

Justin Martyr on Sunday Worship

Written by Josh Winslett

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Sometimes I read accounts of Christian worship and life from the 2nd century. It's always interesting to see how those directly after the apostles interacted in public worship. None of these saints were infallible. Some used strange language and others were influenced by Alexandrian philosophy. This should remind us to follow the Bible alone for regulatory principles of worship and dogmatics. With that said, it's still a blessing to read their writings and even those accounts of them from their persecutors.

Below is a small glimpse of Christian worship from a man named Justin Martyr. He was a 2nd century Christian that lived AD 100-165. It's believed that he possibly even was alive to hear the teachings of John the apostle. He was one of the first writing apologists of Christianity. In his First Apology, he gave a vivid window into the worship of these primitive Christians. In this small window we see praises being given to the entire trinity, reading of both the Old and New Testament, exposition/exhortation of the word, the collection for the orphans/widows, the reason for Sunday worship, and a description of Christ's Friday crucifixion and Sunday resurrection.

"Chapter 67. Weekly worship of the Christians

And we afterwards continually remind each other of these things. And the wealthy among us help the needy; and we always keep together; and for all things wherewith we are supplied, we bless the Maker of all through His Son Jesus Christ, and through the Holy Ghost. And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons. And they who are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succours the orphans and widows and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in bonds and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need. But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Saviour on the same day rose from the dead. For He was crucified on the day before that of Saturn (Saturday); and on the day after that of Saturn, which is the day of the Sun, having appeared to His apostles and disciples, He taught them these things, which we have submitted to you also for your consideration." End quote

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