



February 19, 2021

Now on the First Day of the Week...

Warm hellos friends, brethren, co-workers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God, from here on the Gulf Coast. My wife and I pray and hope this finds you all doing well, and that again your week has been blessed.

Two weeks ago, in my Friday evening letter, we began to examine the flaws in the assertion that some believe that the day set aside for worshipping God has been *changed* from the seventh day (Sabbath) to Sunday, the first day of the week.

We've been examining faulty arguments that have been made to attempt to define Sunday as the day for worship of God. Another argument involves misconstruing Acts 20:7, "*Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.*"

Some make the assertion that "break[ing] bread" refers to the ceremony in which Christians partake of bread and wine in commemoration of Christ's death. Many conclude that this verse in Acts concerns a religious service on the first day of the week.

Interestingly, here is what Adam Clarke's Commentary states regarding this passage, "the Christian Sabbath, in which they commemorated the resurrection of our Lord; and which, among all Christians, afterwards took the place of the Jewish Sabbath . . . [To break bread] To break [Syriac] eucaristia, the eucharist, as the Syriac has it; intimating, by this, that they were accustomed to receive the holy sacrament on each Lord's day."

Indeed bread was broken when the Passover was celebrated. (Matt 26:26) We continue that to this day. However, that commemoration takes place only once a year at the festival of Passover, not every Sunday or even once a month on Sunday.

Moreover, "breaking bread" is not limited to a religious observance, but refers to dividing flat loaves of bread for a typical meal. "It means to partake of food and is used of eating as in a meal . . . The readers [of the original New Testament letters and manuscripts] could have had no other idea or meaning in their minds" (E.W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*, 1991, pp. 839-840).

This is proven by the fact that after Paul finished speaking, they again *broke bread* and ate a meal. "Now when he had come up, had broken bread and eaten, and talked a long while, even till daybreak, he departed." (Acts 20:11)

Breaking bread to eat a meal is mentioned in Luke 24:30, 35 and Acts 27:35. The timing of the events in Acts 20 helps us to understand more clearly. Verses 7-11 describe several events of one night.

During this activity on the first day of the week, we are also informed that "There were many lamps in the upper room where they were gathered together." (Acts 20:8) The Bible, in both the Old and New Testaments, counts days as *beginning when the sun goes down*, so these events began with a meal at the beginning of the first day of the week, on what we would call Saturday evening, after the Sabbath (when lamps would be needed for light). This would have been the only time of darkness on "the first day of the week."

Paul planned to leave the next day for another city, so he stayed and spoke long into the night. At midnight one young man in the congregation fell asleep, tumbled from the window where he sat and was killed in the fall. Paul rushed to the young man, who miraculously came back to life. After that, the group broke bread and ate again, talking almost until dawn. Paul then departed at daybreak.

After speaking and talking all night, the next morning Paul walked almost 20 miles to Assos to meet the rest of the people in his group who had sailed there (Acts 20:11, 13-14).

So rather than describing a religious service on Sunday, this passage actually documents Paul speaking for hours on what we call Saturday night and continuing until dawn on Sunday morning. He then walked almost 20 miles on foot on the first day of the week - hardly making it a day of rest and worship for him! Let's continue to base our beliefs on God's Word, and not traditions of men, or perspectives that are not congruous with His inspired Word.

Arms up friends! Our prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Please do pray for us as well.

-Scott Hoefker

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