

# Sunday and the Lord's Supper

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The idea that all people are obligated to conform their thinking and their actions to the teaching of Jesus Christ is not a popular notion these days—even among Christians. Many desire to **feel** religiously authentic and pleasing to God, but few think that acceptance by God is predicated upon their own conformity to divine legislation. In fact, those who urge people to be conscientious about compliance with the details of God's Word are decried as "legalists" (see Miller, 2003). Of course, this antinomian spirit is in direct conflict with the thrust of the Bible from beginning to end. God always has expected people to conform themselves to His stipulations (Ecclesiastes 12:13). Obedient human response is a manifestation of one's love (John 14:15; John 15:14; 1 John 5:3).



The New Testament conveys specific information regarding the "what, when, how, and why" of the observance of the Lord's Supper. Nevertheless, most within Christendom assign no significance to frequency. To them, one may partake of the Lord's Supper once each month, quarter, or year. However, Scripture is in conflict with this thinking (Brownlow, 1945, pp. 168-175). The biblical view is that God intends for the church to observe the Lord's Supper every first day of the week, i.e., every Sunday. A more recent wrinkle of innovation is the insistence that the Lord's Supper may be observed on days of the week other than Sunday (e.g., Atchley, 1989; Hood, 1990, p. 15; Mayeux, 1989, 46:6). But what does the Bible teach?

## PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

Shortly before His death, Jesus observed the Old Testament feast of unleavened bread. In the process, He instituted the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:20) and told His disciples that this "communion" (1 Corinthians 10:16) would be observed in the kingdom (Matthew 26:29). The bread and the fruit of the vine were to function as symbols for the body and blood of Jesus that soon would be offered on the cross as the sacrifice for the world. When is this practice of observing the Lord's Supper to be done? On **Sunday? Every Sunday? Only on Sunday?**

One key consideration is the early church's practice under the apostles' guidance. After all, Jesus specifically predicted that after His departure from Earth, the Holy Spirit would enable the apostles to implement the teachings of Christ in the establishment of the church and the launching of the Christian religion (John 14:25-26; 15:26-27; 16:7-15). Just prior to His ascension, He commissioned the apostles to preach the Gospel (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). Hence, the New Testament reports what early Christians and churches practiced as a direct result of the teachings of Christ as mediated through the apostles. How churches observed the Lord's Supper, beginning in the book of Acts, is unquestionably a reflection of apostolic influence and inspired precedent. As McGarvey well noted:

It is axiomatic that the Lord, who instituted ordinances for observance in the church, knew the precise manner of their observance which would best secure the spiritual ends had in view; and consequently every loyal soul feels impelled to preserve them precisely in the manner of their first institution, when that can be ascertained.... [O]ur only safety...is to be found in copying precisely the form instituted by divine authority (1910, pp. 342-343).

A second key factor concerns the significance of Sunday. Does the New Testament assign any special meaning to Sunday? One cannot help but take note of the fact that Jesus' resurrection took place on Sunday (Mark 16:1; Luke 24:1; John 20:1). After His resurrection, Jesus met with His disciples on Sunday (John 20:19,26). Pentecost was a Jewish feast day (Leviticus 23:15ff.), and it was on this feast day, ten days after the ascension of Jesus, that the church was established—on Sunday (see McGarvey, 1892, p. 19; Brewer, 1941, pp. 325-326). New Testament churches assembled on Sunday (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2). They observed the Lord's Supper on that day (Acts 20:7). In harmony with Revelation 1:10, early Christians began calling Sunday "the Lord's day" (Swete, 1911, p. 13). How can even the casual reader miss this repetition? Without a doubt, the day Sunday is infused with considerable religious significance.

Another implied factor is the deafening silence of the New Testament with regard to the special significance of Saturday (or any other day). Other than Sunday, Saturday is the only serious contender for a day of religious significance. However, observance of the Sabbath was unquestionably a feature of only Judaism, not Christianity—though the infant church was exclusively Jewish and initially reluctant to abandon Mosaic practice (Acts 11:19; 15:1,5; 21:12). The same is true with regard to early church history. While certainly not the deciding criterion for New Testament Christians, early church history confirms that Acts 20:7 is not an incidental reference. Observance of the Lord's Supper on Sunday reflects the general practice of both the first-century churches as well

as post-first-century churches. For example, the *Didache*, written shortly after the close of the first century, speaks of Christians coming together each Lord's day and breaking bread (9:1-12; 14:1). Justin Martyr wrote in his *First Apology* (ch. 67), circa A.D. 152, of Christians meeting on Sunday and partaking of the communion (ch. 67). Milligan observed: "That the primitive Christians were wont to celebrate the Lord's Supper on every first day of the week is evident.... During the first two centuries the practice of weekly communion was universal, and it was continued in the Greek church till the seventh century" (1975, p. 440). Johnson summarized the post-first century data:

