnessed to address a whole host of problems and controversies.<sup>1</sup> Factions have arisen among them (1 Corinthians 1:11). 1 Corinthians 5 is spent by Paul warning the Corinthians about the dangers of sexual immorality, apparently including some kind of incest. Paul is shocked that the Corinthians are taking their fellow Believers to the pagan Corinthian courts to determine their disputes (1 Corinthians 6). Paul also comments about marriage between a man and a woman, and urges some of the unmarried to stay unmarried in light of their circumstances (1 Corinthians 7). 1 Corinthians ch. 10 addresses the issue of meat sacrificed to idols, and how Believers must be consciously aware that what they do is being observed by others. Paul issues instruction involving the Lord’s Supper (1 Corinthians 11:17-34). A large amount of instruction is seen in 1 Corinthians chs. 12-14, which are spent analyzing the proper usage of the spiritual gifts, with love being the greatest of them all (1 Corinthians 13). Writing to a predominantly non-Jewish audience, originally reared in Greco-Roman religion, 1 Corinthians 15 lays out the Biblical doctrine of resurrection. Interspersed throughout 1 Corinthians, Paul must spend time defending his spiritual authority.

The opening salutation of a letter like 1 Corinthians, while extending God’s grace and goodwill from Paul toward his audience, also conveys a strong sense of what the writer intends to instill to his audience in much of his message. As is easily seen, the Apostle Paul wants the Corinthians to decisively consider the calling of these Believers into Messiah faith, and the reflection of their behavior in the wider world. Paul exclaims to the Corinthians that they “have been sanctified in Messiah Yeshua, [and are] saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, their *Lord* and ours” (1 Corinthians 1:2).

N.T. Wright’s Kingdom New Testament might be said to take a slight, but understandable liberty in 1 Corinthians 1:2, in rendering the title *Christos* (Χριστός) not as “Christ” or “Messiah,”<sup>2</sup> but instead as “King”: “to God’s assembly at Corinth, made holy in King Jesus, called to be holy, with everyone who calls on the name of our Lord, King Jesus, in every place—their Lord, indeed, as well as ours!” It might be that Wright’s choice of rendering *Christos* as “King” (normally the Greek *basileus*, βασιλεύς), is affected by the prayer of Hannah in 1 Samuel 2:20: “Those who contend with the LORD will be shattered; against them He will thunder in the heavens, the LORD will judge the ends of the earth; and He will give strength to His king [*mal’ko*, מַלְכִּי], and will exalt the horn of His anointed [*meshicho*, מְשִׁיחִי].”

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

<sup>2</sup> It should not go unnoticed how *Thayer*, 672, does define *Christos* with “the Septuagint for מְשִׁיחִי [*mashiach*], anointed.”

Examiners of 1 Corinthians will most certainly take some of the assertions made in 1 Corinthians 1:2, and not only address the issue of the spiritual identity of Paul's audience—but how Paul's audience has just been associated with terms used for Ancient Israel in the Tanach. The Corinthians are first addressed as *tē ekklēsia tou Theou* (τῆ ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ), “the assembly of God” (YLT) or “God’s community” (TLV). This is widely recognized as being the equivalent of “the assembly of the LORD” or *qahal ADONAI* (קָהָל יְהוָה; Numbers 16:3; 20:4; Deuteronomy 23:1; 1 Chronicles 28:8), or even *qahal Yisrael* (קָהָל יִשְׂרָאֵל; Leviticus 16:17; Deuteronomy 31:30).<sup>3</sup> Of course, even though it is true that Yeshua’s word to establish the assembly (Matthew 16:18-19) is rooted within Tanach prophecies of Israel’s restoration (Jeremiah 31:4; 33:7)<sup>4</sup>—and is not the creation of some new and separate group independent of Israel’s Kingdom—given the classical orientation of much of Corinthians’ audience, more background for *ekklēsia* (ἐκκλησία) than it translating *qahal* (קָהָל) via the Septuagint, is in view. Marion L. Soards appropriately directs,

“In secular Greco-Roman literature it named a political assembly, especially one brought together for decisive action. Yet the word had religious usage in Judaism that Paul would likely have known. The LXX uses *ekklēsia* to render the Hebrew word *qahal* that both named the Israelites at points in their desert wanderings during the exodus and referred to their later assemblies at the temple for various kinds of worship. There is no reason or way to force a decision between the secular and religious uses of *ekklēsia* in order to understand how Paul and the Corinthians thought about the nature of the company of Christians in Corinth.”<sup>5</sup>

