



# Minutes With Messiah

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## TOWP

She had recently moved to town after ending an abusive relationship. She was downtown on business and her bus was very late. She was also hungry. That was when TOWP (The Open Window People) approached her. They gave She a lunch and a flyer about Jesus. Later She called TOWP back and talked to them.

She learned that her kidneys were failing, and sat in her room gathering her seizure medication to commit suicide by overdose. Just then TOWP came down the hall to talk to her. Later She talked to TOWP and, at 11:30 at night, put on her Lord in baptism.

She turned to the Lord wholeheartedly. She set up Bible studies in her apartment building. She assembled with the saints regularly. Her kidneys started working again, and She gave the credit to God. Then She learned that her husband had located her. She disappeared for a while, eventually letting TOWP know She was safe in another state.

There had only been a small window of opportunity for somebody in that town to find her, teach her, reach her, and save her life and (more importantly) her soul. A small window, perhaps, but an open one. TOWP saw the window and took the opportunity. But that is what makes TOWP TOWP.

Who is TOWP? It might be anyone. TOWP is the person who looks for the open window of opportunity. It might be small, as in the case of She. It might be big, like with a long-time neighbor. But there is always a window of opportunity open, and TOWP looks for it. That is why TOWP are called that.

Not every TOWP hands out sack lunches and flyers. Some become one by walking away from a group telling off-color stories at work or

school. Others invite neighbors to the assembly of the church, or to a Bible study. Maybe another TOWP creates a web site or writes articles. Sometimes they help people in distress, and take that window to teach about the one who heals all distresses.

Will every TOWP be successful at every window? No. Jesus reminds us that few will follow the way to life (Matt 7:14). Some people don't look for the window of opportunity. They figure the odds are against them, so they quit. The TOWP figures the odds are against them, so they try to improve the odds. They don't even count on seeing the results of their work. They know the results may be realized only by another TOWP. It is the results that matter, not who gets the credit, except that God gets the credit. "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase." (1 Cor 3:6)

In Ex 32:26, Moses asks, "Who is on the Lord's side?" The Levites become TOWP and slay 3000 Israelite sinners. In Acts 2, the apostles become TOWP and "kill" 3000 sinners, making them dead to sin but alive to Christ. Who will answer Moses' question? Are you one of TOWP?

*This article is for Dottie and Floyd and Christie and Loren, and all The Open Window People like them who jump through open windows.*

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# Why Sunday?

I have been requested to do a follow-up on last month's article about the Sabbath. Since Sunday is not, and has never been, the equivalent of the Sabbath, why do we assemble on that day? What makes Sunday special, after centuries of God's people honoring the Sabbath?

For starters I want to make a statement that may startle some. The church of the Bible assembled, as their ancestors had for centuries, every day. Old habits die hard. It was the practice of every observant Jewish male to assemble at least once, and often three times, each day in the synagogue to pray. In Jerusalem the worship in the Temple, the daily sacrifices, took place three times a day. The practices in the synagogues followed

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this pattern, but without the sacrifices. Since the church was entirely Jewish for ten years, and strongly Jewish for several years after that, the men of the church assembled daily.

And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.  
(Acts 2:46-47)

I don't know how soon the daily assembly was abandoned in favor of only Sunday assembly. It was within a century that those describing the church pointed out that they met on the first day of every week, so it was not long. Perhaps it was a result of the rapid growth of the non-Jewish portion of the church that brought this on. Whatever the reason, the church eventually got away from assembling every day. Even when they had daily assemblies, though, the first day of the week was singled out as different.

## The First of the Week

How do we know that the disciples' assemblies differed on the first day of the week? Two scriptures come into play here. One is an implication, the other an express statement. Let's start with the latter.

In 1 Cor 16: 2 Paul says "Upon the first of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." Although it was the practice of the Jewish Christians to assemble daily, Paul tells those at Corinth to give to the treasury of the church on "the first of the week." Obviously this day had some special significance. Most likely it was the day when most Gentiles, and thus the bulk of the congregation, would be assembled together. Whether or not it had any other significance, and I hope to show it did, it now had the significance of being the specific day set aside for contributing funds for the church. (Whether the church can accept contributions on other days or whether they can deposit the funds in a bank on other days is a matter for a separate discussion.)

The second passage that mentions the first day in relation to the assembly of the church is Acts 20:7. As I stated earlier, this one involves some reasoning, but it is not difficult to see that the Trojan congregation met specially on Sunday. The passage reads: "And upon the first 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." It goes on to tell of an incident of a man falling out of a window after falling asleep in Paul's sermon, which began some time before midnight and ended at dawn. The preceding verse tells that Paul and his companions had come to Troy six days earlier. So here comes the thinking part. Paul was there six days. Presumably during this time he assembled, as did others, for prayer. But on the seventh day of his time in the city, the first day of the week, the scripture specifically points out that the disciples came together to break bread. Might they have done so on other days? Perhaps. The scripture is silent on that. But it is very specific that the disciples assembled on the first day of the week (Sunday) to break bread, this most likely being the Lord's Supper. Whether Paul was waiting for this day before he left is speculation. That he took this opportunity to preach because the church was gathered together on that day for a specific purpose is obvious. Whether or not the church met on other days, they clearly and specifically met on Sunday.

Putting the two passages together, it is easy to deduce that the reason Paul told the Corinthian church to give on Sunday was that they, like the Trojan church, met specifically and primarily on the first of the week. Since they had assembled to break bread, they should also take that time to give.

(On a side note: I have heard men in the church distinguish between the Lord's Supper and the contribution by saying, "That ends the Lord's Supper. Now as a matter of convenience the elders have set aside this time for us to give." From my reading of the passage in 1 Corinthians this is wrong. It *might* have been because the church assembled on that day that Paul commanded the Corinthians and Galatians to give on the first day. But it is no longer a "matter of convenience" but a command of God that we do so.)

