

Sunday in Troas

Acts 20:6b-12

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 11-22-2008

Introduction

When I told Kathy that I was going to be preaching on Eutychus – the guy that Paul killed with a long sermon, she pointed to a perfect concluding Sabbath hymn. It starts, “Safely through another week.” Apparently it was written by someone who had been spared death during a long Puritan sermon in the 1700’s. We won’t be singing that hymn this morning. It hits too close to home. But the story of Eutychus has sparked a great deal of humor down through the ages. Most of it is poking fun at us pastors.

A Reformed pastor told the story of Martin. I noticed he had a bulge in his cheek that looked like chew. Anyway, here’s the story as he told it. Martin was a good guy. He was always volunteering for jobs during the week. He loved the singing, gave testimonies of the reality of God’s grace in his life, was a generous giver, and was just an already good church member. In fact, he was just as enthusiastic as Eutychus to go to church. But without fail, part way through every sermon he would start to nod off to sleep and after half an hour wake up thoroughly refreshed. His wife would elbow him, but without much effect. One day, his wife brought something that she knew in the past had made him almost pass out with the smell. She brought some smelly Limburger cheese wrapped in Saran Wrap, and when he nodded off to sleep, she slipped the Limburger under his nose. He didn’t wake up. But he did talk in his sleep, saying fairly loudly, “Martha, you’ve got your feet on my pillow.” Since Martin was already making a nuisance of himself, the pastor thought he would teach him a lesson. He asked everyone that wanted to go to heaven to raise their hands. Everyone except for Martin raised his hand. Then in a loud voice that could raise the dead, he shouted, “And who wants to go to hell?” Martin was startled awake and stood to his feet, thinking it was time to sing. When he looked around and realized that he was the only one standing, he said, “Pastor, I don’t know what we are voting for, but it looks like you and I are the only ones for it.” Well, much as I like the story of Eutychus, and much as it gives us pastors comfort that even Paul had people fall asleep on him, Eutychus won’t be the center of attention in our sermon today.

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The sermon is going to be on a Sunday in Troas. I think this is a beautiful snapshot of a first century Sabbath day, and it's a beautiful snapshot of New Covenant Christianity. In many ways it reminds me of the churches in Ethiopia, where I grew up.

I. Paul celebrated a New Covenant day – “the first day Sabbath.” This is not the Old Covenant Sabbath (which has been abolished), but a new day that the Lord has made.

A. Greek of verse 6 = Ἐν δὲ τῇ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων

1. This is the same form of the word used for the fourth commandment - τῶν σαββάτων (Ex. 20:28 in LXX)

And the first thing I want you to notice is that Luke did indeed treat the first day of the week as a Sabbath day. In your outlines you can see that verse 7 begins with the words, “Ἐν δὲ τῇ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων.” The literal translation of that Greek is, “And on the first day Sabbath.” You can see in your outlines that the word translated “week” in our Bibles is the same word that is used in the Greek version of the fourth commandment in Exodus - σαββάτων (Sabbath). Now obviously the “first day Sabbath” is the first day of the week, but translating it that way obscures the fact that Luke explicitly calls it a Sabbath.

2. However, whereas the Old Testament used the word “seventh” (ἑβδόμη) before the Sabbath¹ the New Testament Lord’s Day repeatedly uses the term “first” (μιᾷ) before the Christian Sabbath,² and thus distinguishes it from the Jewish Sabbath which had already been abolished (Col. 2:16-17) by God.

You can see from your outline that the only substitution for the phrase seventh day Sabbath that you find in Exodus 20:10, Leviticus 23:3 and Deuteronomy 5:14 is the word “first” instead of “seventh.” Otherwise they are parallel. In fact, this is identical language to Sabbaths that occurred in the Old Testament on the first or eighth days of a religious festival. If there had

¹ The Greek in the Septuagint for seventh day Sabbath is τῇ ἑβδόμῃ σάββατα (see Ex. 20:10; Lev. 23:3; Deut. 5:14),

² The Greek in the New Testament for first day Sabbath is either τῇ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων or πρώτη σαββάτου (see Matt 28:1; Mark 16:2,9; Luke 24:1; John 20:1,19; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2).