While it is appropriate to deduce that the Corinthian Believers, Jewish and non-Jewish alike, were fellow members of the Commonwealth of Israel (Ephesians 2:11-13) or the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16), it is important that the Corinthians’ identity is based less on an association with Israel in the Tanach in the past *and more* on their association with the work of Israel’s Messiah in the present. Anthony C. Thiselton advises, “We should be cautious about overinterpreting the word...ἐκκλησία...It is often argued that the NT writers inherited the word later as the LXX translation of the Hebrew קָהָל (*qahal*)...Whatever the origin, the word stresses the call *to assemble together as a congregation* in God’s presence.”<sup>6</sup> The Corinthians, in their recognition of Israel’s God and Israel’s Messiah, are to serve *in the midst of pagans* as a testimony and witness of His awesome power. As David E. Garland notes, “In the political assembly, the art of elegant rhetorical persuasion is paramount; in the assembly of God, the proclamation of Christ crucified, delivered in weakness, fear, and trembling, and the demonstration of the Spirit’s power are utmost.”<sup>7</sup>

The Corinthian assembly is labeled by Paul as *klētois hagiois* (κλητοῖς ἁγίοις), “saints by calling” (NASU) or “called to be his holy people” (TNIV). The calling of God is an important

<sup>3</sup> W. Harold Mare, “1 Corinthians,” in Frank E. Gaebelien, ed. et. al., *Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 10:188; Gordon D. Fee, *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 32; David E. Garland, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: 1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 27; Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *Pillar New Testament Commentary: The First Letter to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 55; Shira Lander, “The First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians,” in Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds., *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, NRSV (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 288.

<sup>4</sup> For more details, consult the examination for Matthew 16:18-19 in the author’s publication *Are Non-Jewish Believers Really a Part of Israel?*

<sup>5</sup> Marion L. Soards, *New International Biblical Commentary: 1 Corinthians* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), pp 18-19; also Ben Witherington III, *Conflict & Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), pp 79-80.

<sup>6</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, *New International Greek Testament Commentary: The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 75.

<sup>7</sup> Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 27.

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feature of Paul's letter (1 Corinthians 1:26-31; 7:17-24). As J. Paul Sampley details, "All believers are called; sometimes the call has a particular task integral to it (e.g., Paul is to be apostle to the gentiles); typically, the call is to be lived directly in the life context where one is called (see 1 Cor 7:17-24)."<sup>8</sup> It is properly recognized that God's calling of the Corinthians, is one of a **calling to salvation and sanctification**. Not surprisingly, the Corinthians' calling to sanctification or holiness, is one rooted within the original commission placed by God upon Ancient Israel in the Torah (Exodus 19:5-6; Leviticus 11:44-45; 19:2). Thiselton details how, "The Greek again reflects an LXX translation, this time of the Hebrew קָדוֹשׁ (*qadosh*), which means *separate* or *set apart* in contrast to *being in common use*. The people of God and the things of God reflect their special status as serving God, who is awesomely Other, transcendent in majesty and purity."<sup>9</sup>

Being holy and set-apart as God's people, and recognizing its importance for Believers' behavior and their relationship to Israel's Messiah, are a major part of the Corinthian correspondence (1 Corinthians 1:30; 6:11; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1). The multiple dynamics, of the Corinthians' required holiness, are critical to acknowledge, as the Corinthians' behavior will not just involve them having the right attitudes or thoughts, but very much a sanctification of their physical actions unto God. Gordon D. Fee appropriately draws out,

"Believers are set apart for God, just as were the utensils in the Temple. But precisely because they are 'set apart' for God, they must also bear the character of the God who has set them apart...Paul's concept of holiness regularly entails observable behavior. That will be particularly the case in this letter, which is addressed to a community whose 'spirituality' and 'higher wisdom' have been largely divorced from ethical consequences."<sup>10</sup>

While there are doubtless debates between today's Messianic people over Jewish and non-Jewish Believers, their relationship as one in the *ekklēsia*, and whether there is even a separate assembly independent from Israel (a concept which the author does not adhere to)—it is important that the association of the Corinthians with Israel's Kingdom, is one that involves their service to God, and their recognition of His redemptive plans in the Tanach. *The Corinthians' calling is hardly to be one of self-serving importance or pride—and most especially, as will be seen, "knowledge."* Richard B. Hays astutely explains,

