

SUNDAY NIGHT

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Surely mixed emotions attend the title when the services of the church are considered. The published sources show about half those in attendance on Sunday morning are absent on Sunday night. The congregations that enjoy consistent attendance numbers at all their services are the rare exception. While Christians know not to be forsaking the assembly, many must believe an exception maintains with regard to Sunday night (Heb. 10:25). Perhaps an investigation of the question “Does the Bible have anything to say at all about attendance at the worship service Sunday night?” might prove beneficial.

The Bible clearly advances the case for evening worship. The Psalmist declared, “Behold, bless ye the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord, which by night stand in the house of the Lord” (Psa. 134:1). The apostle Paul expressed the view that living the Christian life was the fulfillment of the hope of Israel who had served God day and night. When Paul was brought before King Agrippa, he said to him, “Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope’s sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews” (Acts 26:7). How can Christians who attend services only on Sunday morning identify with such a promise as this? The point of the statement emerges out of the continual service of the faithful from old, yet a characteristic of their faith was service both “day and night.”

But, are there any New Testament examples showing where disciples of Christ actually met at night? Oh yes. The Lord himself instituted the supper commemorating his death at night. The apostle Matthew told how the event was concluded, “And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives. Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad” (Matt. 26:30-31).

Another time, following the death of the apostle James, Herod incarcerated Peter. Luke wrote, “Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him. And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison” (Acts 12:5-6). Upon his release from prison that night, Peter made his way to the house of Mary the mother

of John Mark “where many were gathered together praying” (v. 12). Further proof that the brethren were gathered together praying at night on this occasion is seen when Peter departed, because Luke next wrote, “Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter” (v. 18).

Shall the study proceed to examine Paul and Silas imprisoned at Philippi worshiping at midnight or Paul at Troas preaching until midnight? (Acts 16:25; 20:7). Obviously, New Testament examples abound that demonstrate worship is not confined to a Sunday morning only event.

What shall the conclusion then be concerning worship on Sunday night? Surely, it has been established that the admonition of Hebrews 10:25 applies with equal strength to this meeting of the church. The Hebrews writer said, “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised:) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries” (Heb. 10:22-27).