been a Jewish festival occurring on this Sunday, it could have been argued by Seventh Day Adventists that Luke is just referring to the fact that the first day of the week happened to fall on a festival day that was also a Sabbath. The problem is, there was no Jewish festival on this day. You can see that in the Jewish calendar in your outlines. Furthermore, Paul has already abolished all Jewish Sabbaths. In Colossians 2:16-17 Paul said, **“Let no one judge you in food or drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.”** We don’t celebrate any of the Old Covenant days according to Paul – at least not as a mandate. If we thought Old Covenant days were still binding upon Christians then we would in effect be saying that Jesus has not come yet. Those days were at the end of the week to symbolize the fact that Old Testament saints still had to look forward to salvation being accomplished. It would be future to them – at the end of the week – at the end of their age.

3. Each Gospel account describes the resurrection as ending one Sabbath (the Jewish Sabbath) and beginning a new “first day Sabbath” Mark 16:1-2 is especially strong, saying, “when the [Jewish] Sabbath had passed away³... on the first day Sabbath...”

But once Jesus died and said, “It is finished,” and was raised from the dead, all Old Covenant days were abolished. In my book on the Sabbath I document this in much greater detail. For now I just want to mention that each Gospel account describes the resurrection as abolishing a Sabbath and instituting a brand new Sabbath day. Matthew 28:1 says, **“In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day Sabbath.”** One had to end before the next could begin. Mark 16:1-2 is particularly strong because it has a verb that indicates that the Jewish Sabbath has completely passed away, and then speaks of a first day Sabbath.

4. Paul had previously written a command that Christians celebrate their gatherings on the “first day Sabbath: - “...as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: on the first day Sabbath let each of you ...” (1 Cor. 16:1-2)

This means that while no Old Testament days are binding any longer, there is a New Testament day that is binding. 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 speaks of

³ Parker comments: "In these words the evangelist says the (Jewish) Sabbath "was past," and he uses the verb διαγινομαι in the Second Aorist, signifying that the action was complete. The preposition δια in composition gives intensity to the verb to show that the transition of time was entirely finished through to the very end..." in *The Sabbath Transferred*, p 43.

a kind of day-keeping that is appropriate to the New Covenant in which we live. It says, “**as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also; on the first day Sabbath let each of you...**” and he gives instructions for their Sabbath gatherings. Those words couldn’t be said of Old Testament Sabbaths because Paul has just finished writing the book of Romans where he says in Romans 14 those Old Covenant days are no longer binding. He insists that you can treat all Jewish days alike. Some want to celebrate a Passover, and others don’t, and so long as those people don’t impose the celebration on the church, either option is OK on a private level. But it is clear from Romans 14 and Colossians 2 that the church may not make Saturday binding on worship because it is an Old Covenant day. Seventh Day Adventists want to move us back to the Old Covenant. However, Paul speaks with entirely different language about Sunday. He doesn’t speak of the first-day Sabbath as an option. He says that he has given *orders*; he says you *must* do it, and he gives a *command* concerning first-day-Sabbath-keeping. So that in a nutshell is my argument for why I call the first day of the week a Sabbath. It’s not because I want to bring you back under the Old Covenant. This is a day of rejoicing, celebration, relaxation, fellowship and feasting upon God’s Word. It’s not a fast day from food, but a feast day. It’s not a fast day from Scripture but a feast day on the Word of God. And boy, does Paul give them a feast. I think they were overstuffed. They were so stuffed that Eutychus falls out of a window. And I don’t want to be hearing lots of Amen’s or “I can relate to that.”

5. However, this was bucking culture and they accommodate those who had to work by meeting later in the day (implied in v. 7-11)

But lest anyone be tempted to put people under a Puritan bondage to the Sabbath, I want you to notice that this church was meeting in the evening or late afternoon. That’s significant. Now some people might explain it away by saying that Paul was simply following the Jewish pattern of starting the Sabbath the evening before. They measured days from sundown to sundown. But as we will see, that doesn’t work. It’s dark, it’s the first day of the week, and Luke says that Paul will leave the next day, which means he would leave on the second day of the week. But if he used Jewish reckoning, then Paul would have left on Sunday, the first day of the week. It would not be the next day. That interpretation absolutely will not work.

No, there is a better explanation for what is happening here. Pagan employers did not want to let their employees off for the day, and the early church found it necessary to accommodate this tough situation by having

church later in the evening. That doesn't mean they didn't have church in the morning as well. But an evening service helped to accommodate those who could not get time off from work.

