

Does Paul, in 1 Corinthians 16:2, Teach Sunday Worship?

It was in early January when I finally went along with my neighbors to worship services on Sunday. After listening to the liturgy and hearing a simple sermon on faith and belief, all members were asked to go by a table in the rear of the sanctuary and pick up their box of envelopes for the new year. These were easy enough to find, all arranged alphabetically.

Enroute home in their auto, one of the youngsters tugged at my sleeve and handing me a pastel envelope from the box, asked, “Aren’t these pretty?” They were indeed colorful. Written in bold letters were the words, “Stewardship Envelopes for Every Sunday of the Year.”

Obviously they were offering envelopes intended for each Sunday’s collection plate. On each envelope was written the following verse: “*Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as [Yahweh] has prospered him, that there be no collections when I come, 1 Corinthians 16:2.*”

Upon noting my examination of the envelope my friend quipped, “That makes it pretty plain, doesn’t it, that we are to gather on the first day of the week?” With that my friend stopped at the curb and upon exchanging pleasantries, let me out.

As he drove away I pondered the meaning of the verse. It did not establish the first day of the week as the day of worship at all. Yet, many churches assert that because this verse seemingly commands that an offering be given on the first day of the week, that Sunday is to be the day of worship.

Here is an example of “proof-texting,” where a doctrine is first established and then after a search, a verse is presented to prove the hypothesis. Let us proceed to examine this passage that is used to show Sunday as the New Testament Sabbath.

The previous verse 1 reads, “*Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the assemblies of Galatia, even so do you.*”

The word collection in this passage is **Strong’s Concordance** No. 3048, *logia*, and is translated either gathering or collection. It is not an offering. Paul here speaks of a collection for the saints, the BRETHEN, the body of believers—not for the temple.

This is not a tithe, which is holy to Yahweh. Neither is it a collection to be used to proclaim the Good News or to help reach out to others. It is a collection to be given to the saints, and for a good reason.

Focus Is on the Starving

A close analysis shows that a famine is in progress in Judea, which the prophets, along with Agabus, had earlier prophesied: “And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar” (Acts 11:27-28).

Apparently the famine was especially bad in Judea and the environs of Jerusalem. Lack of food is of course the problem in a famine, and it was decided by the Antioch brethren to send foodstuffs to aid the saints in Judea. Perhaps in their largess these Gentile believers of Antioch

were expressing their gratitude for the knowledge of Yahweh and the Evangel of Yahshua given them by the Jewish assembly now suffering in Jerusalem.

Let's continue with other events relating to 1Corinthians 16:2: "Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea: Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul [Paul]" (Acts 11:29-30). Now the disciples themselves are pitching in to help their starving brethren however they could.

Paul in 1Corinthians 16 is also now urging the brethren in Corinth to set aside foodstuffs for the poor saints at Jerusalem. Some translations assume that the "collection for the saints" means money. However, the "relief" to be sent because of the famine is more likely to have been a collection of fruit, barley, wheat, nuts, dates, figs, cheese, raisins, and other foods common to the area.

Gathering Food Take Time

Let's read the critical passage again: "Upon the first [day] of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as [YHWH] has prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come" (1Cor. 16:2).

Paul asks the Corinthian brethren to gather up foodstuffs and set them aside at home. Nothing is said about gathering in fellowship to worship, nor is worship mentioned or even implied. They were simply to "store up" at home the food and other items in which they had prospered and could share to ease the burdens of the saints in Jerusalem plagued by the famine.

It would be awkward and time-consuming for the brethren to be scurrying around trying to get all the foodstuffs together with Paul standing at the door waiting for them. Cereal grains could be put in containers, as could figs, raisins, and other foods available in Corinth. Paul explains that it would be better to have packed, set aside, and ready to go so that the couriers could pick it up the first part of the week and take it to Judea.

This verse 2 has been widely mistranslated. The word "day" is not in the text and is italicized in some Bibles. It simply says, "On the first of the week..." They are told to set aside the foodstuffs either on Sunday, Monday or even Tuesday, thus avoiding any last minute rushing around once Paul arrived.

It Was Not About Money

Funds are not normally "gathered." Money and coins were ordinarily kept in the home, already "gathered" in a safe place.

The announcement of the plight of the Judean brethren and their needs during the famine would be shared during Sabbath meetings.

The NIV erroneously reads, "On the first day of every week, each one should set aside a sum of money..." The Greek words for money (5536, *chrema*; 694, *argurion*; 2772, *kerma*) do not appear anywhere in this entire chapter. Money is not the collection or gatherings Paul is speaking about in this chapter. It is relief for the famine-stricken saints.

The next verse reads, "And when I come, whomsoever you shall approve by [your] letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem" (1Cor. 16:3). The word "liberality" is not usually considered an offering to Yahweh's work to proclaim the Good News. It is *Strong's* No. 5485, *charis*, meaning graciousness, gratifying, the divine influence upon the heart. "Liberality" here is a gift from the Gentile brethren to those suffering in Jerusalem, given from the heart out of deep love for the brethren.

“Whomsoever” and “them” shows that a number of brethren are required to bring the relief items to Jerusalem, likely a caravan to carry foodstuffs.

Paul shares his teachings with the Corinthian brethren that one who sows sparingly will reap sparingly, and then he goes on to reprove selfishness and urge all to be generous. “For the administration of this service not only supplies the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto [Elohim]” (2Cor. 9:12).

This is the same message he gave to the Galatians brethren: “Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do” (Gal. 2:10).

Now Paul is going to Jerusalem to see the brethren, taking along the collected items to help sustain them during the famine: “But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it has pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem” (Rom. 15:25-26).