"[W]hen Paul applies this language to the Corinthians, he is echoing God's call to Israel. This is the first of many times in the letter that Paul implicitly addresses and describes the Corinthian Christians—a predominantly Gentile group—as members of the covenant people of God, Israel. Whatever their background, they have now been caught up into the story of God's gracious elective purpose."<sup>11</sup>

Stephen C. Barton further concludes,

"The call by God to be 'saints' is biblical language for the election of Israel to be God's chosen people (cf. Lev 19:1-2); but here, in a way which must have been shocking to Jewish sensibilities (cf. Acts 10), it is applied to a mixed, predominantly Gentile, solidarity. This transformation of language represents a transformation of reality, the coming into being of a

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<sup>8</sup> J. Paul Sampley, "The First Letter to the Corinthians," in Leander E. Keck, ed. et. al., *New Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 10:798.

<sup>9</sup> Thiselton, 76.

<sup>10</sup> Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 32.

<sup>11</sup> Richard B. Hays, *Interpretation, A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching: 1 Corinthians* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1997), 16; also Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 33; Craig S. Keener, *New Cambridge Bible Commentary: 1-2 Corinthians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 21.

new covenant community. The ‘[assembly] of God’ is a society which transcends old boundaries and brings God’s grace to people previously ignorant of it.”<sup>12</sup>

The Apostle Paul also indicates to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 1:2, how they are people “along with everyone everywhere who [call] on the name of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, their Lord as well as ours” (CJB/CJSB). It can be recognized how those who call upon the Lord “in every place” (RSV, NASU), has some echoes from the Torah, regarding how cultic acts were only to be performed at a place of the Lord’s choosing (Deuteronomy 12:11, 21, 26; 14:23-24; 16:2, 6, 11; 17:8, 10; 26:2). What is intended by Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:2, of course, is how the acknowledgment of the One True God of Israel, and His Son Messiah Yeshua, is occurring and expanding the world over. Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner state, “Rather than refer to that place, however, Paul says that the Corinthians join those who call on the name of our Lord ‘in every place’ ...and he uses it to refer to the worship of God which is spreading around the world through his ministry to the Gentiles.”<sup>13</sup> Acknowledgement and worship of God going out to every place, among the nations of Planet Earth, is something anticipated in the Tanach:

“For from the rising of the sun even to its setting, My name *will be* great among the nations, and in every place incense is going to be offered to My name, and a grain offering *that is pure*; for My name *will be* great among the nations,’ says the LORD of hosts” (Malachi 1:11).<sup>14</sup>

The Corinthians calling upon the Lord is not just something that they do isolated and by themselves; the Corinthians were part of a much larger Body of Messiah. The Corinthians were not to think of themselves as fully autonomous and independent; the Corinthians were connected to others who were following the same God and Lord. In being told that they call out on the Lord *with others together*, “in every place” (1 Corinthians 1:2), it would encourage them to have more unity and less factionalism (cf. 1 Corinthians 4:17; 7:17; 11:16; 14:33). As Paul would later direct in this letter, “Was it from you that the word of God *first* went forth? Or has it come to you only?” (1 Corinthians 14:36). While factionalism and divisions among God’s people were hardly unique to the Biblical record at this point in the First Century, it does have to be recognized how the culture of Ancient Corinth did contribute to this problem. Garland indicates,

“Here, [Paul] notes their calling to sanctity that bonds them to others. As a Roman colony, Corinth was the center of Roman presence and influence in the province of Achaia. The surrounding Achaen neighbors were tied to the Greek past and had become their social inferiors. The letter betrays that an attitude of superiority had crept into the [assembly] at Corinth and was destroying their solidarity.”<sup>15</sup>

The interconnection, and indeed interdependence, that local assemblies and fellowships of Messiah followers were to have one to another, certainly is evidenced by Paul’s support request for the Jerusalem Believers (1 Corinthians 16:1-4). Yeshua Himself issued the ever-important declaration: “For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother” (Mark 3:35).

Paul’s specific greeting, “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Yeshua the Messiah” (1 Corinthians 1:3), is widely and correctly recognized to include a combination of traditional Greek and Jewish terms. Normal Greek letters tended to only include the salutation *chairein* (χαίρειν) or “greetings” (cf. 1 Maccabees 10:18), which Paul has replaced with the similar

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<sup>12</sup> Stephen C. Barton, “1 Corinthians,” in James D.G. Dunn and John W. Rogerson, eds., *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), pp 1316-1317.

