

SABBATH IS “EVENING TO EVENING”

When is ‘Evening’ in the Bible?



by
Steven Greene

Website: <https://sabbathreflections.org>

Email: sabbathreflections@gmail.com

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture
is from the *King James Version*.

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“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day *is* the Sabbath of the LORD your God. ... For *in* six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that *is* in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

— Exodus 20:8-11.

PREFACE

There is a false teaching spreading that seventh-day Sabbath observance only spans 12 hours of daylight, beginning at sunrise and ending at sunset. Those who have only recently begun looking into keeping the seventh-day Sabbath could easily be influenced by such teachings; however, it is surprising that anyone with a rudimentary knowledge of the Bible can be swayed by such utter nonsense.

As one of the Ten Commandments, keeping the Sabbath Day is vitally important. The seventh day of the week was set apart by God and is the sign of those who are His children. God places a great emphasis on keeping it because it is **holy** time to Him. For that reason, those who intentionally despise or disrespect the Sabbath Day can expect a harsh judgment:

EXODUS 31:13-17 “Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: ‘Surely **My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you** throughout your generations, that *you* may know that I *am* the LORD who sanctifies you. 14 ‘**You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people.** 15 ‘Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh *is* the Sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does *any* work on the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. 16 ‘Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to **observe the Sabbath throughout their**

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generations as a perpetual covenant. 17 **‘It is a sign between Me and the children** of Israel forever; for *in* six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.’”

Deliberately violating the Sabbath Day demands the death penalty. Teaching that the Sabbath Day is less than a full 24-hour day is showing contempt for God and changing times and Law:

DANIEL 7:25 He [*the Beast with ten horns*] **shall speak pompous words against the Most High,** Shall persecute the saints of the Most High, And **shall intend to change times and law.** ...

This is a very serious matter to the Most High God¹:

REVELATION 22:18-19 For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: **If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book** of this prophecy, **God shall take away his part from the Book of Life,** from the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book.

From a secular perspective, claiming the Sabbath Day is less than 24 hours is as ridiculous as suggesting that any day of observance, whether God’s holydays or national holidays such as Christmas, is only 12 hours during daylight. No one sets aside a special day and limits it to something less than 24 hours. If that were the case, why do calendars not have fourteen columns labeled Sunday, *Sunnight*, Monday, *Monnight*, ... Saturday, and *Saturnight*?

There is a vast amount of evidence in the form of historical writings and ancient traditions that prove the Sabbath Day, as well as the other six days of the week, are 24 hours—too much to include in this booklet. Instead, absolute proof will come from the Bible—the source of God’s Truth.

¹ Also Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Prov. 30:6.

CHAPTER 1

Definitions

The following definitions are used throughout:

DEFINITIONS:

Darkness = the absence of light.

Light = illumination of the sun during daytime or illumination of the moon during nighttime.

Day = one complete rotation of the earth (24 hours).

Week = seven consecutive 24-hour days.

Month = one orbit of the moon around the earth.

Year = one orbit of the earth around the sun.

Nighttime = the portion of a day between evening and morning that is darkness (~12 hours).

Daytime = the portion of a day between morning and evening that is light (~12 hours).

Evening = transition period from light to darkness.
Biblically, it occurs at sunset when the entire sun dips just below the horizon.

Morning = transition period from darkness to light.
Biblically, it occurs at sunrise when the entire sun is just above the horizon

Biblical Time—Days, Week, Months, Years

Darkness and light are *not* opposites; rather, darkness is the *absence* of light. Only darkness existed at the beginning of God’s work in Genesis 1-2 so nighttime and daytime did not exist until after light was created. Importantly, the duration of a day on earth is marked by one rotation, independent of light. Whether the earth

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was already rotating or God initiated it when He began His work, light was created on the first day and that singular act divided days into nighttime and daytime.

God’s work on the earth began in Genesis 1:2, which says, “... **darkness was on the face** of the deep. And the **Spirit of God was hovering over the face** of the waters.” This was the first day, but when did God’s work actually begin? It was *not* the moment when light was created because the Spirit of God was active *before* the light when His Spirit was hovering or moving in the darkness.