These Gentiles had learned Yahweh’s truth from the Jews at Jerusalem, and it is only fitting and proper that in their gratitude they would repay their brethren for that understanding in their hour of physical need.

“It has pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things. When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain” (Rom. 15:27-28).

An Example of Unselfishness

Obviously from a closer examination we see that 1Corinthians 16:1-4 has been twisted to justify a Sunday observance. In fact, it has no such meaning at all. It is given us to show that we should have love for the brethren and be a help to those in need.

Paul evidently wrote this passage as an example of the Gentiles’ “fruit” that Paul gladly delivered. By this example of unselfish giving we are strengthened, as when we read Paul’s admonition to the Galatian brethren:

“As we therefore have opportunity, let us do good to all men, especially those of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:10). We find no command or indication anywhere in the Old or New Testament that the day of rest in which we are to worship Yahweh has been changed. It is still the seventh day of the week, the day we know as Saturday. It has been in effect from creation itself, when Yahweh rested and blessed the seventh day:

“And on the seventh day Elohim ended His work which He made; and rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And Elohim blessed the seventh day and sanctified it; because that in it He had rested from all His work which Elohim created and made” (Gen. 2:2-3).

Confessions About Sunday

The following churches and Christian authorities acknowledge that the Sabbath is the original, proper observance, and not the first day of the week:

“There was and is a commandment to keep holy the Sabbath day, but that Sabbath day was not Sunday...It will be said, however, and with some show of triumph, that the Sabbath was transferred from the seventh to the first day of the week...where can the record of such a transaction be found? Not in the New Testament” –Dr. Edward Hiscox, author of *The Baptist Manual*.

“From this same Catholic Church you have accepted your Sunday, and that Sunday, as the L-rd’s day, she has handed down as a tradition; and the entire Protestant world has accepted it as a tradition, for you have not one iota of Scripture to establish it. Therefore that which you have accepted as your rule of faith, inadequate as it of course is, as well as your Sunday, you have accepted on the authority of the Roman Catholic Church” –D.B. Ray, *The Papal Controversy*.

“Nowhere in the Bible do we find that [Yahshua] or the apostles ordered that the Sabbath be changed from Saturday to Sunday. We have the commandment of [Yahweh] given to Moses to keep holy the Sabbath day, that is, the seventh day of the week, Saturday. Today most Christians kept Sunday because it has been revealed to us by the church [Roman] outside the Bible” – *Catholic Virginian*, Oct. 3, 1947.

“They (the Catholics) refer to the Sabbath-day as having been changed into the ‘Lord’s Day’, contrary to the Decalogue (Ten Commandments) as it seems. Neither is there any example whereof they make more than concerning the changing of the Sabbath-day. Sunday is not celebrated in Christendom by [Yahweh’s] command. Great, say they, is the power of the Church, since it has dispensed with one of the Ten Commandments” –*Augsburg Confession*, Art. 28, p. 24.

“I have repeatedly offered \$1,000 to anyone who can prove to me from the Bible alone that I am bound to keep Sunday holy. There is no such law in the Bible. It is a law of the holy Catholic Church alone. The Bible says, ‘Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.’ The Catholic Church says: ‘No. By my divine power I abolish the Sabbath day and command you to keep the first day of the week.’ And lo! The entire civilized world bows down in reverent obedience to the command of the holy Catholic Church”—T. Enright, CSSR, in a lecture in 1884.

“The moral law contained in the Ten Commandments, and enforced by the prophets, He [Yahshua] did not take away. It was not the design of His coming to revoke any part of this. This is a law which can never be broken...Every part of this law must remain in force upon all mankind and in all ages; as not depending either on time or place, or any other circumstances liable to change, but on the nature of [Yahweh] and the nature of man, and their unchangeable relation to each other”—John Wesley, *Sermon on Several Occasions*, Vol. 1, No. 25.

“It being expedient to overthrow superstition, the Jewish holiday was abolished and as a thing necessary to retain decency, order, and peace in the Church...The early Christians substituted what we call the L-rd’s Day for the Sabbath” –John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1, p. 343.

Sabbath in the Kingdom

Yahweh’s Word says the Sabbath that Yahweh inaugurated at creation will be kept by Yahshua when He sets up His Kingdom here on earth: “And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before Me, saith Yahweh” (Isa. 66:23).

Micah says Yahweh’s law will go forth out of Jerusalem, which certainly includes the weekly and annual Sabbaths when the people go up to Jerusalem to worship Him: “But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of Yahweh shall be established in the top of the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of Yahweh and to the house of the Elohim of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of Yahweh from Jerusalem” (Mal. 4:1-2). See also Isaiah 2, Ezekiel 46:3; 44:23-24.

Ezekiel says the Sabbaths are a sign that we are Yahweh's people: "Moreover, I gave them My Sabbaths to be a sign between Me and them, that they might know that I am Yahweh Who sanctifies them" (Ezek. 20:12; see also verses 20-21).

Are you keeping all of Yahweh's Sabbaths that set you apart for His holy purpose? The Sabbath is the sign that He gave for sanctification –which means being set apart for His sake.

The verses in 1Corinthians 16 do not in any way teach a change of the Sabbath to Sunday, as some allege. Rather, attention should be given to the thrust of Paul's message. He reminds the various Gentile brethren at Corinth and other places of their obligation to support the brethren at Jerusalem who were responsible for bringing them the Good News of the coming Kingdom. That responsibility continues with His people today. We all have a duty to perform.

"For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things" (Rom. 15:27).

The lesson from this account in 1Corinthians 16 is clear. Each person in the Body of Messiah is responsible to be a help when the need arises among brethren. What is mistakenly cited as justification for Sunday worship is simply a lesson about sharing and caring for needy brethren.

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