<sup>13</sup> Ciampa and Rosner, 57.

<sup>14</sup> Perhaps also Haggai 2:7: “‘I will shake all the nations; and they will come with the wealth of all nations, and I will fill this house with glory,’ says the LORD of hosts.”

<sup>15</sup> Garland, *1 Corinthians*, pp 28-29.

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sounding *charis* (χάρις) or “grace.” He has attached this with *eirēnē* (εἰρήνη) or “peace,” the Septuagint equivalent of *shalom* (שָׁלוֹם).

As is also typical to the introductory statements of most of the Pauline letters,<sup>16</sup> Paul explains his view of the relationship of the Father and Son. The Father is identified as “God” (*theos*, θεός), and the Son as “Lord” (*kurios*, κύριος), with the Son definitely being considered as much Divine as the Father. Commentators have had to certainly reason through not only the assertion of 1 Corinthians 1:3 and what it means to Christology, but also what it means in terms of the identity of Yeshua as the Jewish Messiah. Ben Witherington III interjects,

“There can be no doubt that Paul views Jesus as in some sense divine because he gives both divine functions and divine names such as ‘Lord’ to him. What is less clear is how he envisions the relationship between Christ and the Father. Christians [meaning, Believers] are those who call upon the name of Jesus, not as though he were some departed saint but as God! This was scandalous to some Jews.”<sup>17</sup>

Craig S. Keener also details, “Paul (and some other early Christians) invoked not only ‘God our Father’ for a blessing (as in Judaism) but also ‘our Lord Jesus Christ’ (1:3). These letters thus open with a recognition of Jesus’ deity in some sense.”<sup>18</sup> The content of 1 Corinthians later, in employing the Divine titles God and Lord *and* in association with the Deuteronomy 6:4 *Shema*, asserts how both Father and Son are **the Divine entity** (1 Corinthians 8:5-6) which stands supreme. Thiselton correctly details (for 1 Corinthians 1:2) how the affirmation of Yeshua the Messiah as Lord, is connected with the title *kurios* rendering the Divine Name YHWH/YHVH in the Septuagint:

“In 1 Cor 1:2 **the name of the Lord** is applied to **our Lord Jesus Christ**. This christological application cannot be detached from the utterly familiar tradition that in the LXX κύριος [*kurios*] translates and becomes ‘an expository equivalent for the Divine Name,’ both the Hebrew unspoken proper noun יהוה (YHWH, no vowels used) and אֲדֹנָי (*‘adon, lord*) or אֲדֹנָי (*‘adonai*).”<sup>19</sup>

The affirmation of Yeshua the Messiah, Israel’s King, as *kurios*, also would have had a subversive political character to it in the First Century Roman Empire. Garland states, “It also severs them [i.e., the Believers] from those who insist that Caesar is the world’s lord.”<sup>20</sup>

Paul recognizes that in spite of the problems that he will have to admonish the Corinthians about in this letter, that they are still people whom he has seen experience the spiritual blessings of God, just as he has: “I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you in Messiah Yeshua” (1 Corinthians 1:4). Paul’s reference to “my God,” is hardly a statement where the God whom Paul serves is somehow different from the God whom the Corinthians serve. This is instead an affirmation that the God whom Paul has had special experiences with, is the same God whom the Corinthians likewise have had special experiences with. The significance of recognizing “the grace of God that has been bestowed on you” (Moffat New Testament), is that the Corinthians are not beyond all hope in seeing their present difficulties rectified. David Prior observes,

“The one fact most people have at their fingertips concerning the Corinthian church is that it was a mess—full of problems, sins, division, heresy. It was, in this sense, no different from

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<sup>16</sup> Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:3; 2 Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 1:3; Ephesians 1:2; Philippians 1:2; Colossians 1:3; 1 Thessalonians 1:1, 3; 2 Thessalonians 1:1-2; 1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2; Philemon 3.

<sup>17</sup> Witherington, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, 80.

<sup>18</sup> Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, pp 21-22.

<sup>19</sup> Thiselton, pp 79-80.

<sup>20</sup> Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 29.

any modern church....We need to register this primary truth—Paul looks at the Corinthian church as it is *in Christ* before he looks at anything else that is true of the church.”<sup>21</sup>

The assertion of 1 Corinthians 1:4, and how grace was given to the Corinthian Believers, may be said to very much parallel the later words of Paul, in Titus 2:11-13 on the working of God’s grace in Yeshua:

“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Yeshua the Messiah.”

