

Acts 20:7 and the Assembly of the Church at Troas

1 And after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto *him* the disciples, and embraced *them*, and departed for to go into Macedonia. 2 And when he had gone over those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece, 3 And *there* abode three months. And when the Jews laid wait for him, as he was about to sail into Syria, he purposed to return through Macedonia. 4 And there accompanied him into Asia Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timotheus; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus. 5 These going before tarried for us at Troas. 6 And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days. 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. 8 And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together. 9 And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead. 10 And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing *him* said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him. 11 When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed. 12 And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted. 13 And we went before to ship, and sailed unto Assos, there intending to take in Paul: for so had he appointed, minding himself to go afoot. (Acts 20:1-13).

1.) The assembly in Acts 20:7 is a church assembly, and the Lord's Supper was celebrated at it.

a.) The phrase "the disciples" (οἱ μαθηταί) in Acts always refers to church members, and in at least 22 out of the 25 uses¹ refers to members of the specific church in an area (Acts 1:15; 6:1-2, 7; 9:1, 19, 25-26, 38; 11:26, 29; 13:52; 14:20, 22, 28; 15:10; 18:23, 27; 19:9, 30; 20:1, 7, 30; 21:4, 16).² The first use in Acts 1:15 sets the pattern—there reference is made to the pre-Pentecost church³ with its membership roll of "about an hundred and twenty." Therefore when v. 7 reads, "the disciples⁴ came together to

¹ The three possible exceptions are Acts 13:52; 15:10; 18:23, where church members are still in view, but the reference is generic. Cf. "Christ . . . loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Ephesians 5:25), a generic use of the word "church" to refer to no specific assembly, but to any individual true congregation of the Lord (cf. the generic use of "man" and "woman" in 1 Corinthians 11:3).

² 6:1-2, 7, 9:1 refer to the church at Jerusalem (which in 9:1 was scattered abroad, 8:1-4); 9:19, 25 to the church at Damascus; 9:26 to the church at Jerusalem, which Paul attempted to join the membership of (*kollao*, cf. 5:13); 9:38 to the church at Lydda; 11:26, 29 to the church at Antioch, etc.

³ The Lord Jesus started His church in the gospels; the church did not start on the day of Pentecost (Matthew 18:18, etc.; see See, e. g., pgs. 509-516, Sargent, Robert J., *Landmarks of Baptist Doctrine*, vol. 4. Oak Harbor, WA: Bible Baptist Church Publications, n. d.).

⁴ The corrupt variant "we" (ἡμῶν) for the *Textus Receptus* reading "the disciples" (τῶν μαθητῶν) in v. 7 is based upon a small minority of manuscripts and must be rejected, as must the corruptions ἡμεν for ἦσαν in v. 8. The αὐτοῖς of v. 7 also provides internal evidence in favor of τῶν μαθητῶν, rather than the first person textual variants ἡμεν and ἦσαν. καθεζόμενος for καθήμενος in v. 9, and the addition of τόν before ἄρτον in v. 11, likewise must be rejected.

break bread,” reference is made to the members of the church at Troas.⁵ The immediately preceding context is also clear; “the disciples” in 20:1 referred to the church at Ephesus (cf. Acts 19). “The disciples” did not refer to Paul and his company, for Paul is distinguished from “them” or “they,” the Troas church, in v. 7, 8, and 12. Paul’s companions are distinguished from the them/they of the church at Troas in v. 13 (“we” is Paul’s company, distinguished from the them/they of v. 12, and thus of v. 7-8). The rest of the New Testament supports the existence of a church at Troas,⁶ and ancient church history evidences the existence of a church at Troas.⁷

b.) The fact that the disciples “came together” (συνηγμένων) supports the view that a church assembly is in view. *Sunago* is used for church assemblies in Matthew 18:20; John 20:19; Acts 4:31; 11:26; 14:27; 15:30; 20:7, 8; 1 Corinthians 5:4 (cf. also Acts 15:6). The references to *sunago* in the perfect tense in Acts only speak of church assembly (Acts 4:31; 20:7, 8; cf. Matthew 18:20; John 20:19). The related word

