

"Traditional" Sunday Services?

by Wayne Goff

Some brethren have decided that Sunday **evening** services are mere human tradition and thus can be dispensed with easily. But we need to realize that what began in America as a *second service* is not necessarily traditional. We need to take a closer look at the Scriptures on the subject of worship on Sunday.

Sunday Morning Service

Naturally we are to return to the New Testament for our authority in things religious. *"If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen"* (1 Pet. 4:11). So when the first church met on Sunday, what time was it?

The first assembly of the Lord's church would have to be pinpointed as taking place on the Day of Pentecost, about 33 A.D. (Acts 2). We learn that the apostles began to speak at the *"third hour of the day"* (v. 15). Reckoning by Jewish time, that would make it about 9 a.m. So the first gospel sermon preached by the apostles took place in the morning. Thus we could say this is the first Sunday morning service.

But before we close the discussion and affirm that Sunday morning is the *authorized time to meet*, let's continue to look in the book of Acts!

Sunday Evening Service

In Acts 20, Paul had waited for seven days to meet with the church in Troas. We read, *"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"* (v. 7). I think it is safe to say that this was an *authorized* Sunday service by way of an *apostolically approved example*. Note that Paul *"continued his message until midnight."* Would this not affirm a *Sunday evening service*? It certainly does, and thus we cannot throw away Sunday evening worship suddenly! Sunday evening worship is **not** just tradition.

Which One Or Both?

A local congregation can scripturally authorize a Sunday *morning* service (Acts 2) and a Sunday *evening* service (Acts 20). So which one do we choose, or do we choose both?

First, we must realize that Christians are **commanded** to assemble on the first day of the week. Two acts of worship which can **only** be observed on the first day of the week are (1) Lord's Supper, Acts 20:7 [apostolic example]; and (2) Giving of our financial means, 1 Cor. 16:1-2 [direct command]. Singing (Eph. 5:19), praying (1 Cor. 14:15), and preaching (Acts 2:42) are specified acts of worship, too, but not *limited* to the first day of the week. So to obey the command to assemble on the first day of the week to observe these acts of worship, we **must** meet at least once. Some denominations, like the Catholics and Methodists, have resorted to offering a worship on Saturday evening *in place of Sunday*. Unless we are using Jewish time, this is improper.

It can be argued that we can meet *anytime* on Sunday so long as it is the first day of the week. We can meet once, or twice, or all day if we so choose. The elders who are among us have the wisdom and experience to make that choice based upon the needs of the congregation and that which makes our worship most *expedient* (*practical, convenient*). Churches of Christ in America have generally met twice on Sunday throughout my lifetime. However, that is not something that has been written in stone. In earlier times, when brethren traveled via "horse and buggy" *relatively* long distances, some churches would meet on Sunday morning for Bible class and preaching, then dismiss for a noon meal, and assemble again afterwards for continued teaching. Some churches probably met only once on Sunday as Troas apparently did in Acts 20. I have read of other churches meeting for the better part of the whole

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