While the grace of God (*tē chariti tou Theou*, τῆ χάριτι τοῦ θεοῦ) surely involves the salvation provided in Yeshua, as well as the sanctifying power of God to change lives, it is noted to also involve something more—especially as non-Jewish Corinthians have just been described in 1 Corinthians 1:2 with terminology regarding Israel. Ciampa and Rosner recognize, “The epitome of grace for Paul was the admission of Gentiles, people without God and without hope, like many of the Corinthians, to the glorious privileges which had been exclusive to Israel.”<sup>22</sup>

Paul further acknowledges how for the Corinthians, “that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge” (1 Corinthians 1:5, NKJV). Given the widely inappropriate orientation that many of the Corinthians had, in thinking of themselves as presumably “knowledgeable,” one would think that a figure like Paul would be negative toward knowledge. Yet he says that in the Messiah, they “have been made rich in every way, being endowed with the highest degree of eloquence and knowledge” (God’s New Covenant-Cassirer). Paul does not speak disparagingly of knowledge (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:1), although he does note its limitations (1 Corinthians 8:1)—especially if it is human knowledge. If *panti logō kai pasē gnōsei* (παντὶ λόγῳ καὶ πάσῃ γνώσει) originate from a place other than God, what will it mean? Hays observes,

“It is precisely these gifts of speech and knowledge that have become the instruments of division in the community. Paul never denies that such knowledge and speech are authentic gifts of God; indeed, he gives thanks for them rather than deploring them. At the same time, however, he stresses that they are *gifts of God*; that is, they are not expressions of the Corinthians’ own autonomous spiritual capacity or brilliance.”<sup>23</sup>

The Apostle Paul later inquires of the Corinthians, “For who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?” (1 Corinthians 4:7). God alone is the One who has given the Corinthians “power of expression and...capacity for knowledge” (Goodspeed New Testament). Yet, many had forgotten or overlooked this—some more seriously than others. F.F. Bruce actually makes a connection between some Corinthians’ drive for knowledge, and some of the later Second Century problems of Gnosticism:

“They prized **knowledge** because they believed it gave them access to the divine mysteries (cf. 2.6ff), but it probably did not have for them the more technical sense of *gnōsis* associated with the developed Gnosticism of the following century. They may be described as ‘gnosticizing’ rather than ‘Gnostic.’”<sup>24</sup>

Paul is clear to affirm how for his Corinthian brothers and sisters, “the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you” (1 Corinthians 1:6, NKJV), in that the message declared by Paul to the

<sup>21</sup> David Prior, *The Message of 1 Corinthians* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1985), 23.

<sup>22</sup> Ciampa and Rosner, 63.

<sup>23</sup> Hays, 18.

<sup>24</sup> F.F. Bruce, *New Century Bible: 1 and 2 Corinthians* (London: Oliphants, 1971), 31.

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Corinthians during his tenure in Corinth (cf. Acts 18:1-18), was received and met with God's Spirit working powerfully among them. There is some variance of rendering among versions for *to marturion tou Christou* (τὸ μαρτύριον τοῦ Χριστοῦ), more standardly being the "testimony concerning Christ" (NASU), "testimony about Christ" (ESV), or even "testimony to the Christ" (Lattimore). What this is, of course, is "the evidence of Messiah" (TLV) or "the messianic message" (Kingdom New Testament).

With some remarks made on the later Gnosticism of the Second and Third Centuries, W. Harold Mare asserts how "Paul is speaking of concrete knowledge based on the reality of Christ's person and his death on the cross. This is not Gnosticism's secret, mystical, and symbolic knowledge supposedly leading through self-effort to higher levels toward God."<sup>25</sup> This is something that has been effectual through the working of God's grace (1 Corinthians 1:4) in the lives of the Corinthians.

