

Does Acts 20:7 Teach Sunday Worship?

Was Paul really preaching on Sunday in Acts 20:7? A close look dispels this popular belief and discloses important days for observing today.

A most controversial and debated passage in the entire New Testament is found in Acts 20:7:

“And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.”

Often cited as proof that the early disciples had been instructed by the Savior to observe Sunday, this verse supposedly shows that they were indeed now keeping the first day of the week instead of observing the day we know as Saturday.

Certain translations of this passage render it the same as the King James Version, namely, “the first day of the week.” However, other translations render it Saturday night (New English Bible, Good News for Modern Man). How are we to understand this enigmatic passage?

Churchianity’s understanding of this passage is divided. Those who worship on Sunday insist this is a powerful passage in support of Sunday-keeping, and is a paramount verse used to show that the Apostle Paul was now keeping Sunday as a day of worship.

But Sabbath-keepers contend that it is indeed a Saturday evening message Paul preached that lasted into the night, into the first day of the week that begins at sunset (known to us as Sunday). They cite verses 8 and 9 to substantiate that it was evening and that there were many lights in the upper chamber. The evidence indicates that this latter understanding provides a clearer explanation. Biblical days end with sunset as well as start at sunset.

No Communion Happening Here

Believe it or not, Acts 20:7 was never inspired by Yahweh’s Spirit to support Sunday worship! It has been twisted to teach a counterfeit day of worship. These verses have nothing to do with observing Sunday, but actually show that Paul was keeping the same Holy Days given to Israel that will be kept in the Kingdom.

Neither does this verse teach us to partake each Sunday of the symbols of the body and blood of our beloved Savior by taking the cup and breaking of bread. The expression “breaking of bread” here simply means sharing a common meal such as in Acts 2:42; 46. Note especially Acts 27:35: “And when [Paul] had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to Yahweh in presence of them all: and when he had broken it, he began to eat.”

Bread in those days was not sliced as today, but broken off in chunks, then often dipped in a sauce or broth before being eaten. Acts 20:11 shows that Paul, having revived Eutychus, went back up and ate bread, continuing his conversation until daybreak.

This Was 25 Years AFTER Yahshua

Verse 6 tells us that Paul sailed away from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread, arriving in Troas five days later where they stayed for seven days. Passover and the days of Unleavened Bread always come around the time of the spring barley harvest heralding the first of the seven annual Feast Days for Israel .

Why does Luke, in the year 57, make special mention of the Days of Unleavened Bread, which always follow the spring festival of Passover? This is some 25 years after the Messiah's death and ascension to the heavens! If the Days of Unleavened Bread are now done away, as some erroneously teach, why does Luke call attention to them in Paul's dealing with the Gentiles? Paul had evidently stayed in Philippi to observe these days with the non-Israelite Philippian brethren.

Notice that the cup or fruit of the vine is nowhere mentioned in Acts 20:7-11, as it is in 1 Corinthians 10:16. The cup would be required had this been an observance of the Passover or the "Master's Supper." Furthermore, verse 6 reveals that Paul had already kept this annual memorial service before his arrival in Troas .

It is quite clear that upon Paul's planning to depart from Troas , the brethren came together for a common meal, a "farewell supper," and Paul preached a discourse unto them, continuing until midnight and beyond. Paul was not partaking of a "Communion" or "Master's Supper." He ate later, verse 11. The cup or "fruit of the vine" are nowhere mentioned. This was a common meal.

This verse has a much more profound meaning for those who are searching for Yahweh's truth and seeking His will. Understanding this verse will help us go on unto perfection.

Paul Observes An Annual Sabbath

In Green's Interlinear Bible, where the English is translated directly under the Greek, Acts 20:7 reads, "on and the one of the Sabbaths."

In the King James the word "week" is the Greek plural of No. 4521 in Strong's Exhaustive Concordance and means the Sabbath. It is the equivalent of the Hebrew No. 7676 and means the Sabbath, the day of weekly repose, a rest from secular avocations.

Now notice that the word "day" in the authorized version is in italics. This means it is not found in the Greek manuscripts, but is a help-word added by the English translators. In most cases these help-words clarify and aid us in a better understanding of the Bible. But in this passage the added word "day" is quite misleading to the Bible student.