[T]he early church writers from Barnabas, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, to Clement of Alexandria, Origen and Cyprian, all with one consent, declare that the church observed the first day of the week. They are equally agreed that **the Lord's Supper was observed weekly, on the first day of the week** (1891, 1:505, emp. added).

Still another consideration is the doctrinal significance that interconnects the Lord's Supper and Sunday. Jesus' **death and resurrection** were connected intimately to Sunday observance of the Supper (1 Corinthians 11:26). One cannot argue for a Sunday **assembly** without arguing for Sunday **communion**. In Deuteronomy 5:12-15, the Sabbath commemorated the Exodus—the deliverance of the Jews from Egyptian bondage. Sunday, in like manner, is the Christian's day of deliverance. The Lord's Supper is associated with this redemption and the very nature of the church. It is a corporate act and thus done by all members when the assembly comes together on Sunday. The Lord's Supper on any other day weakens its doctrinal significance (see Ferguson, 1976, pp. 59-62). As Rex Turner so eloquently affirmed:

The first day of the week is Christ's resurrection day. It is the greatest day in all the annals of history. What could be more appropriate, therefore, than for the disciples to assemble on Christ's resurrection day, the first day of the week, to break the bread and to drink the fruit of the vine in commemoration of Christ's death, his atoning blood, his resurrection, and his promise to come again? **He who contends that Christians may with equal propriety and authority partake of the Lord's Supper on some other day than the first day of the week has not grasped the real significance of what took place on that certain first day of the week**, nor does he recognize how that the first day of the week is the Lord's Day (Revelation 1:10) (1972, p. 80, emp. added).

Ultimately, the issue of observance frequency hinges on the verses that address the subject specifically. [NOTE: For an excellent analytical treatment of the passages of Scripture that impinge on the question of the Lord's Supper, see Warren, 1975, pp. 148-156.]

## SPECIFIC SCRIPTURES

### ACTS 2:42,46

In Acts 2:42, we encounter the expression "breaking of bread." The Greek expression "to break bread" (*klasai arton*), a literal rendering of the Hebrew idiom (*paras lechem*), was a common idiom meaning "to partake of food" (Bullinger, 1898, p. 839; Woods, 1976, p. 67; Harris, et al., 1980, 2:736; Gesenius, 1847, p. 690; Moule, 1961, p. 25; Behm, 1965, 3:729). The idiom developed from the fact that Hebrews baked their bread in the shape of thin round flat cakes (rather than loaves) that lent themselves more to breaking than cutting (Bullinger, p. 839; McClintock and Strong, 1867, 1:882). The idiom is clearly seen in Isaiah 58:7, Jeremiah 16:7, and Lamentations 4:4. Americans use a similar idiom when we speak of "getting a bite to eat." However, figures of speech often do "double duty" by developing additional meanings. From the idiomatic meaning of eating a meal came a more technical use of the expression in Scripture. Since the Lord took bread and, in accordance with the Jewish practice where the father of the household prepared the bread for distribution to the family (see Arndt and Gingrich, 1957, p. 434; Rackham, 1901, p. 37; Behm, 1964, 1:477), apparently broke it into pieces (Matthew 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 1:24), "breaking bread" sometimes is used in Scripture to refer to the Lord's Supper (see Behm, 1965, 3:730; Klappert, 1976, 2:530; Reese, 1976, pp. 83, 734). One cannot assume that every occurrence of the idiom refers to the Lord's Supper. **Context** must determine whether a common meal or the Lord's Supper is intended (see chart).