The beginning of a day was established when God *began* His **work**, which was while the earth was in darkness.

Each of the six Genesis creation work days are the period of time covering both “the evening and the morning”:

GENESIS 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31 ... **the evening** and the **morning** were the [*first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth*] day.

DEFINITIONS:

Evening = Heb. ‘*ereb*: H6153 עֶרֶב **ereb** (eh'-reb) n-m.

Morning = Heb. *boqer*: H1242 בֹּקֶר **boqer** (bo'-ker) n-m.

One 360° rotation of the earth is called a day and that duration has been defined and fixed at 24 hours. No matter the latitude (north-south location), one complete rotation of the earth around its axis is always 24 hours. The duration of a day *never* changes because it is solely dependent upon the rotation of the earth, not the axis tilt or the orientation with the sun. As the earth rotates, the light-dark terminator passes over a fixed point twice in 24 hours—once during the evening transition and once during the morning transition. The time between the evening and morning transitions is about 12 hours (at the equator).

The creation of light brought into existence both evening (Heb. ‘*ereb*) and morning (Heb. *boqer*) because half the earth is in sunlight and the other half is in darkness. Evening and morning are transitions from light to darkness and darkness to light,

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respectively, because of refraction and scattering of the sun's rays in the atmosphere. Looking ‘down’ on the earth, one would see what is called the light-dark terminator—a circumferential line around the earth resulting from the simultaneous presence of darkness on one half and light on the other.

God had to begin His work in darkness on the first day in Genesis in order to create light. Light was the result of His work so His work only began *before* the light; that is, in darkness. Even though there was no evening to mark the beginning of the darkness, God began His work within the same 24-hour period that light was created; therefore, “evening” marked the beginning of the first day because the rotation of the earth is fixed at 24 hours.

It would be impossible for mankind to mark time on earth without light to reveal the beginning and ending of a day. The sun and moon both distinguish nighttime from daytime, but a day is still determined by the rotation of the earth.

A *year* is one orbit of the earth around the sun and a *month* is one orbit of the moon around the earth. Without the sun and moon, time in the form of days, months, and years would not exist. The creation of light established *time* for mankind:

GENESIS 1:14, 16-18 Then God said, “Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens **to divide the day from the night**; and let them be for signs and seasons, and **for days and years**; ... 16 Then God made **two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night**. *He made* the stars also. 17 God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth, 18 and to **rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness**. And God saw that *it was good*.

A *day* is one rotation of the earth, which is further divided into nighttime and daytime:

[FV] DANIEL 8:14 And he [*the angel*] said to me [*Daniel*], “Unto two thousand, three hundred **evenings [H6153 = ‘ereb] and mornings [H1242 = boqer]**. Then the sanctuary shall be cleansed.”

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The 2,300 equal periods of darkness (evening) and light (mornings) are equivalent to 1,150 days and they were commonly considered to be about 12 hours each:

JOHN 11:9-10 Jesus answered, “Are there not **twelve hours in the day**? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. 10 “But if one walks **in the night**, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.”

Summary

The sun and moon establish nighttime and daytime, months, and years; however, the rotation of the earth fixes the duration of a day at 24 hours, independent of the sun and moon. The sun divides a day into 12 hours of nighttime and daytime and days begin at evening because God started His work on the first day in darkness. Nighttime begins at evening as the earth transitions from light to darkness and daytime begins at morning as the earth transitions from darkness to light.

Months are determined by one orbit of the moon around the earth and a year is one orbit of the earth around the sun. Calendars show months and years but they are not measured in whole number of days, at least in modern times. A month is 29.53 days and a year is 365.24 days because they are not linked to days. Simply put, the rotation of the earth, the orbit of the moon around the earth, and the orbit of the earth around the sun are not synchronized so months and years cannot be expressed in whole number of days.

A week, however, is directly linked to days. It consists of seven repeating and consecutive days because **God** created the week by working for six days and resting on one.

Above all, the duration of a day, week, month, and year is fixed and unchanging (at least post-flood).