The key to the significance of verse 7 lies in a proper understanding of Yahweh's seven Annual Holy Days that are listed in order in Leviticus 23. Acts 20:6 reveals that Paul arrived in Troas after the Days of Unleavened Bread. Our attention is called to these special days to emphasize that they were still being observed.

Special, Yearly Sabbaths Revealed

Leviticus 23 adds to our understanding of Yahweh's overall plan for us. The Sabbath is the first of these special days He reveals in His grand plan for redeeming mankind (Lev. 23:1-3). Then follows Passover with seven Days of Unleavened Bread (verses 4-8).

Instructions are then given for counting to Pentecost (verses 9-15). This relates directly to our problem verse, bringing us back to Acts 20:6-7.

Note carefully, Pentecost is what Paul had in mind as we read in Acts 20:16, "For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus , because he would not spend the time in Asia: for he hasted, if it were possible for him to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost."

In Acts 21:17 we learn Paul did indeed arrive at Jerusalem for Pentecost, and later he relates his

worship in Jerusalem : “Because that you may understand, that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship. And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues nor in the city: Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me. But this I confess unto you, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the [Elohim] of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets,” Acts 24:11-13.

Paul went to Jerusalem to worship and observe Pentecost more than 25 years after the death and resurrection of the Savior! He did not go to Jerusalem merely to evangelize the Jews who might be gathered there, as some erroneously contend. He went to worship and keep the Feast.

He emphasizes that he was not a rabble-rouser, but worshiped in complete harmony with the Old Testament law and the prophets. He continued observing the Feast Days. Because he did not continue with circumcision and offer animal sacrifices, the Jews called his way “heresy.” Paul had accepted Yahshua’s death as the supreme sacrifice for his sins. He now sacrificed his old way of life to a new walk in Yahshua’s footsteps.

First of the Week

The verse under consideration deals with the first day of the week. As already mentioned, in the Greek the verse reads “first of the sabbaths.” Dr. Bullinger notes in his Companion Bible that this was “the first day of the sabbaths, i.e., the first day for reckoning the seven sabbaths to Pentecost.”

Paul continued preaching to the brethren in Troas quite late, for we note that many lamps or torches were in the upper chamber (Acts 20:8-9). As Paul continued speaking, likely the fumes from the lamps made Eutychus sleepy, causing him to fall three stories below.

While we have no record of Paul’s topic, his discourse very likely centered on an explanation of Pentecost, the next Annual Feast day, and how to count the seven Sabbaths. Upon counting the seven weekly Sabbaths (49 days), the next day would be the 50th day or Pentecost. Pentecost was clearly on Paul’s mind, for he was hastening to arrive in Jerusalem by then, verse 16.

See John 20:1, Luke 24:1, Matthew 28:1, and Mark 16:2. According to Dr. Bullinger and the Greek texts, these verses relate to the first weekly Sabbath which begins the counting of seven weekly Sabbaths toward Pentecost.

Yahshua the Wavesheaf

These verses are prove that the Savior Yahshua fulfilled Bible prophecy, literally becoming the actual wave sheaf offering, Leviticus 23:15, John 20:14-17 (John’s account is clearer when read from an interlinear.)

Notice the instructions in Leviticus 23:10-11, “When you...reap the harvest...then you shall bring the sheaf of the first-fruits of your harvest to the priest, and he shall wave the sheaf before Yahweh to be accepted for you on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it.” Counting fifty days from the wave-sheaf offering day brings us to Pentecost, Acts 2.

Upon the morrow after Yahshua arose He became our High Priest (Heb. 4:14) and took the place of the priest that waved the sheaf before Yahweh, John 20:14 and Leviticus 23:10-11.

Note Leviticus 23:15-16, “And you shall count from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that

you brought the sheaf of the wave-offering; seven Sabbaths shall be complete, even to the day Sabbath shall you number fifty days...”

At the same time He also became the firstfruits (1Cor. 15:23) by ascending to Yahweh and presenting Himself before Him, John 20:17, and also became our High Priest. One can find facets of Yahshua’s work in each of the seven Annual Holy Days. Many important events also happened on the Feast days Yahweh ordained to be observed by an ordinance “forever,” Leviticus 23:14, 21, 31, 41.

