

## THE SIXTH TEXT — JOHN 20 : 19

Whilst this passage records a gathering of Christ's disciples on the evening of the resurrection day, it also explains the reason why they were assembled behind closed doors—"For fear of the Jews". Their motives were unbelief and fear, not faith and devotion.

Some have suggested that the disciples were gathered together to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, but Mark 16:14 and Luke 24:41 show that most of the disciples remained in a state of gloomy unbelief in the resurrection right up till the evening of that day!

## THE SEVENTH TEXT — ACTS 20 : 7

This verse records one isolated meeting of one small-town congregation of Christians on the first day of the week. However, the context shows that it was a special meeting, called for the purpose of farewelling Paul. It was also a unique occasion because, due partly to the accidental death of a young man in the congregation, and his miraculous restoration, the meeting continued all night (vv 8-12).

There is no evidence here that this or any other Christian congregation met **regularly** for worship on the first day of the week. There is no evidence that these or any other Christians devoted the **whole** of each first day to religious exercises. The text shows rather that the all-night farewell meeting was followed, not by a day of rest and worship, but by common, everyday activities, such as travelling. No sacred title is given to the first day, and there is no evidence that the Christians at Troas, or anywhere else, were accustomed to celebrate the Lord's Supper every first day. As a matter of fact, it is impossible to prove from this text that the Communion service was celebrated on this occasion, for there is no mention of the wine, and the term, "the breaking of bread", is frequently applied in the New Testament to a common meal (Luke 24:30, 35; Acts 2:42, 46; 27:35).

So, in order to find in these verses an evidence for Sunday sacredness, we have to read into them a great deal that is not there. Besides, the meeting described began somewhere before midnight either on what we now call Saturday night, or on Sunday night. If it was Saturday night, the meeting began hours **before** our modern Sunday. If it was Sunday night, the meeting continued for hours **after** our modern Sunday, until daybreak on **Monday** morning. Nowhere does the Bible suggest that the conducting of one isolated religious meeting on a certain day, apart from any Divine act of sanctification, makes that day a Sabbath, or a regular weekly day of worship. If the mere holding of a religious meeting automatically sanctified a day, then **every day in the week** would qualify as the Sabbath!

## THE EIGHTH TEXT — I COR. 16 : 2

In spite of a widespread misunderstanding, this passage does not refer to the **public** giving of offerings in regular church services on Sundays. The advice, "Let every one of you **lay by him** in store", refers rather to the **private** laying aside of sums at home, by individuals, for a special "Judaean Relief" appeal. These sums would presently be collected by Paul (or his deputy) on his way to Jerusalem (vv 3, 4).

There is no reference here to the giving of public offerings for the support of the local church or ministry, or for "Foreign Missions", as we think of them today. Nor is there any reference here to any universal or permanent Christian institution, or to any universal or permanent pattern of Christian worship. Paul is certainly not attempting to legislate for the whole Church, or for the entire Christian age. His appeal was prompted by a **local and temporary emergency**, namely, the current hardships of the Judaean believers due to famine and persecution; but this emergency affected only a small section of the Christian community at the middle of the first century.