Now that's instructive to me. This shows sensitivity to the culture. The early church tried the best they could to honor the Sabbath, but they recognized that it was not always possible. We know from the first three centuries that try as they might, many Christians could not get Sunday mornings off from work. So the church tried to work with them.

But look at the sacrifice that they made in order to try to get in a full Sabbath. They were up all night. I'm sure that all of them were pretty tired for work the next day. But it was their way of seeking to honor the Lord. I should hasten to say that I don't think they stayed up all night every Sunday. But you can see where their hearts are at in this passage.

B. Paul's travels illustrate that he did not worship with the churches on Saturdays (20:3,6,7,11,16; 21:1-3,4,7,8,10,15,17). If F.N. Lee is correct, there were no Sundays in which Paul traveled. However, he calculates based on 56 AD. I believe Paul was traveling in 55 AD.

We can see another hint of the way Paul honored the first-day Sabbath, in the way in which he travelled. Dr. Francis Nigel Lee goes through the whole book of Acts to show that the early church honored the Lord's Day. I won't go into all the specifics. In fact, the chronology offered by different scholars was so difficult to present in written text that I have included a calendar of April and May from the year 55 AD. There are eight Sundays documented in chapters 20 and 21. On page 749 of his commentary, Simon Kistemaker outlines the relevant facts. But Francis Nigel Lee does even more detailed work. It does make a difference what year you are working in. Lee thinks this takes place in 56 AD, and he has Paul resting every Sunday. I think this takes place in 55 AD and I see Paul traveling on one Sunday. It doesn't matter who is right, because either year you use you can see Paul deliberately traveling on Saturday when he did not need to. It's almost like is making a point.

« April 0055 »						
change view: [event list calendar grid] [month entire year]						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Worship	Travel to Philippi			1 Pesach III (CH'M)	2 Pesach IV (CH'M)	3 Pesach V (CH'M)
4 Worship Pesach VI (CH'M)	5 Pesach VII	6 Pesach VIII	7 A normal 2-day trip to Troas becomes a five-day trip			
11	12	13 Stays in Troas for seven days		14 Rosh Chodesh Iyyar	15 Rosh Chodesh Iyyar	16
18 Worship	19 Travel to Miletus – four days. Sails past Ephesus because of time.			20	21	22
25 Worship	23 Call Ephesian Elders		24 elders travel to M.	26	27	28
	29 Travels to Coos, Rhodos, Patara, past Cyprus to arrive in Tyre on Saturday					

« May 0055 »						
change view: [event list calendar grid] [month entire year]						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Worship						1
2 Worship Lag B'Omer	3 After being with	4 disciples, remains	5 in Tyre for another	6 seven days	7	8
9 Worship	10 Travel to Ptolemais, the Caesarea		11	12	13	14 Rosh Chodesh Sivan
16 Worship	17	18 Erev Shavuot	19 Shavuot I	20 Shavuot II	21	22
23 Worship	24	25	26	27	28	29
30 Worship	31					

When you examine those two charts you will see that Paul wasn't even trying to keep Saturday as a rest day. And that makes sense since he has already abolished all such Jewish days for the New Covenant church (Colossians 2:16-17). He feels under no obligation to the Saturday Sabbath.

If the year 55 AD is the correct date then here is what you see with regard to the first day of the week. On March 28 Paul worships in Ephesus. He travels the next two days to Philippi. He had originally planned to take a trip south, but he takes two days north and hides out from the Jews trying to kill him. He worships on Sunday, April 4, and stays in Philippi until the feast of Unleavened Bread is finished. On either Tuesday or Wednesday (there is debate on whether it is April 6 or 7, Paul heads to Troas. Ordinarily this is just a two-day trip, or three days max, and so there would have been plenty of time to get to Troas before Sunday. But commentaries believe that he may have faced adverse winds, and the trip takes much longer than usual, taking five days according to the text. This indicates that Paul was trying to get to

Troas to spend Sunday the 11th and the 18th with the church. But he misses the 11th and doesn't arrive in Troas until some time on Monday. But you can see that for all the rest of the Sundays in those two months Paul has arranged his schedule around the first day of the week. One or two might be chalked up to coincidence. But Francis Nigel Lee shows how this is the pattern throughout Acts. It is quite deliberate.