CHAPTER 2

The Sabbath Day is Evening to Evening

The question now is how does the Sabbath Day observance relate to the period of time called a day? Specifically, when does observance of the biblical Sabbath begin and when does it end? Scripture confirms that the weekly Sabbath Day begins at evening:

NEHEMIAH 13:19 And it came to pass, that when the gates of Jerusalem **began to be dark before the sabbath, I commanded that the gates should be shut**, and charged that they should not be opened till after the sabbath: and some of my servants set I at the gates, that there should no burden be brought in on the sabbath day.

Not only does the Sabbath Day *begin* at evening, Sabbath Day *observance* **includes** the nighttime that follows evening:

NEHEMIAH 13:21 Then I warned them, and said to them, “Why do you spend **the night** around the wall? If you do so again, I will lay hands on you!” From that time on **they came no more on the Sabbath**.

Sabbath Day observance clearly starts at evening. It continues through the nighttime, and ends the following evening:

EZEKIEL 46:1-2 Thus saith the Lord GOD; **The gate** of the inner court that looketh toward the east **shall be shut the six working days**; but **on the sabbath it shall be opened**, and in the day of the new moon it shall be opened. 2 And the prince shall enter by the way of the porch of that gate without, and shall stand by the post of the gate, and the priests shall prepare his burnt offering and his peace offerings, and he shall worship at the threshold of the gate: then he shall go forth; but **the gate shall not be shut until the evening** [**H6153 = ‘ereb**].

Nehemiah shut the gates to Jerusalem to prevent merchants from buying and selling during the Sabbath Day. He did this at the *evening of the sixth day*, which was the **beginning** of the Sabbath Day observance. The gates that Ezekiel mentioned are to the inner

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court of the Temple. These were open during the Sabbath Day to allow people to gather to worship God but He closed them at the *evening of the seventh day*, which was the **end** of the Sabbath Day.

Sabbath Day observance **begins** at evening of the sixth day and **ends** at the evening of the seventh day. Sabbath Day observance is a full 24 hours that includes both the nighttime and daytime.

Secular Evidence

There is a mountain of historical writings that affirm the seventh-day Sabbath observance begins at evening and ends 24 hours later at evening. One example of such is recorded in the writings of first century A.D. historian Josephus in his *Wars of the Jews Book IV*, Chapter 9, ¶12:

“...the last [tower] was erected above the top of the Pastophoria, where one of the priests stood of course, and gave a signal beforehand, with a trumpet **at the beginning of every seventh day, in the evening twilight, as also at the evening when that day was finished** ...”

Josephus captured the understanding and practice of the Jews *at the time of Jesus Christ* who kept the Sabbath Day beginning at evening and ending 24 hours later at evening. In all his writings, Josephus never mentioned Jesus keeping a different Sabbath Day observance. It would have been a noteworthy incident because it would have brought upon Him a sentence of death.

Passover & Unleavened Bread Are Evening to Evening

The Bible says the days of Passover and seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread all begin at evening:

EXODUS 12:18 In the first *month*, on **the fourteenth day of the month at even [H6153 = ‘ereb], ye shall eat unleavened bread, until the one and twentieth day of the month at even [H6153 = ‘ereb].**

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Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread are eight days total, beginning at the evening of the 14th and ending at the evening of the 21st. The only way the 14th to the 21st spans eight days is if each day begins at evening and each day ends 24 hours later the following evening. There is *no* mention that any day begins with morning. The following scriptures also confirm that Passover begins at evening of the 14th day of first month Nisan:

DEUTERONOMY 16:6 But at the place which the LORD thy God shall choose to place his name in, there thou shalt sacrifice **the passover at even [H6153 = ‘ereb]**, at the going down of the sun, at the season that thou camest forth out of Egypt.

JOSHUA 5:10 And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept **the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even [H6153 = ‘ereb]** in the plains of Jericho.

Scripture plainly states that Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread are eight calendar days and each begins at evening. Since all days are 24 hours, simple math proves that if all days begin at evening, they must therefore also end 24 hours later at evening.

