

Acts 5 notes (Acts 4:32 – ch. 5)

Hallel Fellowship (<http://hallel.info>)

Speaker: Jeff Quackenbush (jeff@hallel.info)

July 26 & Aug. 9, 2008

Summary: When people come together with “one mind” and “one heart,” the result can range from the kingdom of Heaven on Earth at best and blasphemous Babel at worst. To be one, believers in Messiah must look for ways to unite, as husband and wife should, under the purpose of God to reveal Salvation — Yeshua — to the world. As Rabban Gamaliel predicted in the trial of Peter and John, the movement of God through them through time has not been stopped.

- Why doesn't God deal with people in this day the way he dealt with Anaias and Sapphira?
- Why aren't people healed as often by the laying on of hands nowadays?
- Was the sin of Ananias and Saphira “petty”? Was the judgement against them disproportionate?

v. 32 “of one heart and one soul”

- This phrase harkens back to the Shema: “Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength” (Deut. 6:4).
- Just after foretelling of a “new covenant” with the house of Ya'akov and the house of Israel (Jer. 31:31) to put His law in His people's minds, the LORD foretells the outcome of that writing of His law on the minds of many.

“Indeed this city has been to Me a provocation of My anger and My wrath from the day that they built it, even to this day, so that it should be removed from before My face, 32 because of all the evil of the sons of Israel and the sons of Judah which they have done to provoke Me to anger — they, their kings, their leaders, their priests, their prophets, the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 33 They have turned their back to Me and not their face; though I taught them, teaching again and again, they would not listen and receive instruction. 34 But they put their detestable things in the house which is called by My name, to defile it. 35 They built the high places of Baal that are in the valley of Ben-hinnom to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire to Molech, which I had not commanded them nor had it entered My mind that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin. 36 Now therefore thus says the LORD God of Israel concerning this city of which you say, “It is given into the hand of the king of Babylon by sword, by famine and by pestilence.” 37 Behold, I will gather them out of all the lands to which I have driven them in My anger, in My wrath and in great indignation; and I will bring them back to this place and make them dwell in safety. 38 They shall be My people, and I will be their God; 39 and I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me always, for their own good and for the good of their children after them. 40 I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; and I will put the fear of Me in their hearts so that they will not turn away from Me. 41 I will rejoice over them to do them good and will faithfully plant them in this land with all My heart and with all My soul.” (Jer. 32:31-41)

- The second of the two great commandments also reflects respect and care for others. “Love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD” (Lev. 19:18).
 - Care is expressed through true friendship.

“Then I looked again at vanity under the sun. 8 There was a certain man without a dependent, having neither a son nor a brother, yet there was no end to all his labor. Indeed, his eyes were not satisfied with riches and he never asked, ‘And for whom am I laboring and depriving myself of pleasure?’ This too is vanity and it is a grievous task. 9 Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. 10 For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up. 11 Furthermore, if two lie down together they keep warm, but how can one be warm alone? 12 And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart.” (Eccl. 4:7-12)

- “Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Rom. 15:5-6)
- “Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.” (1st Cor. 1:10)
- True wisdom is hidden from the ungodly. The ultimate wisdom in Messiah coming to die for His holy people “For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ.” (2nd Cor. 2:16, starting in verse 6; quoted from Isa. 40:13-14 and Jer. 23:18)
- God doesn't tolerate “group think” on evil. “The LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. 6 The LORD said, ‘Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them. 7 Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, so that they will not understand one another's speech.’” (Gen. 11:5-7)
- God lets His friends in on what He's doing in the world, time and space. “No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I