In Rev 1:10, John says he was in the Spirit on "the Lord's day." Throughout the centuries we have assumed that this was on Sunday. There is no scriptural evidence to support this, and it could as easily be that he was referring to the Sabbath. On the other hand, this passage is not about the church assembling together, but about an individual giving others a time frame for his vision.

## Why Sunday?

In our look at the differences between keeping the Sabbath and assembling with the saints on Sunday, the question comes up, why Sunday? If the Jews kept the Sabbath for all those years, why did the early church assemble specially on Sunday? We looked at what they did on that day, but still need to examine why.

Sabbatarians are quick to point out that God had a reason for setting aside the Sabbath for the Jews—it was a day of rest, just as He rested on the seventh day. Actually, Deut 5:15 gives another reason—because they had been servants in Egypt. If there was a reason for the Sabbath, albeit a reason specifically for the Jews in this latter case, then there ought also to be a reason for Sunday assembly as well.

Of course, that reasoning is not necessarily true. There are a number of laws God gave to Israel that he never explained a reason for, and for which there is no obvious reason. This does not negate their importance. However, we can provide a reasonable guess as to why Christians of the first century chose to assemble specifically on Sunday.

The central difference between Christianity and most other religions is the doctrine of the resurrection. When Paul was in Athens, the locals asked him to speak to them more fully because he was preaching the resurrection (Acts 17:18-19). When he spoke to their assembly on the Areopagus, it was the mention of the

resurrection that broke up the meeting (Acts 17:32). In 1 Cor 15:13, Paul said that the validity of our faith depends on the fact of the resurrection. Because Jesus' resurrection was discovered on a Sunday, it is logical that that day would be held in special regard. This is further borne out by the apparent emphasis on the memorial of the death and resurrection of Christ, the Lord's Supper, on that day. (One Sabbatarian has "proven" that Jesus rose on the Sabbath rather than the first day of the week. Regardless of whether he arose a few minutes before sundown or during the night, the resurrection was discovered and proclaimed on the first day of the week.)

Although there is no correspondence between keeping the Sabbath and assembling with Christians on Sunday, one can compare the reasons for each. The Sabbath celebrated the deliverance from bondage to the Egyptians. Sunday, or specifically the Lord's Supper taken on Sunday, celebrates the deliverance from the bondage to sin.

A second "reason" Christians would assemble on Sunday is that the first assembly of the church occurred on that day. According to the practice of the Sadducees, Pentecost would always fall on the day after the weekly Sabbath. While the Pharisees counted the fifty days differently and Pentecost could fall on any day, in the year Jesus died both the Pharisaic and Sadducean modes agreed. That year Pentecost was on a Sunday. Peter preached and the first 3,000 people were baptized to form the first congregation of the church of

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Jesus the Messiah. If the church began, so to speak, on a Sunday, then it is no stretch to see why they would continue to assemble on that day.

Christians do not "keep" Sunday like keeping Sabbath. The Sabbath was never commanded for non-Jewish Christians. In fact, many do as much work on Sunday as on other days of the week. But Christians do have the example of the early church, and commands to the early church, to support assembling together on Sunday. We should be willing to assemble other days as well, but must assemble at least on this one day.

# The UFO

It all started when I saw the Unidentified Flying Object. It was a clear night and I was just minding my business, watching my sheep. But then, watching sheep *is* my business. I am a shepherd, you know.

Anyway, it appeared in the night sky. It got closer and closer. Then all of a sudden a bright light shone all around us. Lit up me and my buddies. Scared the sheep something terrible. I must say it scared me, too. I never saw a light quite like that.

Then there was this being. He spoke to us. Told us not to be afraid, but he was bringing “good news of great joy to all people.” Those were his exact words. I thought, “Yeah, sure. What kind of good news? Couldn’t be that mutton prices were going up. That would be great news for me, but maybe not for the buyers.” But this person, or being, or whatever you want to call him, he went on. He said that King Messiah had been born that very day, and in Bet-lechem, no less. Said we could find Him swaddled and in a *manger*. Not in some fancy house in Jerusalem, mind you, but in a feed trough in our home town.

Then I thought, surely he isn’t telling us to just waltz into town at this hour of night. What would the boss say? I might lose my job. But then, if it, he, was right, think of it—seeing the real Messiah! All of a sudden there were a whole bunch of these beings around us, praising God all at the same time. If I was scared before, now I was

petrified. And those poor sheep must have lost ten pounds each. But that wasn’t the worst of it. After they said the blessing, they started flying up into the sky. I don’t know what they were, but Yakov figured they must be angels.

Well, we decided that if they were angels and if they told us to go find King Messiah in Bet-lechem, then we had best get going. Somebody said we should draw straws to see who would stay with the sheep, but nobody felt they should miss out on this; not if God sent word to us about it. So we all left the sheep and went into town. If God was sending us here, then He could watch the sheep.

The inn had a good stable with a large manger, so we tried there. Sure enough, there was this man and woman and a newborn baby. He didn’t look different from any other baby I’ve seen, but if God tells me that is the Messiah, then I believe that is the Messiah.

Since They said this was going to be the proof that King Messiah was born that night, then it was proven. Naturally we told everybody about what happened. Even the boss. I guess that is how you heard about it, Doc. And that’s the story. They say you may even put this in a book. You say he really did turn out to be the Messiah. Well, what do you think of that!

*(As told by a shepherd of Bet-lechem to Dr. Lucas. This interview was transcribed in chapter 2 of the doctor’s Letter to Theophilus.)*

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