What are some conclusions we can learn from this? I learn that to the degree that we *can* plan to keep the Sabbath on the first day of the week, we should strive to do so. But if we are not able to because of providential hindrance, we should not lose sleep over it. Sometimes people are required to travel on Sunday. Paul flexes with God's providences. When you take Paul's attitude toward travel and the church's attempt to accommodate the work schedules of employees who can't get off, you can see that the church was gracious, flexible and understanding towards those who providentially couldn't keep the Sabbath. There doesn't appear to be any church judgment. On the other hand, to the degree that we can plan our schedules, Paul is a great example of *trying* to plan for great Sabbath rests on the first day of the week. So I think this is a great passage to turn to in order to demonstrate the continuing validity of the Sabbath. But it is also a great passage to turn to in order to show changes and that Paul is not puritanically rigid.

C. For Paul, days no longer began at sundown (6pm). With the resurrection they began at dawn (v. 7 with v. 11). The resurrection of Jesus created a new calendar (AD), a new set of holy days ("first day") and a new reckoning of days ("next day...daybreak"). The New Covenant makes all things new.

But there is one more thing related to the Sabbath that I see in this passage. For years I have vacillated on whether the Sabbath should be kept from sun-down to sun-down, morning to morning, or midnight to midnight. I'm still not sure it is a critical issue. But if you are curious, here is a passage that shows that Luke was treating it from sunrise to sunrise. This shows that he wasn't following the Jewish pattern of sundown to sundown, or the Roman pattern of midnight to midnight. It was a new pattern of sunrise to sunrise. I don't think this is a Biblical mandate, but I do think there is something symbolic in this that is pretty cool.

Verse 7 says **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.** The facts we can gather from this are: 1) First, that they gathered on the first day of the week.

2) Second, It's still the first day when it is dark. 3) Third, as they gather, Paul is ready to depart the next day. He's got his bags packed, so to speak. 4) Fourth, the purpose of gathering was to break bread in communion on the first day of the week. 5) Fifth, Paul doesn't get to communion till after midnight in verse 11. 6) Sixth, they leave at daybreak on Monday morning. This indicates that the next day didn't start until daybreak. I don't know any other way of interpreting this. I've tried the midnight to midnight and it doesn't work. They were still celebrating the first day of the week after midnight.

What's the significance of this? When Jesus rose triumphant and ascended on high to heaven, He was making all things new. There was a new temple, a new geography, and new gifts of the Spirit. And this is one of several passages that indicates that with the rising of the symbolic Sun and the dawning of His kingdom, Jesus gives a whole new approach to time. Colossians 2 throws out all the Old Covenant time keeping. No longer will things start in darkness and proceed to the dawning of the kingdom. Why? Because the kingdom has come. Because the end of their age or their week has come. Now that the kingdom has come, the days start with sunrise. So there is a new calendar that divides history into BC and AD. It wasn't formalized till later, but it is there. There is a new calendar of holy days – the first day Sabbath – something only prophesied to happen in the Old Testament. And now there is a new way of looking even at the division of days. This may only be hinted at, but I believe it is one of many indications that the New Covenant makes all things new. So the first thing you would notice in Troas on a Sunday would be a celebration of the Sabbath.

II. Paul celebrated the New Covenant meal (vv. 7,11)

The second thing you would notice on a Sunday in Troas would be the celebration of the Lord's Supper. And it's not celebrated in the Old Covenant way. It's a New Covenant celebration. They anticipate the Lord's Supper in verse 7 and they actually celebrate it after midnight in verse 11.

Why do I call it a celebration? For three reasons: First, this is not like the Old Covenant meals, which looked forward to salvation yet to be accomplished. That's reason enough to celebrate. But this is more than that. This looks back to Christ's words – "It is finished." The victory is won, and all that is left for us is to stand in that guaranteed victory by faith. Second, we value the many covenant blessings that are pledged to us as we "cut covenant" with God in the Lord's Supper. This is a means of grace. We don't want people robbing us of that weekly blessing. No. This is the place

where God's blessings flow. We celebrate it. We rejoice in it. Third, it is a reminder that if He is for us, who can be against us? There is every reason to rejoice when we can participate in the Lord's Table and every reason to grieve when we are cut off from it. To be cut off from God's table is to be cut off from God's fellowship.