Atonement is Evening to Evening

The Day of Atonement also begins and ends at evening:

LEVITICUS 23:32 It shall be unto you a sabbath of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls: in **the ninth day of the month at even [H6153 = ‘ereb], from even [H6153 = ‘ereb] unto even [H6153 = ‘ereb]**, shall ye celebrate your sabbath.

Scriptures clearly establish that the Day of Atonement begins at evening of the ninth day of the seventh month Tishri and ends 24 hours later at the next evening.

Sabbath & Atonement Are Unique Days

The Sabbath and Atonement are both very special and unique days:

LEVITICUS 23:3 ‘Six days shall work be done, but **the seventh day is a Sabbath [H7676 = shabbath] of solemn**

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rest [H7677 = shabbathown], a **holy convocation**. You shall do **no work** on it; it is the Sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings.

LEVITICUS 23:27-32 “Also the tenth *day* of this seventh month *shall be* the **Day of Atonement. It shall be a holy convocation for you**; you shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire to the LORD. 28 “And you shall do **no work** on that same day, for it is the Day of Atonement, to make atonement for you before the LORD your God. 29 “For any person who is not afflicted *in soul* on that same day shall be cut off from his people. 30 “And any person who does any work on that same day, that person I will destroy from among his people. 31 “You shall do **no manner of work [H4399 = mla'kah = “no work”]**; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. 32 “It shall be to you a **sabbath [H7676 = shabbath] of solemn rest [H7677 = shabbathown]**, and you shall afflict your souls; on the ninth *day* of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall celebrate your sabbath.”

The weekly Sabbath Day and the Day of Atonement are both a “Sabbath of rest” (*shabbath shabbathown*). This is an important designation by God that is not given to *any* other holyday. They also have the distinction that they are holy convocations and days in which all work is prohibited. This makes them unique from all the other commanded observances of God.

However, claims that the Sabbath Day is only to be observed during the 12 hours of daytime violate these three designations. The Genesis week is seven 24-hour rotations of the earth—seven *days*. The Sabbath is also a 24-hour *day* because it **is** the seventh *day*. If the Sabbath observance is only during the daytime, then work would be allowed during the nighttime in clear violation of “you shall do **no work** on that same **day**,”—a day is always 24 hours. It also violates the “Sabbath of rest” and holy convocation.

The Day of Atonement is unique from the other holydays and it is a full 24-hour day. Only the Sabbath Day has the same designations as a Sabbath of rest, a holy convocation, and a day forbidding *all* work. Considering that violating the Sabbath Day is

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punishable by death², who would risk observing it for only half a day especially since Scripture clearly proves the Sabbath Day is a 24-hour observance?

Summary

The Bible clearly establishes several facts that cannot be disputed:

- 1) A day is fixed to 24 hours by the rotation of the sun.
- 2) Evening is the transition from light to darkness and morning is the transition from darkness to light and each is about 12 hours (at the equator).
- 3) All days begin and end at evening because God started His work in the darkness.
- 4) Scripture proves the Sabbath, Passover, Days of Unleavened Bread, and Atonement are all 24-hour days and all begin and end at evening.
- 5) There is **no** scriptural evidence that a day that is a commanded observance—or any other day for that matter—begins at morning or is less than 24 hours.

² Exod 31:15; 35:2.

CHAPTER 3

When is ‘Evening’?

The formal astronomical definition of *evening* is the period of time when the sun is close to the horizon and comprises the periods of civil, nautical, and astronomical twilight³. Colloquially, evening may be used to include the last waning daytime shortly before sunset⁴. In modern terms, *evening* is more properly referred to as *twilight* because it describes the soft glowing light from the sky caused by the refraction and scattering of the sun's rays from the atmosphere when the sun is below the horizon. The modern understanding of evening and twilight is a substantial period of *time* between sunset and darkness.

When it comes to observing the seventh day Sabbath, Passover, and holydays, the Bible specifically uses the Hebrew word ‘*ereb*’, translated *evening*, to refer to the beginning and ending of the observance of each day. But when exactly is evening?

Light from the sun is refracted and scattered by the atmosphere around the earth making it difficult to pinpoint the exact time that evening occurs. Does evening begin when the sun goes below the horizon or is it later as the sky dims?