This Was 25 Years After Yahshua

The account in Acts 20 took place over 25 years after Yahshua had ascended into heaven and Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, is still observing these Holy Days. This clearly shows that the Annual Holy Days are important in this New Covenant era and are not done away, but will also be kept in the Kingdom.

Paul’s speech, lasting until midnight, more than likely was to show the Gentile brethren how to calculate the time for Pentecost where seven complete Sabbaths (weeks) are counted to arrive at the proper time to keep Pentecost, the day following the Sabbath.

We at YAIY are always happy to explain to new believers all about Yahweh’s Holy Days, which will be kept in the Kingdom, and help us better understand His plan of redemption.

Gentiles Taught Annual Sabbaths

Acts 20:7 cannot be taken as evidence for a change of weekly worship from Sabbath (Saturday) to Sunday because Paul himself was a teacher to the Gentiles, Acts 9:15.

The Savior chose a strict observer of the letter of the law, a Pharisee of the Pharisees, to go to the Gentiles and teach them Yahweh’s way of life. Paul was this choice, and he continued to teach the Gentiles on the Saturday Sabbath (Acts 16:13; 13:42-46; 17:2; 18:4). The context of the passage shows that the center of attention is on Yahweh’s Holy Days.

Keep in mind that the early Greek manuscripts do not contain the Greek word meaning day (“hemera”). The word for “day” simply is not found in the Greek and has been added by translators. Acts 20:7 literally reads, “On And one of the Sabbaths, having been assembled the disciples to break bread, Paul reasoned to them, being about to depart on the morrow; he continued and the discourse until midnight” (J. P. Green).

What we find there is the spirit of truth through the Apostle Paul’s teaching Yahweh’s Word as found in Leviticus 23:15-16. He showed the Gentile brethren how to count the seven complete Sabbaths to arrive at the correct time to observe Pentecost.

Paul also taught the cosmopolitan, pagan Corinthians about Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread: “For even Messiah our Passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the Feast...” 1Corinthians 5:7-8. He explains that because Yahshua has become our Passover sacrifice, let us get cleaned up, be clean from our old ways, and feed on the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Why write to the Gentile Corinthians and apply Old Testament principles of truth contained in the Feast days if these days are not to be kept by Gentile converts? Are they not to become

spiritual Israelites, Romans 9:4-6?

Annual Sabbaths in the Millennium

We pray it is your goal to keep Yahweh's Holy Days in spirit and in truth so that you will better understand the grand design He is working out with us even now. These Holy Days will be observed in the Millennium under the Messiah, Isaiah 65:23, Micah 4:1-4.

Ancient Israel kept these days under the Old Covenant as a timely reminder of Yahweh's omnipotent power of creation and deliverance. He says these sabbaths are a sign between Him and His people, which He gave as a sign that He is the One Who sanctifies them (sets apart for a holy purpose), Ezekiel 20:12. Through verse 20 of this same chapter He repeats His demand for obedience and gives the promise that the obedient ones will know that He, Yahweh, is our Elohim.

Hebrews 8:8-10 reveals that these same laws will again be kept "after those days." Even now the "sanctified ones" (Heb. 10:14) are to have His laws "put in their hearts and will be written in their minds."

These are not some new or different laws that He refers to here. These are the same laws given to ancient Israel, but now to be observed in their full spiritual intent and obeyed from the heart. Not the lip-service of ancient Israel who did not have the heart to obey.

Acts 20:7: Keep Sabbath, Feast

Acts 20:7 cannot be used to show that worship on the Saturday Sabbath has been transferred to Sunday. Many interlinears show that the gathering was on "the first of the Sabbaths" and continued on after sundown into the first day of the week.

This verse actually recounts Paul's dedication to keeping the weekly Sabbath we know as Saturday, and then goes on to show that Paul is determined to keep the coming Annual Sabbath of Pentecost.

Only the laws of circumcision and Temple sacrifices have been put in abeyance as we obey from the heart and offer up spiritual sacrifices: "You also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to Yahweh by Yahshua the Messiah."

He is calling a dedicated people like you to help rule under Yahshua, Revelation 5:10. Will you answer the call?

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