Now I said that we don't want people robbing us of that weekly blessing. But there are a lot of people out there who think that if you celebrate the Lord's Supper ever week it will spoil the preciousness of it. They usually advocate either monthly communion or four times a year. Well, if you believe that, I suggest that you kiss your spouse only four times a year. Anything more might spoil the preciousness of that kiss. Or I suggest that we only preach once a quarter and sing once a quarter in order not to spoil the preciousness of those things. Of course, I am being facetious. We can enjoy lovemaking, eating feasts, fellowship and many other things as precious without having them only four times a year or only once a month. In fact, the opposite usually happens. People who only celebrate it four times a year or monthly begin to think of it as unimportant and dread the intrusion when it does come. So let me just comment on this subject briefly.

Weekly communion is indeed hinted at here. The first day of the week is defined in verse 7 as "**when the disciples came together to break bread.**" Verse 7 says, "**Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread.**" The Sabbath was the time for breaking bread. That's only a hint, and it could be interpreted differently. But Calvin pointed out that if the Lord's Supper takes over not just the Passover, but also every Old Testament communion meal (as 1 Corinthians 10 explicitly affirms), then it should be celebrated as often as the Old Testament fellowship meals were - every week. And of course, other Scriptures indicate that this was indeed the practice of the early church. Acts 2:42 says that the disciples "**continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.**" They were steadfast in those elements of worship. That implies two things: First, wherever public worship occurred with apostolic doctrine, fellowship and prayers, there communion also occurred. That by itself argues for weekly communion. Second, the continuing steadfastly in breaking of bread is hard to interpret as being only once a year or four times a year. Acts 2 is describing at most a period of months in that chapter. Throughout that time they continued steadfastly in breaking bread.

The only logical alternative to weekly communion is once a year communion (as in the Passover). Nowhere could you get a monthly cycle

from the Bible. But (as I've just mentioned) 1 Corinthians 10 explicitly ties communion to all the Old Testament temple meals (not just Passover), and secondly, 1 Corinthians 11 explicitly says that Communion was to be celebrated "**when you come together**" (verse 17), "**when you come together as a church**" (verse 18), "**when you come together in one place**" (verse 20), "**when you come together to eat**" (verse 33) and a warning of "**lest you come together for judgment**" (v. 34), which implied that whenever they came together they partook unworthily – but they partook. So if you were a visitor to Troas on any given Sunday, you would see the church glorying in the Sabbath, glorying in the Lord's Supper, and thirdly – glorying in the preaching of the word.

III. Paul gives a New Covenant sermon (v. 7-9)

A. The hunger – shows the reality of Christian life

And verses 7-9 show what a hunger these people had for the word. Verse 7 ends by saying, "**...Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.**" After the fiasco in verses 8-10, verse 11 says, "**Now when he had come up, had broken bread and eaten, and talked a long while, even till daybreak, he departed.**" Some commentaries assume that they have been meeting most of the day on Sunday. But let's assume they started meeting around 6 pm or 7pm. Even at that late hour it meant that they met for eleven or twelve hours. And a good chunk of that was spent in listening to the Word. Now I doubt that their regular worship services lasted that long. It was no doubt because they wanted to get every bit out of the Apostle Paul that they could before he left the next day. But it does show a hunger.

To me this implies the genuine reality of their Christian life. Peter tells us that newborn spiritual babes hunger for the milk of the Word. When we don't hunger for it, we are spiritually sick. There is something wrong.

B. Paul's accommodation – shows that services were no mere formality

And Paul accommodates their hunger by staying up all night. This is not a paradigm of what we should do every Sunday. This was a special time when they wouldn't be able to be around Paul's much longer. He's going to be able to sleep on the ship, so he sacrifices to teach them all that he can. I have had some groups in Asia – especially in the countryside – who are so hungry for teaching that they get up at 4 in the morning so that they can get their two hours of prayer in, then it is sometimes teaching till midnight

minus breakfast, lunch and supper – and sometimes an afternoon nap. I praise the Lord that it's not quite so rigorous in the cities. But New Covenant people in Troas were celebrating the preaching of the Word. If they were willing to listen at this great length, you know that they looked forward to the shorter messages each Lord's Day.

