

Acts 20:1-12

Priorities in NT Worship

(What did the early church do when it met for worship?)

- This passage is significant for one reason. It is one of the few references that we have to a Christian “meeting of worship” in the New Testament.
- See apptoteach.org (Theology file #813) for information on the church and worship.

“¹ And after the uproar had ceased, Paul sent for the disciples and when he had exhorted them and taken his leave of them, he departed to go to Macedonia. ² And when he had gone through those districts and had given them much exhortation, he came to Greece. ³ And {there} he spent three months, and when a plot was formed against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he determined to return through Macedonia. ⁴ And he was accompanied by Sopater of **Berea**, {the son} of Pyrrhus; and by Aristarchus and Secundus of the **Thessalonians**; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and Tychicus and Trophimus of **Asia**. ⁵ But these had gone on ahead and were waiting for us at Troas. ⁶ And we sailed from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and came to them at Troas within five days; and there we stayed seven days.

- The fact that Paul’s traveling companions come from different churches that he had started suggests the fact that there was a universal or catholic consciousness within the Christian community.

The long sermon

⁷ And on the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul {began} **talking** (dialegomai) to them, intending to depart the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight. ⁸ And there were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered together. ⁹ And there was a certain young man (boy of 8-14 years) named Eutychus sitting on the window sill, sinking into a deep sleep; and as Paul kept on talking (dialegomai), he was overcome by sleep and fell down from the third floor, and was picked up dead. ¹⁰ But Paul went down and fell upon him and after embracing him, he said, "**Do not be troubled**, for his life is in him." ¹¹ And when he had gone {back} up, and had broken the bread and eaten, he talked with them a long while, until daybreak, and so departed. ¹² And they took away the boy alive, and were **greatly comforted**.

- This is the first unambiguous reference to Christians meeting for worship on Sunday. See apptoteach.org (Theology file #814) for information on the Christian and the Sabbath.
- The “breaking of bread” could refer simply to the taking of a meal together but most commentators see this as an expression that includes the Lord’s Supper as a part of a worship meeting. Lk.22:20, 24:30-35, Acts2:42
- Teaching or preaching was an important part of the meeting. The Greek term translated “talking” is the same word from which we get “dialogue”, suggesting some kind of interaction.
- What is worship? (*D.A. Carson’s definition from “Worship by the Book.”*)

1. “*Worship* is the **proper response** of all moral, sentient beings to God, ascribing all honor and worth to their Creator-God precisely because he is worthy, delightfully so.
 2. This side of the Fall, *human worship* of God properly **responds to the redemptive provisions** that God has graciously made.
 3. While all true worship is God-centered, *Christian worship* is no less **Christ-centered**.
 4. Empowered by the Spirit and in line with the stipulations of the new covenant, it manifests itself in **all our living**, finding its impulse in the gospel, which restores our relationship with our Redeemer-God and therefore also with our fellow image-bearers, our co-worshippers.
 5. Such worship therefore manifests itself both in **adoration and in action**, both in the **individual** believer and in **corporate worship**, which is worship offered up in the context of the body of believers, who strive to align all the forms of their devout ascription of all worth to God with the panoply of new covenant mandates and examples that bring to fulfillment the glories of antecedent revelation and anticipate the consummation.”
- Principles of Christian worship.
 1. Worship is a style of life more than an action on Sunday morning. If we are not in a posture of thankfulness, praise, and awe during the week we will probably not worship well on Sunday.
 2. Worship should be edifying (faith, hope, and love building for the believer) but it is first of all a sacrifice offering to God of our hearts awe and thanksgiving for who He is and what He has done.
 3. Mature believers find it possible and easy to worship in many settings and through many forms. They are not picky eaters with respect to music, etc.
 4. In public worship, leaders play an important role by setting the tone and spirit of the worship and bringing the congregation together to communicate to God with one voice.
 5. In the early church worship meetings were held on Sunday and consisted of the Lord’s Table and teaching among other things. The New Testament has no prescription for a worship service agenda.

Sabbath-Sunday position, one day in seven holy

1. The position stated - “The Sabbath or Lord’s Day is to be sanctified as a holy resting day, not only from such works as are at all times sinful, but even from such worldly employments and recreations as are on other days lawful; we make it our delight to spend the whole time . . . in the public and private exercises of God’s worship.” Westminster Larger Catechism
2. The position defended
 - a. God ordained the Sabbath in creation.
 - b. The moral law commands Sabbath observance.
 - c. The New Testament changed the day of the Sabbath.
 1. Christ arose on the first day - Jn.20:19,26
 2. Sunday is called “the Lord's Day” - Rev.1:10

3. The apostles practiced the keeping of the first day of the week (Sunday) - Acts 20:7; I Cor.16:2
 4. Irenaeus (living in the time of the apostle John) - *“Let every one that loveth Christ keep holy the first day of the week, the Lord’s day.”*
 - d. Patristic writings show the early church’s observance of Sabbath-Sunday.
3. The position challenged.
- a. The Sabbath is Saturday.