⁵ Some who wish to deny the presence of a church assembly at Troas try to affirm that only a tiny number of people were present in Acts 20:7ff—some even supposing that only Eutychus, one person, was present from the local area! However, the passage makes it evident that there was quite a crowd. In addition to the seven brethren named in v. 4, along with Luke and likely unspecified others that accompanied Paul (“us . . . we,” v. 5-6), a large number from Troas were present, “the disciples” (v. 7). There were “many lights” in the chamber where they were gathered together, plain evidence that there were many people who needed the many lights. The obvious reason that Eutychus sat in the window (v. 9) is that the chamber was full of people, so that the window was the only available room. Had there only been a few present, someone would naturally have noticed that the young man had drifted into a deep sleep (v. 9) and taken him away from such a dangerous place to snooze as a third loft window. Furthermore, it is clear that Paul stayed up all night preaching and teaching in Troas because he was “ready to depart on the morrow” (v. 7), that is, leave the church in the city behind the next day. Paul did not stay up all night preaching to his companions (and Eutychus, who somehow appeared out of nowhere if there is no church in the city), people he was going to see practically every day in the upcoming weeks and months. Consider also that part of Paul’s company “tarried [earlier] . . . at Troas” (v. 4-5), waiting for the apostle and the rest of the group to arrive, because there was a church there and brethren to fellowship with.

Apart from these natural contextual considerations, the grammatical plurals (“yourselves,” v. 10; “they,” v. 12, are distinguished from Paul (v. 11) and his missionary team (“we,” v. 13), evidencing the existence of a church at Troas, and the fact that the church is a plural “they/them” (v. 7, 8, 13) proves that a plurality of disciples from Troas were there—but two is enough to constitute a church (Matthew 18:20).

⁶ 2 Corinthians 2:12 records a time prior to the events of Acts 20:7ff. where Paul, on the way to Macedonia (Acts 20:1-2), “came to Troas to *preach* Christ’s gospel [εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ; this is evangelism of the lost, thus the use of *euangelion*, derived from εὐαγγελίζω, to evangelize/preach the gospel], and a door was opened unto [him] of the Lord.” It is evident that the conversions that resulted at this time formed the nucleus of the church at Troas, which Paul and his company then re-visited in Acts 20:7ff. 2 Timothy 4:13 reads, “The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring *with thee*, and the books, *but* especially the parchments.” What was the Christian brother Carpus doing at Troas if there was no church in the city? Furthermore, in Acts 20:5, Paul’s helpers “tarried . . . at Troas.” Would they wait in a city that had no church to worship with, when there was no necessity of doing so, and so voluntarily miss out on church assembly?

⁷ Around A. D. 107, in *The Epistle of Ignatius to the Philadelphians*, Ignatius wrote, “The love of the brethren at Troas salutes you” (Chapter XI). A like statement is found in *The Epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans*, chapter XII, *The Epistle of Ignatius to Polycarp*. Note also Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles* (XLIII), who wrote, “Troas is not a large place: why then do they pass seven days in it? Perhaps it was large as regarded the number of believers.” Writing at a later period, Socrates Scholasticus, in his *Ecclesiastical History* (VII:36-37), names one Silvanus as bishop of the church at Troas. He tells us that Silvanus came from Philippopolis to pastor the church at Troas after the death of its former bishop, and records various aspects of Silvanus’ ministry in the city.

*sunagoge*⁸ is used for the Christian place of assembly in James 2:2. The related word *episunagoge*⁹ is used for the Christian “assembling” in Hebrews 10:25 in the classic command, “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together.” The grammar in Acts 20:7, “the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together,”¹⁰ is very similar to that of the church assembly of John 20:19, when “the first *day* of the week . . . the disciples were assembled.”¹¹

c.) The disciples came together for the purpose of¹² breaking bread, for celebrating the Lord’s supper.¹³ Similarly, 1 Corinthians 11:20 records that the purpose of the church at Corinth was, “when [they] come together therefore into one place . . . to eat the Lord’s supper.”¹⁴

i.) The “breaking of bread” in v. 7 was a celebration of the Lord’s supper, not just a meal. This is evident, for:

I.) The “breaking of bread” (*klao + arton*) is commonly (though not always, (Acts 27:35, etc.) an expression for the Lord’s Supper in Scripture. Matthew 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19; Acts 20:7, 11; 1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:24; also Acts 2:42).¹⁵

II.) The time that the ordinance was celebrated, the evening, suits the time that Christ first instituted the Supper for His church (See #4a-d below).