	Literal Breaking	Figurative Breaking
<b>Common Meal</b>	Matt. 14:19; 15:36 Mark 6:41; 8:6,19 Luke 9:16; 24:30 Acts 27:35	Luke 24:35 Acts 2:46

<b>Lord's Supper</b>	Matt. 26:26	Acts 2:42
	Mark 14:22	Acts 20:7,11
	Luke 22:19	
	1 Cor. 11:24	

Contextual indicators in Acts 2:42 that point to the meaning of the Lord's Supper include the use of the article "the" (in the Greek), indicating that a particular event, as opposed to a common meal, is under consideration (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:16; Nicoll, n.d., 2:95). The verse could well have been translated, "And they continued steadfastly in **the** apostles' doctrine and **the** fellowship, in **the** breaking of **the** bread, and in **the** prayers." Luke obviously was speaking of the formal worship activities of the Christians.

Second, "breaking bread" is listed among other unmistakably **religious** activities of the church: apostles' doctrine, fellowship, and prayer. Third, the phrase "continued steadfastly" (imperfect tense) indicates a customary, habitual, ongoing practice—though the exact frequency is not indicated in this context. One has to go elsewhere to ascertain whether specific frequency is enjoined. Yet, from this passage one can see that the early church obviously partook more frequently than annually, since a year had not passed since the establishment of the church, and they already were worshipping "steadfastly."

"Breaking bread" is again mentioned four verses later. Here, too, context must provide indication as to whether Acts 2:46 refers to observance of the Lord's Supper or simply common meals. Arndt and Gingrich call attention to the use of the enclitic particle, *te*, occurring most frequently in the New Testament in the book of Acts. It appears twice in Acts 2:46 to convey the idea of "not only...but also" (1957, p. 807; cf. Robertson, 1934, p. 1179—"But *te...te* is strictly correlative"). Thayer identifies the term as a copulative enclitic particle that conveys an inner connection with what precedes. Hence, double use of the term in the same sentence, as in Acts 2:46, presents parallel or coordinate ideas—"as...so" (Thayer, 1901, pp. 616-617; Blass, et al., 1961, p. 230). Hence the use of the correlative conjunction (*te*) in verse 46 functions as a break in thought—a contrast—to guard against the impression that the disciples stayed in the temple 24 hours a day. Luke conveyed the idea that the disciples clustered together in the temple almost constantly after the momentous events of Pentecost, no doubt unwilling to miss any of the tremendous spiritual activities associated with the establishment of the church. However, they went to their private homes in order to carry on the routine amenities associated with common meals. So Jamieson, et al.: "in *private*, as contrasted with their *temple-worship*" (1871, p. 176, italics in orig.).

The parallel thought conveyed by the double use of *te*, evident throughout the context, is the unity or togetherness that the disciples enjoyed. While they participated together in their **religious** activities, they also continued their togetherness in their **nonreligious** acts of domestic socialization. English versions that capture the grammatical nuances of the verse include the NIV: "Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts." Observe that the allusion to being together in the temple courts is terminated with a period. The next sentence conveys a separate idea pertaining to the eating of common meals in their homes. The ASV translates the verse: "And day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they took their food with gladness and singleness of heart." The daily meeting **in the temple** was a separate practice from breaking bread **at home**, where they ate their meals with gladness. Barnes observed: "[T]he expression 'did eat their meat' seems to imply that this refers to their common meals, **and not to the Lord's supper**" (1847, p. 59, emp. added). "Breaking bread" (vs. 46) therefore refers, not to the Lord's Supper, but to common meals. The term "food" (*trophe*; cf. "meat," κJV), never used to refer to the Lord's Supper, is explicative of the expression "breaking bread"—further proof that a common meal is under consideration (Jackson, 1991, p. 3).

In order to prove that Acts 2:46 refers to daily observance of the Lord's Supper, one would have to both know and prove two unprovable points: (1) that "daily" is an adverbial temporal modifier that **necessarily** modifies the phrase "breaking bread at home," and (2) that the phrase "breaking bread at home" refers specifically and exclusively to the Lord's Supper (Warren, 1975, p. 151). One would have to **know** these two things before one could draw the conclusion that God sanctions partaking of the Lord's Supper on some day other than Sunday. But one **cannot** know or prove these two points. Indeed, the grammatical evidence militates against them. Acts 2:46 provides no authority or evidence to warrant the conclusion that the church can partake of the Lord's Supper on some day other than Sunday.

