

The Lord's Supper

There have been many great memorials: The Washington Monument, the Lincoln Memorial, the eternal flame at President Kennedy's grave in Arlington National Cemetery, and many others. In the Bible, the rainbow is God's memorial that never again will he destroy the earth with water (Gen. 9:15). Jacob buried his beloved Rachel, and over her tomb he set up a pillar, and Moses said, "and to this day that pillar marks Rachel's tomb" (Gen. 35:20). In the O.T., the passover was a memorial feast. In the N.T., the Lord's Supper is a memorial of the body and blood of Christ.

The question is often asked, "how often should we remember the death of Christ through observing the Lord's Supper?" The statement made in the scriptures about when the Lord's Supper was observed is the first day of the week (Acts 2:42; 20:7). In Acts 2:42 the statement is "and they continued steadfastly...." This indicates a degree of regularity, something certainly being done over and over. In Acts 20:7 the statement is "upon the first day of the week...." Here the time is definitely stated. There is never any other day of the week, nor any other time frame. It is interesting to observe that although Paul and Company abode in Troas "seven days," it was only upon the first day of the week that they came together to break bread. In fact, Everett Ferguson, in the book *Early Christians Speak* says that there is no first or second century evidence that the early Christians met together to break bread upon any other day than the first.

Writers outside the Bible confirm the preceding paragraph: Justin said, "And on the day called Sunday there is a gathering together in the same place of all who live in a city or a rural district." Then is given a description of the worship activities, one of which is the Lord's Supper. The *Didache* states, "come together each Lord's Day of the Lord, break bread, and give thanks." *The Acts of John* declares "on the next day, since it was the Lord's Day and all the brethren were assembled, John began to say to them...." Then he prayed. "And he asked for bread and gave thanks thus:" Then a more specific description is given of the partaking of the Lord's Supper.

Although many denominationalists have had no trouble with the contribution being taken up every first day of the week, they have all kinds of trouble with the Lord's Supper being observed every first day of the week. Why? The same phrase, "upon the first day of the week," is found in both Acts 20:7, and I Cor. 16:1,2

There is absolutely no authority to partake of the Lord's Supper on any other day. The only authority we have says, "upon the first day of the week."

It is sometimes objected that an observance so often would destroy the solemnity and sacredness of the supper. It is strange that we do not seem to have the same concept about singing and praying. I often express myself with the same words to God in prayer. And some of my favorite songs are songs I have sung all my life. I never get tired of them.

Hebrews 10:25 urges "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together...." What did the people do when they assembled? Acts 20:7 answers that in part. They observed the Lord's Supper (cf. Mt. 26), and when we observe it upon the first day of the week, we are doing what God authorized us to do. Some might say, "but it doesn't say every first day." How would we understand the announcement, "our service club meets on the first Monday"? Or, how do we understand "remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy"? If not the first day of every week, then where is the authority for once a month, or twice a year, or once a year? Acts 20:7 answers by inspired example exactly how often. Paul added, "for as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you do show the Lord's death, till he come" (I Cor. 11:26).

It is interesting to note that many leading religious theologians have admitted what I have written, although their religious groups have not, and do not, always practice it. Notice:

1. John Calvin, the great protestant reformer and founder of the Presbyterian church: "And that custom which enjoins believers to communicate only once a year, is unquestionably an invention of the devil, whoever were the persons by whom it was introduced." Mr. Calvin declared, "a very different practice ought to have been pursued. At least once in every week the table of the Lord ought to have been spread before each congregation of Christians, and the promises to have been declared for their spiritual nourishment."

2. Dr. Thomas Scott, of the Church of England, on Acts 20:7 wrote: "Breaking of bread, or commemorating the death of Christ in the Eucharist, was one of the chief ends of their assembling; this ordinance seems to have been constantly administered every Lord's Day."

3. Augustus Neander, a Lutheran, in *History of the Christian Religion and Church*, Vol. I, p. 332: "As we have already remarked, the celebration of the Lord's Supper was still held to constitute an essential part of divine worship every Sunday,"

4. A. C. Hervey, an Episcopalian, in his commentary on Acts 20:7: "This also is an important example of weekly communion as the practice of the first Christians."

5. P. Doddridge, a Congregationalist, in Notes on Acts 20:7: "It is well known the Primitive Christians administered the Eucharist (the Lord's Supper) every Lord's Day."

6. R. A. Torrey, late President of the Moody Bible Institute: "It is true that I personally believe that the Lord's Supper ought to be partaken of every Lord's Day."

It is a fact that many denominational groups today do not have a clue that the leadership of their denominations formerly believed and preached that the Lord's Supper ought to be observed every first day of the week. Churches of Christ are still practicing what their leadership used to believe, and what the Bible still teaches.

Paul, being present at the Troas meeting (Acts 20:7), lent his support to the N.T. practice. If something had been amiss, Paul, in his sermon, would have said something about it. So, we can say that the example of Acts 20:7 is endorsed by apostolic authority. Jesus commanded the apostles to teach all that he had commanded (Mt. 28:19). We find the early church observing the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week. Therefore, we conclude that the early church was carrying out that which they had been taught concerning the Lord's Supper.

Until we quit having first days, or until passages like Acts 20:7 are removed from the Bible, I will not quit observing the Lord's Supper on that day.