III.) The fact that the purpose of their getting together was the breaking of the bread proves it was the Supper, not a common meal. If the breaking of bread was just eating some food in this passage, it would hardly have been the reason that the church at Troas assembled. On the night before the great apostle Paul and his fellow laborers in the work of God were leaving, would they have come together, not to bid him farewell, but to fill their bellies? Would the rare, precious opportunity to be taught by and fellowship with the apostle to the Gentiles have been passed over as a reason for assembling, in favor of eating some food? Paul’s preaching¹⁶ was hardly a surprise to

⁸ συναγωγή; the normal word for “synagogue,” Matthew 4:23, 6:2, 5, etc.

⁹ ἐπισυναγωγή.

¹⁰ τῇ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων, συνηγμένων τῶν μαθητῶν.

¹¹ τῇ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων . . . οἱ μαθηταὶ συνηγμένοι.

¹² συνηγμένων . . . τοῦ κλάσαι ἄρτον, an infinitive of purpose.

¹³ Note the very similar Greek phraseology in the Didache 14:1 (c. A. D. 125), “On the Lord’s own day gather together (*sunago*) and break bread (*klao + arton*) and give thanks,” Κατὰ κυριακὴν δὲ κυρίου συναχθέντες κλάσατε ἄρτον καὶ εὐχαριστήσατε.

¹⁴ Of course, since the church was divided and had other problems, Paul records that they were really not eating it in the ordained way in 1 Corinthians 11:20. This fact does not change the parallel in the verse to Acts 20:7; in both verses, church assemblies met together for the purpose of celebrating the Lord’s Supper. In 1 Corinthians 11:20, note συνερχομένων σὺν ὑμῶν ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό, οὐκ ἔστιν Κυριακὸν δεῖπνον φαγεῖν. Compare the use of ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό for the church in Acts 1:15; 2:1, 44; 1 Corinthians 14:23.

¹⁵ Instead of the verb *klao* and the noun *arton*, Acts 2:42 has the very similar noun *klasis* with *arton* in the phrase τῇ κλάσει τοῦ ἄρτου.

¹⁶ This was a formal discourse; cf. the uses of διαλέγομαι (*dialegomai*) in Acts 17:2; 18:4, 19; 19:8, 9 (consider v. 9, and Acts 20:7, 9, as a basis for elenctic and apologetic theology, preaching, and teaching); 24:25.

them at their gathering; would they have been so ungodly as to have said, “we are not gathering together to hear the apostle Paul preach, but we are coming together for the more important purpose of having dinner.” Only if this breaking of bread is the Lord’s Supper is it reasonably given as the purpose for the church assembling. If the “breaking of bread” is the holy Supper of the Lord, and the church at Troas was coming together to obey that great command, “This do in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:24-25), the importance placed on this event as the most important part of their celebration is natural, and preaching in conjunction with a church service is expected. Coming together for the purpose of celebrating the Supper is also the pattern in 1 Corinthians 11:20. The brethren at Troas celebrated the Supper and held a church service, so it was no surprise that Paul began to preach to them—nor is it recorded that they were even surprised that he preached until midnight or until dawn. They did not gather together just to eat a meal, and then, out of nowhere, have Paul got up and preach to them for many hours. If Acts 20:7 simply documented a meal, Paul’s preaching, fellowship with the apostle and his fellow-workers, and fellowship among themselves would all have been far more important purposes for coming together than filling their bellies. There are no examples in the rest of the Bible of churches coming together simply to eat some food. A denial that this passage refers to the celebration of the Lord’s Supper would also eliminate all mention of specific church assembly to celebrate the ordinance from the book of Acts—is it reasonable that no example of a church gathering to celebrate this holy ordinance would be found in the only inspired chronicle of church history? Furthermore, “the disciples came together to break bread” is exactly the language one would expect for gathering to celebrate communion.¹⁷ If this language, which is almost identical to that in Acts 2:42, does not prove that the Lord’s Supper is in view, what language would?¹⁸

IV.) While they quite likely had a meal as well as taking the Lord’s Supper (taking a break for refreshments somewhere in the process of many hours of preaching is very natural—as it is natural to expect that they did not send the apostle and his companions away on empty stomachs—especially since Paul was going to walk to Assos from Troas, v. 13, a distance of c. 20 miles), this does not alter the fact that the purpose of their coming together and their breaking of bread referred to the church ordinance.