## ACTS 20:7

In Acts 20, considerable information regarding the early church's handling of the Lord's Supper is divulged. Nothing in this or any other context indicates that the "many lights," "upper room" (vs. 8), or "third story" (vs. 9) have anything to do with the Lord's Supper. Thus the location and surrounding paraphernalia (e.g., number of

trays/cups) are expedients. As such, they are permanently optional (cf. Warren, 1975, p. 140). Additional contextual features help to define the parameters of the passage.

First, the term “to break bread” is a first Aorist infinitive. Infinitives in Greek and English denote **purpose of action of the principal verb** (Summers, 1950, p. 132; Dana and Mantey, 1927, p. 214). The verb in the verse is “came together.” Thus the primary purpose for the assembly was to partake of the Lord’s Supper. This conclusion is also implied in Paul’s rebuke of the Corinthians: “Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord’s Supper” (1 Corinthians 11:20). Alexander Campbell noted that Paul’s words demonstrate that partaking of the Lord’s Supper was “the chief object of meeting” (1972, p. 32). Observe carefully that even as the purpose for the assembly is declared forthrightly to be partaking of the Lord’s Supper, so the text states explicitly that this act was done on the first day of the week. [NOTE: For a discussion of the underlying Greek that authenticates the translation “first day of the week,” see McGarvey, 1910, pp. 306-307.]

Second, Luke used “when” as a stylistic device to denote a regular procedure that the reader should know and understand (see Dungan, 1891, 1:245-246; Gibson, 1990, pp. 4-5). The clause prefaced by the word “when” constitutes a side comment by Luke intended to flag a well-recognized, fully expected event. The significance of this feature is illustrated in the following paraphrase: “Now on the first day of the week—**which everyone recognizes is the very day that Christians come together to observe the Lord’s Supper**—Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them....” A parallel to American culture may be seen in the statement: “On the fourth of July, when Americans celebrate the birth of their country, the President delivered a stirring speech to the nation” (cf. Nichol and Whiteside, 1920, 1:171). The main point to which Luke was driving was the preaching of Paul that lasted until midnight. However, subordinating an additional action within a separate clause, prefaced with “when,” shows that Luke was making reference to that which was recognized as standard protocol among Christians: Sunday observance of the Lord’s Supper. Indeed,

[w]e must remember that **I Cor. had been previously written**, and that the reference in I Cor. xvi.2 to “the first day of the week” for the collection of alms naturally connects itself with the statement here in proof that **this day had been marked out by the Christian Church as a special day for public worship, and for “the breaking of the bread”** (Nicoll, n.d., 2:424, emp. added).

Third, Paul spent an entire week in Troas—even though he was on a rushed schedule, in a hurry to get to Jerusalem (20:16). One would not delay a rushed trip simply to partake of a common meal or meals—which could have been eaten on any of the delayed days. It would seem he desired to meet with the entire church at the formal, weekly worship assembly—a circumstance he repeated both at Tyre (Acts 21:4) and Puteoli (Acts 28:14). Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown explain the timetable:

[A]rriving on a Monday, they stayed over the Jewish Sabbath and the Lord’s Day following; occupying himself, doubtless, in refreshing and strengthening fellowship with the brethren during the interval.... This...plainly indicates that the Christian observance of the day afterwards distinctly called “the Lord’s Day,” was **already a fixed practice of the churches** (1871, p. 208, emp. added).

## SATURDAY NIGHT OR SUNDAY NIGHT?

From the text it is apparent that on this occasion the disciples came together **in the evening**. Since we are informed that they came together “on the first day of the week,” the question remains whether the evening was our Saturday night or our Sunday night. The answer hinges on the matter of the reckoning of time in the first century, specifically, whether Luke’s narrative employs Jewish or Roman time. The following background information will resolve this question.

### Days & Hours

Throughout history, cultures have differed in their counting of hours and days. The term “day” has a variety of meanings among cultures even in the Bible. The 24-hour rotation of the Earth on its axis is one meaning for the term “day,” i.e., a solar or astronomical day. But the point at which one begins to count this single revolution has differed from culture to culture. Scholars are largely agreed that the Babylonians counted their days from sunrise to sunrise, the Umbrians from noon to noon, the Athenians and Hebrews from sunset to sunset, and the Egyptians and Romans from midnight to midnight (Pliny, 1855, 2.79.77; Smith, 1868, 1:567; Hasel, 1979b, 1:878; Anthon, 1843, p. 361). Europe, America, and Western civilization have generally conformed to Roman time. Throughout the Bible, the Jews commenced their day in the evening—as stipulated by the Law of Moses in the phrase “from evening to evening” (Leviticus 23:32; cf. Exodus 12:18). Hence, for Jews the Sabbath (Saturday) began at sunset (approximately 6:00 p.m.) on what we delineate as Friday evening. Their Sabbath (Saturday) came to a close at approximately 6:00 p.m. on our Saturday evening, and their Sunday began at that time (see also Nehemiah 13:19; Psalm 55:17; cf. *ereb boqer* [evening-morning] in Daniel 8:14). Since the early church initially was composed entirely of Jews, and since Jews were scattered outside of Palestine throughout the Roman Empire, “the early churches...often followed the Jewish custom” (Johnson, 1891, 1:506) of reckoning time.

