

Is it Saturday or Sunday?

In favor of the idea that "every one of a week" means Sunday are these points:

- (1) Gentiles did not keep *Shabbat*.
- (2) By the Roman system of timekeeping, days began at midnight.
- (3) There is good documentation that the Gentile churches have observed Sunday as a day of worship since very early times. Specifically, Ignatius writes in the early second century of Sunday as "the Lord's Day," commemorating the day Yeshua rose from the grave. This we know to have been Sunday from Mt 28:1 and Lk 24:1; Mk 16:2 pinpoints it as "just after sunrise" on the first day of the week, that is, Sunday morning. (But Rv 1:10 is speaking of the eschatological Day of Judgment, not Sunday.)

In favor of the idea that "every one of a week" means Saturday night are these points:

- (1) The use of "one" rather than "first" shows that Sha'ul was thinking in Hebrew, not Greek (see the Hebrew of Genesis 1:5).
- (2) In the Jewish calendar, days commence at sundown, so the "first day of the week" refers to any time between sunset Saturday and sunset Sunday.
- (3) In the early days of the Messianic Community, Jewish believers continued to observe *Shabbat* as a day of rest and met for Messianic worship in the evening after it was over.
- (4) There were Jews, prominent ones, in the Corinthian congregation, so that Sha'ul would not have dealt with it as a wholly Gentile congregation.
- (5) The only other use of this Greek phrase in connection with Sha'ul speaks of an evening event where he preached so long that Eutychus went to sleep and fell off the window ledge; this was probably Saturday night (see Ac 20:7&N).
- (6) Sunday could not have been regularly celebrated by the early Jewish believers as *Shabbat* or as a *yom tov* ("festival," literally, "good day") because, since Judaism prohibits handling money on such days, Sha'ul would never have suggested taking up a collection then to a congregation with Jews in it.

I believe the reasons for Saturday night outweigh those for Sunday and accordingly translate the Greek phrase by "In favor of the idea that "every one of a week" means Sunday are these points:

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I believe the reasons for Saturday night outweigh those for Sunday and accordingly translate the Greek phrase by "Motza'ei-Shabbat."

While the New Testament does not abrogate Shabbat as the holy day of rest for Jews stipulated in the Fourth Commandment, it also contains no command concerning a proper day for Messianic worship. At the founding of the Messianic Community, the believers met together every day (Ac 2:46). In conclusion, what makes sense to me is that a Messianic Jewish congregation can choose any day (or days) of the week for Messianic worship, but worship elements specific to Shabbat should be included only on Shabbat (Friday sundown to Saturday sundown).

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¹ David H. Stern, Jewish New Testament Commentary: A Companion Volume to the Jewish New Testament, electronic ed. (Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1996), 1 Co 16:2.