¹⁷ It should be noted that the word “eaten” (γευσάμενος, from γεύομαι) in v. 11 is used for the consumption of solids (Acts 10:10), liquids (Matthew 27:34; John 2:9), and both (Luke 14:24; Acts 23:14, cf. v. 12; also Jonah 3:7, LXX; Shepherd 56:7), so both the bread and fruit of the vine of the Lord’s Supper are naturally in view in the record of breaking of bread and eating in Acts 20:11. Γεύομαι takes an accusative object, but it is “rarely in Gk. lit. with this verb. . . . the obj. of the verb is [frequently] indicated by the context, Mt 27:34; Ac 20:11” (Danker, Frederick William (ed.), *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd. ed. (BDAG), Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000.). Thus, the elements of communion, the items for consumption mentioned in context, are the elements “eaten” in v. 11. The word does not refer to additional food eaten in addition to the Lord’s Supper.

¹⁸ It should be noted that the presence or absence of the article with *arton* when in relation to *klaō* does not determine if the ordinance of communion, or simple food, is being eaten. An articular *arton* is found in Matthew 26:26 (as in 1 Corinthians 10:16) in the institution of the Supper for the church, but the article is absent in the parallel passage describing the same event in Mark 14:22 and Luke 22:19. *Artos* is articular and employed of a simple meal in Luke 24:30, and non-articular and employed of a meal in Acts 27:35. The word is non-articular in Acts 2:46; 20:7, 11.

2.) The church at Troas assembled on the first day¹⁹ of the week, Sunday/the Lord's Day.

a.) The "day" of Acts 20:7 is a midnight-to-midnight, or morning-to-morning day, not an evening-to-evening day.

i.) The Jewish sabbath was an evening-to-evening day, Leviticus 23:35; cf. Mark 1:21, 32;²⁰ but the church did not assemble on the sabbath, but on the Lord's day. Sometimes the Jews themselves used morning-to-morning days, Psalm 1:2; Leviticus 7:15.

ii.) The "first day" of the Lord Jesus' resurrection began in the morning, not the evening, and was reckoned with midnight-to-midnight/morning-to-morning days. John 20:1, 19: "The first *day* of the week . . . early, when it was yet dark . . . then the same day at evening, being the first *day* of the week . . . the disciples were assembled . . . Jesus [came] and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace *be* unto you." Compare also Matthew 28:1, "In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first *day* of the week," Mark 16:2, 9, "very early in the morning the first *day* of the week . . . *Jesus* was risen early the first *day* of the week." It is noteworthy as well that "the Romans [reckoned] . . . the civil day . . . from midnight to midnight."²¹ The churches, remembering the resurrection of their Lord, met on the first day of the week, reckoned from midnight to midnight/morning to morning, not from evening to evening, as the Jewish sabbath was reckoned.²²

iii.) Acts 20:7 itself (as does the rest of the book; cf. 4:3) supports a morning-to-morning/midnight-to-midnight day. The main verb is "preached/was preaching (διελέγετο; imperfect tense)," on which the participle "came together" (συνηγμένων) depends.²³ The verse therefore tell us that Paul was preaching to the assembled disciples on the first day of the week, the day they had come together to break bread. Since Paul evidently did (at least) a very large body of his preaching after the sun went down, the evening until "midnight" (v. 7) when the preaching concluded²⁴ and the Supper was celebrated (v. 11) was the same day as that upon which the disciples originally came together before the setting of the sun. One who wanted to affirm evening-to-evening days in Acts 20:7 would have to posit the strongly anti-contextual

¹⁹ New Testament days had twelve hours (Οὐχὶ δώδεκά εἰσιν ὥραι τῆς ἡμέρας;), John 11:9.

²⁰ In Mark 1:32, the sick were brought after the sun went down because the sabbath was then over. Note also Daniel 8:14, a "day" is an "evening-morning" (Heb. בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי, LXX ἑσπέρας καὶ πρωὶ ἡμέραι); 2 Corinthians 11:25 νυχθήμερον (although Paul simply could have been shipwrecked at nighttime, and thus in the "deep" first at that time).

²¹ "Day," *Dictionary of the Bible*, William Smith (4 vol., 1868; rev. & ed. H. B. Hackett & Ezra Abbot, elec. acc. in *Online Bible* software, Ken Hamel).

²² The word ἀύγῃ, translated "break of day" in v. 11, does not contribute one way or another to the question of whether the days discussed began in the evening or at midnight (or any other time). It simply indicates the beginning of light, the time of dawn. It is a *hapax legomenon* in the NT, but appears in the LXX in Isaiah 59:9; 2 Maccabees 12:9, in both cases referring simply to light or brightness.