Another meaning for the word “day” corresponds to our word “daylight.” The phrase “night and day” (Mark 5:5) refers to the dark and light portions of a single, 24-hour day—with the word “day” referring to only half of the 24-hour day (Gibbs, 1982, 2:769; Hasel, 1979a, 1:877; Anthon, pp. 362,507). Jesus made this meaning clear when He asked, “Are there not **twelve hours** in the **day**?” (John 11:9, emp. added). He was using the word “day” to refer to the daylight hours as distinguished from the night. Luke uses the term the same way. In Acts 16:35, he wrote: “And when it was day, the magistrates sent the officers, saying, ‘Let those men go.’” He means “when it was daylight,” since the events leading up to his statement were post-midnight occurrences (vs. 25).

The Jews of Jesus’ day divided the daylight portion of the “day” into even smaller units, i.e., four units of three hours each beginning about 6:00 a.m. (Hasel, 1979b, 1:878; Robinson, 1881, p. 338; Robertson, 1922, p. 284). This mode permeates the New Testament. The darkness that prevailed during Christ’s crucifixion “from the sixth hour until the ninth hour” (Matthew 27:45; cf. Mark 15:33) is our noon to 3:00 p.m. Though Luke probably was a non-Jew, and though the initial recipient of the book, Theophilus, very likely was also a Gentile, it nevertheless is evident that Luke used the Jewish—not Roman—method of counting time in Luke and Acts. The “sixth hour” and “ninth hour” in Luke 23:44 are noon and 3:00 p.m. respectively. The “third hour of the day” in Acts 2:15 refers to 9:00 a.m. The “sixth hour” in Acts 10:9 is 12:00 noon. The “ninth hour” in Acts 3:1 and Acts 10:3,30 is 3:00 p.m. So certain of this reckoning were the NIV translators that they converted the “ninth hour” to the modern equivalent to aid the English reader: “Cornelius answered: ‘Four days ago I was in my house praying at this hour, **at three in the afternoon**’” (Acts 10:30, emp. added; cf. vs. 3). Even the Roman authority Claudius Lysias was “following the Jewish method of counting time” (Jackson, 2005, p. 298) in Acts 23:23 when he alluded to “the third hour of the night” (i.e., 9:00 p.m.). Notice that all of Luke’s allusions to days and hours in Acts assume a **Jewish** reckoning of time. [NOTE: Matthew and Mark also followed Jewish time, while John—who wrote near the end of the first century—seems to have followed Roman time (cf. Smith, 1869, 2:1102; Robertson, 1922, p. 285; Lockhart, 1901, p. 28; Brewer, 1941, pp. 330-331; McGarvey, 1892, 2:181-182).] The same may be said even of Luke’s references to **seasons**, as Reese so insightfully observes in his comments on Acts 27:9:

It should be noted that Paul is using Jewish time here (as he does in Acts 20:16; 1 Corinthians 16:8; and Acts 18:21, κJV); or shall we say that **Luke is using Jewish time in his account of what Paul said**? Rather than speaking of sailing being dangerous from the Ides of November to the Ides of March, **Luke uses the Jewish means of reckoning**. In Jewish language, the sailing season was reckoned from the feast of Passover until the feast of Tabernacles (five days after the Day of Atonement) (1976, p. 897, emp. added).