Ex.20 “⁸ Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. ¹¹ For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”
 - b. The Christian is free from the Old Covenant Law. The Sabbath was a sign of the Old Covenant while the Lord’s Day became a sign of the New Covenant. See apptoteach.org (Theology file #106,#107) for information on the New Covenant as well as Law and Grace.

Rom.7:6 “But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.”
 - c. The apostles applied the Freedom of the Gospel to the Sabbath issue.

Rom. 14 “¹ Now accept the one who is weak in faith, {but} not for {the purpose of} passing judgment on his opinions. ² One man has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables {only.} ³ Let not him who eats regard with contempt him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats, for God has accepted him. ⁴ Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand. ⁵ One man regards one day above another, another regards every day {alike.} Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶ He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God. ⁷ For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; ⁸ for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s. ⁹ For to this end Christ died and lived {again}, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. ¹⁰ But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God. ¹¹ For it is written, “As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall give praise to God.” ¹² So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God.”

Col.2 “¹⁶ Therefore let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day – ¹⁷ things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.”
- The Lord’s table was a regular feature of the worship. It is unclear as to the sacramental significance of the breaking of bread in this text. See apptoteach.org (Theology file #813) for information on the Lord’s Supper.

The Lord’s Supper or Communion service.

1. Its institution by Christ.

- a. Matt.26:26-28; Mk.14:22-24; Lk.22:19-20.
 - b. The first Lord's Supper was apparently a part of the Jewish Passover meal just before His crucifixion. John 18:28; 19:14 may refer to an alternative view of the Passover (Sadducees), which was after the crucifixion.
2. Its practice in Acts 2:42,46, 20:7 is described as "breaking of bread."
 3. Its prescription in the epistles
 - a. **I Cor.10:16** "Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ?"
 - b. **I Cor.11** "18 For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and in part, I believe it. 19 For there must also be factions among you, in order that those who are approved may have become evident among you. 20 Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper, 21 for in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk. 22 What! Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink? Or do you despise the church of God, and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this I will not praise you. 23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; 24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." 25 In the same way {He took} the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink {it,} in remembrance of Me." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. 27 Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. 28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup."
 4. Its practice in the early church.
 - a. The "love feast" was a common practice - II Pet.2:13, Jude 12; I Cor.11:20; Acts 2:42,46; 6:1.
 - b. According to the Didache, 7-15; and Justin Martyr, Apology, c.lxvii, & c. lxxv. the event consisted of:
 1. A feast, various prayers of thanksgiving and confession, reading and instruction from Scripture,
 2. The Supper itself,
 3. A collection for orphans, widows, sick, and needy, and finally a holy kiss.
 - c. There is no indication in Scripture as to how often this ordinance was practiced.

Its significance.

1. Points of agreement among most Christians.
 - a. It is a remembrance of Christ - I Cor.11:24.
 - b. It is a proclamation of His death - I Cor.11:26.
 - c. It is an assurance of Christ's second coming - I Cor.11:26; Matt.26:29.
 - d. It is a time of fellowship with Christ and His people - I Cor.10:21.
 - e. It is restricted to believers - I Cor.10:21.

- f. It is restricted to believers who apply their faith in relationships with other believers - I Cor.10:15-17; 11:27-34.
- g. Unrepentant believers under discipline were excluded from the Supper (I Cor.5:11-13; II Thess.3:6, 11-15).

Differences between high and low church styles and worship.

1. One of the issues that distinguishes various forms of church government and worship is the way the OT and NT are seen in relationship to the church.
 - a. Some churches (Roman Catholic, Anglican, etc.) have taken the pattern of Jewish temple worship as a model for Christian worship.
 - Where the Jewish pattern called for a sacrifice, the Roman church presented the bread and the cup as a reenactment of Christ's sacrifice. This was seen as both a sacrament and a reminder of what Christ had done.
 - Other aspects of the temple architecture and its priestly ministry were mirrored in the Christian service.
 - b. Other Christian groups have looked only to the teaching of the Apostles for guidance on proper Christian worship. They tend to be less structured and put a greater emphasis upon teaching and the Lord's Supper as a memorial.
2. The following chart lays out some of the distinctives.

“Low Church”	“High Church”
New Covenant	Old Covenant
(Congregational Gov.)	(Episcopal Gov.)
Elders in Congregation	Priests over Parish
Local Autonomy	Hierarchy
Assembly	Temple
Pulpit	Altar
Ordinances	Sacraments
Experiences	Symbols