²³ Consider also the union created between the assembling, the preaching, and the celebration of the Supper—a union that provides yet further evidence that Acts 20:7ff. describes a church assembly, rather than merely the record of some meal.

²⁴ The ending of the Lord's day at midnight is also inferred from the different form of discourse on Monday morning. Paul "preached" (διαλέγομαι) on the Lord's day (v. 7), but in the early hours of Monday morning he "talked" (ὁμιλέω), v. 11.

conclusion that the preaching of Paul mentioned in v. 9²⁵ was not that Luke wrote of in v. 7.²⁶ Evening-to-evening days would also require that the church came together on the first day to celebrate the Supper, but they were unable to execute their intention. The first day, that on which the brethren at Troas came together to break bread, and upon which Paul preached to them, concluded at midnight, and “on the morrow” (v. 7), which began after midnight, as soon as the sun came up, Paul departed. Midnight-to-midnight days suit the natural conclusion that the preaching and the breaking of bread²⁷ happened on the first day of the week.

3.) Consider that they had arrived at Troas on the previous Lord’s day/first day as well, v. 6. This practice of staying seven days at a location, which was not unique to their stay at Troas, but their regular practice, Acts 21:4; 28:14. This was so that they could be present at the worship on the first day that went on at the beginning and end of their journeys. Note that in Acts 20, although they stayed through the Jewish sabbath, no worship, no celebration of the Lord’s supper, nothing at all is mentioned on that day—only on the first day. There are no examples in the New Testament anywhere of churches meeting for worship specifically on Saturday²⁸—or, for that matter, specifically on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday. All the examples are Sunday—and the church is to get “doctrine” from these examples, as from everything else in Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16-17). (Sometimes churches met every day of the week, Acts 2:47; but apart

²⁵ The same Greek verb, διαλέγομαι, is used in both verses.

²⁶ If evening-to-evening days are in view, then the preaching in v. 9 would be on the second day of the week, while v. 7 speaks of preaching on the first day. The distinction is not tenable.

²⁷ See point #4 for evidence that the breaking of bread happened between 9 p. m. and midnight on Sunday, rather than early on Monday morning.

²⁸ Indeed, the fact that Paul (and his company, Acts 13:13-14) regularly took the opportunity to go to synagogues on the sabbath to preach to the unsaved Jews and Gentiles there (Acts 13:14, 44; 16:13; 17:2; 18:4) evidences that the churches were definitely not meeting on Saturday—evangelism is very important, but one does not skip church to go to a synagogue—this would never be right to do, and an apostle would hardly do it as a regular practice—the fact that Paul and the entire group of people that were with him were going to synagogues on the sabbath to evangelize the lost shows that church assemblies were definitely not held on that day. (Preachers in NT Baptist churches today would certainly be glad to go copy the Pauline practice of visiting synagogues on the sabbath as well, if the Jews that met there would let the Christians preach the gospel to them and persuade them that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, as they allowed Paul to do. They would then, as Paul did, lead the converted Jews to be baptized and worship with the church of Christ on the first day of the week.)

That some sabbatarians would attempt to reverse this testimony and argue from evangelistic preaching in synagogues that churches were meeting on Saturday is incredible. Sabbatarians who argue this way, if they were to be consistent, would not meet in their “Christian” sabbath-observing assemblies on Saturday, but would go to Jewish synagogues to worship with Jews who do not believe that Jesus Christ is the Messiah.

In addition to the testimony in Acts against Saturday church assemblies based on the practice of evangelistic synagogue preaching on that day, Paul explicitly taught in his epistles that the sabbath was a type of salvation-rest in Christ (Hebrews 4) and is abolished (Colossians 2:16-17), so that Christians have no necessity of putting Saturday above any other day (Romans 14:5-6). The church at Galatia presents the only example in the New Testament of Christians who wished to worship on Saturday—and they were taught to do so by false teachers (Galatians 4:17-18), contrary to Paul’s instruction to them—and their practice of Saturday worship made the apostle fear that they were not really saved (Galatians 4:9-11, 19-20), and exhort them to stop following the Jewish ceremonial regulations and return to the liberty they had in Christ instead (Galatians 4:12; 4:21-5:13).

from special occasions like this, “revival meetings,” as it were, there is no record of them assembling particularly on any day except Sunday.) In contrast, on the first day:

- 1.) The Lord Jesus rose from the dead (Mark 16:9).
- 2.) Many dead saints arose from the grave (Matthew 27:52-53).
- 3.) The disciples (who were the church—note that the assembly was not the apostles alone, Luke 24:33-34) were assembled (Mark 16:10-11)²⁹ on the first day, when the Lord appeared to and met with them (Matthew 28:8-10; Luke 24:33-34; John 20:19-23).
- 4.) The church received Christ’s blessing (John 20:19).
- 5.) The church received the gift of the Holy Spirit (John 20:22).
- 6.) The church was commissioned to preach the gospel to the whole world (John 20:21-23; Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:17-20; Luke 24:47).
- 7.) The Lord Jesus ascended to heaven on the first day, was seated at the right hand of the Father, and was made Head of all (John 20:17; Ephesians 1:20; cf. Luke 24:13-53; Mark 16:14-19).
- 8.) The gospel of the risen Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1-4) was first preached on the first day (Luke 24:33-34).
- 9.) The church rejoiced in Christ on the first day (Luke 24:41; John 20:20).
- 10.) The Lord Jesus explained the Scriptures to the disciples on the first day (Luke 24:27, 45).
- 11.) On the first day, the work involved in the elect’s justification was completed (Romans 4:25).
- 12.) Before Pentecost, the church was meeting on successive first days of the week and communing with the risen Christ at that time (John 20:19; 24-26)³⁰—the Bible skips over the sabbath, and no record of the church assembling, or of them having corporate fellowship with the Lord Jesus on Saturday, is given.
- 13.) On the first day, Christ baptized the church with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2). Pentecost was on the 50th day after the sabbath following the wave offering (Leviticus 23:15,16). Thus Pentecost was always on a Sunday. On the first day of the week, God

²⁹ The aorist tenses for “went” and “told,” the present plural participles for “mourned” and “wept,” the aorist plural participle “had heard,” and the aorist plural verb “believed not” all point to the fact that the church (“those that had been with him,” v. 10; cf. Mark 1:36; 3:14; John 6:66), was gathered in one place that first Lord’s day when the Savior arose, and Mary came and delivered her message to them in their assembly, rather than seeking them out one by one in different locations and speaking to them. Ἀναστὰς δὲ πρῶτῃ πρώτῃ σαββάτου ἐφάνη πρῶτον Μαρία τῇ Μαγδαληνῇ, ἀφ’ ἧς ἐκβεβλήκει ἑπτὰ δαιμόνια. ἐκείνη πορευθεῖσα ἀπήγγειλε τοῖς μετ’ αὐτοῦ γενομένοις, πενθοῦσι καὶ κλαίουσι. κάκεινοι ἀκούσαντες ὅτι ζῆ καὶ ἐθεάθη ὑπ’ αὐτῆς ἠπίστησαν. (Mark 16:9-11).

³⁰ Christ gave His orders, filled with second person plural forms, when “the disciples were assembled” (Jn 20:19). Christ was “in the midst” (εἰς τὸ μέσον, 20:19) of them, as He was the next Sunday evening (Jn 20:26)—He had promised that He would be in the midst of His church (Mt 18:20; the church is “gathered together” (συνάγω), and Christ is “in the midst” (ἐν μέσῳ) of them; see also Heb 2:12, “in the midst of the church,” ἐν μέσῳ ἐκκλησίας). Luke also records Christ’s dwelling “in the midst” (ἐν μέσῳ, Lu 24:36) of the disciples at the resurrection appearance of John 20:19. He was seen later to walk “in the midst” (ἐν μέσῳ) of the seven churches of Revelation (Rev 1:13, 2:1). Thus, that Christ was “in the midst” of His assembly, as seen twice in John 20, indicates a church context for the resurrection appearance of 20:19ff.

gave three thousand converts the gift of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:38) and added them to the church through baptism (Acts 2:41, 47).

14.) Christians met for worship on the first day (as here in Acts 20:7; they had their offerings then as well, 1 Corinthians 16:2). The first day is the “Lord’s day” (Revelation 1:10).³¹