Further, one must distinguish very carefully between the meaning “24-hour period” and “daylight” in the Bible’s use of “day.” For example, Luke informs us that Herod had James executed and intended to do the same to Peter: “Now it was **during the Days of Unleavened Bread**. So when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four squads of soldiers to keep him, intending to bring him before the people **after Passover**” (Acts 12:3-4, emp. added). Passover began on our Friday evening around 6:00 p.m. While sitting in prison during that night (vs. 6), Peter was released by an angel, so he went to the home of Mary (vs. 12) to report the incident, and then went elsewhere. Luke then states: “as soon as **it was day**, there was no small stir among the soldiers about what had become of Peter” (vs. 18, emp. added). “Day” in verse 18 refers to daylight, i.e., morning—not another or second day.

Another example is seen in Luke’s remark about the Jewish authorities: “And they laid hands on them [the apostles—DM], and put them in custody until **the next day**, for it was already evening” (Acts 4:3, emp. added). Observe that, by “next day,” Luke did not mean to refer to a different day, as if to say that the apostles were arrested on Monday, but placed in custody until Tuesday. Rather, using Jewish time, Luke was saying that the apostles were arrested at or after 6:00 p.m. (“it was already **evening**”) on a particular day, and then placed in custody until the next daylight period, i.e., the next morning of the **same** day. To illustrate, if the apostles were arrested after 6:00 p.m. on, say, our Monday, it already was their Tuesday, and the “next day” when the Sun rose would still be Tuesday. [NOTE: For yet another example of this use of “day,” see Acts 23, where Paul delivered his defense before the Jewish Council (vss. 1-10). Luke then states: “But the following night the Lord stood by him...” (vs. 11). The “following night” does not refer to the night of the next day, but rather to the dark hours that followed sequentially after Paul’s defense during the daylight hours (as reflected in the NASB rendering: “But on **the night immediately following**...”). Verse 12 then states: “And when it was **day**...”—referring to the daylight that followed the night of verse 11. See also Acts 23:31-32; 27:27-29.]

This linguistic usage comes into play in Acts 20. Since Luke was using Jewish time (as he does everywhere else in Acts), then the disciples came together on the evening of our Saturday—**their Sunday**—with Paul “ready to depart **the next day**,” i.e., the next period of daylight, which would be sometime after dawn the next morning—which would still be their (and our) **Sunday**. Conybeare and Howson comment: “It was the evening which succeeded the Jewish Sabbath. On the Sunday morning the vessel was about to sail” (1899, pp. 592-593).

Observe also that the Jewish (vs. Roman) method of reckoning time is inherent in the terminology in the above passages, in which 12 sequential hours are equated with “day,” i.e., daylight. Roy Lanier, Sr. explains:

But reckoning the day of twenty-four hours from 6 p.m. to 6 p.m. is the only way one can get twelve hours of night and twelve hours of day and get them in that order. Starting the period at midnight gives

us approximately six hours of darkness, then twelve hours of light, and then another six hours of darkness, in that order. The Biblical day began with twelve hours of darkness and was followed by twelve hours of light (1984, 2:108).

## ACTS 20:11

When the worship was interrupted by the fall of Eutychus from the upper window, and Paul miraculously revived him, we read in verse 11: "Now when he had come up, had **broken bread** and eaten, and talked a long while, even till daybreak, he departed." Commentators are divided as to the meaning of "broken bread" in this verse. Some insist that "broken bread" and "eaten" refer to a common meal (perhaps "love feast") that the brethren shared with Paul before his departure. Others insist that "broken bread" refers to the Lord's Supper.

One primary reason to equate "broken bread" in this verse with the eating of the Lord's Supper is due to its connection to the same expression used previously in verse seven. The Greek places the article before "bread" in verse 11, i.e., "**the** bread," as reflected in both the ASV and NASB. G.C. Brewer concluded from this grammatical feature: "In verse 7 we are told that they came together to break bread, and in verse 11 we are told that after the interruption they came to the upper chamber again and broke *the bread—ton arton*" (p. 331). Brewer's point was not that the article preceding "bread" automatically proves that the Lord's Supper is intended. Rather, his point was that

since bread was mentioned in the context (verse 7), and this, as all admit, was the Lord's Supper, and no other bread was contemplated in the passage, then "*the bread*" in verse 11 **would naturally refer** to the bread just previously mentioned. If we allow the context to explain what bread is intended, we can have no doubt about its being the Lord's Supper (p. 336, italics in orig., emp. added; see also Hackett, 1852, p. 283; cf. Johnson, 1891, 1:505).