IV. Death interrupts this Sabbath celebration (vv. 9-10), and New Covenant Christians are still subject to sorrow, pain and tears.

A. Death continues to visit us, as does sorrow, pain and tears – we are in the “already not yet”

So if you were a visitor to Troas on any given Sunday, you would see the church glorying in the Sabbath, glorying in the Lord's Supper, glorying in the preaching of His Word, and glorying in the comfort that God's grace brings in the midst of pain and suffering. On this particular Sunday, death visited their group. Verses 8-9: **“There were many lamps in the upper room where they were gathered together. And in a window sat a certain young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep. He was overcome by sleep; and as Paul continued speaking, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead.”** He wasn't just unconscious. Luke as a physician knows that Eutychus is dead. Literally it means that he was taken up a corpse.

And death and suffering continues to visit the people of God. It is not until the Second Coming that Romans 8 says that the redemption of our bodies occurs. It is not until the Second Coming that 1 Corinthians 15 says, **“then will be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.”** It is not until the Second Coming that Revelation 21 says, **“God will wipe away every tear from their eyes”** (Rev. 21:4). Believers still have tears despite all that Jesus has purchased for us. If you went to Troas during a Sabbath celebration, it would not be without pain, sorrow, suffering and tears. You would probably see someone with his arms around a grieving brother and sister, or praying for another who was sick at home.

This was no Pollyanna church. This was not a church that was in denial (like the Christian Science cult). Though they stood in the victory of Christ's resurrection, they recognized that we are in what theologians call the already-not-yet. We have already received all things in Christ. When He died, rose and ascended on high, Ephesians 1:3 says that God blessed us at

that point with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. That's the already. We already have everything in Jesus. It's there for the claiming. 1 Corinthians 3:21-23 says, "**All things are yours: whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world or life or death, or things present or things to come – all are yours. And you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.**" But some of those "all things" will not be fully experienced until the Second Coming. Christ won the new heavens and new earth. It is so guaranteed that Scripture speaks of us as in some sense having entered it. We are (as Hebrews words it) tasting of the powers of the age to come. But it is not until the Second Coming that the old will be burned up with a fervent heat and the new will be ushered in with all its glory. Though Christ is progressively making all things new in this age, we still look for another country in which death does not dwell. In fact, the pain and suffering makes us look forward to the coming of heaven.

B. Though Christ has conquered death in His resurrection, the final blow to death will not be till the Second Coming.

Why do I even bring this up? It's because I have seen Christians put other Christians into a lot of guilt because they don't see a healing (or in a recent case, they didn't see a resurrection). There is a difference between our experiencing the full redemption of our body (which Romans 8 makes clear won't happen until the Second Coming) and our experiencing foretastes or down payments of that redemption of the body that God gives to us now. As we will see in a moment, I believe that God continues to do miracles. I've got no problem with that. There have even been a few resurrections from the dead in the last 2000 years of history, and I personally know three people who were raised from the dead. God is powerful, merciful, loving and gracious. But He is under no obligation to remove all sickness, pain, suffering or death from the Christian life.

To fail to understand the principle of "the already-not-yet" is to be forced into problematic viewpoints. For example, Full Preterists believe that all prophecy has been fulfilled. There is nothing future that is yet to be fulfilled. We only have the "already." But this means that when they see death and suffering and sin around them, they have to affirm that those things are 1) eternal and 2) that death is natural. For trillions of years to come they believe we will be born, live, die and go to heaven, and new people will be born, live, die and go to heaven, but that death will never cease. There are others who focus so much on the "already" that they insist that death should not be experienced. They believe that God never wills

sickness or death for a believer. He needs to affirm the opposite. On the other hand, there are those who only believe in the “not-yet.” They don’t believe in miracles, healings. In their theology, all of those things are “not yet.” In contrast, we must have the balance of the already-not-yet.

Romans 8 ends by saying that what we can claim with absolute confidence is that nothing in all of creation can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus – not death, not life, not anything related to death or life. Romans 8 assures us that we will face tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril and sword, “**as it is written: ‘For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.’ Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.**” That is what we can glory in, bank on, and find comfort in.