³¹ If John had seen the vision of Christ on Saturday, he would surely have said, “I was in the Spirit on the sabbath.” Nothing in Scripture equates or hints that Saturday is the Lord’s Day—this term is employed in conradistinction to the Saturday sabbath. Early Christianity clearly understood the “Lord’s day” to be the first day of the week, not the sabbath. For example: “[T]hose who had lived in antiquated practices came to newness of hope, no longer keeping the Sabbath but living in accordance with the Lord’s day, on which our life also arose through him and his death . . . At the dawning of the Lord’s day He arose from the dead, according to what was spoken by Himself, ‘As Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly, so shall the Son of man also be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.’ The day of the preparation, then, comprises the passion; the Sabbath embraces the burial; the Lord’s Day contains the resurrection.” (Epistle of Ignatius to the Magnesians 9:1; and his Epistle to the Trallians, chapter 9; both c. A. D. 107) Of course, there are many other very early references to Christian worship on the first day that do not explicitly employ the formula “the Lord’s day” (ἡ κυριακὴ ἡμέρα) as well. “Finally, he says to them: ‘I cannot bear your new moons and sabbaths.’ You see what he means: it is not the present sabbaths that are acceptable[. . .]. This is why we spend the eighth day in celebration, the day on which Jesus both arose from the dead and, after appearing again, ascended into heaven” (Barnabas 15:8-9, c. A. D. 120). “And we afterwards continually remind each other of these things. And the wealthy among us help the needy; and we always keep together; and for all things wherewith we are supplied, we bless the Maker of all through His Son Jesus Christ, and through the Holy Ghost. And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given. . . . And they who are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succours the orphans and widows and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in bonds and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need. But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Saviour on the same day rose from the dead. For He was crucified on the day before that of Saturn (Saturday); and on the day after that of Saturn, which is the day of the Sun [Sunday], having appeared to His apostles and disciples, He taught them these things, which we have submitted to you also for your consideration. (Justin Martyr, Apology, I, 67, c. A. D. 140). “If St. John had intended to specify the Sabbath [with the expression “the Lord’s Day,” instead of the first of the week] . . . it would have been strange indeed that every ecclesiastical writer for the first five centuries should have avoided any approach to such confusion. . . . Σάββατον [Sabbath] is never used by them for the first day, [and] Κυριακὴ [the Lord’s Day] is never used by them for the seventh day” (*Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, John McClintock & James Strong. elec. acc. AGES software library, Rio, WI: 2000.)

One notes also that not only did believers in the ancient church period worship on the first day of the week, but so did the medieval Waldenses. These believers, “as they observed no other day of rest or holiday, than Sunday . . . were styled Insabbathi or Insabbathas, that is, Sabbathless, or not observing Sabbaths” (pg. 277, *The Blood Theater or Martyr’s Mirror of the Defenseless Christians, Who Baptized Only Upon Confession of Faith, and Who Suffered and Died for the Testimony of Jesus, Their Saviour, From the Time of Christ to the Year A. D. 1660*, by Thieleman J. Van Braght, trans. from 1660 ed. by Joseph F. Sohm (2nd Eng. ed). Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1999. Modern Baptists are the descendents of the medieval Waldenses and of the ancient churches; as the Reformed historians Dr. J. J. Durmont & Dr. Ypeig wrote, “[The Baptists] descended from the tolerably pure evangelical Waldenses. . . . They were,

4.) The church at Troas celebrated the Supper on the first day of the week.

a.) They came together on the first day with the intention of celebrating communion that day, v. 7. Even if one wished to maintain, contrary to the sense of the passage, that the actual celebration of the Supper took place Monday morning in this unusual situation of very long preaching by the departing apostle, the intent of the church to celebrate the ordinance on the first day is plain—the disciples “came together to break bread . . . upon the first *day* of the week.”

b.) Not only did the church intend to celebrate communion on the first day—illustrating that the practice of Christian churches was to observe the Supper on the first day of the week, not the sabbath or any other day—but they actually did so sometime after nine p. m. but before Monday morning (v. 11),³² despite the length of Paul’s preaching.³³

therefore, in existence long before the Reformed Church . . . We have seen that the Baptists, who were formerly called Anabaptists . . . were the original Waldenses; and who have long in the history of the Church, received the honor of that origin. On this account the Baptists may be considered the only Christian community which has stood since the Apostles; and as a Christian society which has preserved pure the doctrine of the gospel through all ages.” Modern Baptists, like the true churches in early church history and the believing remnant in the Dark Ages, likewise assemble for worship on the first day of the week, not on Saturday.

³² The expression for breaking bread is very similar in v. 7 and v. 11—both verses have a form of *klao* followed by a non-articular *artos* in the accusative case. The breaking of bread in v. 11 represents the fulfillment of the gathering for that purpose in v. 7. It violates the sense of the context and the parallels in grammar to contend that Acts 20:7 records an intention of the church to celebrate the Lord’s Supper, but four verses later the breaking of bread refers to a mere meal, leaving the purpose of v. 7 unfulfilled in the record of the chapter.