In their famous *Greek Grammar of the New Testament*, Blass, Debrunner, and Funk lend further support to this interpretation of Acts 20:11, in their discussion of the use of the article with proper names (1961, pp. 135-136). They note that while proper names "do not as such take the article," they may do so as the result of "anaphora" (i.e., "the use of a linguistic unit...to refer back to another unit"—*American Heritage...*, 2000, p. 65). In other words, if a proper name is used, *arton* (bread) in verse seven, and the same noun is used thereafter in the same context preceded by the article, *ton arton* (the bread) in verse 11, the second occurrence of the noun generally refers to the earlier occurrence. Blass, et al., give examples of two such instances—both also by Luke: (1) the use of the article with Saul ("the Saul") in Acts 9:1 with reference to the earlier mention of him in Acts 8:3 where the article is not used, and (2) the use of the article with Damascus ("the Damascus") in Acts 9:3 with anaphora to verse two where Damascus occurs without the article.

Using four participles and one verb in verse 11, Luke itemized five specific actions that followed the revival of Eutychus. In the ASV, those actions are: (1) gone up (i.e., returning to the third floor), (2) broken the bread, (3) eaten, (4) talked a long while, and (5) departed. Observe carefully that the term "eaten" is a separate participial action from the breaking of the bread. It would appear that "eaten" refers to a common meal that Paul ate **after** the Lord's Supper was commemorated. Guy N. Woods commented: "We believe that the breaking of the bread in verse 11 refers to the Lord's supper; and that the mention of the word *eaten* suggests a common meal" (Woods, 1976, p. 351, italics in orig.). Conybeare and Howson agree: "[T]hey celebrated the Eucharistic feast. The act of Holy Communion was combined, as was usual in the Apostolic age, with a common meal" (1899, p. 594). They further noted that "*When he had eaten*, v. 11...is distinguished in the Greek from *the breaking bread*" (p. 594, note 3, italics in orig.; see also Robertson, 1930, 3:342; Jamieson, et al., 1871, p. 208). The objection that the allusion to breaking bread is singular and that therefore it cannot refer to the Lord's Supper, since Paul would not have taken the Lord's Supper by himself, actually carries no force, since the same objection would apply to the idea that a common meal is intended. Would Paul have consumed a common meal by himself—especially since he was accompanied by several traveling companions who would have been in just as much need of sustenance before continuing the trip with Paul (cf. McGarvey, 1863, p. 249)?

In view of Luke's use of Jewish time, it matters little whether the Lord's Supper or a common meal is indicated. In either case, the disciples came together to partake of the Lord Supper "**on the first day of the week**"—not Saturday or Monday. Even those scholars who are inclined to believe that Luke used Roman time, nevertheless, speak with virtually one accord in affirming that the Lord's Supper was observed on Sunday—not Monday. As H. Leo Boles insisted: "[I]f they ate the Lord's Supper on Monday, they did not do what they met to do on the first day of the week" (1941, p. 319). He also explained:

Yes. The Jews and Romans had different ways of counting time. It matters not to us how they counted time. We have a time designated as the "first day of the week," and the Lord's people are to meet upon that day. Their time was divided into days, weeks, months, and years, as in ours. Their weeks had a first day, and our weeks have a first day. We can know the first day of our week, and can meet and worship on that day and receive the blessing of God (1985, p. 112).

Though DeWalt assumes a Jewish reckoning, he noted: "We might remark that the Lord's Supper here called the 'breaking of bread' was partaken of on Sunday regardless of what time of reckoning for time is used. If you count the time from sundown to sundown (Jewish) **it was on Sunday**. If from midnight to midnight (Roman) **it was on Sunday**" (1958, p. 271, emp. added).

## TWO QUIBBLES

Some argue that since the Jewish Christians could have observed the Lord's Supper on our Saturday evening, we can, too. However, Saturday evening was not Saturday evening to a Jew—**it was Sunday!** The timing of our observance of the Lord's Supper must conform to the reckoning of time indigenous to **our** culture. God expects Christians to observe the Supper on **the first day of the week**—however that day is reckoned in a given society. It will not do to say that we can partake of the Lord's Supper on Saturday in Texas since at that moment in Australia it is already Sunday. A person living in Texas must observe the Lord's Supper on Sunday as Sunday is reckoned in Texas. Otherwise, there would be no end to the resulting confusion, and the emphasis placed on **Sunday** in the New Testament would be rendered essentially meaningless. God will hold each of us accountable for observing the Supper on Sunday as that day is reckoned in our culture and geographical location.