The Bible never uses the term ‘sunset’ for the beginning or ending of a day. The exact meaning of evening is also not clearly defined or understood. The Jews have spent much time debating this topic and generally define evening as the period of time beginning at sunset and lasting until three stars are visible. This is obviously inexact and, for that reason, they decreed that the *earliest* possible moment for evening to occur is sunset, just as the sun dips below the horizon. Because the biblical meaning of evening is so uncertain, they traditionally observe the Sabbath Day beginning a

³ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evening>.

⁴ *Ibid.*

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few minutes before sunset on Friday until an hour after sunset on Saturday when three stars are visible and there is no question that evening is past. For Jews, Sabbath Day observance is ~25 hours.

From a few minutes before sunset to an hour after sunset is certainly one way to keep the Sabbath Day. Another is simply from sunset to sunset, which has been the tradition for many Christian believers today. But is that sufficient? Should people observe the Sabbath Day for 25 hours?

The answer lies in keeping the Passover. Like all other commanded observances, Passover day begins at evening. However, understanding when the Passover lamb must be killed provides the proof for the true meaning of evening:

EXODUS 12:6 'Now you shall keep it [*the Passover*] until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at **twilight** [*Heb. bēn hā'arbāyim*].

Many translations use *evening* (KJV) instead of *twilight* (NKJV); however, the Hebrew word here is *bēn hā'arbāyim*, which is the period of time **between** sunset and darkness. The Jews also use this definition but do not distinguish *twilight* from *evening*. It is important to emphasize that *twilight* (Heb. *bēn hā'arbāyim*) requires the sacrifice of the Passover lamb to occur **after** sunset but before total darkness because it must be “at [*or during*] twilight.” But *twilight* differs significantly from the word that is translated *evening* used elsewhere to mark the beginning and ending of a day:

GENESIS 1:5 God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the **evening** [*Heb. 'ereb*] and the morning were the first day.

The Hebrew here for *evening* is quite different from Exodus 12:6. When the Bible mentions the beginning or ending of a day, it is always the Hebrew word *'ereb*, commonly translated *evening*. In modern terms, evening is the transition period from daylight to darkness; however, the lamb must be sacrificed **on** Passover but during *twilight* so it must occur **after** the Passover day begins at

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evening. When does a day begin? At evening. If the lamb must be sacrificed during *twilight* (Heb. *bên hā‘arbāyim*)—meaning **after** sunset but before total darkness—and the Passover day begins at *evening* (Heb. *‘ereḇ*), then *evening* must refer to sunset. Anything later would be between the sunset and total darkness—the period of time defined as *twilight* when the lamb must be sacrificed. Therefore, *evening* occurs at sunset or when the entire sun dips just below the horizon. This means a biblical day begins at sunset and ends 24 hours later at the following sunset.

DEFINITIONS:

Evening = Heb. *‘ereḇ*: refers to the beginning or ending of a biblical day and it occurs **at** sunset when the entire sun dips just below the horizon. The requirement for observing the Sabbath Day, Passover, and all the holydays is from sunset to sunset. The 25-hour Jewish observance of the Sabbath Day exceeds this minimum.

Twilight = Heb. *bên hā‘arbāyim*: the period **after** sunset but before darkness.⁵ It never refers to the beginning or ending of a day but always specifies the time for sacrifices and offerings.

Biblical Day = one complete rotation of the earth (24 hours) beginning at sunset and ending at the subsequent sunset.

⁵ Eleven occurrences: Exod. 12:6; 16:12; 29:39, 41; 30:8; Lev. 23:5; Num. 9:3, 5, 11; 28:4, 8.

CHAPTER 4

Creation Days—“Evenings and Mornings”

One argument that the Sabbath Day is less than 24 hours claims that the duration of a day is somehow different because the phrase “the evening and the morning” is missing from the seventh day:

GENESIS 2:2-3 And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. 3 Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

The creation week describes events that occurred during seven 24-hour rotations of the earth (days). God worked during the first six days of the week and then rested on the seventh. Doing something different—resting, not working—did *not* change the rotation of the earth to less than 24 hours and neither does the absence of the phrase “the evening and the morning.”