It is this presence of grace that enabled Luke to say in verse 12 that “**they were not a little comforted.**” In other words, they were a lot comforted. But the point is, all Christians need comfort. Why? Because all Christians suffer pain and have tears. So if you went to Troas on any given Sunday, you would see a church that hadn’t learned how to avoid all pain, but had learned with Paul how to be “**exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation.**” And that is an even more remarkable tribute to God’s grace than if all tribulation, suffering and tears had already been removed. Amen? May our church be a church that realistically ministers to each other in our tribulations like Troas did.

V. Troas was able to rejoice in testimonies to the life and power of God in their midst (vv. 10-12)

A. The miracle

Another thing that a visitor might see at Troas would be weekly testimonies to the grace, life and power of God in their midst. On this occasion, it was a particularly remarkable testimony. Verses 10-12: “**But Paul went down, fell on him, and embracing him said, ‘Do not trouble yourselves, for his life is in him.’ Now when he had come up, had broken bread and eaten, and talked a long while, even till daybreak, he departed. And they brought the young man in alive, and they were not a little comforted.**”

The miracle was astounding. Paul was used by God to raise someone from the dead. Liberals don’t believe in such miracles, and commentators like Kuineol, Olshausen, Ewald and DeWette say that the boy was stunned and

that the people supposed he was dead, and Paul finds out that is not the case. They completely explain this away. We rightly reject that anti-supernaturalism. But I sometimes think that evangelicals, who believe in the supernatural in the *Bible*, often deny it in modern times, and sometimes for the same reasons – it’s just too hard to believe; it doesn’t fit our experience. But you know what? Our experience (or lack of experience) is not the judge of truth.

I’m going to go out on a limb here and mention that I believe that such miracles as this one are still on occasion occurring today. And I know that there will be skepticism in some minds. That’s OK. You can’t believe things simply because a man says them. You have to be captive to the Word of God. But I don’t think evangelicals are captive to the Word of God on the issue of miracles. People say that signs of an apostle have passed away. I agree. But Mark 16 also speaks of signs of a believer. I won’t list all the temporary resurrections that I believe have actually occurred, but let me list five. The first report comes from a guy who was originally a real skeptic of these things - the fourth century theologian Augustine (who lived from 354-430 AD). He reported several cases of people who had died and been raised through prayer. One of them had been dead for four days. He already stinketh. And he cites the witnesses. As I mentioned, he used to be skeptical of such things, but he said that these resurrections were undeniable. Two centuries earlier, Irenaeus (130-202 AD) gives similar reports. He said, “as I have said, the dead even have been raised up, and remained among us for many years.” There are death certificates for two others that I know about. But let me get personal. I personally know that my grandma was prayed back to life after she died and said that she experienced heaven. My sister-in-law’s grandma came back to life after she was declared dead in a hospital room. Interestingly, in her case, she died a five-point Arminian and came back a five-point Calvinist. She said that she was thoroughly humbled at the realization of depravity. When my sister-in-law was a child, she was clinically dead, and even had rigor mortis set in. But through prayer she was healed. Though these kinds of things are rare, there is no reason to believe that God cannot on occasion give such a foretaste of the powers of the age to come by giving a temporary coming back to life. It’s not something we can demand, but it is certainly something we can rejoice in.

B. The celebration

And the saints in this church had extra reason to celebrate the Lord’s Supper on that particular night. The Lord’s Supper testifies to the fact that

Christ triumphed over every enemy – even the last enemy death. And whether we see a miracle or do not see a miracle, we can rejoice that we are safe in the arms of Jesus. Every Lord's day we should have conversations with each other of the reality of God's presence in our lives. It might be testifying to how God has given you the victory over some sin, or God's remarkable guidance in your life. Or it may be how God has provided finances in your hour of need, or has answered a prayer to help you find something lost. It really blessed me when Tom shared different stories of how he offered up a simple prayer of help to find something and as soon as he prayed – there it was. Or the testimony might be of how God ministered through some spiritual gift, or a testimony to how you became a Christian. But churches ought to be filled with testimonies to the reality of God's grace, life and power.

C. The comfort

Luke ends this whole section by saying, “**And they brought the young man in alive, and they were not a little comforted.**” What wonderful understatement. Not a little comforted. And that is my prayer for each of you – that the comfort of God's grace would be your constant possession.