- have heard from My Father I have made known to you.’ ” (John 15:15)
- Human friendship is powerfully expressed in marriage.
 - “The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. 23 The man said, ‘This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man.’ 24 For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh [echad, the same Hebrew word for one as in the Shema]. 25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. (Gen. 2:22-25)
 - *Nakedness* is a great symbol for living life without facades masking who we really are to one another.
 - One of the best signs of God’s power in our lives is to come together with one mind to worship a Creator with high standards and rare appearances in history. In other words, there is massive potential for differences in opinion and belief on God.
 - “ ‘I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are.’ ” (John 17:11)
 - “I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; 21 that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. 22 The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; 23 I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.” (John 17:20-23)
 - Attacks among believers are evil.
 - “ ‘You have heard that the ancients were told, “YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER” and “Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.” 22 But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, “You good-for-nothing,” shall be guilty before the supreme court [Sanhedrin]; and whoever says, “You fool” [“unwise,” hence “ungodly” (Prov. 1:7)], shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell. 23 Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar [bringing an offering is literally called “drawing near”], and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled [or “draw near”] to your brother, and then come and present your offering [“draw near” to God].’ ” (Matt. 5:21-26)
 - We should be very very slow to claim any believer is involved in “pagan” worship, because:
 - “Pagan” generally is understood to be derogatory.
 - **pagan**. A person holding religious beliefs other than those of the main world religions. Dated derogatory a non-Christian. An adherent of neopaganism. ORIGIN: late Middle English : from Latin *paganus* ‘villager, rustic,’ from *pagus* ‘country district.’ Latin *paganus* also meant ‘civilian,’ becoming, in Christian Latin, ‘heathen’ (i.e., one not enrolled in the army of Christ). (*New Oxford American Dictionary*)
 - Calling Christian belief “pagan” is calling the believer “unwise.”
 - You must be prepared to take the next step in “making wise the simple”:
 - “Wisdom has built her house, She has hewn out her seven pillars; 2 She has prepared her food, she has mixed her wine; She has also set her table; 3 She has sent out her maidens, she calls From the tops of the heights of the city: 4 ‘Whoever is naive, let him turn in here!’ To him who lacks understanding she says, 5 ‘Come, eat of my food And drink of the wine I have mixed. 6 Forsake your folly and live, And proceed in the way of understanding.’ 7 He who corrects a scoffer gets dishonor for himself, And he who reproves a wicked man gets insults for himself. 8 Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you, Reprove a wise man and he will love you. 9 Give instruction to a wise man and he will be still wiser, Teach a righteous man and he will increase his learning. 10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. 11 For by me your days will be multiplied, And years of life will be added to you. 12 If you are wise, you are wise for yourself, And if you scoff, you alone will bear it.” (Prov. 9:1-12)
 - **heathen** (noun chiefly derogatory). A person who does not belong to a widely held religion (esp. one who is not a Christian, Jew, or Muslim) as regarded by those who do : *bringing Christianity to the heathens*. A follower of a polytheistic religion; a *pagan*. Heathen people collectively, esp. (in biblical use) those who did not worship the God of Israel. Informal an unenlightened person; a person regarded as lacking culture or moral principles. (adjective) Informal unenlightened or uncivilized : *they dismiss the idea of a sauce of simply melted butter as somewhat heathen*. ORIGIN: Old English hæthen, of Germanic origin; related to Dutch heiden and German Heide; generally regarded as a specifically Christian use of a Germanic adjective meaning [inhabiting open country,] from the base of *heath*. (*Oxford*)
 - The implication is the believer’s focus of worship, in this case, Jesus Christ, is either outrightly pagan or so influenced by paganism as to be unreliable.
 - As a result, who is to say the claim that Yeshua is Messiah is false?
 - Sadly, many Christians who have moved from Christian congregations to Messianic

congregations have kept going into disbelief in Yeshua and sometimes God Himself.

- v. 32 “all things were common property”
 - As mentioned in the discussion of Acts 2 [see study notes], sages had ruled that pilgrims to the appointed times were to be taken in and nourished (*Yoma*, fol. 12; *Megill.* fol. 26; *Shekalim*, cap. 9).
 - The new believers in Yeshua stayed in Yerushalayim after Shavuot (Pentecost), and as their number passed 5,000 there needed to be an influx of cash.
- v. 34 “not a needy person among them” ... “owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sale and lay them at the apostles’ feet”
 - How similar was this outpouring of wealth to that for the construction of the tabernacle (Ex. 36:1-7) for the temple built by Solomon (1st Chron. 29:6-7)?
 - Interestingly, people “open their wallets” for what they want to worship, as seen with the outpouring of gold for the calf idol (Ex. 32:1-6).
- v. 36 – 5:11 Yosef, a Levite of Cyprus called Bar-Nabas (Son of Encouragement), and Ananias and Sapphira both sold property and both brought proceeds to the Apostles feet. Yosef lived, but the latter couple fell dead.
 - What was different about the two transactions?
 - Yosef presented all the proceeds from the transaction.
 - Ananias held some of the proceeds back.
 - Sapphira knew he was keeping some of it.
 - This is similar to the sin of Achan and execution of his whole family when he kept the booty from Yerikho (Jericho) and hid it under his tent.
 - Ananias was presenting the funds as if they were all of them, hence Peter’s chastisement about a “lie to the Holy Spirit.”
 - Would Ananias have died had he told Peter he was bringing some of the proceeds?
 - Was all property that believers owned “common property” (ch. 4:32)?
 - Is there any direction provided in apostle Paul’s criticism in 1st Cor. 11:17–22 about impetuous well-off members continuing to act like pagans and exclude the poor during the appointed-time celebrations?
 - What is God’s plan for a social welfare program?
 - People honor God as their Creator and the source of the things they have by returning it as tithe to:
 - Celebrate God’s glory, deeds, promises and mercy during appointments with Him. [See “[The Truth About Tithe](#)” at Hallel.info for a thorough explanation of the purposes for tithe biblically.]
 - Care for the Levite.
 - Allow the poor and Levites to celebrate God’s appointments in one’s town every three years (Deut. 14:28–29; Num. 18:24).
 - Children honor their parents by caring for them when they need it (Mark 7:10–12).
 - A relationship with God is never an excuse for shirking charity:
 - The example of the Good Samaritan vs. the Levites and scribes in the parable.
 - Dedicating one’s self to God shouldn’t intrude on showing parents honor as our “creators” by caring for them.
 - One responds to the needs of the poor by filling their needs directly and discretely.
 - Generosity is a test of our having the same viewpoint of people as God does.
 - Charity is never a substitute for a relationship with God. (John 12:1–8)
 - Those who can work must work to be worthy of charity. (1st Tim. 5:3–16)
 - This is similar to the sin of Cain in not presenting God with the best of his “increase.”
 - How does one fool the Creator by presenting Him something from His handiwork?
 - What was death-worthy about lying and keeping back money?
 - It was a calculated, premeditated act.
 - The man executed for gathering firewood on Shabbat was doing so defiantly (Num. 15:30-36).
 - Perhaps, Ananias was by his actions and motivations conveying any or all of the following:
 - God is not capable of knowing secret matters.
 - Greek/Roman gods had limited knowledge and could be tricked or fooled.
 - Thus, the God of Israel is just like the other gods around.
 - God doesn’t exist.
 - Atheism was rare in ancient times.
 - Sapphira gave her approval to the embezzlement — Ananias presented it as all of the proceeds, transferring ownership of all the proceeds to God.