Reasoning that the Sabbath is less than 24 hours because Scripture does not include the phrase “the evening and the morning” would require either the *day* itself to be less than 24 hours or God to have worked for only part of the seventh day. The former is clearly wrong because *every* day is 24 hours—the rotation of the earth does not speed up on the seventh day and slow down during the other six days.

But neither did God rest for only part of the seventh day—He *rested* for the entire day. God began His *work* each day at evening so He began His *rest* at the same time. If God was not resting, then He was working—by definition. If the seventh day is to be kept less than 24 hours, then God had to work not just the evening and morning of the sixth but also continue working into the evening of the seventh day. But just as God *worked* for 24 hours, He *rested* for 24 hours. It does not say that God rested on the ‘Sabbath’—He rested on the seventh *day*, which is 24 hours. The Bible actually proves this:

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EXODUS 20:11 For **in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth**, the sea, and all that *is* in them, and **rested the seventh day**. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

The six days in which God worked are a direct reference to the six days in Genesis chapter 1 and verses 5, 8, 13, 19, 23, and 31. Each day consisted of “... the **evening** and the **morning**” so the first six days were all 24 hours each. No one argues to the contrary. In fact, those who claim that the Sabbath Day observance is less than 24 hours admit that the first six days are 24 hours. However, they claim the seventh day is different because it is missing that phrase.

That is just irrational. Exodus 20:11 says that God worked “six days,” referring to the six, 24-hour, days in Genesis. But Exodus 20:11 also says God rested on the “seventh day,” also a reference to Genesis. The Hebrew word for *day* (*yowm*) is the same everywhere in Genesis 1-2 as well as Exodus 20:11. Grammatically, it is impossible to assign 24 hours to the first six days and something different for the seventh because the same word is used. All seven days are one 24-hour rotation of the earth, which **means that God worked and rested from one evening to the following evening**. Just as the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread are eight days from the 14th to the 21st and all begin and end at evening, the seven days that comprise a *week* in Genesis begin and end at evening. By definition, a week is seven days and all are 24 hours.

Moreover, if God had only rested for part of the seventh day, then Exodus 20:11 would have said, “For **in six days and seven nights** the LORD made the heavens and the earth” There are several scriptures where days and nights are separated⁶ and, yet, still indicate days, so such phrasing would be completely acceptable if God had actually worked during the evening of the seventh day.

⁶ Gen. 7:4, 12; Exod. 24:18; 34:28; Deut. 9:9, 11, 18, 25; 10:10; 1 Sam. 30:12; 1 Kings 19:8; Job 2:13; Jonah 1:17; Matt. 4:2; 12:40.

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However, God cannot lie⁷. He worked six *days* and then rested one *day*. Days are always 24 hours regardless of whether or not the phrase “the evening and the morning” is missing.

The Sabbath is the Name of the Seventh Day

The rotation of the earth is fixed and never changes so every day is 24 hours. The modern Gregorian calendar does not label the days of the week according to number but, rather, by names of Roman gods. Naming any particular day does not change the duration or the fact that a day is 24 hours. Every calendar in the world is based upon 24-hour days.

The same is true for the Sabbath Day, which is simply the **name** given to the seventh day just as Sunday is the Roman name given to the first day of the week. Interestingly, Genesis does not even mention *Sabbath*—the first use is in Exodus. Because the seventh day is 24 hours, so, too, is the *name* that God gave to it—the Sabbath Day:

EXODUS 20:8-11 “Remember the **Sabbath day**, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the **seventh day is the Sabbath** of the LORD your God. ... 11 For *in* six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that *is* in them, and rested the **seventh day**. Therefore the LORD blessed the **Sabbath day** and hallowed it.

DEUTERONOMY 5:12-13 ‘Observe the **Sabbath day**, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. 13 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 14 but the **seventh day is the Sabbath** of the LORD your God. ...

The Fourth Commandment names the entire 24 hours of “seventh **day**” the “Sabbath **Day**” because it is a 24-hour day of *rest*⁸. Both are called *days* and they are interchangeable references to identical 24-hour periods of time. The duration of the *Sabbath* observance is

⁷ Titus 1:2.