Conclusion

This was just a little cameo of what a church could look like. I believe it is one that is realistic, but also honors God. Let's strive to make our church a place of celebration: celebrating the Sabbath, Celebrating the Lord's Supper, celebrating the preaching of the Word, celebrating God's sustaining grace even in the midst of pain and sorrow, and celebrating the reality, power and life of God in our midst. Amen. Let's pray.

Sunday in Troas Acts 20:6b-12

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 11-22-2008

Introduction

- I. Paul celebrated a New Covenant day – “the first day Sabbath.” This is not the Old Covenant Sabbath (which has been abolished), but a new day that the Lord has made.
 - A. Greek of verse 6 = Ἐν δὲ τῇ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων
 1. This is the same form of the word used for the fourth commandment - τῶν σαββάτων (Ex. 20:28 in LXX)
 2. However, whereas the Old Testament used the word “seventh” (ἐβδόμη) before the Sabbath the New Testament Lord’s Day repeatedly uses the term “first” (μιᾷ) before the Christian Sabbath, and thus distinguishes it from the Jewish Sabbath which had already been abolished (Col. 2:16-17) by God.
 3. Each Gospel account describes the resurrection as ending one Sabbath (the Jewish Sabbath) and beginning a new “first day Sabbath” Mark 16:1-2 is especially strong, saying, “when the [Jewish] Sabbath had passed away... on the first day Sabbath...”
 4. Paul had previously written a command that Christians celebrate their gatherings on the “first day Sabbath: - “...as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: on the first day Sabbath let each of you ...” (1 Cor. 16:1-2)
 5. However, this was bucking culture and they accommodate those who had to work by meeting later in the day (implied in v. 7-11)
 - B. Paul’s travels illustrate that he did not worship with the churches on Saturdays (20:3,6,7,11,16; 21:1-3,4,7,8,10,15,17). If F.N. Lee is correct, there were no Sundays in which Paul traveled. However, he calculates based on 56 AD. I believe Paul was traveling in 55 AD.

« April 0055 »							
change view: [event list calendar grid] [month entire year]							
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	
Worship	Travel to Philippi			1 Pesach III (CH*M)	2 Pesach IV (CH*M)	3 Pesach V (CH*M)	
4 Pesach VI (CH*M)	5 Pesach VII	6 Pesach VIII	7 A normal 2-day trip to Troas becomes a five-day trip				10
11	12	13 Stays in Troas for seven days		14 Rosh Chodesh Iyyar	15 Rosh Chodesh Iyyar	17	
18 Worship	19 Travel to Miletus – four days. Sails past Ephesus because of time.			22	23 Call Ephesian Elders	24 elders travel to M.	
25 Worship	26 Travels to Coos, Rhodos, Patara, past Cyprus to arrive in Tyre on Saturday						

« May 0055 »						
change view: [event list calendar grid] [month entire year]						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Worship						1
2 Lag B'Omer	3 After being with disciples, remains in Tyre for another seven days		5	6	7	8
9 Worship	10 Travel to Ptolemais, the Caesarea		12	13	14 Rosh Chodesh Sivan	15 Travel to Jerusalem
16 Worship	17	18 Erev Shavuot	19 Shavuot I	20 Shavuot II	21	22
23 Worship	24	25	26	27	28	29
30 Worship	31					

- C. For Paul, days no longer began at sundown (6pm). With the resurrection they began at dawn (v. 7 with v. 11). The resurrection of Jesus created a new calendar (AD), a new set of holy days (“first day”) and a new reckoning of days (“next day...daybreak”). The New Covenant makes all things new.
- II. Paul celebrated the New Covenant meal (vv. 7,11)
- III. Paul gives a New Covenant sermon (v. 7-9)
 - A. The hunger – shows the reality of Christian life
 - B. Paul’s accommodation – shows that services were no mere formality
- IV. Death interrupts this Sabbath celebration (vv. 9-10), and New Covenant Christians are still subject to sorrow, pain and tears.
 - A. Death continues to visit us, as does sorrow, pain and tears – we are in the “already not yet”
 - B. Though Christ has conquered death in His resurrection, the final blow to death will not be till the Second Coming.
- V. Troas was able to rejoice in testimonies to the life and power of God in their midst (vv. 10-12)
 - A. The miracle
 - B. The celebration
 - C. The comfort

Conclusion