- Doesn't this incident sound like the execution-heavy rules and regulations under the Old Testament God?
- v. 12 "all with one accord in Solomon's portico"
 - Signs, wonders and a giant throng of disciples right inside the temple grounds, and people flocking from the towns around Yerushalayim for healing. No wonder the Sadducees of the Sanhedrin was worked up.
- vv. 17-26 "Go, stand and speak to the people in the temple the whole message of this Life."
 - What is the "whole message of this Life"?
 - "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. ... Simon Peter answered Him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.'" (John 6:63, 68, 69)
 - Would the high priest and his associates have known Peter and Yochanan weren't in prison had they been at morning prayer in the temple with the people?
 - "... captain of the temple guard and the chief priests ... were greatly perplexed about them as to what would come of this."
 - That explains the more diplomatic request from the guard for Peter and Yochanan to return to the Sanhedrin.
 - At this point, shouldn't the "teachers of Israel" have taken a lesson from Rahab and seen the mighty wonders done by the power of God and in spite of their resistance and repented?
- vv. 27-42 "... obey God rather than men." Another recounting of Israel's history by Peter before the Sanhedrin. Gamaliel gives a history lesson of his own.
 - How clear had God made it at this point that Peter and Yochanan were obeying Him, and the Sanhedrin was disobeying Him with those two and had convicted and executed Messiah?
 - How were the multiple actions by the Sanhedrin against the apostles similar to Ananias' folly with Peter? What did the Sadducees think about God's role in the world?
 - How does one know whether he is obeying God rather than men?
 - Peter reiterates that the Sanhedrin had condemned Messiah to execution and would have to subjugate themselves to Him in repentance. "When they heard this, they were cut to the quick and intended to kill them" (v. 33). How was the Sanhedrin's reaction different from the crowd that heard Peter speak *once* in the temple on Shavuot?
 - Gamaliel warned his fellow members of the Sanhedrin, "... if this plan or action is of men, it will be overthrown; 39 but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them; or else you may even be found fighting against God" (vv. 38-39).
 - How well had the ability to overthrow the teaching of Peter and Yochanan been realized?
 - How does one know whether one is "fighting against God" or stamping out heresy?
 - Would the oppression that later sent believers into hiding have suggested to opponents of the teaching that the message was being overthrown?
 - How many "weeds" or "cancers," to use a term more fitting with the Body of Messiah metaphor, must the body tolerate before aggressively seeking treatment?
 - Who was Gamaliel?
 - Paul's teacher.
 - Grandson of Hilel the Elder, inventor of the Hillel Sandwich and founder of one of the two major Pharisaical schools of teaching.
 - He was noted for his reverence of the Torah, but also ruled:
 - Shabbat laws needed to be more realistic and less rigorous.
 - Women could get divorced when only one witness observed the death of their husbands.
 - A "leap month," or a 13th month, should be added to keep the calendar in line.
 - People should strive for *tikkun olam* (in Hebrew, *tikkun* means "repair" and *olam* means "world").
 - Jews should be kind to *goyim*, or people of the other nations.
 - This likely explains Paul's being the perfect choice as "apostle to the nations."
 - Burial clothes should be simple. At the time, funeral garb was extravagant and burdensome to the grieving family. He was buried in a simple linen garment that set the example for many generations to follow.