⁸ Lev. 23:3.

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exactly the same as the duration of the seventh *day*. No calendar in existence divides seventh day into two periods of time: one designated the seventh night and the other the ‘Sabbath Day’. The 24-hour seventh day and the Sabbath Day are one and the same.

Night & Day vs. Day & Night

Some argue that the word order of the phrase “days and nights” is proof that the Sabbath Day begins at morning. They claim the order limits it to 12 hours of daytime because it begins with “day” and ends with “night”. One of the scriptures used is the time Jesus was in the tomb:

MATTHEW 12:40 “For as Jonah was **three days and three nights** in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be **three days and three nights** in the heart of the earth.

If this is an explicit order of days followed by nights, then Jesus had to be laid in the tomb about sunrise if the counting of the three days began in the daytime. However, Scripture clearly says Jesus was placed in the tomb at evening, not morning or daytime⁹:

MATTHEW 27:57-60 Now **when evening had come**, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. 58 This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be given to him. 59 When Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, 60 and **laid it [the body of Jesus] in his new tomb** which he had hewn out of the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the door of the tomb, and departed.

So, either the order of “days and nights” is not important because Jesus was referring to a *duration* of three 24-hour days or Jonah was swallowed by the great fish¹⁰ during the *daytime*. Either way, days begin at evening so the order here is not important.

⁹ Also Mark 15:42-46.

¹⁰ Jonah 1:17.

SABBATH IS “EVENING TO EVENING”

The phrase “day and night” is used in many verses. But just as important is the fact that the phrase “night and day” is also found in numerous scriptures including:

1 Sam. 25:16; 2 Sam. 2:32; 1 Kings 8:29; Neh. 4:22; Esth. 4:16; Ps. 91:5; 139:12; Isa 27:3; 34:10; Jer. 14:17; Mark 4:27; 5:5; Luke 2:37; Acts 20:31; Rom. 13:12; 2 Cor. 11:25; 1 Thess. 2:9; 3:10; 2 Thess. 3:8; 1 Tim. 5:5; 2 Tim. 1:3.

The phrase “night and day” is always used when specifying a *single* 24-hour day such as in Genesis 1-2 where each day begins at the evening. It also applies to the Sabbath Day, Passover, the Days of Unleavened Bread, and Atonement (and all the other holydays) because all biblical days *begin* at evening and continue throughout the “night and day”. No day in the Bible begins at morning.

On the other hand, when the phrase “day and night” is used, many times it refers to a time sequence of an event that began during the daytime and continued into the following nighttime. When this occurs, it spans two or more consecutive days because each day is 24-hour from evening to evening. An event that begins during the daytime and continues into the nighttime is two calendar days as is the case here:

JUDGES 19:9 And when the man stood to depart—he and his concubine and his servant—his father-in-law, the young woman’s father, said to him, “Look, **the day is now drawing toward evening; please spend the night. See, the day is coming to an end; lodge here**, that your heart may be merry. **Tomorrow** go your way early, so that you may get home.”

Finally, there are instances where the order of “day and night” does not matter at all because the focus is on the *condition* of darkness/nighttime or light/daytime. Here is one such example:

PSALM 42:8 The LORD will command His lovingkindness in the **daytime**, And in the **night** His song *shall be* with me— A prayer to the God of my life.

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Epiphosko—*Not the Time Prior to Sunrise*

Another argument that the Sabbath Day is less than 24 hours involves the Greek word *epiphosko* in the New Testament. It is only used twice and always as a **verb**.

[FV] MATTHEW 28:1 Now *late in* the Sabbath, as the first *day* of the [weeks] **began to dawn [G2020 = epiphosko (verb)]**, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb.

LUKE 23:54 That day was the Preparation, and the Sabbath **drew near [G2020 = epiphosko (verb)]**.

The **verb** *epiphosko* as well as the English verb *dawn* always mean ‘to begin to happen’ or ‘draw near’—they *never* refer to the period of time prior to sunrise.