³³ Verse 7c-e, ὁ Παῦλος διελέγετο αὐτοῖς, μέλλων ἐξιέναι τῇ ἐπαύριον, παρέτεινέ τε τὸν λόγον μέχρι μεσονυκτίου, could be rendered as follows: “Paul was preaching to them (imperfect tense verb), ready to depart on the morrow, and was extending his word/message as far as midnight.” Midnight is a summary of the time that Paul ended his discourse—it was not that he stopped speaking at that very minute. Verse eight obviously took place before midnight, as did Eutychus’ sitting in the window, falling asleep during Paul’s preaching, and sinking down with sleep (v. 9). His fall from the third loft and being taken up dead interrupted Paul’s discourse, and unless one wished to press that Paul spoke “as far as” midnight to the unnatural conclusion that the youth fell out the window and died the very instant the “clocks struck twelve” the designation of “midnight” as the time for the events of v. 9-10 is a summary statement, and the interruption of Paul’s preaching by Eutychus’ fall, and the apostle’s work of raising the youth from the dead, happened near midnight, but before that exact moment. Thus the breaking of bread of v. 11 took place close to but before the actual moment of midnight, the specific moment that the second day of the week commenced.

The New Testament, and the Romans, divided the night into four watches, “which were described either according to their numerical order, as in the case of the ‘fourth watch’ (Mt 14:25; comp. Joseph. Ant. v. 6, 5), or by the terms ‘even, midnight, cock-crowing, and morning’ (Mr 13:35). These terminated respectively at 9 P. M., midnight, 3 A. M., and 6 A. M.” (“Watches of Night,” in *Dictionary of the Bible*, William Smith (4 vol., 1868; rev. & ed. H. B. Hackett & Ezra Abbot, elec. acc. in *Online Bible* software, Ken Hamel)). Thus the watch “midnight” designated the time between 9 p. m. and the specific moment modernly designated as midnight. This is further evidence that the expression on Acts 20:7e indicates that Paul ended his discourse, and the celebration of communion took place, late Sunday evening, but before the start of Monday morning. Note the use of “midnight,” without any qualification, to specifically designate the three hour period between 9 p. m. and 12:00 a. m. in Mark 13:35.

The verb *παρτείνω*, “continue/extend,” in Acts 20:7 is a *hapax legomenon* in the New Testament. It appears, however, in the LXX (Genesis 49:13; Numbers 23:28; 2 Samuel 2:29; Ezekiel 27:13; Psalm 35:11; Judith 7:3; Ode 14:46), and those appearances support the view that the time spoken of

c.) The celebration of the Supper in the second watch of the night likely formed a close approximation to the time that the Lord Jesus instituted the Supper. A Passover meal could not be eaten until the sun went down and, having started the normal meal during the first watch of the night (“even,” cf. Matthew 26:20; Mark 14:17), the first communion meal would have taken place either very near the start of the second watch (“midnight”) or during it. Furthermore, it is very likely that the church would have celebrated the supper even earlier than it did, had Paul not prolonged his discourse to such an extent before the ordinance was practiced.

d.) Note that there is no passage in the entire Bible that even remotely indicates that churches gathered on the sabbath, instead of on the first day of the week, to celebrate the Lord’s Supper.

Conclusion:

Acts 20:7 provides strong evidence that NT churches assembled for worship and participated in the church ordinances on the first day of the week.

See for further information:

The Sabbath and the Lord’s Day, Charles Lee Feinberg, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 95:378 (April 1938) p. 172-194.

The Doctrine of the Sabbath in the Old and New Testaments, Gary G. Cohen, *Grace Journal* 6:2 (Spring 1965) pgs. 7-15.

in Acts 20:7 could not by any means have extended beyond the moment of midnight, but must have ended during that the second watch of the night. None of the LXX uses allow for any further extent in time beyond the point, place, or other thing found in conjunction with the verb. Nor do the NT uses of , “until/as far as/up to,” support any extension of Paul’s preaching beyond μεσονύκτιον (Matthew 11:23; 13:30; 28:15; Mark 13:30; Acts 10:30; 20:7; Romans 5:14; 15:19; Ephesians 4:13; Philippians 2:8, 30; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 2:9; Hebrews 3:6, 14; 9:10; 12:4). Paul did not continue his discourse into a moment of Monday; it was concluded, and the Supper commenced, late on the first day of the week.