The purpose of the testimony of Yeshua confirmed in the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 1:6), is "so that you are not lacking any spiritual gift and are eagerly awaiting the revealing of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah" (1 Corinthians 1:7, CJB/CJSB). The spiritual gifts are later addressed by Paul in 1 Corinthians chs. 12-14, as the spiritual gifts are intended to minister to the needs of fellow Believers (1 Corinthians 12:7-11; 14:3, 12, 17). The spiritual gifts, however, are noted to be employed for the present, as *tēn apokalupsin tou Kurion hēmōn Iēsou Christou* (τὴν ἀποκάλυψιν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) or "the revelation of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah" (HNV) still awaits for the future. The dynamics of where the redeemed in Messiah sit, having experienced salvation from sins—but with still more to be anticipated in future salvation history—are first seen here (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:20-28). As Soards summarizes,

"This crucial circumscription gives a clear eschatological cast to the spiritual gifts in Corinth. *Already* the Corinthians have faith in Christ, but *not yet* are their hopes in Christ realized. *Already* the Corinthians are enriched by God's grace, but *not yet* has the full reality of divine grace been made real."<sup>26</sup>

While Paul's word of 1 Corinthians 1:7 does include an exhortation of sorts to the Corinthian Believers, the future revealing of Yeshua the Messiah at His Second Coming—regardless of its specific timing—should serve as an indication to many of them that they have hardly "arrived" at the pinnacle of true spirituality. *It is only at the moment of the resurrection of the dead, the granting of a permanently embodied and immortal state, and the inauguration of the Messianic Kingdom*—that any born again Believer can be said to have experienced the culmination of his or her salvation. Failing to recognize this on the part of many Corinthians, as will be seen, led to some significant problems. Noting further remarks (1 Corinthians 4:8; 15:12), Fee describes how many Corinthians were probable to have held to an overly-realized eschatology:

"[S]alvation for Paul was primarily an eschatological reality, begun with Christ's coming and to be consummated by his imminent return. But it is also probable in this instance that that ever present concern is highlighted by the Corinthians' own apparently overrealized eschatological understanding of their existence...Paul's attitude for their giftedness...includes a reminder that they still *await* the final glory, since it seems to be the case that some among them do not have such eager expectation."<sup>27</sup>

While it is absolutely true that Yeshua the Messiah came to rescue people from the present evil age (cf. Galatians 1:4), and that the power of the future Messianic Age has already broken

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<sup>25</sup> Mare, in *EXP*, 10:190.

<sup>26</sup> Soards, 26.

<sup>27</sup> Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 42.

in—more is still to come in future history. Today’s Messianic people, for whatever reason, tend to have the exact opposite problem (similar to various dispensational Christians)—as they do not often understand how the power, and many realities, of the future Messianic Age have entered into the present, *although with more to come in the future with the resurrection and Second Coming*. Thiselton mentions an example in his 1 Corinthians commentary of what realized eschatology is like for the redeemed in Messiah:

“Christians [i.e., Believers] are like people who were once in the cold, freezing to death, but now have been transferred into a warm room. The forces of its heat will decisively overcome the forces of the cold; but in the present both sets of forces are still active. Some limbs are already warm; but others have still to thaw out completely. The forces of heat are decisive, but are not yet the only operative forces. The decisive event has occurred, but the process which it set in motion takes time to reach completion.”<sup>28</sup>

It is going to be Yeshua the Messiah, resident in the hearts of the redeemed via the presence of the Holy Spirit, “who will also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah” (1 Corinthians 1:8). This demonstrates that in spite of the problems that Paul will need to address in his letter, that he has a widely favorable disposition toward the Corinthians, knowing that most will make the right decision concerning their faith, letting the Lord confirm Himself in their lives. The “end” or *telos* (τέλος) to which Believers look, is the day of the Messiah’s return (Philippians 1:6, 10; 1 Thessalonians 3:13). What Paul labels here as *tē hēmera tou Kurīou hēmōn Iēsou [Christou]* (τῆ ἡμέρα τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ [Χριστοῦ]) is widely synonymous with the Tanach *Yom ADONAI* (יהוה יום), with the Lord here being none other than Yeshua the Messiah. Soards explains,

“The reference to the Day of the Lord Jesus Christ takes up language and thinking from the OT (Ezek. 30:3; Joel 2:31; Amos 5:18, 20; Zeph. 1:14-16), although in the OT texts the one who executes judgment on the Day of the Lord is *the Lord God*, whereas here Paul plainly understands that one to be *the Lord Jesus Christ*. Paul preserves the theological vision of the OT and gives it christological focus that makes the promise of the Day of the Lord all the more specific and real.”<sup>29</sup>

While it is evidenced by the tone of much of 1 Corinthians that the Apostle Paul does place a responsibility on many of the Corinthian Believers for their own errant ideas and actions—it is also true that they must absolutely look to God and His power to see them placed on the right course of faith. Paul directs how “God is faithful, through whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, *Yeshua* the Messiah our Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:9, TLV).