DAWN (VERB FORM):

Epiphosko = (verb) G2020 ἐπιφώσκω (e-piy-fō'-skō) used of the reckoned commencement of the day, to be near commencing, to dawn on.¹¹

Dawn [upon] = (verb) to begin to happen; to become evident.

To indicate the time prior to sunrise requires the Greek *ximeróno*, which is the noun form of *sunrise* or *dawn*.

DAWN (NOUN FORM):

Ximeróno = (noun) ξημερώνω (ksi-mé-roma) first light before sunrise.

Dawn = (noun) first light before sunrise.

Matthew 28:1 and Luke 23:54 refer to two different events but both specify they were very late in the day when they started. In fact, Matthew 28:1 reinforces that fact by stating it was “*late in* the

¹¹ <https://www.billmounce.com/greek-dictionary/epiphosko>. NOTE: All days begin at sunset so “commencement of the day” refers to the biblical evening.

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Sabbath.” *Epiphosko* refers to the end of the day as evening draws near. Simply put, it is the time prior to sunset.

Even though *epiphosko* is one of the most infrequently used words in the Bible, those who misinterpret it are suggesting that this one particular Greek word establishes precedent over the rest of the Bible, including the Old Testament. Not only does this word have nothing to do with sunrise, proper exegesis of the Bible would immediately challenge the interpretation of a single Scripture or word that contradicts the rest of the Bible.

Other Scripture

One last argument uses the following Scripture, which does not have anything to do with specifying the beginning of *any* day much less the Sabbath Day:

MARK 16:1-2 Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary *the mother* of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. 2 Very early in the morning, on the first day of the [weeks], they came to the tomb when the sun had risen.

This verse only says that the Sabbath Day was past (ended) when they went to the tomb “very early in the morning ... when the sun had risen.” It refers to the time of day they *arrived* at the tomb; it does not indicate the *beginning* of a day.

Summary

Those who argue that the Sabbath Day observance is less than 24 hours cannot even remotely produce a viable argument for their claims. In reality, they are simply ignoring the overwhelming biblical evidence to the contrary:

- 1) God *rested* the entire seventh day from evening to evening just as He *worked* a full 24 hours during each of the first six days.
- 2) *Sabbath Day* is the name given to the 24 hours of the seventh day of the week. The name refers to the fact that the seventh day is called a “Sabbath of rest” (*shabbath shabbathown*).

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- 3) The phrase “days and nights” can refer to a duration of time or an order of events but the meaning is determined by context. “Night and day” is always used when specifying a 24-hour day.
- 4) The Greek verb *epiphosko* used in Matthew 28:1 and Luke 23:54 always means ‘to begin to happen’ or ‘draw near’. It *never* refers to the period of time prior to sunrise.

CONCLUSION

The rotation of the earth confirms that a day is 24 hours; consisting of about 12 hours of darkness and about 12 hours of light. It is also clear that every day in the Bible begins and ends at evening. This applies to the Sabbath, Passover, holydays, and every other day of the year. No evidence, whether biblical or secular, exists to back any claims that the weekly Sabbath Day observance begins at sunrise or is less than 24 hours. Every one of God’s commanded observances are full 24-hour days that begin and end at evening, which occurs at sunset.

Claiming that the Sabbath Day begins at sunrise and ends at sunset has serious consequences because it is a false teaching and changes “times and Law.”¹² Furthermore, if observing the Sabbath Day is from sunrise to sunset, then that must also apply to the Passover and holydays because the duration of the Sabbath is not unique from the other commanded observances. This is especially true of the Sabbath and Atonement, both of which are a Sabbath rest, a day when work is prohibited, and a holy convocation. Eliminating the evening/nighttime portion of the Sabbath Day, would make it impossible to keep an evening/nighttime Passover observance¹³ when it falls on the seventh day. The same applies to keeping That Night of the Lord (the evening of the first day of Unleavened Bread; aka, the night to be much observed)¹⁴. The whole concept of a sunrise to sunset Sabbath Day is not only irrational and has no basis for argument within the Bible but it is an abomination to God and brings a terrible judgment!

¹² Dan. 7:25.

¹³ Lev. 23:5.

¹⁴ Exod. 12:42.