Another quibble is the assertion that since Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper on a Thursday—taking of it Himself along with His disciples—we can partake on days other than Sunday. It is true that Jesus instigated the Lord's Supper on Thursday evening—the first day on which the Jews commenced preparations for the feast, which was the killing of the Passover lamb. But the thinking that says, "If He did it on Thursday, we can, too" fails on two counts. First, Jesus could have taught His disciples about a practice on one day, but intend for them to practice it on another, without being inconsistent. Second, the text plainly says that Jesus' participation in this practice would take place "new...in my Father's kingdom" (Matthew 26:29). In other words, He was giving them instruction on the observance of the Lord's Supper that would be practiced **in the church after its establishment**. Therefore, one would have to look **after** Acts chapter two in order to see if Jesus intended any set frequency or particular day. We find precisely that—Sunday observance of the Lord's Supper.

## 1 CORINTHIANS 11:23-39

While 1 Corinthians 11:23-39 provides much detail, the main purpose of the passage pertains to the **how** of the Lord's Supper, not the **when**. Nevertheless, frequency and consistency in partaking of the Lord's Supper are implied in such words as "do this" (vss. 24,25), "as often as" (vss. 25,26), "until" (vs. 26), "when" (vs. 33). Repetition is inherent in the construction of such expressions, without specifying the precise pattern of frequency. Since the phrases are indefinite, one must look elsewhere to see if any specific frequency is enjoined. All one need do is read forward to chapter 16. The Corinthians knew that they were to meet **every** first day of the week—as is evident from the use of *kata* in 1 Corinthians 16:2 ("**every** week"—see below). When Paul wrote, "Whenever you meet, you are to do such and so," he knew that his readers already understood the intended specificity about the day (Sunday).

## 1 CORINTHIANS 16:1-2

In 1 Corinthians 16:2, the term *kata* is distributive and means "every." Macknight explains: "And as *kata polin* signifies **every city**; and *kata mena*, **every month**; and, Acts xiv. 23 *kata ekklesian*, **in every church**: so *kata mian sabbatou* signifies **the first day of every week**" (n.d., p. 208, italics and emp. in orig.; cf. Arndt and Gingrich, 1957, p. 407; for a discussion of the proper translation of *sabbatou*, see Lyons, 2006; McGarvey, 1910, pp. 306-307). English translations that reflect this feature of the Greek include the NIV and NASB. Thus Paul unquestionably invoked weekly contributions for the churches: "on the first day of **every** week." Similarly, the Jews understood that the Sabbath observance—"remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8)—applied to **every** Sabbath. Paul stated that he gave this same command for weekly Sunday collection to the Galatian churches as well (vs. 1). Here is an inspired apostle, under the guiding influence of the Holy Spirit Whom Jesus said would come, legislating frequency for first century churches. These churches obviously came together not only to offer a financial contribution and then go home. They met to engage in all acts of worship—the Lord's Supper being premiere among them. Recognized theologian, avowed Pentecostal minister, and Professor Emeritus of New Testament Studies at Regent College, Gordon Fee, agrees with this contention, when he speaks of Sunday as—

a weekly reckoning with religious significance.... This language is well remembered in the Gospel traditions in relationship to the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The fixed place of this terminology in those narratives implies that **it had more than simply historical interest for the early church**. This is verified further by the note in Acts 20:7, which implies most strongly that Paul and the others waited in Troas until the "first day of the week" precisely because **that is when the Christians gathered for the breaking of bread**, that is, their meal in honor of the Lord (1987, p. 814, emp. added).

## CONCLUSION

Only by gathering everything the New Testament says on a subject and logically fitting it all together can one arrive at the truth. The conclusion to be drawn from this information is definitive and unquestionable. Since

Christians met every Sunday (1 Corinthians 16:2), and a central purpose for such assemblies was to observe the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7) regularly and consistently (Acts 2:42), it follows that the early church partook of the Lord's Supper **every Sunday**—and partook of it **only** on Sunday. H. Leo Boles well concluded: "There is no scriptural example or instruction authorizing the eating of the Lord's Supper on any day except the first day of the week" (1985, p. 37). Rex Turner offers a fitting summary: "[T]he necessary and inescapable conclusion is that disciples must meet on, and only on, the first day of the week to break bread" (1972, p. 77).

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