Calling is an important part of 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 1:9 detailing *di’ ou eklēthēte eis koinōnian* (δι’ οὗ ἐκλήθητε εἰς κοινωνίαν), “through whom you were called into [the] fellowship” (Brown and Comfort).<sup>30</sup> **This is, once again, a calling to salvation and sanctification** (1 Corinthians 1:2). Concurrent with this, those who have been called into fellowship or “partnership” (NLT) with the Lord, do have an important duty to attend to, as they compose His body. Witherington makes some very interesting points about the role of the local assembly, especially in view of further discussions in 1 Corinthians about the Body of Messiah composing many members:

“[E]ach local assembly is a full representation of the *ekklēsia*, not merely a part of it. This becomes especially clear when [Paul] uses the body image in 1 Corinthians 12-14 in reference to just the group of [Believers] in Corinth. They manifest locally all the members of the body of

<sup>28</sup> Thiselton, 99.

<sup>29</sup> Soards, 27.

<sup>30</sup> Brown and Comfort, pp 579-580.

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Christ. This means that Paul would deny that a local assembly is but a partial 'church,' though he might say that it is a part of the universal *ekklēsia*. Each local congregation is a full representation, whether small or large, of the whole body of Christ and of the whole Christ....The local *ekklēsia* is...the visible manifestation of an eternal and universal commonwealth [referenced: Philippians 3:19ff; Galatians 4:25-27; Colossians 1:18-24]."<sup>31</sup>

While being called into fellowship with the Messiah most definitely involves a being redeemed from sins, it also involves being made holy by the power of the Lord, and as a part of the sanctification process serving Him in the interests of the good news. With this, understandably, comes a diverse representation of many gifts, talents, and skills to be employed for His glory.

Witherington's example, of a single assembly representing all of the different "body parts" of the Messiah, is certainly something difficult for many Christian Believers today to think of. This is a direct consequence of there being so many religious options for today's Christians to choose from, some denominational and others non-denominational. Yet, the Apostle Paul was writing to a Corinthian group of Messiah followers, which by this time had probably maintained the assembly adjacent to the Corinthian synagogue (cf. Acts 18:7), and had spread out to various associated fellowships. *They were to be representatives of Israel's God and Messiah in Corinth*. It is much easier for Messianic congregations and assemblies to think of themselves in the terms Witherington presents, mainly because there really are very few Messianic people on the scene at present.

### 1 Corinthians 3:21-23

#### "All things are yours"

**"So then let no one boast in men. For all things belong to you, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come; all things belong to you, and you belong to Messiah; and Messiah belongs to God."**

Having just asserted how human wisdom is meaningless<sup>32</sup> in light of God's wisdom (1 Corinthians 3:18-20),<sup>33</sup> some intriguing statements are made by Paul to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 3:21-23, which have been beset with a variety of perspectives, some conflicting. The first assertion made by Paul here, *hōste mēdeis kauchasthō en anthrōpois* (ὥστε μηδεὶς καυχάσθω ἐν ἀνθρώποις), "So don't let anyone boast about mere human beings" (1 Corinthians 3:21, Kingdom New Testament) or "So let no one boast about human leaders" (NRSV), is straightforward enough. The factionalism that has arisen in Corinth, immediately addressed in terms of those rallying around Paul or Apollos (1 Corinthians 3:4-9), bears no significance when these figures are human beings serving the Corinthians', and all Believers', interests. Rather than boasting in mortals, as Paul has previously directed, the Corinthians are to boast in the Lord (1 Corinthians 1:31; Jeremiah 9:23). Even with various differences of opinion expressed regarding 1 Corinthians 3:21b-23 following, Fee is generally right to direct,

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<sup>31</sup> Witherington, *1-2 Corinthians*, pp 91, 92.

<sup>32</sup> This entry has been adapted from the author's commentary *1 Corinthians for the Practical Messianic*.

<sup>33</sup> "Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you thinks that he is wise in this age, he must become foolish, so that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God. For it is written, 'He is THE ONE WHO CATCHES THE WISE IN THEIR CRAFTINESS' [Job 5:13]; and again, 'THE LORD KNOWS THE REASONINGS OF THE WISE, THAT THEY ARE USELESS' [Psalm 94:11]" (1 Corinthians 3:18-20).